

## Regular Meeting

The 1581<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Town of Stonington's Planning and Zoning Commission was held Tuesday, December 20, 2016 at the Mystic Middle School, 204 Mistuxet Avenue, Mystic, CT. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Rathbun at 7:05pm. Also present for the meeting were Commissioners Curtis Lynch, Frances Hoffman, Gardner Young, and Shaun Mastroianni; Alternates Lynn Conway and Harry Boardsen, Town Planner Keith Brynes, and Director of Planning Jason Vincent.

**Public Information Forum – Short Term Rentals (STR), Airbnb & VRBO Public input and information forum for discussion of short term rentals in Stonington.**

Director of Planning Jason Vincent reviewed the order of the night's meeting, ground rules and the history of why the topic has been brought up.

Blunt White presented on behalf of the Economic Development Commission.

Brown Jacobsen land use attorney Kim McGee, representing clients who have short term rentals in Stonington, spoke about a sharing economy, stating that if there's a need for regulating short term rentals, that they not be heavily regulated. Short term rental facilitators will be providing self-regulation, allowing for less government regulation. There are two sides that need consideration, the property owner rights and the neighbor's rights. Those that have short term rentals would like to have an open dialogue on how to successfully manage these rentals without a great deal of regulation. If regulations are adopted, they are only as good as their enforcement procedures. These procedures should also track complaints that are unsubstantiated. Ms. Magee also stated that we cannot legislate by anecdote, but by statistics.

Lindsey Malone, resident of Stonington and head of the Stonington Short Term Rental Association, spoke and presented a PowerPoint presentation on their organization and short term rental processes. Lindsey Parke-Fairchild spoke about the history of short term rentals in Stonington and her experiences with short term rentals. Bob Hannon spoke as a short term rental owner who received a notice of violation last year, explaining the purpose for establishing their association and their mission.

**Public Comment in Favor:**

Darianne Zielinski, who manages homes owned by Rob Rivers, read a review of one of their guest's stays and their positive experience staying in Mystic and spoke about the level of quality of the guests they host.

Dick Abdow, resident of Latimer Point, spoke about the economic benefits of hosting short term rentals due to the limited capacity of year round living due to land restraints. Some of the homeowners cannot afford to keep their homes without defraying the cost by hosting short term rentals.

Susan Atwood, owner of a seasonal property on Mason's Island, stated that she would be unable to keep the property due to rising taxes.

A resident of Lord's Point spoke about short term renting as less of a business and more of a way of life. He stated that this is the nature of the community.

Robert Martin, resident of Mason's Island, stated that short term rentals are part of the community but is in favor of guidelines for them. Mr. Martin reviewed recent guidelines adopted by the City of New Orleans.

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Melissa Pelham, owner of an Airbnb rental, read a statement by her neighbor that was in support of their operation and positive experience as a neighbor.

Paul Goetz, renter through VRBO, explained that their property has a long history of short term rentals. They have made capital improvements and property taxes have increased for the town. The property allows for additional revenue to the community by visitors spending their dollars locally. There are already remedies for those who have issues such as noise ordinances.

Larry Kelly, neighbor to an Airbnb rental, stated that he has had a positive experience as a neighbor and they do a great job screening guests.

Rufus Allyn, resident of Mason's Island, questioned the definition of a short term rental in terms of quantity.

Jim Wills read a letter of support from friends regarding short term rentals and stated his support as well. They have invested significant dollars into a property in Mystic to make it a viable property again.

Todd Brady spoke on behalf of the Downtown Mystic Merchants Association and stated that the short term rental business is an economic driver for business in Mystic.

Joanne Krawczyk and Elaine Bogue stated that they originally learned about short term rentals as travelers, deciding that restoring their grandmother's home would be feasible due to the short term rental market.

Matt Beaudoin spoke about his positive experiences as a child with short term visitors in the summer.

Skip Griffin, resident of Lord's Point, believes that the landlord should maintain the responsibility of their property and its effect on others. Different communities have different norms and expectations, requiring good communication be employed to prevent incidents.

Adam Strelczak, a resident of Mystic, stated that he has had a positive experience with neighboring short term renters, but would like consideration for parking provisions and occupancy limits.

John Doyle, resident of Latimer Point, asked the commission to differentiate between the length of stays.

Will stated that Mystic is having a revitalization and stated that the reduction in demand for housing will damage our local economy.

Dennis Myers, resident of Latimer Point, stated that there are already mechanisms in place for issues with renters.

Chris Regan, stated that short term rentals are longer stays than hotels and provide the visitor a better experience.

**Public Comment in Opposition:**

Paul Sartor, neighbor to a short term rental, stated that he would like to see more data in support of the argument that this would be an economic driver for the town. Mr. Sartor also stated that when property owners buy homes they should be able to expect that the zoning regulations preserve their

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expectations. Though he sees the economic capacity for homeowners he is worried about the fabric of the community.

Fred Allard spoke about his opposition to short term rentals in the residential district in the Downtown Mystic area. He submitted his comments for the record.

**General Comments:**

Vanessa Parungao, Mystic resident, stated that short term rental owners can be very active in the community.

Mr. Vincent let the public know that the information will be gathered by the Department of Planning and made available to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.



Frances Hoffman, Secretary