

**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, March 6, 2024, to discuss the following:

Members present: Frank Horneck (Chair), Brad Lawrence, Benjamin Pauly, Mary Margaret Sloan, Matt Driscoll, and Nicole Green

Public present: Eric Duffy (Woodstock Municipal Manager), Laura Powell, Derek Demas, Susan Fuller, David Hill, Brad Prescott, Kathy Washburn, Susan Chamberlin, Michael Peters, Barbara Oconnell, Deborah Neuhof, Mary McQuaig

Staff present: Steven Bauer, Director P&Z

**Administrative Tasks**

1. Call to Order – Frank Horneck called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. Adjustments to Agenda – Eric Duffy, Woodstock Municipal Manager asked to make a statement.
3. Approve Minutes
  - (a) 2/7/2024
  - (b) 2/12/2024

Motion: by Ben Pauly to approve the minutes as submitted.

Seconded: by Matt Driscoll.

**Vote: 6-0**, approved as submitted.

**On Going Business**

Eric Duffy, Woodstock Municipal Manager thanked the Planning Commission and Planning and Zoning office for working on the Short-Term Rental regulations over the past year.

1. Short-term rental ordinance draft review

Frank Horneck presented that the current regulations are complicated, unfair, and increasingly unenforceable.

- There are an estimated 84 permitted short-term rentals in Woodstock and up to 200 advertised.
- All STRs in Woodstock will require registration starting January 1, 2025.
- Two types of STR – Owner Occupied and Non-Owner Occupied.
- “Grandfathering” – Municipal ordinances do not provide for “grandfathering” of uses.
  - o However, proposed ordinance carves out special exemptions for “preexisting rural operators” and “preexisting multiple unit operators”
- Application Window #1 - opens August 1-September 15, 2024 for existing permit holders, preexisting rural operators and preexisting multiple unit operators.
- Application Window #2 – everyone else. Opens November 1, 2024.

- Cap on STR – 55 owner occupied, 50 non-owner occupied registrants per year. Preexisting rural operators and preexisting multiple unit operators do not count towards the cap.
- One STR per registrant, unless qualified as a “preexisting multiple unit operator”. Mary Margaret Sloan asked for clarification on the multi-household building rental units. Steven clarified it is only in reference to buildings with 5 units or more in the building. Steven mentioned an example would be in a 100-unit complex, only 15 units (15%) units can be used as STR. He will define multi-household parcel in definitions.

Steven explained the application submission requirements and the reasons for potential denial, standards and rules and prohibited activities.

- Fees – \$250 non-refundable administrative processing fee.
- Owner Occupied- \$750 plus \$250/occupant and Non-owner-occupied is \$3000 plus \$250/occupant. Paid annually.
- If “owner-occupied preexisting rural operator” fee waiver is available for up to \$2000, less the \$250 administrative fee.

### **Public Comment**

Michael Peters is a current bed and breakfast permit holder. He’s asking if he will be in the first application window? Steven Bauer explained, yes, that will be considered a legal preexisting, non-conforming use.

Barbara O’Connell asked to make sure language is clear in the ordinance.

Brad Prescott explained high fees in owner-occupied STRs will not result in units converting to long-term housing. The proposed fees would represent 15% of gross income for his property which is too onerous. He is concerned the waiver of fee does not help people with existing permits, it is not fair, suggested adding existing permit holders also to the fee waiver.

Derek Demas asked timeline, Steven said the new Ordinance will run January 1, 2025. Will moratorium expire in March 31, 2023? Steven Bauer said that is up to the Trustees and Select Board. Is the preexisting rural waiver good indefinitely? Steven replied the waiver has an unknown timeframe, ultimately the goal is to go to a tax to be more equitable. Derek confirmed the \$250 administrative processing fee is paid annually and is part of the total fee which will be subtracted from the registration fee, not in addition. Derek asked how parking would limit occupancy allowed, i.e. if have one parking space but 4 bedrooms. Steven replied the parking requirements are now 1 parking space for each 4 guests, so a 4 bedroom unit would need 2 on-site parking spaces.

The Commission will look into how max occupancy will be determined if parking is less than what is required.

Mary McQuaig said fees are unreasonable she cannot raise the rates to cover it.

Sue Chamberlin asked about the number of times allowed to rent in Village and Frank Horneck confirmed it is now unlimited.

Deborah Neuhof recently received a permit in October and is worried that the new won't allow her to cover the expenses. She felt fees were too high.

Kathy Washburn moved to Woodstock last year. She mentioned the EDC is trying to bring more people to Woodstock and there are not enough rooms for visitors. She asked to waive fees for owner-occupied units.

David Hill does not agree that Commission can get rid of "Grandfathering". Steven Bauer mentioned that the prior zoning administration should not have told residents it was permanent.

Public Comment Closed.

Mary Margeret Sloan said the fees are too high. She thinks owner-occupied should be \$250 or \$500. She estimated \$256k generated from the fees if maxed out, if only 70% \$180k would be generated annually. Costs are estimated at \$120k, which brings in \$60,000 more than needed.

Laura Powell responded that the owner-occupied fee was reduced from \$1000 to \$750. Only aiming to cover costs is not helpful and underestimating costs is not wise. She explained the Town and boards are looking to generate revenue where possible.

Ben Pauly said that the taxpayers cannot cover the expenses for the short-term rental monitoring process and the fees are set up to cover that and extra revenue should be used for planning. Ben mentioned the potential for STR owners to generate revenue is much higher now that days allowed to rent are unlimited.

Matt Driscoll agreed taxpayers cannot be on hook for STR process and is supportive of the fees.

Nicole Green and Brad Lawrence are comfortable with the fees as proposed.

Motion: by Ben Pauly to approve language as presented and amended for the Village and the Town Zoning regulation changes and the language for the Short-Term Rental Ordinance which will be presented at a Public Hearing on March 25, 2024 at 7pm.

Seconded: by Brad Lawrence.

**VOTE: 5-1, passed.**

For - Nicole Green, Brad Lawrence, Ben Pauly, Frank Horneck, and Matt Driscoll  
Against – Mary Margaret Sloan

### **Other Business**

None

### **Action Items**

Public Warning for March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting will be posted. On March 27<sup>th</sup> Steven Bauer will be presenting the Ordinance to Select Board and Trustees.

Planning Commission will look at the Woodstock Master Plan next.

### **Adjournment**

Brad Lawrence motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Ben Pauly seconded the motion.

**Vote 6-0. Approved.**

**Meeting adjourned 8:40pm**