

John Long

From: Edgar Dworsky <edgar@consumerworld.org>
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2019 6:54 AM
To: Katjana Ballantyne; Matthew McLaughlin; Stephanie Hirsch; Wilfred Mbah; Mary Jo. Rossetti; William A. White; City Council; JT Scott; Ben Ewen-Campen; Jesse Clingan; Mark Niedergang; Lance Davis; City Clerk Contact
Cc: Joseph Curtatone
Subject: Short-Term Rental Proposal Amendment

Dear City Councillors,

I am writing to comment on the council's proposed short-term rental ordinance.

While I am generally not in favor of regulating the lawful use of one's own property, it is inevitable that Somerville will follow Boston's lead on this matter.

However, the rules become confusing when every city or town, and the state for that matter, defines "short-term rental" differently.

I urge the council to adopt Boston's definition since you pattern most of the proposed ordinance on it to start with.

Boston defines short term as "fewer than 28 consecutive days." That definition makes the most sense, because logically, "short-term" is generally construed as being for less than a month when speaking of tenancies so as not to be confused with monthly leases. Since some months have 28 days, 29 days, 30 days and 31 days, defining "short-term" as "30 or fewer consecutive days" could unintentionally sweep in some monthly leases.

Monthly tenant leases are one of the most common forms of tenancies. So ,as to not include any leases that are at least a month in length, I urge the council to amend the proposed ordinance's definition of short-term rental to read either, (1) **"...for a duration of less than one month"** OR ALTERNATIVELY (2) **"...for a duration of fewer than twenty-eight (28) consecutive days."**

Thank you for your consideration.

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Edgar Dworsky
147 Shore Drive
Somerville, MA 02145
617-666-5958

John Long

From: Chris Dwan <chris@dwan.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2019 8:30 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk Contact
Cc: Dan Flynn; Eleanor Howe
Subject: Short Term Rentals - Owner Adjacent Units

Honorable councilors,

My friend and neighbor alerted me to a change in the proposed ordinance regulating short term rentals in Somerville. While I am absolutely in favor of regulating and taxing these units, I urge you to vote "no" on the ordinance as it stands.

The proposed ordinance has been changed to exclude "owner adjacent" dwellings from short term rentals. I'm not sure when that happened, and I would have missed it if not for my neighbor's sharp eyes.

As I have shared before, I own a duplex in Ward 2. My family lives in one unit, and we have rented out the other unit for the last four years through a competitor to AirB&B known as "Vacation Rental By Owner" or VRBO. We inherited this arrangement, along with our longest term tenant. She is the mother of a Harvard professor, and provides child care for her granddaughter during the winter semesters.

It's a great relationship, and I was amused to note that she is now having a daily newspaper delivered to our door. This is the kind of tenant that I serve, in contrast to the horror stories that I hear about absentee landlords turning triple deckers into nightly rooming houses.

Reading the ordinance as proposed, if we wanted to continue this arrangement, we would have to offer our guest a bedroom in our home rather than giving her a private unit. While we like each other, neither of us are inclined to share a kitchen, a bathroom, and all the other amenities of a single dwelling unit. Neither would our other long-term tenants - who include adjunct faculty and professionals relocating to the area.

Please re-instate the owner-adjacent unit clause in the ordinance.

As a compromise, I would be thrilled to see the minimum stay extended to a week or even longer. We have stopped taking guests for less than a week at a time, as the turnovers are more trouble than they are worth. At a community forum last fall, most of the complaints that I heard from residents centered on rapid turnovers and confusion about neighborhood standards. Longer stays address both of those.

Thank you for your attention, and as always, thank you for all your hard work on our behalf.

-Chris Dwan
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John Long

From: Caterina Hill <caterina.hill@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2019 3:34 PM
To: Board of Aldermen; City Clerk Contact
Cc: Trishan Panch
Subject: Fwd: Proposed short-term rental ordinance - vote no

Dear all,

I am writing to ask if we can count on you to vote NO to the proposed short-term rental ordinance as it stands, wherein it has deleted the clause on Page 3 which allows people to rent out adjacent units for AirBnB/other short term purposes.

Renting out Adjacent Units to AirBnb is an important strategy for ensuring that the global community which flocks to Harvard and other famous institutions near us, actually invests in Somerville. This group of travelers wants the privacy of their own place, rather than a hotel or a shared airbnb space. **They will go to another city if private units in Somerville through Airbnb are not open to them and it will be a loss to us all.**

A better solution:

- Increase the taxes so the financial gain is shared across the city.
- Include the fire and other safety requirements.

Our Experience

Over the last 3 years we have offered the apartment below us for short term airbnb rentals. These guests are exactly the sort of people we should be bringing to Somerville. They are international professionals visiting Harvard/MIT/ other local institutions for work or travel.

Advantages:

- **Financial Impact for Somerville businesses:** They bring business to our wonderful local restaurants, cafes, shops and entertainment venues. (We make sure to add a page of Somerville recommendations on our Airbnb profile page.)
- **Prominence of Somerville Profile:** It is an opportunity for us to raise the profile of Somerville for this group of people. They often do not know much about Somerville before they come, but are visiting because it is close to Cambridge. On staying they are invariably so impressed by our wonderful community and all the local things going on. They then choose to stay in Somerville when they return either for more meetings or when they move here for their post docs or other opportunities.
- **Financial Impact for Somerville Residents-** They bring extra income to families such as ours who are investing in the community and could bring extra taxation to the City of Somerville. We would be happy to pay more taxes.

Not troublesome guests!

Guests who elect to stay in a space adjacent to hosts are a self-selecting group. They do not cause any trouble. They really are nothing but respectful and calm. We have had nothing but pleasant interactions with the people coming through.

At this time when the world is becoming more protectionist and xenophobic, I am so grateful to live in the vibrant and international Somerville. Please help us make sure it stays this way by keeping it a welcoming and warm place for the international community. We will be all be better off for it!

Caterina Hill
Trishan Panch

44 Harrison Street, Unit 2, Somerville MA 02143