

Lacey Maxwell

From: Ellen Henry [REDACTED]
Sent: February 21, 2018 4:46 PM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council
Subject: Fwd: Short Term Rentals and a Hot Tourism Sector

Good afternoon,

I am forwarding an email I sent to you last month as I understand you will be reviewing this matter at tomorrow's meeting. I see that staff is recommending a licence fee of \$1500 for STRs that are not principal residences. I strongly disagree with this recommendation. It is not the job of one sector to cover enforcement costs and this fee is punitive. Why should a one bedroom STR pay more in licence fees than does a hotel?

In light of the recent Airbnb agreement which would see revenues generated to support affordable housing, it would appear that the City of Victoria is trying to stifle this initiative. Fewer licenced, tax collecting STRs means less money for this affordable housing budget. If anything you should be encouraging moves to add to housing stock. Why not come up with incentives for those who do decide to provide long term housing rather than punish those who don't?

I encourage you to reconsider the hard line the City has taken against STRs, especially by reducing the licence fee.

Thank you,
Ellen

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Ellen Henry <[REDACTED]>
Date: Thu, Jan 18, 2018 at 8:38 AM
Subject: Short Term Rentals and a Hot Tourism Sector
To: mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca

Good morning,

Tourism reports show that 2017 was another incredible year for the industry. After a number of years of solid growth, we are poised for more in 2018. However, staying in this city is in danger of becoming something only available to the wealthy. With hotels already near capacity and more closing to convert to long term housing, there is more pressure on room rates to rise. Tourism Victoria, nudged along by the hotel lobby, is delighted with this situation and reticent to allow any competition for hotels. Those travelling with children will be hard pressed to find affordable places to stay. When more than one bedroom is needed, rates of \$200 per night per room make our City off limits.

An alternative for families and for those who prefer a more home like accommodation option is short term vacation rentals. This is an excellent time for the City to work together with the growing short term rental industry to nurture growth of accommodation options.

Instead, the vacation rental industry is under attack in a short sighted move to solve the long term housing crisis. This is the wrong target not only for the above reasons, but also because the situation we are in was not caused by STRs. It was caused by many years of decisions that created an atmosphere where rental housing was not being built. We are now playing catch up, as are cities across Canada, and that unfortunately will take time.

I applaud the City's actions in streamlining zoning for "garden suites" and encouraging other innovation such as the proposal for 1126 Rockland to add 6 more rental units within the existing footprint. I also support cracking down on STRs in areas where the zoning never intended for their existence and they are creating a problem for residential neighbourhoods. The City squandered its ability to deal with this by not enforcing the existing bylaws and instead passing the harsh new policies in September. There are many other ways the City can encourage an increase in long term rental stock. Attacking the STR industry and hampering tourism growth is not one of them.

At our AGM last night, The Union passed some bylaws to help better manage STRs in the complex. I know that some buildings have issues with poorly managed units and stratas do have the ability to create rules and bylaws around this. A heavy handed approach by the City is not required.

There are many more measured steps that can be taken to address the long term housing challenge. I encourage you to explore other ideas and focus less on hampering the already at capacity tourism accommodation sector by shutting down STRs.

Thank you,
Ellen

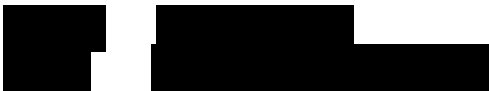
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Ellen Henry



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Ellen Henry



Alicia Ferguson

From: Public Hearings
Subject: RE: proposed changes to bylaws (18-036 and 18-035) to regulate short term rentals

From: Peggy Hunter | David Bellows
Sent: March 4, 2018 11:46 AM
To: Public Hearings <PublicHearings@victoria.ca>
Subject: RE: proposed changes to bylaws (18-036 and 18-035) to regulate short term rentals

Victoria City Council
RE: proposed changes to bylaws (18-036 and 18-035) to regulate short term rentals

I object strenuously to the proposed bylaws aimed at regulating air bnb. These bylaws are regressive and punitive. Moreover, they are being generated in a complete absence of data to evaluate the bigger economic and social impacts of such a backward decision (by a seemingly forward thinking city council) in a world where the sharing economy is so emergent.

There is considerable data to indicate that air bnb benefits cities and their citizens.

The sharing economy benefits the tourism industry tremendously. Moreover, the sharing economy makes it affordable for people to travel to places like Victoria and to extend their stay here.

Air bnb combats middle class income stagnation and helps homeowners afford their homes. Most air bnb hosts are not operating 'businesses'; they are trying to survive economically in cities that have become increasingly unaffordable.

There is no evidence to suggest that the wealthy multinational corporations that run most of Victoria's hotels have suffered significant income loss due to air bnb. There is however, evidence to suggest that **hotels in municipalities where air bnb is used have responded by reducing prices, an impact that benefits all consumers**, not just participants in the sharing economy.

While rental availability may be affected by air bnb in areas of the city close to tourist amenities, this has been attributed to a small segment (<10%) of air bnb hosts who have multiple listings available for full time air bnb. The proposed bylaws penalize the >90% of air bnb hosts who are not running an air bnb business. **These bylaw amendments will drive homeowners (and tourists) out of the downtown core.**

There is a very real need for short term rental. People coming to Victoria for educational programs or business development, people between homes, people leaving relationships, people looking for housing need short term accommodation.

Tax revenue collected at source (through air bnb on every rental) is administratively simple. This air bnb revenue should be earmarked for development of affordable / rental / social housing. Targeting homeowners who use air bnb to subsidize their housing related expenses is punitive to an already financially challenged group of citizens. Moreover **policing homeowners and administering the collection of licence fees or fines is likely to be costly or ineffectual (or quite possibly) both.**

I urge Victoria councillors to focus their time, energy and precious taxpayer dollars on collecting tax revenues at source (VRBO / air bnb) rather than policing homeowners. Please **reconsider the bigger picture** and the overall impact socially, culturally and economically of every aspect of the shared economy before passing these truly regressive bylaws.

Respectfully
P. Hunter
Victoria BC