



TOWN OF HARRISON

HARRISON PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP MINUTES 08.16.2023

Board Members Present: Chairman James Dayton, Vice-Chairman Colleen Densmore, Wendy Gallant, Michael Garvey

Board Member Absent: Scott Ramsdell

Staff Present: ACEO James Fahey, Secretary Veronica LaCascia

Public Present: Jessica Frost, Carol Durkin, Tom Durkin, Rhonda Japley, Wayne Cummings, Becky Cummings, Madeline Dinapoli, Cheryl & Mike Craffey, Matthew Frank, Ron & Barbara Ward, Walter Riseman, James Maucel, Michael Vane, Jennifer Vane, Rodger Jacobson, Angela Gray, Jonathan Goodwill, Christen Eaton, Mitch Sluttery, Adrienne Carroll, Wendell Scribner

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairman Dayton.

Workshop Discussion with Public Participation

If people would like to speak, they need to be at the podium and are limited to three minutes of time.

Mr. Chairman James Dayton begins, "Short term rentals, we have a lot in this town, and they are unregulated causing major problems throughout the town. That's why I've asked so many people to come. I personally would like some input about what people think should happen. How might it happen? How many people should be a loud in a house? All of those questions. I will preface this by saying that the Chair at this point in time feels that the limit on the number of people in the house is limited by the size of your septic tank times two. So, if you have a thousand-gallon septic tank with a house with three bedrooms, that's a total of six people. That's the chairs feeling at this point. The rational for that feeling is that, you have a lot of people in there on a weekly basis the septic might get a two-day rest and then you are doing it again. Eventually that septic system is going to fail. You could say, 'Well than I have to replace it.' But you should be thinking about the consequences of the failure. Whether you're right on the lakes or near a stream or not. There are still consequences. Everything runs downhill. Worst case scenario is you're on a lake and you've had twenty people using your three-

bedroom house for the last year and a half. Septic fails and everything goes into the lake and then we will have to shut down the lake for everyone. We do not want that to happen, because that is our money maker. That is the premise I am working from today. I would love to have other input. If you are on a private road there may or may not be restrictions. Also it's the Chairs feeling that the parking needs to be contained on the property and not on the road. The primary reason for that is that if its on the road, God forbid something happens at that house and rescue cannot get through, because of the vehicles. I'm trying to base this off of health and safety."

Loring Hale of 532 Cape Monday. He has lived here in Harrison for a while now, owns several properties in Harrison. He has some examples of what he is experiencing. One being a house a crossed the street that is on Long Lake. It just sold for over a million, Mr. Hale believes the sole use of this property is for STR. Every weekend 5 or 6 trucks are parked on the road with the trailers. This is causing the road to be blocked, only one car at a time can maneuver through the parked cars. He states that It's a mess almost hitting his neighbors head on. There is another house down the road, that is a 2 bedroom very small house. He said this passed weekend there were 12 cars parked there and over 20 kids there that just partied the whole time. Mr. Hale tried complaining to the actual owner. The owner resides in Florida and uses a third-party rental service up here. Mr. Hale was recently in Florida where he saw a plague in his Airbnb that stating, 'This is a vacation rental commercial property'. Their code enforcement goes in and checks it and gives it them a certificate that they have to have visible.

Ron Ward born in Harrison and been here ever since. He is vested in the town. What it is that is the goal? And how are you going to get there Mr. Ward wanted draft materials such as pending ordinances for STR and ADUs. Mr. Chairman explains to him that The Board is nowhere near that point yet. The Board is looking for more public input that's why they are hosting an open style meeting. Mr. Ward believes this isn't a problem and we should not have a short-term ordinance. He would like more data that justifies creating an ordinance. He believes what Harrison needs is ordinances that make sense. He thinks they should be more specific to shoreland zoning. He would like to work with the town and come up with something different. He believes the town may need something totally different. He points out he is responsible for anything his renters do and he is serious about it. Mr. Ward thinks other ordinances with conflict with other goals. Mr. Ward is convinced the revitalizing program will clash with STRs. He would like to have ordinances that enforce properties to fix or repair unpleasant houses in the area. This will create capital to clean up undesired areas around town. Mr. Ward would like more transparency so we don't waste time guessing on what is next.

Johnathan Goodwill 37 Waterford Road. He would like health and safety first. He is wondering if The Board is willing to consider looking at the differences between a local resident with a financial interest in their property but wants to care for the community as well. Verses an out of state owners that's only business is to prey on small towns with no ordinances like Harrison. Mr. Goodwill says there is more to this than just loud parties and failed septic tanks.

"We need to look at the fact that there is a distinction between, individual interests and the investing in property and the community, which ties with the safety of the community. Verses a real estate investor with a for profit interest. That are changing

homes into hotels.” Mr. Goodwill finds this to be a scary situation. He believes this all connects with the current housing crisis in America.

Loring Hale speaks for a second time. This is for one of his neighbors that could not be here tonight. The neighbor has lived there for 20 years. They are residences that do not like that the house next door is basically a hotel. He is very worried about a house adjacent that will soon be up for sale. It’s a gorgeous lake house with a massive dock. He knows this will attract out of state buyers basically waiting for something like this to make a STR.

James Fahey ACEO for the Town of Harrison. The complaints do not stop, they are daily. He is concerned with safety. Having 20 people stuffed into a 3 bedroom is unsafe. He believes if we limit it to 2 people a bedroom it will be much safer. There is an outcry for regulations in The Town of Harrison. The town doesn’t want to lose the small-town appeal. We don’t want this to become a college central where the elderly just priced out of their homes. What Mr. Fahey would like is for owners to register the property as a STR.

“You would have to get licenses first and foremost, If you’re hosting while living there its \$100.00 a year. If you live out of town than it would be \$300.00 a year. You cannot operate until either the code enforcement officer or the fire department inspect the property. The owners will have to post the license on the wall with a local contact person, who may be reached if an issue arises.” Mr. Fahey explains. He makes it clear we are not trying to outlaw STRs.

“This will in ensure renters that the place they are staying is at least safe and has been inspected. That’s our goal here safety, not to outlaw or ban STRs. STRs are a vital part of this community, we just want them to be safe”

Madeline Dinapoli Cape Monday Road. She is a former EMT. She is very unhappy with the new milfoil problem in the Cape Monday Cove. She is wondering if out of state boats are regulated. Veronica LaCascia The Secretary and Deputy Clerk explains that out of state boats do need to come in and pay \$45.00 for a “milfoil sticker”. The State Rep. for House District 83, Walter Riseman, adds that the \$45.00 contributes to a fund collected by inland fisheries, in order to stop combat milfoil throughout the state. Ms. Dinapoli believes out of state renters of STRs are contributing to a lot of the milfoil problem.

Mr. Fahey asks the room who is in favor right now for STR ordinances. 85% of the room raises their hands.

Barbara Ward. More specific data like really specific to show that we actually need these ordinances.

Bucky Jacobson E Shore Drive. He lives in Maryland full time, however is up here as often as possible. He would like The Board to know that in Maryland they register STRs with the county if you aren’t owner occupied. Also, they are strict on how many guests. It is usually only 2 guests per bedroom.

Tom Durkin 26 Crystal Heights. New Yorker, moved here permanently 5 years ago. The land around them on Crystal Heights sold a year and a half ago. Next thing the Durkins know, the new owners began clear cutting trees and building houses everywhere. There was a lot of damage and erosion. There are three condos surrounding the Durkins. There are sometimes over 20 people renting between the 3. They are visibly upset. Their well went dry this year because 50 people may be in their common area. Due to the constant partying The Durkin's Have seriously been considering moving. They did not retire and move up here to be neighbors with a hotel. They wish The Board would get ahead of the curve with ordinances, considering there is still so much land to buy and be developed here.

James Lock Summit Hill Road. Is wondering if parking on the road can be a separate ordinance.

At this point in the workshop the public disperses. The Chairman asks the rest of the board if they would like to continue or adjourn.

Mr. Michael Garvey responds, "Yes, we don't have much time. If we're going to get this on the November ballot. We've got to get something at the next workshop to be able to hand out to people. To show them something before it goes on the ballot for a town meeting."

Ms. Vice Chairman Colleen Densmore states "I am going back to work shops are for the board only, they are not a public meeting. They do not allow public participation. This was Jamies discission to run the meeting like this tonight, I would choose not to do it like this going forward."

"Well then the problem, like everyone is saying is transparency." Mr. Garvey replies.

The Vice Chairman responds, "There is plenty of transparency. The whole process has to have two public hearings. It can't go on the ballot without that process. So why are we creating more work?"

"Well because we're getting input from"- Mr. Garvey is interrupted.

"We did, we took it we have the input." Ms. Vice Chairman interposed.

Mr. Chairman explains, "I didn't want the public to have the materials, because I wanted to hear what their raw feelings were. To not be influenced by anything we may or may not have come up with so far. We've got a pretty unanimous feeling that we need to regulate something."

Ms. Gallant rejoins, "The transparency issue is very sensitive to me. I don't want to speak and put my foot in my mouth or anything, but transparency in my opinion is an absolute problem with not only this board but in general of getting the information out to the people. We can say its on the website, we can say it's in the newsletter. Well, it's extremely difficult to find it on there you have to go to this page, this page, this page. To get an agenda. That's a bigger picture. I agree with the Chair that we don't need to put out a draft ordinance. I came to this meeting prepared was to be addressing LD2003's the affordable housing act. I did all my research this last week on that. I sat on my phone last night researching STRs. I was watching the Bridgton Planning Boad's workshop. As many municipalities are doing right now. That's what I was ready to do tonight. And I get here and this meeting is opened with, 'we will discuss exclusively with short term rentals.' I understand its part of the affordable housing act, but if I didn't know that than how would anyone else know that? Apparently, all these people knew that,

maybe they talked to Jim? That we were exclusively about short-term rentals tonight. My point in saying that is it just shows again to me the lack of transparency. I don't know maybe I'm stupid, maybe my heads in the sand. I'm just a little frustrated with that. All of the sudden this became a short -term rental Work Shop. That's not what I was prepared for. I didn't know that. I'm commenting in support of more transparency, because even I'm not informed. I should not have to be looking on our website. This poor woman wanted to know and how would she know about when the next Workshop is. We didn't really have an answer, we said 'the website'. She said the website is always outdated. It's another example of how we could be doing better with our transparency."

Work Shop Discussion Points:

- Short Term Rentals will need to be registered with the town.
- They will need a license issued by Code Enforcement or the Harrison Fire Department.
- This will be issued after passing inspection of the property.
- 2 People per bedroom will be allowed.
- \$100 fee for owner occupied for the year, \$50 per bedroom after 3 bedrooms.
- \$300 fee for owner unoccupied hosts for the year, \$100 per bedroom after 3 bedrooms.

2. Next Meeting:

September 6th, 2023

3. Adjourn:

8:07PM

Chairman James Dayton

Secretary Veronica LaCascia