

The Barnstable Patriot

Letter to the Editor | November 14, 2020

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More work to be done on STRs

Three cheers for Councilor Schnepf's withdrawal of both the proposed Short-Term Rental Ordinance and the related Zoning Amendment. Councilor Bogan is absolutely correct, in spite of what STR committee members think: there is much more work to do.

The frustration expressed by Councilor Cullum is representative of some of the problems with this whole process. She is right that, if it goes back to the same committee, nothing is likely to change. What that indicates to me is the opportunity that now presents itself in that a new committee should be formed which includes a mix of councilors and residents.

This committee can pick up where the other left off, so that no previous work will be ignored. It's imperative that residents be included in the planning process going forward, as it became clear to many of us that the committee, and some councilors in general, stopped listening to the "public". It was more like the committee decided that they were done working on this. They were done listening, and the public's input was nothing more than a nuisance; thus, the closing of the public hearing. This action indicated that going forward, the Council was not interested to hear what the public had to say. The public – the people you represent – still would like to contribute constructive input on these matters.

Measuring the hours of committee deliberation and the months of committee meetings is not relevant to the problem at hand. What is relevant is accepting the reality that the public has one or more goals in mind that appear to be at odds with the goals of the Council. Until this is productively resolved, there should be no vote on either of the items.

Can you see that you are at a crossroad, and now is the time to take the road that will lead to consensus with those who you, the Councilors, supposedly represent? To do anything else would be obstructive for no apparent reason other than to defend your work on the committee. The public believes the ultimate product can be better. It's time to reconcile, as they may be right.

As far as sniping about poor leadership and not "getting this done," it's not the job of the Council President to ram through new legislation in spite of resistance from the public. It

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is up to leadership to allow all those who have something to say to be able to express themselves and when all have arrived at an acceptable arrangement, regardless of which “side” you are on, or what title you have, then and only then is it time to vote. In reading the article in the Patriot, it seems to me that, since Council elections are imminent, that some who lost to current leadership in the previous election are using this situation to deride leadership. It’s unprofessional and unwise, to say the least. If Councilors are frustrated that these issues have not been dispensed with, it’s not because of poor leadership, it’s because there is more work to be done, as Councilor Bogan said.