

STR Ad Hoc Committee April 8th, 2024,
Minutes

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
EAST LYME, CT

2024 APR 18 P 1:40

Caughlin
TOWN CLERK

Minutes of EAST LYME SHORT TERM RENTALS AD HOC COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING - 04/08/24

Date and time: 04/08/24 07:00 pm to: 04/08/24 08:18 pm

Present: Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary, Anne Santoro, Greg McIntire, Gary Farrugia, Paul Formica, Gary Cicchiello, Anne Thurlow, John Cellino, Absent:, Daniel Beachy

CC: Absent:, Mark Zamarka, Town Attorney, Candace Carlson, Ex-Officio

Location: East Lyme Town Hall, Conf. Room #1, 108 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic, CT, 06357

Topics

1. Call Meeting to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Note Ms. Santoro called the April 8th, 2024, Regular Meeting of the STR Ad Hoc Committee to order at 7:01 p.m. and led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Delegations

Note There were none.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

3-1. March 18th, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

Note see attached minutes.

 [STR-March-18-2024-Ad-Hoc-Committee-Minutes.pdf](#)

Note MOTION (1)

Mr. Farrugia moved to approve the March 18th, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes of the STR Ad Hoc Committee as submitted.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Note Mr. Formica noted he has some corrections:

1. On page two, under section 4-2, the second paragraph, "...the vast majority of short-term locals exist along the coast," he thinks should be "...the vast majority of short-term rentals exist along the coast."

2. On page five, halfway down, during that discussion he mentioned long-term and academic rentals, how short-term, long-term and academic rentals have all of the same issues, and he thinks it's important to include that.

Decision MOTION (2)

Mr. Farrugia moved to approve the March 18th, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes of the STR Ad Hoc Committee as amended.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the amendment.

Motion carried, 7-0-0.

4. Reports

4-1. Reports of Co-Chairs

Note Mr. Cicchiello had nothing to report but commented that he truly appreciates the incredible amount of work Ms. Santoro did, writing the draft.

Note Ms. Santoro discussed the annual conference of the Connecticut Federation of Planning & Zoning Agencies, that she attended.

Attorney Franklin Pilicy, who represents Mr. Wihbey in the current short-term rental legal case, spoke about the challenges and regulatory approaches to short-term rentals.

Ms. Santoro said he emphasized the importance of zoning in managing these rentals and advised specificity in regulations.

Ms. Santoro also shared some of the following from the conference:

Preston, who has a population of 4,700 and is located between two casinos, is currently under a moratorium due to an influx of short-term rental investments.

The town is using this pause to study and develop effective zoning regulations to balance residential integrity with rental opportunities.

The town plans to lift the moratorium after June and implement new regulations.

Note Ms. Santoro noted an Airbnb advertisement seen during a basketball game that promoted the party aspect of short-term rentals, highlighting a common public perception and potential problem associated with some of these rentals.

Note Ms. Santoro added that it's important to keep in touch with Preston, study the issue, and see what they do. She also noted that Attorney Pilicy is very positive regarding the outcome of the court case, for his client, and is of the opinion that zoning regulations should have definitions and be as specific as possible.

Note Ms. Santoro said she asked Attorney Pilicy about beach communities, and he discussed the importance of zoning in regulating beach communities, with an emphasis on how ordinances can augment but not replace zoning. Mr. Pilicy mentioned the need for detailed historical research on community incorporation for regulation.

Note Ms. Santoro and Mr. Cicchiello discussed pending state legislation affecting short-term rentals, including bills aimed at studying rental impacts on housing and allowing municipalities to regulate and tax these rentals.

Ms. Santoro said she will forward copies of the bills to the Committee Members and reference them in their report.

5. Discussion and Editing of Updated Draft Status Report to Board of Selectmen

Note The Committee did an in-depth, thorough review of the draft and focused on how different communities within East Lyme's beach areas handle zoning and self-regulation, with some lacking formal zoning, leading to discussions on the need for structured regulations. The discussion included how short-term rentals impact local communities, touching on both the benefits to local economies and the challenges such as noise, parking, and community disconnect.

Note The Committee discussed how future steps include more detailed research into specific community regulations and the broader implications of zoning and ordinances. There was also talk of refining the draft report for clarity and inclusiveness of various viewpoints.

Note Mr. Formica raised concerns about potential biases in the way information is presented to the Board of Selectmen and emphasized the need for unbiased recommendations. He discussed how zoning regulations could address the commercial versus residential use of properties by short-term owners, and how this illustrates the need for clear definitions in zoning laws.

Note Mr. Formica mentioned the need to clearly differentiate between public opinions and the committee's views in the report, ensuring that the report accurately reflects community sentiments without bias.

Note Ms. Santoro challenged Mr. Formica's concern about biases noting that as a result of this process, she could easily and adequately argue for each position, and detailed how each separate section is labeled to make it clear whose thoughts are being discussed. She said she will be happy to add additional language to emphasize whose thoughts are being discussed in each section.

Note Mr. Formica apologized for any offense his comments about biases might have caused.

Note The Committee had a brief debate on whether short-term rentals inflate property prices, with opinions suggesting that market forces are the primary drivers of recent price increases. Preliminary discussions on potential recommendations such as establishing a registry and implementing a fee structure for short-term rentals were mentioned.

Note Ms. Santoro discussed the necessity of sending the report to all zoning members as their votes are crucial for changing regulations.

6. Scheduling Delivery and Presentation of Status Report to Board of Selectmen

Note The Committee discussed scheduling a presentation date for the Board of Selectmen, considering their typical meeting days and the need for them to have the report in advance to prepare questions.

Note Ms. Santoro detailed plans to finalize the report and its exhibits and discussed considerations for the physical format of the report to make it easy to handle and review.

Note The Committee set May 15th, as a target date, for presenting their status report to the Board of Selectmen and Ms. Santoro and Mr. Cicchiello encouraged the fellow Committee Members to attend and participate.

Note The Committee discussed keeping the upcoming presentation short as attendees have already had preliminary exposure to the content, which included a prior presentation and Q&A session.

7. Scheduling Future Meetings of Committee

Note The Committee considered suspending regular meetings unless major developments occur or updates are necessary, with the possibility of circulating important articles via email.

Note No future meetings were scheduled; updates to be circulated through Ms. Stevens as needed.

8. Committee Member and Ex-Officio Comments

Note Mr. McIntire said no one said this process would be easy, but that the town of East Lyme can't lose sight of this. He briefly discussed how the town's inconsistencies in zoning and rental regulations versus actual practices, could portray the town as either ignorant or neglectful.

Note Mr. McIntire highlighted some of the inconsistencies in town practices and stressed the importance of bringing the town into a consistent position.

Note Mr. Farrugia said he would be happy to attend the presentation of the status report to the Board of Selectmen, and Ms. Thurlow observed that East Lyme is much more complicated than other communities.

9. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (3)

Mr. McIntire moved to adjourn the April 8th, 2024, Regular Meeting of the STR Ad Hoc Committee at 8:18 p.m.

Mr. Cicchiello seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 7-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary