

Land Use Planning Commission Study of Short-Term Rentals

Community and Virtual Meetings 2023

East Millinocket – June 15, 2023

This document compiles the notes recorded by LUPC staff on June 15, 2023 at the East Millinocket Town Hall. The notes summarize discussion and comment from both the open drop-in period and the community meeting, including the responses to discussion questions posed by LUPC staff.

Discussion Questions

What are the benefits of short-term rentals in your opinion or experience?

- Keeps properties updated and in use; renters provide feedback on needed maintenance or issues
- Motivates property owners to maintain property
- Increase in jobs through hiring of local people for cleaning, snow removal, and repairs
- Fill housing gaps, especially during off-season
- Meet more diverse seasonal needs
- Meet people from other places/personal interactions
- Can share area and Maine way of life
- Enhance visitor experience by recommending activities, restaurants, shops
- Supports economy of local area
- Renters can get local perspective and knowledge
- Can help keep property in a family longer – especially if next generation has moved away
- May incentivize construction of new or second homes – if can rent it out, the income can help pay it off
- State collects lodging tax (via rental platforms)
- More convenient for families with kids than hotels/motels

What are challenges or issues with short-term rentals in your opinion or experience?

- Impact on year-round housing - takes housing out of local market and increases prices
- People purchased housing stock for short-term rental /vacation homes during pandemic because housing/property is inexpensive compared to other places
- Dwelling and septic capacity may be out of step with # of renters
- Increased traffic/road impacts (in some cases from increased use in general)
- Over-occupancy may not be the result of advertising; guests may ignore limits
- Regarding septic capacity, many recreators do not spend much time at the short-term rental because they are out recreating/eat meals out
- How would LUPC handle a grandfathered septic system with no HHE-200? *Response: The Commission would likely ask for the # of bedrooms and limit capacity based on that.*

How would you define short-term rental? Do you consider them residential or commercial and why?

- Properties on Smith Pond and other area ponds are limited to two weeks at a time; not consecutive, based on provisions added by Great Northern at time of lease/sale
- Regulatory approach may affect definition. As examples:
 - If notice with no fee, include all short-term rental owners
 - If permit with a fee maybe exclude minor activity
- Bar Harbor example – two-tiered system:
 - Vacation Rental-1 (VR-1): Primary residence of the property owner or on the owner’s primary residence property and is rented for less than 30 days and a minimum of two nights at a time.
 - Vacation Rental-2 (VR-2): Not the primary residence of the property owner and is rented less than 30 days and a minimum of 4 nights at a time.
- Rental period (days available consecutively) + amount of time available during year
- Multiple short-term rental properties owned in area is commercial (Question raised: can different people in the same family be on different deeds?)
- Use of companies/platforms – Vacasa, Air BnB, etc.

What do you think of the LUPC requiring a notice for short-term rentals? What performance standards, or other rules, specific to short-term rentals should be considered, if any?

- Seems reasonable
- Start with registration and proof of septic capacity
- How would it be enforced?
- Would there be any consequences if ignored?
- LUPC would be setting itself up for something it can’t enforce
- Associations already deal with many of the issues (nuisances and roads)
- No need to require insurance in performance standards – not LUPC issue (some platforms offer it)
- Many owners have their own house rules
- Re: parking standards – in the Millinocket area parking is not much of an issue; long driveways to camps/dwellings
- Host-Guest communication is the key
- Most renters are homeowners who respect property
- Education is a key piece for hosts/guests
- Maybe LUPC prepares a best practices packet for hosts that includes information for guests like fishing license is required, we don’t leave trash on the side of the road in Maine, lighting
- LUPC is overworked as it is; they don’t need this trouble
- People police themselves effectively already, especially in areas with associations
- Different regions are different – LUPC rules apply to whole area and maybe are only needed in Greenville or Rangeley regions and not in the Katahdin Region
- VRBO and AirBnB – owner has to sign saying they comply with local regulations to list on these platforms

- Owners leave feedback (reviews) on renters, so disruptive renters get flagged
- Some people are afraid of the LUPC and won't want to fill out any form

Miscellaneous Notes and Comments

- Millinocket only allows short-term rentals in certain zones *[Follow up note: As of June 2023, Millinocket has not adopted ordinance language regulating short-term rentals. However, the Planning Board is currently working on draft provisions related to short-term rentals.]*
- Local association bylaws/covenants limit rentals to two consecutive weeks at a time but there is not a limit on how many times a house can be rented in a year
- LUPC should request information from associations, especially the more recent ones
- Please post the PowerPoint to the short-term rental website

Drop-in Period

- Discussion of Bar Harbor's short-term rental ordinance
 - If three legitimate complaints, then owner loses permit
 - Requires a sign in the rental with owner information
 - Town has CEO that just does short-term rental inspections
 - Safe emergency egress is required – in some cases new windows in historic homes (creates policy conflict)
 - Does the staff scour the rentals to see if there are unpermitted rentals?
 - Has local police force to tend to complaints
 - No water test required