



Town of Brunswick, Maine

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Short-Term Rentals

Overview

A new legislative commission has been reviewing approaches to increase housing opportunities in Maine and one subject they are evaluating is the impact of short-term rentals on the current housing crunch. A short-term rental, although not defined in State law, is generally considered the use of all or part of a legally-existing dwelling unit for rental to a person or persons unrelated to the owner or occupant of the unit, for consideration, for periods of less than one month.

Commission's Draft Recommendations

1. Establish a statewide registry of short-term rentals.

The purpose of a registry would be to permit the use of legally-existing dwelling units for the accommodation of short-term guests while ensuring the safety of the occupants and minimizing the impact of such use on the surrounding neighborhood.

2. Redirect a portion of "lodging tax" revenue to the municipality where short-term rentals are located.

There has been discussion of this occurring only if the Municipality is administering a short-term rental ordinance.

3. Create a category in State law to shift short-term rentals into a commercial assessment category.

This step would seek to recognize the commercial nature of the property, reduce the impacts on residential assessments, and balance out the tax burden.

Brunswick's First Steps

1. Examine policy.

Currently there is no ordinance or regulation in place specific to short-term rentals.

2. Identify short-term rental properties.

Airbnb lists roughly 150 rentals in Brunswick with about 130 being entire house rentals and 20 being private room rentals. Further inventory should be made to identify locations, property type, number of rooms available, and if the property is owner occupied or not.

3. Review impact of short-term rentals.

In addition to the Commission's review of impacts statewide, we should review impacts specific to Brunswick. Possible impacts include disruptions to supply and demand, displacement of long-term residents, and commercial property uses creeping up in residential zones.

4. Investigate regulation models.

Roughly 10 other municipalities in Maine have regulations in place. The strengths and weaknesses of each should be identified.

5. Continue to monitor the State's legislative direction regarding short-term rentals.

Short-Term Rental Regulation Requirements

www.brunswickme.org

1. Create a short-term rental ordinance.

Revisions would be needed to chapters 8, 10, 19 & appendix B in the Town’s Ordinance/Charter.

2. Create a permitting process.

- A. Determine permitting authority.
- B. Create an application requiring annual renewal.
- C. Determine a fee structure – considerations should be made to number of rentable units, owner-occupied property versus not owner-occupied, and life/safety measures incorporated (sprinklers, monitored fire systems, no smoking policies, etc.)

3. Determine how to enforce and who enforces.

- A. Registration – Planning, Clerks?
- B. Life/safety compliance – Codes, Fire
- C. Business personal property declarations – Assessing

Conclusion

Brunswick has well known recreational, educational, business, and medical resources that influence the demand for short-term rentals and there is a presence of these property types. The presence and impacts of short-term rentals are not a new issue, however, statewide regulation of them is in its infancy. Now is the time to begin reviewing their impact on the community and ways to manage them.