

# **TOWN OF EATON PLANNING BOARD July 22, 2025**

The Planning Board met for a work session on July 22, 2025, at 3:00 pm. Present were Chairman Dennis Sullivan, Judy Wilson, Cindy Hall, John Hedden, and Kevin Conklin. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

## **Updating Short-Term Rental Regulations**

The main goal of this work session was to propose new ideas for ordinances governing short-term rental properties in the Town of Eaton. The Board agreed that putting a halt to all short-term rental properties in the Town was not an appropriate course of action, and Kevin Conklin pointed out that some residents may have a financial need to operate their home as a short-term rental. Cindy Hall stated that she is ok with having some short-term rentals in the Town, but that she is concerned with how the Town currently defines them. Chairman Dennis Sullivan suggested that the Town should encourage residents to rent for 31-night minimums, because any rental period over 31 nights does not qualify as a short-term rental. Chairman Sullivan also stated that he does not see an issue with people renting for over one month or longer, and that this would generally discourage renters who were looking for a weekend party house. Kevin Conklin informed the Board that the Eidelweiss neighborhood in Conway limits short-term rental bookings to only 3 times per year, or by the month or longer. John Hedden mentioned that the Town of Hanover only allows seasonal short-term rentals, and suggested the Board read their regulations for ideas on how to compose ordinances for Eaton. Judy Wilson shared that a friend lives next to a short-term rental home in Conway and has had many negative interactions with renters, including being bitten by a loose dog.

The Board reviewed the article "Controlling Short-Term Rentals: What Can Towns Do?" from the NH Office of Planning and Development in 2022. Kevin Conklin stated that the regulations must be fair and clearly defined. Chairman Sullivan stated that in previous court rulings, the State has been clear in indicating that property owners do not have unlimited options for what they can do with their property. Kevin Conklin stated that he likes the wording used in the "Home Occupation" section of the Zoning Ordinances, and that the ordinance should state that the Town wants to allow short-term rentals, but also preserve the quiet, peaceful nature of the Town. John Hedden stated that the Town needs regulations that point to the path of limited short-term rentals and limited problems with them. John Hedden suggested that the Town should compile a list of all the short-term rentals in Eaton and possibly have the property owners submit each renter's name and phone number. Chairman Sullivan stated that this would also be a good way to keep track of how many times a property was being rented. John Hedden stated that the residents

of Eaton want a pleasant community with people who behave themselves. Kevin Conklin stated that the Town has the right to regulate and restrict short-term rentals, and this should be referenced in the new Master Plan that is being written.

Cindy Hall noted that short-term rentals are not pre-approved based on the length of time they have been operating, unless they were in business when it was already legal. Cindy Hall also stated that the Town should stop giving any new permits to residents who are currently breaking the rules. Chairman Sullivan commented that there could be a requirement in put in place that residents must be in compliance of the rules for at least 30 days before appearing before the Board.

The Board worked on creating a new Zoning Ordinance for short-term rentals. The Board proposed the following wording for the new ordinance:

***“The purpose of this ordinance is to allow short-term rentals on a limited basis while maintaining the peaceful sense of community Eaton residents enjoy.”***

The Board also worked on a list of conditions to be proposed for the short-term rentals. Some of these suggestions included addressing the time and frequency of rentals, complying with State laws such as the New Hampshire Rooms and Meals Tax, creating a registry of owners for the Selectmen to reference if needed, and making sure the owners complete all safety inspections on their property. Kevin Conklin stated that restricting the frequency of renting will discourage people who only purchase property as an investment to rent out and never intend on living in the Town where the property is located. Kevin Conklin also stated that imposing a 3-night minimum for rental reservations will help to discourage renters who are only looking to have a party. John Hedden stated that limiting the number of times per year a property can be rented will also encourage longer rental periods and may also enable a positive relationship to form with neighbors.

Judy Wilson questioned whether the Board should keep the current rule stating that a property must be owner occupied while it is being rented. Kevin Conklin stated that the current rule is good because it encourages properties to be purchased with the intention of the owner living in the home for at least part of the year. Kevin Conklin also stated that the negative of this rule is that it is unreasonable to expect the owner to live on the property at the same time it is being rented. Kevin Conklin then suggested another requirement should be having a local caretaker or property manager if the owner does not live in town. The Board suggested clarifying this rule, and proposed the following wording:

***“The property must be owner occupied for some part of the year.”***

Judy Wilson suggested adding requiring a rental property to have a 911 Address sign and to make sure that the location of the property can be accessed by fire and ambulance services. Cindy Hall stated that she would like to see sewage disposal made a

requirement under the occupancy permit. Chairman Sullivan stated that the suggestions from the evening will be turned into a draft and submitted for feedback from Town Counsel, and that these results can possibly be discussed at the next meeting.

***Keving Conklin made a motion, seconded by Judy Wilson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.***

Respectfully submitted,

***Bethany Hicks***

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