

STR Subcommittee meeting 09.24.2020

- The meeting was called to order at 7:05PM.
- Participants were Elizabeth Craig, Benjamin Feldman, Christine Hinz, Clayton Kirking, Donay Queenan, Susan Raymond, Linda Reardon, Cheryl Rogers and Carol Rusoff.

OLD BUSINESS:

Cheryl Rogers proposed sending the current findings and recommendations of the STR Committee to The Zoning Commission for review before further discussion and revision.

Susan Raymond asked that the committee first discuss the topic of whether the proposed regulations should include the provision allowing non-owner occupied STRs in Taghkanic.

Ben stated that he is opposed to permitting non-owner occupied STRs as they encourage property speculation and absentee landlords, and are generally detrimental to preserving the residential character and quality of life in the Town.

Linda Reardon felt that non-owner occupied STRs could be permitted if carefully regulated as proposed in the draft regulations.

Susan Raymond proposed a two-tier system where non-owner occupied STRs would be subject to stricter regulations such as requiring an appearance before the Zoning Board of Appeals, or being permitted to rent their property fewer days per year and with steeper fines for non-compliance than owner-occupied properties.

Ben was also in favor of a two-tier system with stricter regulations for non-owner occupied STRs.

Elizabeth pointed out that the draft regulations as proposed already specify stricter regulations and higher fees for non-owner occupied STRs.

Ben Feldman made a motion to send the draft regulations to the Zoning Commission for feedback. The motion was seconded by Christine Hinz. The motion was carried with Ben abstaining and Susan voting nay. Ben stated his intention to send a dissenting opinion on the subject of whether to permit the STR of an entire dwelling in the owner's absence, and Elizabeth affirmed that any member of the Subcommittee is welcome to send a dissenting opinion to the Zoning Commission.

There was discussion on whether to include the proposed item permitting people who do not own their home but are long-term leaseholders to operate "Owner"-occupied STRs. There were opinions both for and against this. Arguments "for" included social justice and the opportunity to make eventual home ownership more affordable to young people via the opportunity to rent out an unused room in their home. Arguments "against" cited concerns as to whether a renter would have long term vested interests in preserving quality of life, with some committee members citing examples of irresponsible behavior by tenants even in long-term rental properties.

A motion was made by Ben Feldman to strike the provision that would permit non-owners to operate STRs. The motion was seconded by Donay Queenan and was carried unanimously.

Ben Feldman and others further noted that affordable housing could be addressed by other mechanisms such as separate zoning provisions. Christine Hinz noted the shortage of long term rentals in the area, and noted that STRs further exacerbate that shortage. Elizabeth pointed out that at most only one of the properties identified as STRs in Taghkanic operating at present could be considered affordable, either to buy, or to rent as a primary

residence, but noted that some towns are proposing setting aside some portion of tax revenues from STRs to subsidize affordable housing.

NEW BUSINESS

Elizabeth Craig noted that the regulations when enacted would result in some property owners being out of compliance. She suggested that the Committee consider developing proposed “sunset provisions” so that non-compliant individuals would have reasonable time to come into compliance. Clayton pointed out that the 5 year sunset period proposed in a neighboring area was voted down, and reduced to 2 years.

Elizabeth said she would include a few suggestions made by Larry Kadish, our liaison to the Fire Company, in the revised draft to send to the Zoning Commission, and asked that Committee members to consider whether there are other items in need of regulation. She also asked the committee to give thought to proposed penalties and registration fees.

Registration fees were discussed briefly, and it was agreed to accept Susan’s suggestion to break out registration and inspection fees as other communities have done, to make the first step of registering the STR very inexpensive.

Examples of enforcement strategies were also briefly discussed, with no firm conclusions arrived at.

It was agreed to further investigate the topics of a sunset clause, and registration fees and penalties, and to dedicate a future meeting to these topics.

Elizabeth said she’d send an email to committee members for their review of a cover letter to the ZC and a final draft of proposed regulations that would include the amendments that had been agreed upon in the meeting, and after approval from committee members would send it to the Zoning Commission by October 1st, as planned in the previous meeting.

Next meeting is Thursday October 8th, by Zoom, at 7:00 pm

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.