

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, November 1, 2023 to discuss the following:

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

Public present: Derek Demas, Jill Davies, Susan Fuller, Mary McCuaig, Susie Stulz, Michael Peters, Pat Gray

Staff present: Steven Bauer

Administrative Tasks

1. Call to Order – Frank Horneck called meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. Adjustments to Agenda – None.
3. Approve Minutes - 10/4/2023

Laura Powell motioned to approve the minutes as printed.

Ben Pauly seconded the motion.

Vote 5-0. Approved.

Public Hearing

1. Short-term rental presentation

Laura Powell presented the goals of the meeting and how short-term rentals have an impact on long-term rentals. Woodstock has had a 0% vacancy rate for long-term rentals for the past decade.

According to VTSTRA, Woodstock vacation rentals (short-term rental) generated \$7.6 mil revenue in 2021, of which Woodstock should have received \$53,646 in 2021 from the local options tax.

2. Receive Public Comment on Short-term rentals.

Jill Davies shared that owner occupied and very large, short-term rentals are not hurting long term rental market, but she is concerned with out of state owners that take housing stock and turn it into short term housing. Jill suggested limiting % of homes allowed as short-term rentals.

Michael Peters has an owner-occupied property in Woodstock with an ADU that has been permitted as a bed and breakfast. He suggested removing cap on how often units can be rented and supports an annual permit fee for enforcement. He does not think there should be a cap on % owner-occupied short-term rental units as income is needed to afford living in Woodstock.

Susan Muller explained workforce housing, senior housing and short-term rentals are all separate issues. Short term rentals help owners afford a home in Woodstock. She questioned how short-term rentals impact emergency services and would like to create a simpler way to register.

Susie Stulz commented that 17% of homes sold in VT were purchased by institutional investors. Homeowners are not the problem; commission should focus on institutional investors.

Derek Demas compiled a list of 65 people supporting short term rentals and surveyed for ideas how to streamline the process. He provided their suggestions and gave the list to the Planning Commission.

Mary McQuaig owns a family property with two apartments. Short term rentals help owners pay taxes; they would not rent it out long term as also use it for personal use. Mary suggested giving a tax break if use the property for long-term rentals. She does not think limiting the number of times is helpful but supports a registration process.

Jill Davies explained developers can no longer build houses for the price they sell at. The goal of regulations should be to stop losing housing stock, focus on investors.

Michael Peters suggested looking at the short-term housing regulations Kittery, Maine established with caps on how many units are allowed.

Kat Gray has two short term rentals. She asked goals for frequency limitations and would like to make compliance process easier.

3. Short-term rental discussion

Laura Powell shared the summary of public comments which included:

- Online tool permitting and enforcement, publicly
- Annual permitting process
- Unified town and village process
- Remove caps on times rented
- Tax verification – State tax and Woodstock options tax
- Realtor education
- Simplify
 - Owner-occupied vs non-owner occupied
 - Caps on permits- owner occupied or non-owner occupied
 - What qualifies for grandfathering?
 - Cap permits by household/person/parcel
 - Fee + registration + enforcement, fines
 - Occupancy limit
 - Parking, trash, noise, signage
 - Property management for non-owner occupied
 - Conditional Use vs Administrative Review

Mary Margaret Sloan suggested looking at the list and defining each item further at next meeting.

New Business

1. Review attainable housing development provision.

Steven Bauer mentioned the newly adopted Village regulations allow for density and height bonus for affordable housing. There are developers interested in constructing housing that would not qualify as affordable housing but could make the project "attainable housing" for moderate incomes, if possible to receive density and height bonuses.

Ben Pauly suggested a different bonus for affordable vs attainable housing. Ben suggested leaving parking ratio and one additional habitable 12' floor, but lowering density bonus to 25% for attainable housing projects. The commission will continue discussions.

2. Feasibility Study – Village Wastewater Treatment Plant

Steven Bauer explained the State has required replacement of current treatment plant within next 3-5 years which will be on ballot in November 2024. The commission can investigate if should be replaced with the same capacity or should the new plant have larger capacity. Currently at 50% capacity with around 800-900 hookups. Steven Bauer suggested talking with the engineering team to get an idea of future needs.

Identify Action Items

Send Mary Margaret Sloan the information provided during the meeting.
Identify and define items from public comments on short term housing.

Other Business - None

Adjournment

Mary Margaret Sloan motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Nicole Green seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned 9:04pm