TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

JOINT meeting: BOARD OF SELECTMEN and PLANNING BOARD

TUESDAY, September 10th, 2024 – 6:00 PM

West Brookfield Senior Center, 73 Central Street.

PRESENT: Mr. Sickenberger, Chair; Mr. von Bleicken, Vice Chair; Mr. Merkel, Clerk (Virtual); Jeff Taylor, Building Inspector; Chief Lapierre (Fire); Steve Carroll, Planning Board; Jason Paquette, BOH; Mary Jane Haesche, BOH; Chrissy Pare, BOH; Alexandria Florence, BOH; Heather Gough, Town Clerk; Melinda Czub, Planning Board; Gail Camara-Marks, Assessor; Ms. Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS.
GUESTS (residents): Dominic Paolucci; Gail Bruce; Brooke Stone; Christine Paquette; Catherine Peterson; Greg Allen; Camie Lamica; Justin Paquette.

6:00pm CALLED MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION: SHORT TERM RENTAL BYLAW

Questions arose about: AirBnB – Do they take taxes out?
Mr. Taylor – Who will enforce it? Ms. Haesche – Will they meet the egress codes? Would the Building Inspector to inspect the properties prior? BOH would like Section 16 of the STRB wording to be clarified. Zoning also asked if they would need "grandfathering" re: the properties who are already operating as an AirBnB, VRBO, etc. would be added to the list of the first properties

Comments re: the Day the Bylaw passes we may have a list of people who intend to apply for their properties to be listed as a Short-Term rental property. Town would hope that folks who operate their properties as a Short-Term rental would come forward prior to having forms and policies in place. Do we limit the number of properties listed as Short-Term rentals in the Town to 12? Ms. Pare added that we should add language for the specific use of the properties. We also may not have a max number of properties involved in this program. She added that there are holes in the regulations in the Bylaw as written re: what about infestation: rodents. There should be a Liability ins. requirement and a 24-hr. emergency contact # for the properties, including the Building code and animals permitted, etc. Ms. Pare will share a list of other Towns who have a Short-Term Rental Bylaw.

Added comments: The Article needs to be very specific. A list of regulations needs to be drawn up. Ms. Haesche added that many properties will be operating on the Lake. Are their septic systems up to date? Should there be a subset in the Article for properties on the Lake with regulations specific to them)? Mr. Taylor asked if we have the resources to oversee this? Ms. Haesche asked if we should develop a separate Board to deal with this.

Mr. Brown added that we should have a 1-master form, signed off by each Dept. involved. There should be a fine schedule and a board to oversee it. Possible annual and renewal fees as well. Mr. Merkel added that

complaints re: the properties should go through the BOS, not BOH. The job of dealing with addressing the complaints should fall to the Town Administrator. Ms. Camara-Marks added that we may have noise complaints. Mr. Brown added that Chief Hagglund could deal with these.

It was determined that this Article would not meet the Special Town Meeting deadline to be considered at the meeting this fall (2024). It needs to be amended. Clarity needed on the amount of nights properties are allowed to be rented.

Comments re: AirBnB help owners to pay taxes for each booking. The Town should be able to get this information. AirBnB also deal with negative renter comments.

The Town would look at receiving a 9% fee from each rental, which would be on top of the State fees that the property owners pay currently/booking.

Current property owners in town who have properties renting through companies like AirBnB, Vrbo, etc. are very happy with their relationships. They generally have good renters, who are respectful and many are repeat renters. AirBnB take care of the fees to the State. Property owners involved with Short Term Rentals feel that the 9% fee to the Town is too steep on top of their other fees.

Additional funds may be needed for the folks that will be doing the work related to oversee the Short-Term rentals in the Town as this will be beyond the scope of their normal duties.

9/26/24

Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time

~~Town Clerk~~

10/1/24

Date/Time