Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Public Hearing
Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

The Athens City Planning Commission held a Public Hearing regarding Short-Term Rentals in Room A/B at the Community Center on November 19, 2019.

Attendees: Nikki Sherman, Jim Fuller, Stephanie Goldsberry, Alyssa Bernstein, Peter Hoffmann Pinther, Elizabeth Kramer, David Ingram, Mary Able, Jack Stauffer, Michele Papai, Alan McMillon, Joan Kraynanski, Martha Asgood, Sam Girton, Jan Hodson, Jim Murray, Betty Hollow, Karen Williams, Josh Radcliff

1. **Call to Order**

RJ Sumney called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. and administered the oath to those in attendance wishing to speak before the commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:	
RJ Sumney, Chair	Present
Christy Zempter	Present
Nancy Bain, Vice Chair	Present
Steve Patterson, Mayor	Absent
Andrew Stone, Service-Safety Director	Present
STAFF:	
Paul Logue, City Planner	Present
David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director	Absent

2. **Public Hearing for Case #19-07** **City Council Resolution R-08-19**
Request to consider amending zoning code to include short-term rentals in residential zones

Andrew Stone: Noted that City Council brought the resolution to the Planning Commission requesting that the zoning code be altered. It will be up to the Planning Commission to decide whether to accept, modify, or deny the request. There are no regulations in place at the moment so the commissioners are open to hearing ideas and opinions.

RJ Sumney: This is a forum to receive public input.

Nikki Sherman/3 North May

- What is the big deal? Air BnB website already advertising and BnB's are already operating in Athens.
- She has two units behind her house that she rents to OU professors approximately a month at a time and also to parents of students for weekend stays.
- What will happen to her license?

Jim Fuller/467 Richland Ave.

- He was the first to come forward and ask how to do a BnB.

- If they can't rent tourist homes for more than 30 days this will be a problem.
- Citizens can do this and show off the community.
- Tourist homes is only allowed if you are within 250 ft. of your primary residence. What if you sell your home? What happens?
- Understands the need to codify and have rules but Athens is so unique.
- Opening your home to others is not a bad thing.
- Why bother with this now when it is already occurring?

Stephanie Goldsberry/125 N. May

- To those who are already doing it, the problem is that the city is "opening it up"
- Who will govern? Code? Will have to hire more people.
- Do we know what is being used as Air BnB? Why open up if you don't know what is being used already? Find out before opening up.
- Parking Issues. No off street parking to accommodate. Will the same rules apply that are used for rentals?

Alyssa Bernstein/no address provided

- Has lived here for 17 years.
- Athens has character and she doesn't want to see the feeling of community change.
- BnB's have a huge impact and will transform the city.
- Research what has happened in other communities before making a decision.
- An upward pressure on rent is possible, businesses and uptown area.
- Short term rentals bring in a lot of money so the motivation would be to not have long term rentals.

Peter Hoffmann-Pinther/Columbia Avenue

- What is the procedure?
- Short term rentals requirement is 1 adult/70 sq. ft. of floor space.
- Parking issues.
- Tourist home 250 ft. from primary residence. Not limiting the number of licenses you have.
- This is being rushed through.

Elizabeth Kramer/220 E. State

- She travels for work and rents Air BnB's.
- Misconception of what Air BnB's are. They do not serve foot. People are very respectful of the homes, no trashing of homes occurs.
- Not enough hotels in Athens. Draws people to Athens and they spend $.
- It is an opportunity to get to know people and life in Athens.
- She would not consider renting her home if she was at all concerned about it being abused.
- If renters abuse homes they are banned.

David Ingram/120 Morris Ave

- Lives in an R1 zone and is concerned about the impact on R1 zones.
- Fearful of the regulations that may result and the restrictions.
- Homestays, Tourist Homes, 2 adults/room?
- Parking issues. Homes are not designed to handle this many cars.
- Code will not be able to enforce.

Mary Abel/48 Strathmore

- Presented a petition signed by 250 residents opposed to stand-alone tourist homes. Attached for reference (A).

Jack Stauffer/69 Elmwood

- Submitted five questions to City Council and the Mayor last night but he has not received any replies.
- Residents choose to live in R1 because of the zoning.
- Tourist homes, 6 unrelated people possibly living in the home, partying
- Most people are against this and most didn't even know about it.

Michele Papai/N. Congress

- Past BZA and City Council member. Current Affordable Housing Commission member.
- We allow tourist homes in our business zones already.
- Athens is rare in that 22% of the homes are owner-occupied and 78% are rentals. The average ratio is 60-70/40-30.
- Price point for affordability.
- Air BnB has strict rules and comment cards for both owner and renter.
- Who will enforce?
- So few houses in Athens.

Alan McMillan/209 E. State

- Times have changed. We live in a shared economy now and the question is how to bring control with this change.
- Few hotels in Athens for parents to come and stay to visit their children that attend OU.
- The concerns he hears are valid. Fearing the bad "what if's" and not acknowledging that good things can result as well.
- Currently has a license to rent the house next to his. If there are problems you lose your license.

Joan Kraynanski/Mound Street

- Document drafted by City Council and presented to the Planning Commission did not include the complementary piece, Title 11.13 Short-Term Rentals. Ms. Kraynanski read through her written statement which is attached for reference (B).

Martha Asgood/Grosvenor

- Lives in an R1.
- She knows the renters in Athens. We won't know the short term renters.
- Parking at her end of Grosvenor would not accommodate increased # of vehicles.
- Zones are zones for a reason
- Housing is changing in Athens. OU enrollment is down.

Jan Hodson/Graham

- 27 year resident in an R1 zone. She choose her location because of the R1 zoning.
- No need for additional tourist homes in this town.
- Many tourist homes are located just outside town.
- Why allow in R1 zones. Preserve our R1 neighborhoods!

Jim Murray/1st Street

- 41 year resident.
- OU enrollment is down. Property owners could approach LLC's to manage properties that aren't being rented.
- Don't know what will happen so go more slowly on this. Roll it out in R3 neighborhoods first.
- Unenforceable laws have been passed by council before. Why put on the books if they can't be enforced?
- If you rent a home to 3 you will want to rent to 6.

Betty Hollow/31 Maplewood

- Referred to articles which she presented to the commission (attached for reference, C).
- A-News article about the housing shortage included recommendations including 1. OU and City or organize and make homes more affordable, and 2. Improve Code Enforcement.
- Demand from OU students for rentals raises rent and reduces affordable housing.
- Her neighborhood was rezoned to R1 years ago and she does not want it to be rezoned.
- Are tourists more important than long term residents?

Karen Williams/Charles St.

- The Comprehensive Plan's Vision Statement included the desire to highlight and build historic districts, nurture and enhance different neighborhoods.
- The 2007 Comprehensive Plan focus on the eastside was referred to as an historical neighborhood.

Mary Abel/48 Strathmore

- Presented a list of questions (attached for reference, D).

Nikki Sherman/3 North May

- Her first question has been answered.
- Running an Air BnB is very hard and the rules are very strict. The people she has rented to are more respectful of the property than long term renters.
- Their house was built originally to serve as a "rooming house".

Jack Stauffer/69 Elmwood

- Is against this. Can have the BnB's in Athens without going into the R1 zones.

Stephanie Goldsberry/125 N. May

- Rules are a control.
- Parking has to be addressed.
- Controls have to be put in place.

Alyssa Bernstein/no address provided

- This is a question of law that will be on the books for a long time.
- Need a long-term view.
- Do the research. This will put an upward pressure on rent.

Martha Asgood/Grosvenor

- Clarifying that she is okay with having students next to her.
- When she says "not in my neighborhood", neighborhood is the key word.
- Should not look at this from an economic development standpoint.

- There will be impacts on R1 neighborhoods.
- On a daily basis she will not be sure who is in the short term rental.

Josh Radcliff/Curtis St.

- Affordable housing is few and far between.
- Parking issues, bedroom counts are concerns.
- Cautions to looks what is happening around the country.
- Understands the need to regulate.

Joan Kraynanski/Mound Street

- Regarding Mr. Fuller's comment, the question is several years ago City Council established regulations and designations for BnB's in Business and R3 zones. What brought this up? What is the rush?

3. **Adjournment**

RJ Sumney thanked everyone for coming and participating in a civil hearing.
The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

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RJ Sumney, Planning Commission Patricia Witmer, City of Athens

Robert Delach presented a letter (attached for reference, E) to City Planner Paul Logue at the Public Hearing for inclusion in the record.