

Stonington Economic and Community Development Committee
Short Term Rentals Task Force
April 5, 2022
Meeting Minutes

Purpose: to study the impact of short term rentals on the Town; to review possible remediations; to educate the public; to make recommendations to the SEDC and Selectmen.

Attending: Julia Zell, Island Heritage Trust; Judy Jenkins, Code Enforcement Officer; John Steed; Stonington Selectman; Morgan Eaton, realtor and Island Vacation Rentals; Linda Nelson, Economic Development Director

Next meeting: The task force agreed to meet every two weeks for one hour, with the goal of completing recommendations to the Selectmen no later than June. **The next meeting is Tuesday, April 19 from 9 - 10 am at the Stonington Town Office.**

Materials: Prior to the meeting, the Town distributed to participants a 56-page compilation of research from Bar Harbor, Bangor, Camden, Falmouth, Freeport, Portland and South Portland.

1. Identification of key issues: define short term rental

- a. Conduct inventory – cross match with IWH Camoin Study? AirBNB, VRBO?
 - Start with tax rolls – valuable database – call landowners
 - Morgan feels like she only knows 25-30% of market
 - LandGlide app overlays tax maps with Google Earth
 - Identify increased use and cost of resources (water)
- b. distinction between owner-occupied vs. nonowner-occupied
 - Want a policy that sustains long-term property owners who are renting a portion of their primary residence in order to sustain it
 - use Homestead Exemption status as a guideline
- C. Single family vs. multiple family homes
- D. Short term = interval at which property is turning over
 - Find ways to incentivize longer term rentals
 - Turnovers are expensive and hard on the natural resources (water)
 - 28 days or longer = workforce housing and not vacation rentals
 - Short term = 28 days or less

2. external review of other policies (see attachments from Falmouth, Freeport, Bangor, and overview) After a review of the attached package we discussed the following options:

- banning short-term rentals – not a starter!

- registration/permitting – yes – will help us know what we have
 - Fee level dependent on total value of rental and owner status (see Homestead Exemption above) – similar to model for Clam/shellfish licensing?
 - Fees could be used to create a fund could be used to incentivize creation of year round rentals – rehab, winterization, landlord support, etc.
 - Differentiation for “new” rentals coming onto the market?
 - Apply fees as credit for folx who offer long term rentals
- Use registration requirement to put a cap on # of rentals used for short term
 - Could also prohibit vacation rentals in certain districts as zoned?
- Management
 - How to regulate non-owner-occupied short term rentals
 - Who responds when complaint is filed

2. Establish committee priorities to complete in 3-month period

- data collection
 - how many housing units available total
 - how many of these fit definition of short term rentals
 - how much \$ at stake and how has the market changed in last five years – can we tell from State Lodging tax trends, or...?
 - What is impact on resources (water) and how has this changed?
- is there a way to:
 - retain more \$ in local economy?
 - create policies that incentivize workforce housing
 - Microloan program – could it or something like it be funded to take second position on a mortgage? Ways to incentivize and support local home ownership
 - Registration fees could be structured in such a way as to credit those who offer 29 day + rentals only
 - identify overflow impact to surrounding communities?

3. Public Communications, Education, and Engagement

- Several different channels of communication needed:
 - Existing property owners – through tax and sanitary district bills?
 - Renters – through magnets and cards distributed to landlords?

- New and pending property owners – through realtors and SEDC welcome package?
- How to most effectively appeal to common good
 - Lay out economics of it: how to illustrate benefit to the community year round
 - Define/describe what is needed to maintain a service economy, and how costs increase when no workforce housing
 - School has to be part of the conversation
 - Long-term renter education
 - Impact on limited natural resources: water
 - Magnets for fridge: Morgan reports this is what stays in rentals
 - Large hotels use pillow cards regarding laundry
- Repeatedly communicate impact on Stonington infrastructure (water, sewer, parking, workforce housing, etc.)

Next meeting April 19 at 9 - 10 AM meeting

Town of Stonington is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Short Term Rentals Task Force

Time: Apr 19, 2022 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84839301023>