



SHORT-TERM RENTAL TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES June 15 , 2023

The Short-Term Rental Task Force met for a
Special Meeting at 3:00 p.m.
City Hall
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Anderson at 3:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: Anderson, Manns, Stanton, Steele, Tringali, Boerema, Hart and Clark.

Absent: Gudith

Others Present: Director of Planning, Zoning & Project Management Cummins, Clerk Wolters and Attorney Witte.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Tringali, second by Steele to approval the agenda. Upon voice vote, motion carried 8-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Manns, second by Clark to approve the minutes from June 1, 2023. Upon voice vote, motion carried 8-0.

Public Comment on Agenda Item Only: None.

Review/Discussion:

A. Community Engagement Recommendation:

Kyle Mucha from McKenna reviewed the following recommendations for community engagement as it relates to Short-Term Rentals within the City of Saugatuck. A draft survey will be presented by McKenna at the first meeting in July.

1. Hold an on-site meeting to dialogue with area residents, key stakeholders, and other members of the public to discuss short-term rentals:
 - 3 Boards labeled:
 - Opportunities
 - Perceived Connotations of Short-Term Rentals

- Comments
2. Send out a community survey:
- Survey questions:
 - Highlight the positive
 - Not-so positive
 - Opportunities

B. Data Analysis

Kyle Mucha from McKenna offered 3 data analysis tasks:

- Trends in housing costs and impacts of Short-Term Rentals
- Trends in the number of full-time residents within the City of Saugatuck
- Short-Term Rental caps & economic impacts

Task Force member Stanton left the meeting at 4:39 p.m.

Communication:

Kevin Tringali

Brad Vah

Brian Schipper

Public Comment:

Laura Godfrey, resident:

“I want to commend Holly and the group here on the terrific letter and the commercial record that came out today. Really nice explanation to the community about what you're doing. I think that's very helpful. So, people don't wonder what's going on. So great start, I appreciate that. I was awakened at two o'clock on Saturday morning, I thought it was a pack of coyotes. But it really was a big party to houses north. I called the police, which I think is should be the protocol, because I think you should have a register of that activity. And I don't think you go out and negotiate with a pack of drunken Coyote. So, I think you let the police go and handle that you never know what people are doing. There's weapons, let's let the professionals handle that. So, I don't know if they came. But the next morning, the garbage, the beer, all over the place. It was Queen cottages; I call them they were terrific. They came, cleaned it up, they apologized. And they showed me the list of the rules that you indicated; we show everybody this is the rule. These are the rules, don't break them. But when you're drunk at 11, no one's paying attention. So, I talked to a colleague who rented a VRBO in another state that required him to put \$1,000 down. And if any of those rules are broken, you don't get that money back. And that's the teeth you're talking about Joe, so I know that one of the areas you're looking at are fines and making sure that they're aligned with a touch of punitive, because that's your recourse. That talking is nice little brochures, dice and the rules are nice, but it's not being it's not it's being ignored. So, I'm hoping we can move from quaint to tough. So, appreciate all your excellent work. Thank you.”

Peter Hanson, resident:

“This Monday, it was June 4. The yellow house right across from Joe Clark. Just found out last night from a couple of neighbors. That on that Monday night, there was just terrifically loud music around 930 at night, the homeowners from up at Spear street were wandering down trying to find out where the noise was coming from. The music did quiet down by 10 o'clock. The next night on Tuesday, I woke up at one o'clock in the morning to hooting and hollering. People were outside at the fire pit. And finally at 1:22, I called the Sheriff's Department. The non-emergency number finally quieted down

about two o'clock in the morning. I'm not sure if the sheriff's had talked to him or they just finally ran out of gas. 2:45 in the morning, I had four teenagers having a loud conversation right in front of my house. And I finally went out and confronted them and told him to take it elsewhere. They wandered back to the Yellow House. On Wednesday morning I called the sheriff's department to find out if the deputies had actually talked to him. They had a little trouble finding my call, but eventually said that yeah, they hadn't talked to him. I said I wanted to speak with the deputy who had the conversation with him. So, I went into his voicemail and didn't hear anything for a couple of days. I finally did get a voicemail from him saying he had talked with them. I also talked with Jamie who got the information from Ryan, who the manager of the property was and also the owners phone number, called the manager she apologized, and I texted her later on that evening said I sure hope we have a quiet night and she assured me that both she and the owner had talked with them. Later on, that night I had the privilege of four drunks walking up from downtown at 2:07 in the morning. I live right out in the corner of Spear and Grand, so I got to hear that conversation all the way up grand and then down to spirit to another vacation rental property in our neighborhood. You know, I don't know how you prevent people from just being stupid. But you know it. This is what is happening, you know, up on the hill. And this is just the beginning of our season. And we know it's going to continue; it's going to happen again. There's just no consequences. I mean, the city doesn't know about the call that I made to the Sheriff's Department. Nobody knows about that, except the Sheriff's Department. And I'm not sure that it would be in their report that I made a call about a disturbance at the property. I gotta believe there's more calls in seven or eight. I'm done. Thank you"

Diana Decker, resident:

"I was hoping that the survey that the city is going to send out that hopefully those are city of Saugatuck, property owners. And I've called the police only a couple of times. But that was just because people were getting hurt. When the noise was going on. Somebody was hurting is another incident. They were hurting. Last Tuesday. At midnight, you know, I heard all kinds of yawn I open just to make sure everybody was okay. There were two groups and they were laughing and having fun. So, I was just so relieved. Nobody was hurt. So then, regarding the noise, I'm, you know, from two to six, it would be great from two in the morning to six I wear many hats. I'm an Associate Broker, I own designer farms. So, I wear many hats that I just would like to sleep between two and six heard comments about loss of community. And so, on new commercial building on Bluestar and Douglas, the police, they're full time police. They know everyone, everyone knows their name. And I just feel that we have lost that sense here. The police are great, but we do not have full time police. So, when someone's talking about the enforcement officer calling there, we get section cars and there are other places also. Regarding zones, you know, there's R1, R2, R3, C1, C2, industrial, those are the zones. And they sign the rules like the gentleman said, there's no consequences. Some municipalities don't have rental ordinances, like Ganges they don't have rental ordinance. So that's just a couple of points. Thank you so much. Thank you."

Christin Newman, resident:

"I am an owner and I have a vacation rental. We it sounds like probably or maybe a different situation because we are here one week, everybody five weeks. So, we're working on projects. We also have an onsite management company. So, I'm sorry, in Saugatuck. And we do not live in the state, we actually live in Wisconsin. And so, we rely heavily on our management company to make sure we know what's going on with our property. And I really actually look like what I'm hearing from you guys about increasing the requirements for people and kind of taking down that party atmosphere that we're running into. That actually was a problem that we had with our house two years ago that I was like, I don't know that I want to do this anymore. We had just started doing it was kind of our first full summer. And it was I don't know who but they like broke our hot tub cover like the end broke some

furniture. So, what we wound up doing is not only our rental is 28 and above, and I have kind of like a duplex. So, when one bedroom unit I don't have problems with those, but my three-bedroom unit actually can sleep eight people technically. So, we actually on our listing have taken that down to six adults. So, we've done what we could to make sure that we're not having bachelor parties and that kind of thing in there. So there, I think there's definitely ways that you can be working with those those property owners to say, hey, what can you do on your end, to kind of curtail this kind of thing happening? Oh, that's sort of Thank you."

Nick Barna, resident:

"I do like a synopsis of all of my neighbors up on the hill, and also adding what Joe and Kevin and Shawn had to say. I think we need to build in accountability, not just with the police force, but with all of the renters, I think everybody in the neighborhood that's going to be around these rented properties should have the number of the renters, so we can call them, they're the ones that really have the tooth, the teeth, I should say, to be the ones that are accountable and can really take the bull by the horns and say, look at it stops now are, you're out. And, you know, you're gonna end up paying. And I think they're the ones that really can make it happen. I mean, we're all I think united to be able to make an impact on this. And if we do it right, and have the people that really can, can say, hey, look, this has got to stop now. You know, the police can come, and things might stop for maybe a half an hour or so. But then it's back. We don't have a real full time police force and Saugatuck. I don't know how well; they can really make it happen. But I think I think by having all of us collectively, doing our best to stop it, I think we can make an impact."

Nancy Kimble, resident:

"I've been meeting with some of my neighbors because I live up on the hill. And we've just been chatting informally. And at our last conversation, we talked a lot about are the local residents a priority? Are we important? Because we're hearing a lot from the business owners and how important it is, you know, to have this economic benefit of short-term rentals. But are we a priority? And, you know, one of my neighbors said they'd been vacationing in Jackson Hole. And they actually had things where, you know, if you go to the coffee shop, there's a line for locals versus the tourists because they really value their locals. And if you think about it, we don't have enough locals. That's one reason why some of these businesses can't be open seven days a week, because there's nobody here to staff them. So anyway, I was thinking about it. I thought, Well, I'm really curious, are we a priority? So, I started Googling to see what does our master plan, say? And I, what I found for my search was the most recent one was from 2016. And I thought, Well, surely there's a more recent one. But now I'm hearing No, we only do these every 10 years. So anyway, I found it and if you'll indulge me, basically, this is the tri community master plan, overarching goal. It is the long-term goal of this joint master plan to improve the quality of life for all citizens in the tri communities through implementation of policies and best practices that preserve the existing small town slash rural character of the area, and that achieve sustainable development. That is, which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. And I thought, well, that's terrific. I love that. I hope that has some value some teeth in it. So, I just thought I would share that."

Doug Rodewald, resident:

"I really do appreciate all the time and effort that everyone's putting into this. Obviously a very big topic that has a lot of implications. First, I would just like to say, our community's growth brilliants how special it is, is not 100% tied to short term rentals, property values that someone mentioned with a pandemic and everything that's changed. It's definitely not tied all to short term rentals. So, as we look at all the numbers and metrics, we have to definitely make sure we take into consideration all the changes and what's going on here. I think we also have to be mature and thoughtful as a community about what resources we actually have to put towards short-term rentals. A lot of the discussion today

have been about issues. If we cannot police and enforce, you know, policies, whatever we put in place, or can't even keep up with what we currently have, that should definitely be a discussion. Saugatuck and Douglas and you know, the community, I think is huge. And something that should definitely, you know, continue to be looked at as we think about what short term rentals are doing short term and long term. The other thing I just asked is, What is the goal of this, obviously, the committee? It's a great committee, definitely index towards business, there's one resident on there that does not have some sort of relationship, to rentals to, you know, real estate- that's just a resident. There's a lot of US residents here that don't have short term rentals that are not, you know, in real estate. And we need to make sure that our voices are heard as we move forward here. So, I love the conversation. I love the focus on quality of life. I think this should definitely be something that is amplified. It's super easy to measure economic output. It's super easy to measure, you know, dollars and whatnot. But we do need to take into account is the prior speaker was talking about what is our goal here from a community perspective, and from a committee. So, thank you very much.”

Dick Waskin, resident:

“A couple of things. One is the township, I believe, I'm almost sure this head does have a restriction on the number of occupants that can be in a short-term rental. And they base it on a number of bedrooms, and there can be two people per bedroom. So, if it's a three-bedroom house, it would be six occupants. I think that's an easy low-hanging fruit for you to take a look at and perhaps to have the city adopt. They also have an ordinance in which all cars that are staying at that short-term rental have to be able to have a place to park on the property itself. It's a little harder within the city, but I think it's doable. My other comment is just as you were talking about getting a survey, when City Council formed this task force they were trying to be very even handed to include all members of the community. So whether it be you know, residents that are permanent residents here, whether they are second home residents, whether they be businesses or service industry, people who are all part of the community who all service Saugatuck and the surrounding area. I think it's important that we keep that flavor of what's going on here that we all make the community. We're all part of the community and we all have a stake in the community. And I think the survey should be open to all those members of the community. Thanks.”

Keith Charak- resident:

“In relation to the yellow house that causes all the noise. I live on Main Street, and I hear that all the time when the fire pits on. I heard the noise all week and did not call the police. And in relation to the survey, I believe it shouldn't be residents only because we're the stakeholders who have the quality of life that's most at risk. I'd also like to talk about inspections, happen every three years. And in relation to some of the houses, I actually wear many hats - Secret agent, super-secret agent, real estate agent, I just basically monitor second homes, I only do have like 20-25 homes, and I think two of them are short term rentals. The other 20 are second homes. I noticed that with the yearly inspections they take place, or the inspections take place every three years. But I can say there's a house down the street for me, it's 1500 square feet. It sleeps nine and is four bedrooms, it's 1500 square feet. And I can pretty much tell you that when that house was lived in. It had mom, dad and two kids, it was basically probably three bedrooms, bath and a half. Now it's four bedrooms, two baths, two full baths. If you're going to have there's always four cars outside, but it's on my street, a couple streets. However, there's another one that's the same. So I'm almost thinking that houses need to be inspected every year because people kind of add bedrooms sometimes. Let's see, what else do I have on my list? Oh, I think somebody mentioned businesses. If, if I have a short-term rental on the hill, and I'm making money and it's a business, or I'm making money, therefore it's a business. Can I open a business in my house that can open a bar? Can I open a restaurant? Can I open a retail shop? Can I sell T shirts? Can I have a can I do? Can I make money that way on the hill, I mean, you're basically opened up the hill to be a business

district, if somebody's making \$50,000 to \$100,000 running out their short-term route. So, I'd like to uneven board here if we're going to have commercial everywhere, we might as well have commercial. But you know, that's pretty much what to say, it's a quality of life. For me, my role is in a moment at a time. If I'm woken up, I got to go next door and I have to wake up the renters and ask them to be quiet amount of time. Thanks.”

Gary Kemp, resident:

“We have two rentals here in town that we own. We used to own and run a bed and breakfast and we had a property management company where we rented about a dozen cottages for different people, mostly friends. I wanted to comment primarily because I think what you're doing is a good, I don't want it to become a negative situation that affects the people in the community in very negative ways, both in terms of values, real estate, and in terms of people coming here and enjoy in this town and enjoying the environment. We don't have any problems. And I don't know if we ever had any problems with renters, I think we have had one over the last 20 years. And the reason is we spend a lot of time screening them, talking to them, telling them the rules and inspecting them when they're here, I used to ride around on a motor scooter and inspect our properties even to see what was going on. The properties around this have had some problems because the property management companies in his town tend to rent to anybody. They don't care how many people there are, and they don't inspect the properties near as much as they should, on a daily basis. I think that what you need, what we need is to really have a feedback mechanism that doesn't faculty doing some kind of enforcement that goes to the owners of the property, because the owners need to hear about all this stuff. If they're not hearing about it. Yeah, you know, they're getting their check from their property management company. No big deal. But it's brought a lot of quality people back to Saugatuck on an ongoing basis. They want to buy real estate here. They do they come and live here. They vacation here. They provide economic benefit to all the businesses here. We wouldn't even have a town if we didn't have the renters. So, I want to make sure that that everybody doesn't just turn this into a negative, negative, negative, because that's what everybody tends to focus on first, because that's the easiest thing to come up with. So that's all I had to say.”

Adjournment:

Motion by Manns second by Steele to adjourn. Upon voice vote, motion carried 8-0. Chair Anderson adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jamie Wolters, City Clerk