

MEETING MINUTES
MUNICIPALITY OF WOODSTOCK, VERMONT
WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION
31 The Green
Woodstock, VT 05091

The Woodstock Planning Commission held a public meeting on Wednesday, October 4, 2023
to discuss the following:

Members present: Frank Horneck, Chair, Laura Powell, Nicole Green, Ben Pauly, Mary Margaret Sloan

Public present: Julie Marks, Brett Ralph, Derek Demas, Roger Logan, Sarah Penna and Julian Calv, Jill Davies, Susan Fuller, Mary McCuaig

Staff present: Steven Bauer

Administrative Tasks

1. Call to Order – Frank Horneck called meeting to order at 7:01pm.
2. Adjustments to Agenda – None.
3. Approve Minutes
(a) 9/6/2023

Laura Powell motioned to add Jon Spector to the present list.

Laura Powell motioned to approve the minutes with the amended change.

Ben Pauly seconded the motion.

Vote 4-0-1. Approved – Mary Margaret Sloan abstained.

Public Hearing

1. Short-term rental presentation

Laura Powell explained this is the first of several meetings regarding short-term rentals. Current ordinances were passed in 2018/2019 and research shows processes are not efficient. Zero rentals are in compliance currently and many operate without permits. Bed and Breakfast are owner occupied lodging per the regulations and need to be included in the conversation. The Select Board approved 6-month moratorium on STR and Bed & Breakfast through end of March 2024.

Laura Powell presented the data she and Mary Margaret Sloan compiled, as well as the proposed goals and solutions. Slides are available online.

2. Guest presentation from VTSTRA regarding Short-term rentals.

Julie Marks, Founder and Director of Vermont Short Term Rental Alliance presented on community concerns and practical solutions. Act 10 was established in 2018 and defines short-term rental, health and safety guidance, authority to tax, and other short term rental industry guidelines.

Julie Marks presented data from KeyData and Transparent which collect short-term rental data, Housingdata.org which uses data from AirDNA, as well as Airbnb and VRBO and VT Tourism Department.

Vermont has 12,500 whole home short term rentals as of August 2023 which is 3% of total housing stock. 30% were built as short-term rentals. Majority of owners are 55+, women owned, and roughly 50% of owners are VT residents. 80% of STR in Vermont are also used as monthly rentals over 30 days. Meals and rooms tax must be remitted directly to state and local municipalities. Julie Marks suggested visiting vtstra.org/gov-resources for more information.

Laura Powell asked if tax information for Woodstock is available, and Julie Marks replied she will try to determine that number for Woodstock. Laura Powell asked if there are any examples of STR regulations increasing long-term housing and Julie Marks explained that no, as the majority of short-term housing is not taken from the long-term housing stock.

Mary Margaret Sloan asked Julie if the 2021 to 2022 increase in STR units is projected to continue and Julie said no, the trend during Covid increased but it's starting to slow due to oversaturation of supply. They do not expect the growth in new STR units to continue at same rate as during pandemic levels.

3. Receive Public Comment on Short-term rentals.

Brett Ralph owns a local vacation rental business with 90-100 properties, mainly short-term rentals in Quechee. He indicated approximately 100 rentals in Woodstock, average \$463 nightly rate could create significant tax revenue for the town. Guests that are coming are not price sensitive and accept the rates. He suggested a compliance tracking system that could be funded by tax revenue. He supports the idea of limited number of STR allowed in a town based on percentage of housing supply.

Sarah Penna and Julian Calv from Windsor explained their Woodstock long term rental unit was turned into a short-term rental and they had to relocate. They wanted to live in Woodstock but long-term rentals are \$2200 a month and had to leave the community. Sarah suggested more housing for workers is needed and not allowing long-term rentals

to be converted to short term rentals. Julian mentioned many coworkers have a 45–50-minute commute and do not stay at Woodstock jobs long term due to lack of housing.

Derek Demas explained he runs short term and long-term rentals in Woodstock. He is trying to compile information and ideas from local short term rental owners asking 3 questions. 1. Do any STR owner's only rent during foliage season and owners responded no. This may be good language to remove as its confusing. 2. If fees increased would there be a benefit if number of times allowed also increased, and responders suggested fees are a concern but increasing number of times allowed around holidays would be a benefit. 3. Would you convert a unit to long term housing if not allowed to do short term and most owners said no, they would rather leave home vacant part of year or sell.

Roger Horn explained the best interest of Woodstock should be the main point. Regulating short term rentals is not going to solve the housing crisis. He would like an online registration system to track compliance.

Julie Marks responded discrimination of STR owners from in town vs out of town owners can be a legal liability.

Mary McCuaig did not feel short-term rentals have an impact on long term rentals as the owners would not convert units to long term rentals. She acknowledged Woodstock needs more housing, but this is not the best way. Perhaps offer tax incentive to long term rental owners. She asked the commission why they implemented limited number of times a short-term rental can be used. Ben Pauly responded it was due to the character of neighborhood and Laura mentioned it was easier to track. Steven Bauer explained the Planning Commission is working on ways to add more housing.

Lisa Lawlor mentioned Woodstock is a resort town, such as Nantucket, Bar Harbor and others that have regulations Woodstock can consider. Laura Powell explained that is what she and Mary Margaret Sloan have been doing in their research.

Susan Fuller was part of the conversation when drafted 4 years ago. She uses income from short term rentals to pay taxes. She built the property specifically for short term rental use. She asked if there have truly been complaints about short term rentals and suggested there are too many regulations. Woodstock needs more housing but that is a separate issue.

Julian Calv mentioned the income from short term rentals should be used for enforcement and housing issues. Sarah Penna mentioned short terms rentals do not cultivate community and are intertwined with long-term housing.

Roger Logan responded that short term housing is not going to fix the housing issues. Find a way to allow these that have the least impact on citizens.

Julie Marks explained other communities use funds generated by STR and put into affordable housing trust funds and events.

4. Short-term rental discussion

Ben Pauly agreed it is not accurate to compare Woodstock to the vast majority of Vermont towns. He would like to know what the 1% tax totals, is disturbance a problem and is it a burden on emergency services.

Laura Powell mentioned the goal is to make policy that works for Woodstock. She would like to see effective and clear enforcement and compliance.

Mary Margaret Sloan commented that long term vs short term housing is an important question and she can gather more data to find an answer how they impact each other.

Frank Horneck reminded the participants this discussion will continue at the next Planning Commission meeting on November 1, 2023.

New Business

1. Discuss attainable housing development provision.

Steven Bauer explained developers want to add more multi-family units but do not qualify for density bonus unless classified as affordable housing. The town may need a middle ground for attainable/workforce housing bonus. Steven Bauer suggested the commission look at defining attainable/workforce housing, ask Jill Davies and housing group what grant programs are available, how they define it and what types of density bonuses that may lead to. Add to agenda for next meeting. Laura will reach out to Jill Davies.

Identify Action Items (what we each need to do before next meeting) –

Trustees meeting 10/10/23 at 6:30pm for transmittal draft of Village bylaws.

Other Business

Laura Powell will look for more data on Ben Pauly's questions.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Ben Pauly

The motion was seconded by Laura Powell.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13pm.