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Cook County to Review Vacation Rental Licensing Program to Make it More Effective

By Steve Fernlund

Cook County government created its first formal planning committee for a vacation rental program in 2015. After five years of discussion and public input, the county board passed an ordinance to require licensing and regulation of short-term vacation rentals that was effective January 1, 2020.

There are currently 246 properties in Cook County licensed for Vacation Rental. The ordinance is set to expire at the end of this year.

In April of this year, the board approved the formation of the Vacation Rental Steering Committee, consisting of eight members from county staff and elected officials, for the purpose of developing and recommending back to the Board a framework for a full review of the Vacation Rental Program. The Steering Committee recommended, and the Board approved, a full Vacation Rental Program Review Committee that will be charged with a comprehensive review of the current program and create recommendations for the Board to consider as they contemplate a new ordinance. The full committee will be made up of 17 members from the various interests and include two members of the general public. The county is expected to name the members of the full committee and the committee is expected to complete its review

and recommendations by the end of August.

The committee meetings will be streamed live online and recorded for public access. In addition, the meetings will be open to the public with public comment portions included in the agenda. Further efforts will be made to communicate the committee's work to the public through the county website and local media.

The county defines a vacation rental as: *“any home, cabin, condominium or similar building that is advertised as, or held out to be, a place where sleeping quarters are furnished to the public on a nightly, weekly, or for less than a 30-day time period and is not a bed and breakfast; but excludes similarly-described premises which are managed by and regulated as part of a Hotel or Resort.”*

The ordinance requires a license for any vacation rental that is located in unincorporated Cook County and in one of the identified zoning districts. The license fee is \$200 annually and it requires a property owner to provide their name, address, and contact information, the address and parcel number of the property, a local agent and their contact information., acknowledgment of liability insurance for the property, and a license from the MN Dept of Health if that is required for

the property by the state. The license is transferable and the owner must collect the lodging tax. Rentals cannot begin until the license is issued.

Short-term rentals of vacation property have existed for a very long time. Many cabin owners rent out their places to help subsidize the cost of cabin ownership. Property/rental management firms were created to help serve this market and are the place where rental contracts are signed, keys are handed out, and rules of occupancy are distributed. Townhouse and condo buyers also use short-term rentals, often managed by resorts, to offset the cost of investing in vacation properties. The ability to put a property in short-term rental pools has helped average investors looking for a piece of the northland real estate dream.

Now, online rental agencies like VRBO have made renting out a vacation property easier than ever. So easy that some people have built or bought homes simply to rent out. The issues that might raise led the county to consider regulating rentals in the first place.

Further information on the Vacation Rental Review Committee, including committee members and initial meeting schedules, may be found on the county website, www.co.cook.mn.us.

NORTHSHORE JOURNAL'S HIDDEN PHRASE PUZZLE

To get your name on the Northshore Journal's Puzzle page, send your name, hometown and puzzle answer to: 27 Evans Circle, Silver Bay, MN 55614 • Call: 226-3335
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Last Week's Answer: Graduation is an exciting time. It marks both an ending and a beginning. It's warm memories of the past and big dreams of the future.

- JIM ANDERSON, TWO HARBORS
- PEARL MUUS, GRAND MARAIS
- WAYNE ELLINGSEN, FAIRBANKS
- DIANE NOWERS, GRAND MARAIS
- BJ MUUS, GRAND MARAIS
- MARK & LAURA LAKEY, GRAND MARAIS
- MARIANN MANCUSO
- SANDY WIRT, GRAND MARAIS
- DARLENE STEVENS, TWO HARBORS
- BETTY KING, TOFTE
- NANCY BRAMSTEDT, GRAND MARAIS
- BONNIE SWANSON, BRIMSON
- LIL HANSON, TWO HARBORS
- DARLENE GADACZ, TWO HARBORS
- ROBIN DERSCHIED, GRAND MARAIS
- PAT TORGERSEN, TWO HARBORS
- MARY ANN SMITH, FARM LAKE
- EDIE TAAPA, GRAND PORTAGE
- LAURIE SPRY, GRAND MARAIS
- LINDA BRANDT, TWO HARBORS
- GAIL SAFSTROM, KNIFE RIVER
- LAURIE JUENEMANN, TWO HARBORS
- GAIL KUPFERSCHMIDT, BRIMSON
- GLORIA SCHINN, LUTSEN
- SUSAN SCHLIEP, GRAND MARAIS
- KATHLEEN HERMAN, DULUTH
- LAURI KULJU, GRAND MARAIS
- DIANE RADLE, SILVER BAY
- COREY CHAFFEY, RUDY & MARY
- KAY CARLSON, GRAND MARAIS
- DON MCCOY, TWO HARBORS
- WAYNE & PHILIS ANDERSON, GRAND MARAIS
- MARY LOU MARSHALL
- PATTY ROBINSON, GRAND MARAIS

- | | | |
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| ADDRESS | AIR | BOX |
| BULK | BUY | CANCEL |
| CARRIER | CLASS | CLERK |
| CODE | DELIVERY | DOMESTIC |
| DROP | ENVELOPE | FLAT |
| FOREIGN | FORM | FORWARD |
| FREIGHT | FROM | JUNK |
| LETTER | MAIL | METER |
| OFFICE | OPEN | OUNCE |
| PACK | PAPER | POST |
| PRIORITY | RATE | RECEIPT |
| SACK | TO | TRUCK |

After you find all the words, solve the quote below from the remaining letters!

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T P E V T Y A M O U R L I F E C T O
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A A Y U B R T E I N O S T E I D N R