

**Short-Term Rental (STR) Ad Hoc Committee
Committee Review Meeting
City Hall, Council Chambers, Lake Geneva, WI
May 29, 2024 - 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**

Committee Members present: Joel Hoiland, Chairman (Aldersperson-District #3), Thomas Keefe, Luke Pfeifer, Caroll Pearson, Emily Hummel, and Jason Renz (Code Enforcer, Assistant Building Inspector). Via Zoom: Jason Smolarek. Neal Kolb, excused.

Joel Hoiland called the meeting to Order at 5:00 pm

Motion to approve minutes of the May 15th meeting. Tom Keefe moved; Luke Pfeifer seconded.

Open for Public Comments.

Sherrie Ames, Aldersperson District #1: I want to reiterate this: it is not the people who are doing what they are supposed to, but those who do not think they need to follow the rules who are the concern here. Some of these people feel that because they own the property, they should be able to do what they want without regard to our City Ordinances. What about your neighbors? Don't they have rights also? I remain committed to my position, which reflects the majority of constituents in District #1 who elected me, that I do not believe STRs belong in residential neighborhoods. Also, in full disclosure, recently I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer and have begun treatment. I plan to be open about anything that could impact my work as an Aldersperson, however, I see no reason nor do I have any plans to limit my commitment to serve.

Bjorn Schweinsberg, STR Owner (5117 N. Palisades Rd.) I feel that STRs are beneficial to the Lake Geneva economy. My houses are clean and safe, and they give people an option to gather and celebrate events in Lake Geneva. I am honored to be part of this community. If we get too strict on STRs, tourists may plan to go to other towns. STRs bring revenue to the City and generate economic opportunities for other business owners, such as cleaning services.

Thomas Cincotta, STR Owner. I am puzzled by the verbiage I hear, calling our guests troublesome or problematic. I have heard people complain about behavior that is no different than residential neighbors. Every owner of an STR wants to protect their business. I hope that instead of more restrictions, STRs are nurtured and helped to grow.

End of Public Comments

Joel provided some background information on the origin of the STR Ad Hoc Committee: He said the committee was formed in response to concerns raised by Lake Geneva residents who expressed concerns about disruptive STRs and what seemed like extensive growth of STRs in the community. Many residents have previously spoken publicly about their frustrations for the past six years. This Ad Hoc committee was formed by former Mayor Charlene Klein as a means of addressing these residents' concerns. A team of residents and STR owners/operators with diverse perspectives and interests was

formed to collaborate and work toward solutions. This STR Ad Hoc group has focused on clarifying the existing STR ordinance and identifying monitoring and enforcement provisions to help City staff enforce the STR rules and regulations.

5:13 pm Joel led the Committee's ongoing work to review the existing STR Ordinance.

The legend is as follows: Current language is in black including language that is being removed ~~striketrough~~. Red is the new language.

C. iii. RE: Rental Booking Period shall be 7 days and 6 nights. Jason Smolarek asked for clarification on the example. Change to: Example provided: if someone arrived on June 1 – June 7...

iv. Regarding floor plan language, Luke Pfeifer asked that we refer to the state ordinance. Add statute: ACTP 72.14 (2) b, which addresses the size and occupancy of sleeping rooms. Struck out language that did not apply to STRs.

iv. Neighborhood impact requirements: f. Penalties and license revocation. It was pointed out that this is where we have made the most significant number of changes.

iii. Penalties for major violations. We have reduced from 6 to 4 penalty steps. In the first penalty provision, there is some discretion for City Staff to decide what is warranted.

Discussion of Minor violations – caused by renters or guests – It is difficult to know about renter violations unless a citation is issued. That's why we came up with a penalty. The only power the City has against an Owner is if there are persistent renter violations at the same property. The big thing about giving citations to renters is it needs to be congruent across the board...

Thomas Keefe raised the concern that suspending a license would look like the operator would have to theoretically cancel all reservations for the next three months. For people who are trying to do this properly, how will this impact business?

Discussion re: Resident Reporting. We want residents to be able to have a means for reporting. We want people to speak up if there are problems with owners or operators and to report incidents to City Staff. The ideal would be that neighbors and owners/operators communicate and get to know one another.

After a complete review of v9 and discussions, Joel asked for a roll call vote by the Ad Hoc Committee to recommend to the Plan Commission that this revised STR Ordinance be acted upon. Motion: Emily Hummel. Second by Thomas Keefe. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Other STR-related topics and closing comments:

Joel said he found some educational material and guidelines online that other US communities have put in place to manage and regulate STRs. He suggested that materials such as these could be part of an educational package about STRs that residents could access through the City website. Caroll

Pearson said she read through these and appreciated the Paradise Valley example. He asked for additional comments going forward.

Bjorn Schweinsberg (from the public) raised concern about public information being available in ways that do not set STRs up for vandalism.

Joel agreed that we need to identify cost-effective monitoring and enforcement systems to manage problem STRs effectively.

Jason Renz said that he has had some citizens submit action request forms; he has followed up and will continue to.

Luke Pfeifer stated that he wants to address concerns brought up by some public comments. "We have not made things more lenient for STR businesses; we have made the ordinance stricter and more enforceable. We have worked to make it more structured so that the City Staff can enforce it." He noted that Airbnb as a company has taken a stand against renters' parties.

Emily Hummel said residents appreciate the ongoing work of this committee. She said that ideally, she would like to have a cap put on the number of STRs in a given area to avoid saturation.

Thomas Keefe sees that this revised ordinance is a good start on working toward a solution, and hopes that we can continue to work on this.

Jason Smolarek concurred with Thomas and said that we have a long way to go.

Caroll Pearson appreciated the fact that fines and violations are being given out now. She believes this will help the STR owners who are running their businesses correctly as well as the residents.

From a process perspective, it was noted that the revised ordinance will be forwarded to City Attorney, Dan Draper, for a legal review. The committee will meet on June 26 to consider comments from attorney Draper and then forward the revised ordinance to the Plan Commission which will meet on July 15. This will give everyone time to review the revisions before they go to the Plan Commission. Once the Plan Commission approves the revised STR ordinance it will go to the Common Council where it will receive two readings. The earliest the revised ordinance could be effective would be after the 2024 peak season.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 26, 2024.

Motion to adjourn by Thomas Keefe; seconded by Luke Pfeifer.