

MINUTES
Initial Meeting of the Short Term Rental Issue Advisory Committee
March 23, 2017

Draft: 3/30/2017

Present

Organizers: Allan Overhiser, Mary Campbell, John Barkley, Paul Macyauski, Kathy Stanton

Committee: Chris Barczyk, Valerie Bass, Susan Cutler, Marilyn Darby, Debbie Dickson, Karen Hart, Justin Hulsebos, Robert Jenson, Kathy Korse, Carson Leftwich, Kirk Leftwich, Bret Morgan, Maureen Mos???, Doug Nickerson, Terese Orban, Lois Schwartz, Laura Toweson, Tom Tucker, Joel Warmolts, Bill Watt, Kathy Watt, John Weaver.

Observers: Judy Graff, Bill Garrity, Janet Chambers, Bill Chambers

Welcome and Overview of Meeting

Allan called the meeting to order at 6:17 pm, welcomed participants and thanked them for coming. Allan explained that the townships is leaving things as they are for the next eight months while the township Planning Commission works on the long term plan for short-term rentals.

Allan explained that he formed this team to assist and advise both him and the Board of Trustees -- with the most immediate need being to help make the next eight months positive for all involved, and possibly inform the longer term plan.

The meeting agenda was outlined for the group:

- Brainstorm any additional issues and add them to those id'd at previous meetings
- Prioritize the issues
- Work in Breakout Groups – identify improvement opportunities, 45 minutes
- Report back to the larger group
- Get input from the larger group
- Set next steps and date for the next meeting

Brainstorming

Mary began by defining several terms for the sake of common understanding throughout the meeting:

- Renters - owners who rent their property for short periods
- Guests - transient individuals who come for short periods
- Non-renters - owners not currently renting their properties

Lois Schwartz expressed concern about the term “guest” for those who rent homes for short periods of time. Tom Tucker stated that Renters are those who pay money to rent. Mary explained that we could change these terms for later discussions, but that for the meeting it wasn’t possible to change the terms immediately because they were spread throughout the documents being used for the meeting. It was suggested that “G” be used instead of the term “guest”.

The group reviewed and added other issues to each of the categories. The issues added to the lists are shown below in italics:

Good Neighbor Policy Issues

- Share neighborhood norms and local ordinances by posting for Guests in home
- New home owners welcomed to the community
- Trash placed in covered containers
- Adequate trash receptacles available
- Trash placed at curb for scheduled pickup
- Community areas cared for and maintained by all
- Pet owners pick-up after dogs
- Example set for children by words and action
- Neighbors suggest eateries and other businesses that guest may want to visit
- All respect community property
- Guests feel privileged to stay in a residential community
- Guests look forward to regular return visits
- Guests get to know a few full-time residents
- Guests understand that drunken, lewd, and obscene behavior can terminate their contact or prevent return visits
- Guests experience respect and friendliness from the community
- *Solicit feedback from surrounding neighbors*

Reporting Process

- Knowing who to contact – no need to directly confront violators or track down the owner/renter
- 24x7 easy process for problem reporting that is self-documenting
- Quick resolution of problems that occur
- Uses current reporting to 911 and township to build database
- Self-documenting - stats tracked for the township with regular reports provided and further data analysis possible
- Database that is easy to search and extract info that can lead to permanent corrective action and prevention
- Standards apply to Non-renters and Guests e.g fireworks, noise ordinance
- Renter/agent contact info available for 24x7 contact and able to respond in 1 hour or less
- Opportunity to leverage rental service supplier screening/feedback processes (Airbnb, Mill Pond, etc.)
- *Renter info posted (phone #s, etc.)*
- *Document soft issues*
- *Contact neighbor for neighbor*

Successful Rental Businesses

- Rental properties in demand as guests look forward to return visits
- Guests treat rental properties as their own
- Renters take pride in their properties and the overall neighborhood
- Voluntary registration this year to identify all rentals
- Welcomed into neighborhood by full-time residents

- *Filtering process of guests*
- *Standards in rental agreement*
- *Including noise ordinance/other*
- *Common template for rental agreement, including single point of contact*
- *Share ideas in contracts*
- *Guests responsible for ordinance violation related fines*
- *Share association rules/responsibilities*
- *Illegible bullet point*
- *Distinguish “commercial renters”*
- *“No absentee landlords”*

Potential Safety Concerns

- Adequate control of fire pit use
- Beach fires extinguished
- Children not driving low speed vehicles without an adult
- Dogs kept on leash
- Grills monitored
- SHAES address markers for all rental homes
- Appropriate number of house guests for safety -may not be able to address this yet
- Home capacity for guests is not extended by campers, RVs, or tents
- Vandalism and theft levels remain low
- Visible police presence in all sub-divisions during rental season
- Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in all rental properties
- Land lines in all rental properties so 911 calls by guests are location trackable
- *Know license plate numbers of people that own prinitec?*
- *Limit # of people that can occupy home as “guests”*
- *Compliance to local (water safety) ordinance*
- *Trespassing policy*

Noise

- Noise ordinance developed and publicized
- State fireworks restrictions adhered to by all
- Pets not left outside to bark all day unattended
- All recognize residential nature of the neighborhood and ensure late evening tranquility and quiet
- *More visibility/communication of township ordinance*

Vehicle Guidelines

- Off-road parking for all guest cars
- No overnight parking on roads
- RVs, boats, campers within ordinance limits and not used to extend rental space

- Adherence to speed limits
- Lower speed vehicles, e.g. golf carts, follow state guidelines

One other flip chart page was used to capture parking lot issues – issues brought up during brainstorming that were longer term issues or didn't cleanly fit into the other categories:

Parking Lot:

- Rental of occurrences and number of days (maximum)
- What is the minimum time period for each occurrence
- Registration process to law enforcement (with Contact #s)
- Max capacity of rental units
- "commercial renters" definition
- "single family" definition
- Commercial rentals not allowed
- Definition/clarity for ??? - when/where (i.e. commercial location only??)

Each member of the committee assigned priorities to the issue group *or* individual issues using the stickers given to them when they arrived for the meeting. The stickers identified the following priority groups:

#1 - Reporting Process

#2 - Successful Rental Business

#3 - Good Neighbor Policy Issues

#4 – Noise (and then combined with Safety & Vehicle Guidelines)

The committee was divided into teams by counting off (1-4) to work on each of the priority issues.

Team #1: Robert Jenson, Kathy Korse, Carson Leftwich, Terese Orban, Laura Toweson, Tom Tucker, John Weaver

Team #2: Debbie Dickson, Bret Morgan, Doug Nickerson, Joel Warmolts, Kirk Leftwich

Team #3: Susan Cutler, Karen Hart, Justin Hulsebos, Maureen Moravec, Larry Scott, Bill Watt

Team #4: Chris Barczyk, Valerie Bass, Marilyn Darby, Lois Schwartz, Kathy Watt

Allan explained the process and guidelines for working in the small teams. The teams spent 45 minutes discussing the issue(s) their team was assigned and each came up with ideas for how the issues might be mitigated in the short term. Each group then presented their suggestions back to the larger group:

Team #1 The Reporting Process:

1. Voluntary registration process of renter to township
 - a. Name of owner/Mgt. company
Who: township supervisor By: April 18
2. Posted renter/mgt. company info in window
 - a. Name of owner
 - b. Phone #
 - c. 24x7 response within an hour
 - i. Noise/disorderly conduct
 - ii. Unattended fires
 - iii. Minors driving motorized vehicles*Who: rental/management company By: May 1*
3. Quick Problem Resolution
 - a. Noise – 1 hour
 - b. Safety – 1 hour*Who – renter/management company By: May 1*

Presentation notes: The first and most important thing is voluntary registration. The information must be communicated by mid-April. The information, such as noise ends at 10pm, no unattended fires, no minors driving motorized vehicles. Noise and safety issues must be handled within an hour.

Team #2 Successful Rental Business

1. Communication with neighbors
2. Volunteer registration posted on Casco Township website for contact information
3. Share rental contracts
4. Have a meeting of “renters” to share minimum standards for rental agreements...content, rules, expectations

Presentation Notes: Have a meeting amongst renters to share minimum standards, contracts, etc.. Team talked about a feedback loop needed for renters (landlords) and suggested there could be a public space to invite renters to – for a glass of wine – renters and neighbors to get to know each other.

It was brought up that VRBO and other agencies are getting more and more between the guest and the renter. That is making harder for the owners/renters to stay in control. The industry is going more and more toward VRBO and AIRBOB?.

Team #3 Good Neighbor Policy Issues:

To achieve success and foster a good neighbor policy our recommendations involved:

1. Personal contact info to surrounding neighbors and law enforcement
2. Owners to provide pet pickup rules and doggie bags
3. Communication box at house for neighbors to use
4. Adequate trash containers per # of guests/advise pickup date
5. Hope that everyone is welcoming and not rude
6. Post safety issues especially regarding children

Presentation Notes: Recommendations involve providing information to surrounding neighbors and to the police. They are suggesting having doggie bags at the house for guests to pick up after their pets. They also suggested having communication boxes (suggestion-like boxes) for the neighbors and others to communicate back to the renters. It was suggested that the input reach the renters prior to them returning the guest's security deposit. It was brought up that boxes wouldn't work for absentee landlords that are never there and that another approach is needed for them. They suggested that adequate trash receptacles be provided for the number of guests. Suggested fostering good will with the guests by introducing themselves, offering suggestions, etc.. Suggested that safety rules be posted, especially as it relates to kids (not just inside the rental home).

Team #4 Noise, Safety, and Vehicle Guidelines

Onsite accountability across the board...

Noise

1. Three strikes by your paying renters and you lose your permit to rent
2. Limit percentage of rental units per community
3. Attention to noise levels by pool owners – post quiet hours
4. Research fireworks regulations and times
5. Suggested quiet hours for beaches and residences - posted on township website
6. Clear process and enforcement – how?
7. Bicycle police patrol and enforcement? Or stealth vehicle
8. Adherence to the fireworks ordinance

Safety

9. Kurt's hours Thursday – Sunday night
10. All dogs on leash & clean up
11. Visible police presence in all subdivisions
12. Buoys to make boat- and jet ski-free swimming areas
13. Swim safety posted in the house; life vests and other safety equipment in the house
14. Special Use Permit similar to B&B, limited in number and distance from other rental units
15. Speed limits
16. Allow fire truck access
17. Single family residences adhere to – additional guests with owner present

Vehicle Guidelines

18. ATVs on beaches in violation of the law
19. Licensed drivers only on the roads – golf carts included

Presentation Notes: Onsite accountability is the key to all of it. Suggested making Kurt's hours include Thursday through Sunday, the busiest and most problematic time. Because South Haven is using bicycle patrols, maybe stealth vehicles could be used for patrolling. Fireworks regulations should be posted. Suggesting that quiet hours be posted on the website. Need to review the fireworks regulations. All dogs should be on leashes and cleanup bags should be used.

There should be safe/boat and jet ski-free zones created with buoys for swimming safety. All the swimming and safety rules should be posted at all the rentals. Speed limits should be posted. Post radar equipment so people actually know how fast they are going. Fire truck access needs to be maintained...the roads are narrow and fire safety personnel have stopped and indicated that cars need to be moved. ATVs on beaches are in violation of the law. They are also suggesting that only licensed drivers be allowed to drive golf carts – people have seen young children driving carts.

It comes down to the lack of enforcement and the lack of a visible police force. Everything we talked about – they'd like to see special use permits for rentals – like B&Bs. They'd like to see them applied for in limited numbers and on a lottery basis.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday April 11th at 6:00pm.

- A preliminary Voluntary Registration Form will be developed prior to the next meeting for review.
- A start on a good neighbor policy will be developed for review. This applies beyond the renters and will be distributed to all township property owners.