

## Mark Pruhenski

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**From:** Deb Phillips <deb@debphillips.biz>  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 7, 2021 3:52 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski; Chris Rembold  
**Subject:** Please read into record at Monday meeting

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In anticipation of your discussion of regulating short term rentals, I would like to weigh in on the side of community. One of the things I value most is that I live in a neighborhood. This means I know who my neighbors are, we know that we can call on each other in an emergency, and, during COVID, they were often the only people we had any contact with - conversations over the backyard fence or while walking down the street were important for human connection. In addition, I know that these are people who have invested in the neighborhood and the town and care about what is happening, whether a tree has come down, the power is out, traffic is moving too fast, or the road needs repairs. In short, I have a sense of community and safety. If more of the houses in my neighborhood are occupied by short term renters, empty in between, it detracts from the cohesiveness of a neighborhood, makes it less of a place I want to live.

Second, we are facing a severe shortage of housing which is contributing to a severe shortage of labor to keep the kinds of businesses and services that both residents and visitors want to see in Great Barrington; this ranges from stores and restaurants to health care.

I appreciate the proposal to allow the short term rental of rooms in owner occupied houses, or the use of ADUs in this way (though using them for long-term rentals would provide more affordable housing options), as people may need help to maintain their primary residence. I do not appreciate making it possible for investors and speculators to turn houses in residential neighborhoods into businesses that negatively impact the neighborhood. It is one thing to own rental properties that are lived in year round by those who do not own houses but want to live and work in this community. It is another to contribute to the shortage of year round affordable housing. I feel it is critical to limit the ability of people to turn neighborhood housing into short term rentals. The very character of Great Barrington is at stake if we do not stop this trend

Deborah Phillips, MS, LDN, IFNCP  
4 Highland Drive  
Great Barrington, MA 01230  
413 446-3205  
[deb@debphillips.biz](mailto:deb@debphillips.biz)

## Mark Pruhenski

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**From:** Stephen Bannon <scbannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 8, 2021 5:31 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski  
**Subject:** Fwd: STR proposal

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Sent from my iPhone  
Stephen Bannon  
413 -446 -6957

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** peter franck <peter@ftarchitecture.com>  
**Date:** November 7, 2021 at 3:00:40 PM EST  
**To:** scbannon@gmail.com, leighdavis99@gmail.com, edforgb@gmail.com, mollysdaddy107@gmail.com, ericfgabriel@gmail.com, jbhankin@gmail.com, pedro.pachano@gmail.com, bksnelson28@gmail.com, malcolm.fick@gmail.com  
**Subject:** STR proposal

Dear Select and Planning Boards,

The laudable goal of the short term rental proposal, as described, was to provide more starter housing and longer term rentals for moderate income families. The proposal posits that by making it illegal for second homeowners to rent their homes, more affordable housing would become available.

It seems the thinking behind this is that second homeowners would no longer be able to afford their homes, and would then, because of economic hardship, either be forced to sell their homes or rent them at a lower rate on a long term basis.

This seems to be dubious reasoning and in actuality is nothing short of a forcible attempt to wrest housing from one group (second homeowners) and giving it to another group (moderate income families).

The proposal has a net effect of creating ZERO new housing units.

**The only way to make more housing available is to make more housing!!! Not to limit one group's property rights in favor of another.**

If the town wanted to take positive steps to rectify a pressing crisis, it could offer positive incentives like tax breaks to those who rent their houses below market rate or enact zoning/administrative changes which make it easier to build affordable multi-family units. The Town could even tax short term rentals and apply the revenue to subsidize lower cost housing. Instead this invasive proposal puts an unfair onus on second homeowners.

Further, even if second homeowners sold or long term rented their houses, it is not at all clear that these homes would be suitable for moderate income families as property values, taxes and maintenance costs are prohibitive.

Additionally, no thought is given to the effect this will have on downtown business. Currently most of the restaurants and shops in town are thriving. Without short term renters and second homeowners, it seems obvious that business would be curtailed and downtown would suffer. This is a great concern which seems to have been entirely overlooked in the preparation of this proposal.

Another stated goal is to "limit development." This is absurd!!! If the goal is to create housing wouldn't the town want to create housing through development? For example, it could have negotiated affordable units in the permitting of Powerhouse Square, it could have negotiated affordable units in the Searles Hotel project. Instead, these were missed opportunities for the creation of housing. The town needs development to create more affordable housing.

Lastly, there is the issue of preserving the character of our neighborhoods and how STR's are supposedly destroying the fabric of our town. It was pointed out that only 6 or 9 percent of the current housing stock is rented on a short term basis. So at this point, this is hardly a pressing concern. However, this proposal would have an outsized negative impact on business and economic activity. It is xenophobic in casting second homeowners as evil. In fact, second homeowners and STR people add vibrancy and diversity to our town and should be supported.

Best

Peter Franck

## Mark Pruhenski

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**From:** Stephen Bannon <scbannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 8, 2021 6:15 PM  
**To:** Craig Okerstrom-Lang  
**Cc:** Mark Pruhenski; Ed Abrahams; Leigh Davis; garfieldreed.gb@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: Affordable Housing available now & in near future from Craig OL  
**Attachments:** 2021\_11 GB affordable housing current totals.pdf

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Thanks

Sent from my iPhone  
Stephen Bannon  
413 -446 -6957

On Nov 8, 2021, at 5:58 PM, Craig Okerstrom-Lang <craig@okerstromlang.com> wrote:

Dear Mark and Selectmen,

See attached table listing out current affordable / work force housing projects that are fully rented AND near future projects in the pipeline.

Regards, Craig OL

**Okerstrom Lang Ltd**  
*Landscape Architects*  
Established 1990S  
o k e r s t r o m l a n g . c o m  
17 Bridge Street, Suite 1  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

**Craig Okerstrom-Lang**, RLA, ASLA  
RLA: CT, MA, MI, NY  
(413) 329-6165 - mobile Studio



Design  
Master Planning  
Construction Management

17 Bridge Street, Suite 1  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

To: Antonio Segalla  
Claudia Laslie

**DRAFT for review**

From: Craig Okerstrom-Lang, RLA, ASLA

Date: October 30, 2021

Ref: Affordable Housing in Great Barrington, MA  
**As of November 2021**

The following addresses / buildings are currently all affordable / work force housing in town and are 100% occupied:

Location	Owner / Operator	Units
Flag Rock Village, Gibbons Drive, Housatonic	GB Housing Authority, Property Manager <i>MA State Dept of Housing &amp; Community Development maintains the units</i>	18 Family units 32 Senior units
Brookside Manor, South Main St, GB	GB Housing Authority, Property Manager <i>MA State Dept of Housing &amp; Community Development maintains the units</i>	22 senior/HC units 8 family units
Bostwick Gardens South Main Street, GB	Berkshire Housing Manages <i>Qualified senior only affordable housing</i>	29 units 31 units just added 2020
Bentley Apartments 100 Bridge Street, GB	CDC / Berkshire Housing manages	45
Hillside Avenue, GB	CDC / Berkshire Housing manages	10 units
Forest Springs State Rd/Route 23, GB	CDC / Construct / Berkshire Housing manages	11 units
____ East Street, GB	Construct Inc	6?
Blue Hill Road, GB	Richard Stanley, company? Percentage of homes are affordable	?
	<b>Total Affordable Units Occupied Now</b>	<b>214 +</b>



Design  
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The following affordable / work force housing projects are proposed in town:

Location	Owner / Operator	Units
Windrush Commons, South Main Street	CDC building starts late fall 2021 / Berkshire Housing to manage; 2023 occupancy	49 units
___Grove Street, GB	Habitat for Humanity To be for sale w restrictions; 2022 occupancy	2 units
North Plain Road, Housatonic	Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity / GB Affordable Housing Trust Fund – no projects defined TD but planning on building affordable housing	14-20 units
	<b>Future Affordable Units to be Built &amp; Occupied</b>	<b>68 - 74</b>

## Mark Pruhenski

---

**From:** Steve Bannon  
**Sent:** Monday, November 8, 2021 6:36 PM  
**To:** Deb Phillips  
**Subject:** Re: [Great Barrington MA] short term rentals (Sent by Deb Phillips, deb@debphillips.biz)

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone  
Stephen Bannon  
413 -446 -6957

On Nov 8, 2021, at 6:25 PM, Deb Phillips <deb@debphillips.biz> wrote:

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I would also like to post a reply to the last man who spoke at the hearing and stated that is that he is running a hospitality business in a residential neighborhood.

The impact of the proposed bylaw on the availability of affordable housing and the contribution of short term rentals to the economy can be debated, but, those of us who have chosen to live in residential neighborhoods have a right to not have a business next door. I have concern about what that business might do to my property value when I see the appeal of my property as being part of a neighborhood.

Thank you.

Deborah Phillips, MS, LDN, IFNCP  
4 Highland Drive  
Great Barrington, MA 01230  
413 446-3205  
[deb@debphillips.biz](mailto:deb@debphillips.biz)

On Nov 7, 2021, at 3:51 PM, Steve Bannon <[sbannon@Townofgb.org](mailto:sbannon@Townofgb.org)> wrote:

Deb thank you for your insightful email. I can't disagree with anything you said. I hope all is well with you and Bill.

Sent from my iPhone

primary residence. I do not appreciate making it possible for investors and speculators to turn houses in residential neighborhoods into businesses that negatively impact the neighborhood. It is one thing to own rental properties that are lived in year round by those who do not own houses but want to live and work in this community. It is another to contribute to the shortage of year round affordable housing.

I feel it is critical to limit the ability of people to turn neighborhood housing into short term rentals. The very character of Great Barrington is at stake if we do not stop this trend

Deb



## Mark Pruhenski

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**From:** Stephen Bannon <scbannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 8, 2021 5:20 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski  
**Subject:** Fwd: Better answers than constraining business

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Sent from my iPhone  
Stephen Bannon  
413 -446 -6957

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ron Blumenthal <ron\_blumenthal@icloud.com>  
**Date:** November 7, 2021 at 8:16:26 PM EST  
**To:** Steve Bannon <scbannon@gmail.com>, ericfgabriel@gmail.com, bksnelson28@gmail.com, malcolm.fick@gmail.com, kiresources@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** Better answers than constraining business

Hello:

With regard to Monday's combined board meeting - apologies for the length here - but this STR regulation is an awkward way to promote good development. I've been renovating and renting houses for decades and have thought about this - affordable housing / short term housing etc for all that time.

Promoting affordable housing is a worthy goal. Yet restricting how people use their houses, their scraped together savings - in restricting short term rentals - will not promote more housing; you'll create the opposite effect, LESS available housing. The data you referred to can be shown to skew in either direction. All data is questionable anyway; what ISN'T questionable is direct action - constraining commerce - is antithetical to a robust and fair housing market. There are better direct actions we can take as a town.

I've outlined our real estate business [so you can see my opinion has a basis from working this very job] and then offer a few suggestions at the end.

=====

to dictate how people make their living. It is a weak guess that these restrictions would have the desired effect of increasing 'below market rate' housing. More likely, it would reduce tax revenues for the town; and it seems unlikely that the goal of forcing 50 house sales at 'starter house prices' would happen. There aren't 50 houses that will come on the market at 250 and under. Those 50 houses are not going to go on the market for 1/2 their assesment - what kind of math is that? what kind of 'vision' came up with that? Wishful thinking - for a good cause - but that's not how to accomplish the goal.

By limiting short term rental, you are saying to people - 'don't take your savings and invest it in it the community where you live' - if you've scraped together the funds to purchase a 2nd house or investment property, or you've taken the risk of leveraging your primary house in order to invest where you live or work - DONT DO IT - because WE'RE going to dictate to you how you can use your personal savings. Why isn't a congruent board telling other local businesses, 'well you're gougers, and your price for: paint, a burger, shrubs, hardware, clothing - we're going to tell you how much to charge, and if you don't like it, get out'. That was a shocking thing to hear [though of course not verbatim]

When i buy a property, i'm further mortgaging my personal house to do so. I'm taking the risk. Whatever property i buy is empty for 10 - 30 months, while it's being renovated. That whole time, there is no abatement for taxes, water, sewer [and yes, it is possible to get them - but extremely onerous to do so here]. After 2 years of construction, not knowing what 'the market' may be, I'm putting my 400,000 - 600,000 house or set of apartments, out into the market, for rent or sale. The town provides me services which i pay for; are we partners in the cost of the house? has the town directly helped me with cash to pay labor or materials? If the apartment or house remains vacant, will the town cover my costs? The answer is NO - so why then does the town feel it can tell me WHO to rent MY PERSONAL PROPERTY TO - and FOR HOW LONG? There is the concept of property rights, and this is where we're at. How can you dictate my business decisions - ie who and how to rent?

Let's talk about 'work where you live'. It is unfortunate that it isn't widely possible in Great Barrington - but it isn't widely possible ANYWHERE. This is nothing new. I cannot afford to live in the town i grew up in; i cannot afford to live in the neighborhoods i worked in as a young person, nor could i at the time. THIS IS THE CASE ALL THROUGHOUT THE US and has been for decades. There is a national housing shortage, exacerbated by the 2008 housing finance debacle. This isn't unique to Great Barrington; limiting short term rentals does NOTHING to improve housing here. NOTHING. Great Barrington is NOT Barcelona, San Francisco, Cape Cod, Palm Springs, etc which is different market. To pretend that we have 'an airbnb problem' is a misreading; and should be decoupled from the real problems the town has - both regarding how difficult it is to do projects here, and 'market based housing'

There are answers though, if the town can you be moderately daring and innovative? why not try?

So - affordable housing - how to increase the availability?

A few observations about our experience renovating houses in GB for the last 20 years.

1. GB has NOT been friendly nor supportive regarding multifamily renovation / construction. I understand the reasons behind this, which i won't go into here, but it was and is short sighted, especially as a stated goal of the master plan & etc, is to have more

13. And finally - circling back - to the new owners who have recently moved here, with families, and who want to keep investing here. Why not see this as an opportunity to welcome new community investment, rather than demonizing them as 'outside investors' [and a side note - it's easy enough to see who owns "all the LLCs coming in." Just one more mouse click. You will note that this year - 5 of them related to us retitling property we've owned for years, having nothing to do with new investment or obfuscation].

Thank you again for your time in thinking about this and I hope you will add some of these points to your conversation.

Sincerely,

Ron Blumenthal

[also - your colleagues on the combined board have already received essentially this from me, so i thought i would spare them suffering through repetitive reading]

## Re Regulations for Short Term Rentals

Resident are being evicted to make way for re-purposing of existing housing stock. There is an increase in short term vacation businesses or second (extra) homes for part time occupancy.

Citizens want the town officials to look out for their best interests and to protect existing and future long term housing for residents in need; ie generations of families, our working population and our elderly.

Here is a real-time personal plea from a recently evicted resident and her son. Consider please the situation of this neighbor, a recently displaced– still a bit in shock, reeling from the experience, still looking for a good place to land.

Evicted persons say they are traumatized

“People do not want to give statements .. Evictions are very emotional , exhausting, humiliating and awful. It’s like asking a rape victims to go to the board and give a statement- no one wants to do it.”

Here are some direct quotes lifted from social media; statements made from the heart, if not by the victims themselves, by family members and witnesses in the community

Pay attention.

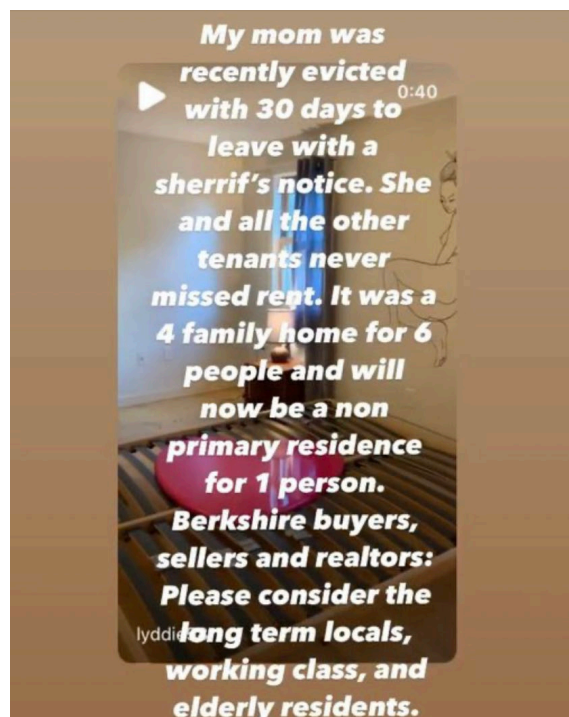
Thank you

Nan Wile  
Great Barrington

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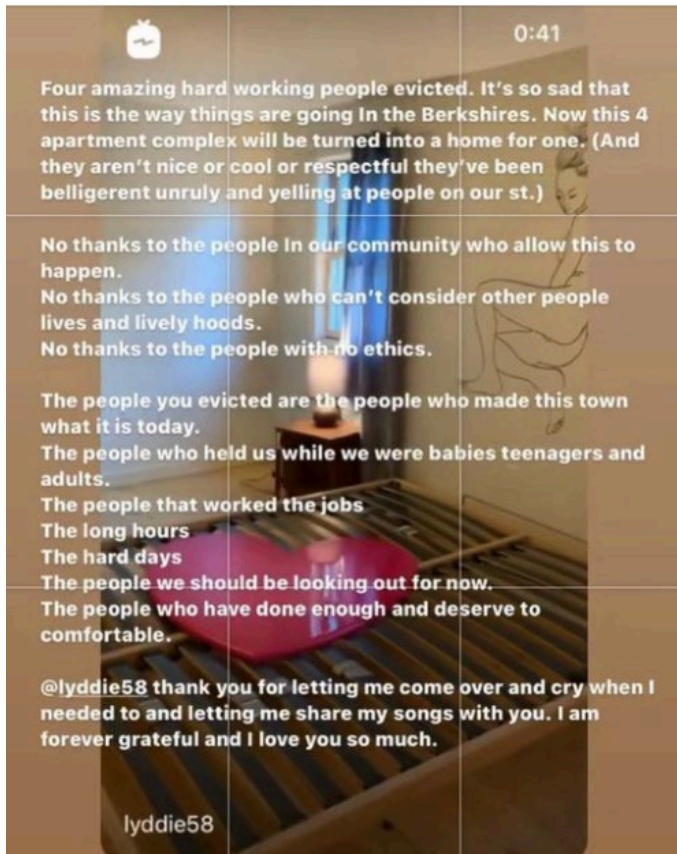
**Massimo Mongiardo, born and raised here, currently in Florida - flew up to help his mother pack**

*My mom was recently evicted with a sheriff's notice, given with 30 days to leave. She and all the other tenants never missed rent. It was a 4 family home for 6 people and will now be a non-primary residence for 1 person. Berkshire buyers, sellers and realtors: please consider long*



*tern locals, working class and elderly residents*

**Lydia Mongiardo, mother of two (grown adults), ex business owner 35+ year residents**



*Four amazing hard working people evicted. It's so sad that this is the way things are going in the Berkshires. Now this apartment complex will be turned into a home for one (And they aren't nice or cool or respectful; they've been belligerent unruly and yelling at the people on our street) No thanks to the people in our community who allow this to happen. No thanks to the people who don't consider other people lives and livelihoods. No thanks to these people with no sense of community, with no civic ethic The people evicted are the*

*people who made this town what it is today  
The people who helped us grow, held us when we were babies teenagers and be-friend us as adults  
The people who worked the jobs  
The long hours  
The hard days  
Who paid taxes  
The people who have built our community, deserve to be secure where they live  
These are our neighbors - people we should be looking out for*

Lydia got over 100 responses to this post – all in sympathy with her



Following: comments to the these posts  
or independently generated ones with a chart at the end

### Nan Wile

#### These two posts have moved me

Local long term rentals are being bought and converted to single family dwellings or STR (AirBNB & VRBO) properties. With a depleted rental stock of affordable housing in the area, residents are being evicted with cruelly short notice and no place to move to.

Last week a single mother, in Housatonic, with daughter and family dog was given 30 days; that falls about a week before Christmas, with nowhere to go

In GB a four unit long term rental property has dislodged 5 residents.

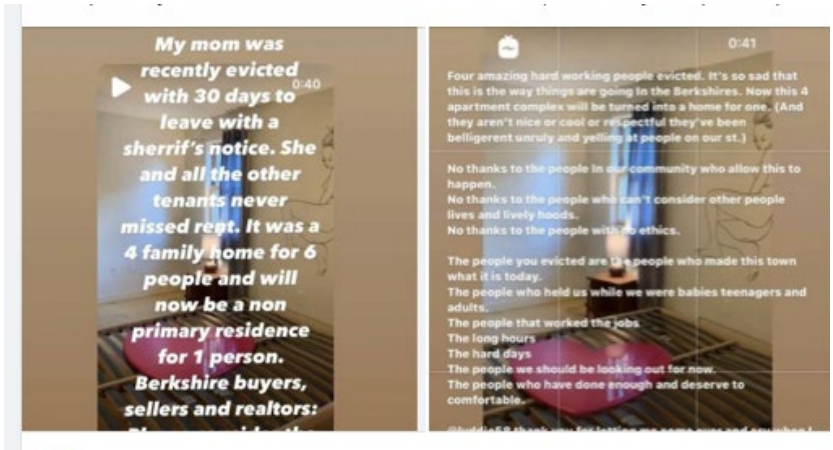
None of these evictions are for non payment, they are all for the benefit of investors.

Something criminal about this – don't you think.

Let's put reasonable limits in place to protect local residents.

Regulations are happening in cities all over the country and in Europe, let's fall into step and protect members of our community.

The idea is getting lots of push back from 2nd (i.e. "extra") home owners, AirBnb/VRBO type vacation investors and (equally vocal) large big party planners.



### Crane Morehouse

I agree, this is greed showing itself. And this is wrong. there needs to be a rule-law-the decent thing to do concept-for this not to keep happening. I notice it everywhere. And why would anyone want to remove 'your neighbor' for the wealthy unknowns? This is a local problem right in our backyard. Let's pay close attention and unveil a solution.....

### Nan wile

Short-term vacation rentals have un-housed several long-term residents recently. Affordable vacancies? A single mother with family dog was just served a 30day eviction notice, which puts her just a week shy of the holidays, with no where to go.

A sub-committee formed to look into a reasonable way to protect our resident community is

meeting with the Select and Planning Boards Monday Nov 29 at 6pm.  
There's been lots of push back by 2nd home owners, AirBnb/VRBO type vacation investors and (equally vocal) large big party planners. Defend your neighbors, come and speak up.  
Here's the agenda [https://www.townofgb.org/.../sb\\_november\\_29\\_2021\\_agenda..](https://www.townofgb.org/.../sb_november_29_2021_agenda..)

**Art Ames: In Messenger 68 yo 20 year resident of Berkshire County**

I moved because the owner of the house I rented for about 10 years wanted to sell it, and even though we had agreed on a selling price, at the last minute he raised it considerably because of the inflated market. I then could not find any realistic rental in the county, short of being up in North Adams, and ended up in Greenfield.  
... I wish you all the best. Sadly, nothing will happen unless the folks who live there with privilege step up, and there is no sign of that happening. I've said many times that if the same effort and funding that went into making the town anti single plastic water bottle went into housing and organizations like Construct, that would be something. But the sad reality is that whenever new and/or affordable housing is mentioned, NIMBY rears its ugly head...often more loudly in the neighborhoods of privilege.

THEBERKSHIREEDGE.COM <https://theberkshireedge.com/proposal-would-bar-out-of-town-speculators-from-operating-short-term-gb-rentals/?fbclid=IwAR1WGM8H5zKVUmn-hSraRYnXjYhDcsb3YW1YJ2t7eCdtel4DDCOd6jhRhUc>

**Proposal would bar out-of-town 'speculators' from operating short-term GB rentals**



**Nan Wile**

Housing Sub-Committee member and Select Board vice-chair, Leigh Davis, drafted a STR

(short term rental) by-law which has been presented at a joint meeting of the Select and Planning boards. It will need massive citizen support to ensure it gets to town meeting.

**Lucinda Hastings**

Housatonic Neighbors Oct 8 'John— looking at the bigger picture of our town as a community not as a commodity for outside investors, absentee landlords who buy up properties here for the sole purpose of renting out and making money. The idea is not to target people who live here as their primary residence and are part of the community part time at least."

**Frances Zigmand**

"maybe you didn't notice but our youth can't afford to live and work here. Also many who work here have to get apartments in Pittsfield. The tourist industry is partly the cause. (comment on Leigh's GB Comm Board post)

**Joey Chernila**

"That billboard actually made me miss Ben Metcalf" (comment on Leigh's GB Comm Board post)

**Ilene Semiatin**

"I think the problem is not so much the people with second homes that sometimes want to Airbnb them. That probably is no different now than at any time before. The issue is that now, People are buying up housing stock as investment properties that they have no intention of ever living in or even coming to. Those properties are short-term rented out all year long via Airbnb and similar ventures. And people who work two jobs and live here can barely find a place to live. I'm in favor of putting some reasonable restrictions in place so that second homeowners still have options but the folks who own multiple Airbnb properties are discouraged." (comment on Leigh's GB Comm Board post)

**Tom McCarthy**

"I support it and feel even residents doing short term rentals need to be subject to licensing, insurance and inspections(it's a public safety issue). Once you rent over 2 weeks a year it is considered a business as evidenced by the required payment of sales and lodging tax.

**Carol J. McGlinchey**

Housatonic Neighbors Oct 8 "Thank you for being the voice of those who have been silenced, marginalized, and pushed out of unaffordable Great Barrington. Why must we cater to real estate investors/speculators who do not cherish this town and the diversity and income of all of its inhabitants. Speak for justice and fairness Leigh. Do not let anyone take your voice away. You speak for the year round residents like me who are hoping we can afford to hold onto our houses, pay taxes, and live a simple life here."

**Tina Wells Gadway**



Post on Housatonic Neighbors Oct 8 "rentals and when I say that I mean affordable rentals in south county just don't exist. It's ridiculous. I was born and raised in south county and would love to stay but I just can't afford to live there. It's sad."



**Sara Morandi**

Post on Housatonic Neighbors Oct 8 "It's terrible, I know multiple families without a home.... Big problem!!!!" "There is very much a housing crisis. There's nowhere to live. I dare anyone to find a place"

Here is a chart which indicates short term rental situation has been of concern to municipalities across the country -- for many years.

 **COMPARED:** 

**Short-Term Rental Laws Across the Country**

City	Summary	Take Effect	Fine	STR License Fee	Additional Cost
New York	1. Can't rent out entire apartment (hosts must be present) 2. Can't advertise an apartment 3. Up to 2 paying guests	May 2011	\$1,000 - \$7,500 (illegal advertising of apartments)	N/A	1. Sales and use tax 2. Hotel room occupancy tax
San Francisco	1. Must register as a business and as a short-term rental 2. Hosts must be permanent residents 3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts 4. No income-restricted affordable housing	Feb. 2015	≥ \$484 (per day)	\$250	1. Transient occupancy tax 2. Business personal property tax
Los Angeles	1. Must obtain licenses 2. Must be primary residence 3. Up to 120 days a year	July 2019	≥ \$500 (per day)	\$89	Transient occupancy tax
Washington DC	1. Must obtain license, additional "vacation rental" endorsement for renting out an entire unit 2. Must be primary residence 3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts	Oct 2019	\$500 - \$6,000 (per violation)	TBD	Transient lodging tax
Chicago	1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license 2. Hosts with 1 home-share unit register through the rental platform 3. Hosts with ≥ 1 home-share unit must obtain license from city of Chicago 4. Vacation rental must obtain license	March 2017 (host registration)	\$1,500 - \$3,000 (per day)	\$0 - \$250	Hotel accommodation tax
Boston	1. Must obtain license 2. Must be primary residence or an secondary unit at their primary residence 3. No income-restricted units	Jan. 2019	\$100 - \$300 (per day)	\$25 - \$200	Same tax as hotel
Seattle	1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license 2. Hosts must register as a business and as a short-term rental 3. Up to 2 units 4. If operate 2 units, one must be primary residence	Sep. 2019	\$500 - \$1,000 (per violation)	\$75	1. Retail sales tax 2. Lodging tax 3. Business and occupation tax

Data source: Municipal Codes



**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Tonights joint meeting re STR  
**Date:** Monday, November 29, 2021 9:53:26 AM

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[STR Comments for posting.](#)

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**From:** Stephen Bannon <[scbannon@gmail.com](mailto:scbannon@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 29, 2021 8:35 AM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Tonights joint meeting re STR

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Stephen Bannon  
413-446-6957  
Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ron Blumenthal <[ron\\_blumenthal@icloud.com](mailto:ron_blumenthal@icloud.com)>  
**Date:** November 29, 2021 at 8:17:37 AM EST  
**Cc:** [jbhankin@gmail.com](mailto:jbhankin@gmail.com), Pedro Rafael Pachano <[pedro.pachano@gmail.com](mailto:pedro.pachano@gmail.com)>, [bksnelson28@gmail.com](mailto:bksnelson28@gmail.com), [malcolm.fick@gmail.com](mailto:malcolm.fick@gmail.com), [kiresources@yahoo.com](mailto:kiresources@yahoo.com), Steve Bannon <[scbannon@gmail.com](mailto:scbannon@gmail.com)>, [leighdavis99@gmail.com](mailto:leighdavis99@gmail.com), Ed Abrahams <[edforgb@gmail.com](mailto:edforgb@gmail.com)>, Garfield Reed <[mollysdaddy107@gmail.com](mailto:mollysdaddy107@gmail.com)>, [ericfgabriel@gmail.com](mailto:ericfgabriel@gmail.com)  
**Subject: Tonights joint meeting re STR**

Here's why i'm opposed to this STR

1. The primary objective of the regulation is to increase affordable housing. So where's the new housing? This regulation does not build or create one new unit, and in reality, has a bad effect - stopping investment and revenue.
2. There are other more effective solutions than this to promote affordable housing. Yes, airbnb / STR can have a questionable reputation particularly in the national news stories; and strident regulations are an effective way to get publicity and notice - but to what end? and why? The national news issues about airbnb are not our situation in GB; it is completely different here - STR is families, not party houses (with one or 2 exceptions that have rightly been shut down); and there is massive historical precedent within the economy here in GB for doing this. Literally decades of it as a piece of our economic tapestry. To eliminate this is short sighted, and frankly, not the level of thinking i expect from

my elected officials. What IS true here that is true nationally, is that there is a housing shortage - which has NOTHING to do with airbnb. To cherry pick data, as was done for the STR reg, or as I can do to support my point of view - is weak analysis. The 30,000 foot view - which is the right one - is there has been a dearth of new units in the US and here too - let's do our part to repair it locally. It's not that hard (yes, it IS that simple).

3. I will briefly outline how to promote affordable housing / additional housing in GB at the end of this - again. It's harder to execute a real solution, than this top down town seizure of airbnb properties - which is what your regulation winds up being - but if you can put your energy into this misguided if well intended regulation, you can instead put your energy into an intelligent answer.

4. Again, while i do not do STR in Great Barrington, it is overreach for the town to tell me how to run my business, which is a legitimate tax paying benefit producing business in Great Barrington. I have spent decades carefully husbanding resources in order to do what i do. The town is not my partner in renovation, financing or management, yet the new regulation proposes to muscle into my business, dictating how to operate, who to rent to, and for how much, while not participating in the associated expenses and implementing invasive monitoring and fines. This diktat ignores financial reality, or says - run at a loss, we'll force you to sell at a loss, we don't care. Central financial planning of this nature doesn't work; CF Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Venezuela, & etc. On the other hand, intelligent development and planning - far different than this - has proven itself in many places - why do the least progressive thing then?

5. The town has only participated in the upside of my decades of renovation work: the housing stock i've brought back from collapse and added back to the tax rolls, employment i've provided at every level, loans from local banks continuing to circulate local money in our local businesses, materials bought from local sources, contractors from south county & etc. There is no subsidy from Great Barrington for any of this. Now the Great Barrington select and planning boards are asking me to pay for it's lack of planning, while at the same time asking me to say thank you for demonizing my business.

6. The back of the envelope formula for getting more housing here - far less elaborate than the proposed bylaw with it's payments to non-local punitive monitoring agencies for compliance and fines is:

1. Establish a board/agency composed of people who have ACTUALLY BUILT HOUSING IN GREAT BARRINGTON [builders, architects, contractors, all us 'evil developers', town planner, planning boards, people with actual financial understanding and links to the financial infrastructure (bankers, grant writers, financial planners etc)]. Regretfully, it doesn't seem as if the current committee has a huge depth of experience in building multiple units. Use the resources available here already - look outside the narrow confines of personal experience.

2. know what a unit of housing actually costs to either build or renovate [250k - 350k all in - so again, how does one force 40/ 50 / 70 units of housing to come on the market at a 'starter home price' below that? that

math is faulty.]

3. The key piece here - quickly develop a low cost pool of loan or grant monies solely for the project of quickly assessing and implementing a real plan for actually building something real - as opposed to this publicity stunt. This is possible; it's done all throughout Massachusetts and other states - municipal bonds which pay off for all stakeholders. This has been done in adjacent towns even, for other purposes. Not to mention draw upon the resources of all the agencies which already exist here. No need to reinvent the wheel; just make it roll faster.

4. Get housing built / renovated. Identify all the properties and locations in GB which are in need of renovation help or replacement. When one starts looking for properties in distress here - it is quickly obvious that there are many houses just a few clicks away from needing serious remediation.

Offer a menu of options using the low cost monies available (from collaborating in repairing with the mechanism of offering 'market rate housing' in part or all of it, to adding to the inventory of our local housing agencies). And this has been successfully done in municipalities all throughout the US. Why not here?

Come on elected officials with deep intellectual resources! - there are better answers to our housing inventory issues than this STR regulation which does nothing but create discord.

Thank you.

Ron Blumenthal

## Short-term Housing Proposal

I am writing in support of the Short-term Housing proposal set forth by Select Board member Leigh Davis. Ms. Davis's presentation a few weeks ago at the SB/PB joint meeting reflects her ongoing process of thoughtful examination and extensive research into a controversial matter that, in the long-run, affects our entire town.

I think that it is important to underline that Ms. Davis' proposal does not eliminate the option of short-term housing, but rather it lays out a sensible standard of regulations and limits on this fast-growing business that to-date has met with little or no regulation or accountability – this unlike every other business in Great Barrington.

I would like to address here two of the arguments put forth by the opponents of Davis' proposal. The first relates to the improvements carried out on the properties to be used for short-term rentals. While any property improvement is of course commendable and beneficial to our community, the implication is that only owners in the business of short-term rentals will invest in these improvements. Aside from other issues I have with this notion, I have personal knowledge of at least one bed-and-breakfast in town where the owners have engaged in constant upgrades and renovations basically since their purchase of the inn about six years ago – these proprietors over this time have had a steady flow of visiting guests who contribute to our town businesses, they employ local workers in all areas of their inn's maintenance and renovation, and they contribute by paying all the many taxes and fees required by the town and state. And I would venture to suggest that they are not alone in this.

A second argument is that short-term housing offers options that would otherwise be unavailable to visitors here, that they would opt to bring their business to other towns. This, too, is a faulty implication, as a number of the traditional lodging establishments in Great Barrington do offer a variety of housing options, including extended stays – and again, these traditional establishments comply and contribute to benefit and support our community.

The question of short-term housing is multi-faceted, and must be examined proportionately and with a long-term vision if it is to be valued as a viable option woven into the fabric of the long-term needs and direction of Great Barrington. It is clear to most of us that the long-term needs of Great Barrington include a strong tourism, but in focusing on tourism I believe that we must not lose sight of the broader priority of a strengthened permanent population that is built upon stability, can provide a local base of employees who can afford to reside, patronize and work in our community, of children to attend our schools, and be a consistent and predictable social and economic base for our neighborhoods to grow upon.

Barbara Matz  
Great Barrington