

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I would like to submit my thoughts on the most recent Short-Term Rental (STR) Ordinance Draft presented at the August Council Meeting. I do think the Council is on the right track by allowing short-term rentals, with restrictions, in our town. As a full-time renting resident, I feel the shortage in long-term housing acutely. Yet, I recognize that we also need short-term accommodations for tourists and economic viability. Many of us who reside in Skykomish and Index use the very same short-term rentals when we have an event or host friends and family during holidays. Some of us also supplement our income by providing cleaning, laundry, or property management services to the owners. We need a healthy mix of short- and long-term housing to thrive as a community, and the town should, at the very least, glean local occupancy taxes from the business activity. Airbnb, for example, simply charges appropriate state and local occupancy tax and makes payments automatically on behalf of the owner to local authorities. We only need codify and notify.

After reviewing the draft presented by Frank Martin on August 8<sup>th</sup>, I would like to suggest a few changes. Regarding business license renewal: it would be far more efficient for Town Hall to process applications and renewals at some time other than the turnover of the calendar year. I would suggest having the license period end September 30<sup>th</sup>, like the federal fiscal year. This would avoid overlap with additional administrative duties during December/January such as budgeting, annual reporting and taxes, contract renewals, and annual accounts payable. By changing the turnover time to fall, it would also benefit property owners by requiring they apply for licenses and conduct inspections during the “shoulder season,” when rental activity is low, rather than during the holiday season, when winter activities are just beginning to pick up in the area.

Regarding the responsible party: I think restriction to within one-hour drive distance is too ambiguous. Due to traffic variability, what constitutes a one-hour drive is debatable. Sometimes that is only as far as Monroe. I suggest we define the distance in terms of a mile radius and that it be less than 30 miles away. I would like to see the distance shortened to increase the likelihood that the responsible party will respond to incidences. Furthermore, reducing the radius of the responsible party also increases the likelihood that the entity will be local and feel social pressure to respond for the sake of their neighbors, versus a company or individual who is detached from the upper sky valley. As an example, I have intermittently managed a short-term rental for a friend in town. Since I live close to the property, I intentionally re-route my regular travels to do frequent drive-by’s, enabling me to intervene early when issues arise with snow removal, trash, or parking. This is a win for everyone involved: property owner, responsible party, and neighbors.

I hope you find this feedback helpful and thank you for putting your time towards a short-term rental ordinance. It is timely and necessary.

Sincerely,

Sage Bryden