

Rhinebeck Democrats Club

Summary Rhinebeck Regular Board Meeting Monday, April 8, 2024

For more information regarding this meeting's agenda, go to Rhinebeck Town Government Agenda webpage at <https://ecode360.com/RH0960/documents/Agendas>. Scroll down to Town Board and choose the agenda which you want to view.

Presentation

Christopher Graham, a biologist from Hudsonia Ltd., conducted a presentation on its study, "Changes Over a Seventeen-Year Period to Significant Habitats in the Town of Rhinebeck." There is much information to review and will be summarized in another report to be sent out and posted on the RDC's website later this week.

Major Items to be Reported

The main item on the agenda was the Public Hearing (comments) on the proposed local law regulating Short Term Rentals (STR's). For a summary of the proposed law, visit the Rhinebeck Democrats Club's website at <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/e53633e7-90e1-4de3-89b1-49e05b825211/downloads/Rhinebeck%20TB%20Meeting%20STR%20March%2011%202024.pdf?ver=1712254511897>.

During the public comments session, Town Supervisor, Elizabeth Spinzia, mentioned that a bill, introduced by NYS Senator Michelle Hinchey, would impose state-wide regulations on STR's, including requiring STR owners to secure a commercial insurance policy.

Public Comments on STR's

A total of ten members of the community spoke at Monday's meeting. Below are the main, significant comments presented by these members. We have separated the comments into those supporting and those opposing the STR proposal. No comments presented or letters submitted were made by business owners (restaurants, gift shops, etc.) from either the village or town.

Ideas supporting the proposed local law

- It would help preserve the unique characteristics that have made Rhinebeck a great place to live.
- Individual neighborhood character would be maintained. It was noted that owners are not always able to vet their renters.

- STR's limit the opportunity for people to purchase homes and become permanent residents in the town.
- It would clarify the differences and distinctions between STR's and B&B's and their respective responsibilities.
- STR's strip community spirit.
- Professional businesses (optometrists, podiatrists, dentists) rely on permanent residents as opposed to STR renters.

Ideas against the proposed local law

- A representative from a management company, with clients in the town of Rhinebeck, stated that most of the complaints against STR's are based on rumors and that over the years, his company has had only two complaints. The town should do more at regulating bad behavior than regulating STR's.
- An STR owner stated that STR companies (VRBO, AirBnB) already have rules and regulations its owners must follow. The rules in the town's proposal are not only redundant, but daunting.
- An attorney, representing a large farm in the town, was opposed to the inclusion of Rural Agricultural areas (RA10 acres) and Historic Preservation areas (HP-20 acres), since any building used as an STR would be far removed from their neighbors where a public nuisance could occur.
- An owner hopes to eventually live fulltime in Rhinebeck. Renting out her house as an STR would help with taxes and house maintenance until she can make that move.
- An owner questioned the actual number of complaints that have been made to the local police which would warrant this law.
- One owner was in opposition to the extreme regulation on private property. It was felt that homeowners should have total control over their property.
- STR's were good for the community's tourism industry. (Submitted by letter)

The public comment session will continue at the next Town Board meeting, Monday, May 13th at 6:00 PM.
