

**From:** [Great Barrington MA via Great Barrington MA](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#); [Carmen Morales](#)  
**Subject:** Comments/Questions to Selectboard & Town Manager  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 2, 2022 4:20:47 PM

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Submitted on Wednesday, February 2, 2022 - 4:20pm  
Submitted by anonymous user: 2603:7080:b53f:6a2:9c9a:81c7:10bb:9600  
Submitted values are:

Subject: Comments/Questions to Selectboard & Town Manager  
Message:

Letter to Select Board from January 31

Dear Select Board,

I don't understand the insistence upon micromanaging how people use their homes, make their money (as if it is a bad thing) and attempts to "lower the playing field" while dictating people's real estate goals and financial planning. Honestly, it is hard enough to earn money at all in 2022, but especially so here in the Berkshires. We are all doing the best we can to keep it all going, in this wealthy, and costly, town that we live in. Why stop with home rentals? Why isn't there an action to curb food prices at the markets where it costs \$100 for a bag of groceries. A local GB restaurant costs a minimum of \$70 for 2 people to eat out and that doesn't include a glass of wine.

I never expected to move into a house in Birmingham Michigan (rental or purchased) when I moved out of my parent's house. I went to a lower rental area, earned, saved, and eventually found my way here to this lovely affluent town. Even back in 2005 my mortgage costs \$500,000+ for a 2300 sq ft house 2300 that needed everything. This idea that everyone ought to be able to afford a house in the same town they grew up in just doesn't add up.

Leigh was allowed to go on for what felt endlessly, regarding her justification for the 90-day restriction, comparing Great Barrington to SF or to Lenox, which, I am sorry just doesn't compare at all to GB. I won't address SF, but let's look at Lenox: a bustling viable town for Summer and Fall only and I know several hosts who won't even try to do a STR here because even the more moderate restrictions in place are prohibiting. They are offering their places for longer term stays but nowhere close to \$1500 or even \$2500. They are getting \$4000 right on up to \$10,000 per month, off season, for transitioning families trying to be here for 3 – 6 months before purchasing a home or for the odd winter ski rental. Lenox is considered to be too far from the ski mountains, so it isn't as popular in winter.

A little background: many people rent for the full season (December through March) and then actually use the houses on weekends/holidays so don't want to drive another 30 or 40 minutes to participate in the race teams at Butternut and Catamount. There are MANY of these type rentals available to wealthy people and they are mostly found on Airbnb. Which brings us to Great Barrington, which does have a robust tourist economy 9 or 10 months of the year (Summer, Fall weekends, all holidays, and the ski season) with April and November mostly

quiet, except for Thanksgiving. There should not be a restriction on the days allowed. If you must have one than make it 225 days minimum. There are oodles of higher end long term rentals always available through Airbnb if you shut these down you WILL NOT create affordable housing. Who will be excluded with a 90-day restriction, are the less wealthy people/families with kids, who want to come up for a few weekends or weeks in winter. They will not be able to because the 90-days already used up in Summer and a few fall weekends. These families, with pets, etc., will not likely choose to stay in a hotel or inn and they will go to other towns.

There are long term homes becoming available regularly through MLS. I just checked the shoppers guide and there are 4 long term homes available, for \$2500/month or less. Please, stop saying there isn't any inventory. It isn't true, it stirs everyone up, and is creating tremendous division within our community! Further, from data presented to the select board on several occasions, solid affordable housing will soon be available. This is exciting and this is where we should be focused, along with ADUs.

Not permitting corporations to purchase and rent short-term only for profit already does what Leigh wants to do by limiting to 90 days! Why didn't anyone mention that from the board?

Locals are not going to be able to float Great Barrington when all the tourists go elsewhere. The pricey costs of goods are directed at these tourists. We will be back to empty storefronts if Leigh's 90 days restriction go into effect. Please take a walk downtown, during the week. It is very quiet...

The idea that owners, who have put so much time and energy into fixing up their older house and into local economy by doing so, ought to be grateful to break even on their "\$30,000 mortgage" is NONESENSE! Why should they be limited to breaking even? They have maintenance, cost of renovations and upgrades, cleaning, their own time, and money to manage both the listings and the renters who sometime call several times a day! These people work hard whether they are doing it themselves or have hired someone else to assist with it – again spending money on the local economy, bringing high taxes to the town, and further lowering their small profit margin. They deserve to be paid for all the efforts they make to be creative and supply a service to the town.

Please, stop this micromanaging of people's ability to earn money, through honest hard working, to better their lives, pay their mortgage, put their kids through college, take a vacation, keep the house updated, spend locally, and who are bringing new guests to our lovely town who also keep the town businesses afloat.

Lastly, it was distressing that citizen speak was allocated to the very end of the meeting. From what I have heard, from several attending, 10-15 people weren't able to stay on another hour+ to share their thoughts, myself included.

As a hard-working single mom, real estate agent, and running my rental business, I have not wanted to be involved in this ongoing discussion... but I must weigh in, because I do have solid facts and information.

My best,  
Claudia Laslie  
413-854-7422

==Please provide the following information==

Your Name: Claudia Laslie

Your E-mail Address: [claudia@berkrentals.com](mailto:claudia@berkrentals.com)

Organization:

Phone Number: 4138547422

==Address==

Street: 29 Benton ave

City: Great Barrington

State: Massachusetts

Zipcode: 01230

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.townofgb.org/node/2/submission/6651>

**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Cc:** [Chris Rembold](#); [Garfield Reed](#); [Ed Abrahams](#); [Eric Gabriel](#); [Leigh Davis](#); [Steve Bannon](#)  
**Subject:** FW: STRs Manning  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3, 2022 3:59:06 PM

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Amy- for the STR comments section on our website. Thanks. -m

-----Original Message-----

From: James Manning <[wjlconnections@gmail.com](mailto:wjlconnections@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Thursday, February 3, 2022 3:50 PM  
To: Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
Subject: STRs Manning

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I went ahead and wrote my opinion. Is there a way to submit this to the town? I have already sent it to BE, BE, Adam Hines, Smitty, and WAMC. Let me know if I am missing anyone.

Short Term Rentals  
Opinion by  
Great Barrington Resident

A simple question: Can this deep-blue county's progressive population live its truth, and agree that without multi-family and affordable housing, the service industry that we all rely on is dead. My friends, research is no longer necessary. Who is going to buy property on a lake that is dead?

I read the recent transcription of "It's Not That Simple" and the report from the 2.2.22 Great Barrington town meeting. Jeez, surprise: Greedy owners v burdensome town. The town is being burdensome because (truthfully) GB has a thriving diverse residential community where people live, and rightfully should not have commercial activity next door.

Meanwhile, investors have been buying houses based upon a cap-rate, and want more and more, because, well, it's pure capitalism.

Is the lake thriving, teeming with life, or dying? Who prefers a town where there will be no one to serve you coffee downtown, or serve you at a restaurant, or sell you groceries, or manage your prescriptions, or lifeguard your kids, or teach you skiing, or work at your gyms, or take care of your kids, or administer your kids' education, or repair your cars, or maintain your property, or fix your pipes, or sell you weed.

Without solid legal rules governing, and restricting STRs, the future is completely predictable! Corporate aggregators will come in and do a roll-up of as many single-family homes as possible. It's inevitable. Everybody in the banking, investment banking, real estate, lodging, and legal fields merely have to lay their M&A model on top of STRs and soon enough, "Marriott Air" and "Ramada Homes" will be the largest owners of Berkshire property. Then expect a subscription model like Vail's "Epic Pass" and the whole world will stream through the town, the town formerly known as Great Barrington.

STRs? Yeah, sure, but the agreement must preserve community and be the most forward-looking and compelling set of rules and regulations in the country, a model for other communities to follow. Owners' will have to accept lower returns and figure out some other way to get value out of their property, maybe even by living there. And please admit, you don't even want a property on a dead lake.

James Manning  
646.468.4057

**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Cc:** [Steve Bannon](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [Great Barrington MA] Short Term Rentals (Sent by James Garzon, jmsgarzon@gmail.com)  
**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2022 12:38:16 PM

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Amy- For the STR comments section on our website.

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**From:** Steve Bannon <sbannon@Townofgb.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2022 12:33 PM  
**To:** jmsgarzon@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: [Great Barrington MA] Short Term Rentals (Sent by James Garzon, jmsgarzon@gmail.com)

Mr Garson thank you for your suggestions. I assure you the Selectboard will not rush while trying to develop a suitable bylaw for this years annual Town Meeting.

Stephen Bannon  
413-446-6957  
Sent from my iPad

On Jan 31, 2022, at 12:29 PM, Contact form at Great Barrington MA  
<[cmsmailer@civicplus.com](mailto:cmsmailer@civicplus.com)> wrote:

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Hello sbannon,

James Garzon ([jmsgarzon@gmail.com](mailto:jmsgarzon@gmail.com)) has sent you a message via your contact form (<https://www.townofgb.org/user/76/contact>) at Great Barrington MA.

If you don't want to receive such e-mails, you can change your settings at <https://www.townofgb.org/user/76/edit>.

Message:

Dear Chairperson Mr. Bannon,

I wanted to address some of my concerns directly regarding the possible short term restrictions.

The proposed changes shouldn't be rushed to meet the Spring deadline as there is much discourse and petitions are already being created to stop the bylaw changes.

The narrative that short term rentals stifle affordable housing isn't a complete

story. Affordable housing is being addressed by planning board not only approving new developments, but creating feasibility studies on possible new developments. Please take into consideration the over 150 affordable housing units already created or about to be available by March 2023.

I do appreciate and support the Selectboard's effort, but let's not try to fix one issue with prohibiting a free market while hurting homeowners, businesses and tourists who are needed to support the community. Let's work in conjunction with the planning board who continues to approve developments and find potential solutions on the affordable housing units issue.

You can't make everyone happy, but hopefully we can compromise for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,  
James Garzon

**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Subject:** FW: for sale  
**Date:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 5:30:22 PM

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Another STR email.

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**From:** Stephen Bannon <[scbannon@gmail.com](mailto:scbannon@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 5:03 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: for sale

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Sent from my iPhone  
Stephen Bannon  
413 -446 -6957

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Naomi Blumenthal <[naomi.is.outside@gmail.com](mailto:naomi.is.outside@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** December 2, 2021 at 5:01:36 PM EST  
**To:** 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), [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)  
**Subject:** for sale

Dear members of the Boards,

There are 52 available single family houses in Great Barrington right now, as of December 2nd. Many of them in the \$350-400,000 range and actually, the prices are noticeably dropping. You can see a link here:

[https://www.trulia.com/for\\_sale/Great\\_Barrington,MA/SINGLE-FAMILY\\_HOME\\_type/price;a\\_sort/](https://www.trulia.com/for_sale/Great_Barrington,MA/SINGLE-FAMILY_HOME_type/price;a_sort/)

Leigh Davis said she wanted to make 50 homes available, here they are already.

So why the law enforcement effort to try to take houses from people who have managed to buy them and fix them up and furnish them already, with a lot of

personal money out-of-pocket? (And really, being fixed up and fully furnished, do you think they will even be anywhere near the price range of the houses that are on the market already? Absolutely not!) It is wildly unfair to change the rules of the rental game AFTER people have structured their lives and livelihoods around earning a living this way. Perhaps some changes could be made going forward but retroactively essentially punishing homeowners for their improvement of existing stock seems like authoritarian overreach. And very likely will not have the desired effect of 'freeing up' housing for low-income individuals. It does not make sense that that would happen, at all.

If the goal is to tell "strangers" "outsiders" "second home owners" and "out of town investors" - all terms being tossed about shockingly casually in these meetings - that they are unwanted by the town, that they are a nuisance, that their investments in the town, and retail, and restaurants, and ski places-are unwelcome, perhaps that should be made more openly stated by the Board, if that is the goal. Because that is what Leigh's proposal makes clear. (I would really like to think that we are a more welcoming community to the to-be and recently moved here folk, just as we would be to immigrants of all kind and so forth.

Shutting the doors and implying that people who grew up here or have lived here for a LONG TIME are allowed to be here is unfair and ugly.)

If the desired goal is to add more housing however, let's add more housing.

There are committees that have been charged with that...this should not be put on the shoulders of homeowners to solve. I think Leigh's bringing attention to the need for housing in this way is useful in that it may spur more creative thinking by the town as to how to go about that exact thing, with an actual concrete outcome. It requires some creative new thinking. What about turning an existing, for-sale nursing home into new starter apartments and rental worker housing?

What about taking empty standing houses such as "StoneGate" on West Ave or the one on Hillside Ave, or the one on the corner of East and Humphrey st, and renovating them for multi family use? Could they be had for back taxes? What about acquiring run-down motels for low-income rental units? Would that not be a win-win? Instead of being a blight on neighborhoods, they could be renovated assets.

Also, the tax monies that are currently being collected from short term rentals can be put toward building/renovating the new housing, which seems fair and right, instead of losing that with the proposed regulation. Renovating existing houses can certainly be done for less than the 1/2 a million dollars PER APARTMENT as the cost of the new built housing at 100 Bridge Bentley apartments was, and be more nicely integrated into the fabric of our community.

My proposal is that rather than strong-arming homeowners into having to sell their renovated and furnished houses, or by internet surveillance and essentially spying on private citizens, (and costing the town money to do so) why not put energy toward improving standing empty housing and or find other creative ways of actually making more places for people to live?

I would like to think that we are a welcoming community to people who want to live here, not just welcoming to SOME people. Let's make that happen by

creating more housing, and also by being open to recognizing the value and benefit of short-term renting to the town. I would also like to point out that in the last few years, we have short-term rented to people (at our rental place in Alford) who then went on to buy houses in Great Barrington. They went from “strangers” to “one of us”. Please remember that that is often how people make their way here, and many have become friends and good neighbors since. This is very common. Let’s not be xenophobic and judgmental as a town. Let’s be proactive in improving the town housing for more people to live here. Banning short term rentals and penalizing the second home owners (who have been here a long time, too let’s not forget, and are our friends and neighbors, who shop at the Coop, etc) is a big mistake.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

Sincerely,

Naomi Blumenthal

**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Subject:** FW: For Select Board meeting 1/18  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 18, 2022 7:38:21 PM

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[For the STR comments on our website.](#)

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**From:** Nan Wile <[nanwile@gmail.com](mailto:nanwile@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 18, 2022 1:12 PM  
**To:** Steve Bannon <[sbannon@Townofgb.org](mailto:sbannon@Townofgb.org)>; Leigh Davis <[leighdavis99@gmail.com](mailto:leighdavis99@gmail.com)>  
**Cc:** Wile Nan <[nanwile@gmail.com](mailto:nanwile@gmail.com)>; Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>; Chris Rembold <[crembold@Townofgb.org](mailto:crembold@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** For Select Board meeting 1/18

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Steve,

Please, share with your board before the meeting tonight. I have serious illness close by and was pulled away from the computer - and didn't send it earlier as I thought. Regrets for that

It's another interesting article about the impact of short-term rentals on community (and market pricing - which raises property assessments - a hot topic now for GB residents)

Most of our elected officials are reasonable folk and I have nothing but praise, however as I scan the posts on social media about this - and read the comments on the town website I have a different reaction. My strongest impression is that collaboration is almost a foreign construct. Much of the approach to this issue has been characterized by polarizing sentiment. It's discouraging when board members behave as antagonistically as those politicians on out national stage.

From the beginning there have been cries for numbers and statistics from those on the sub-committee opposed to regulations. These often came as a challenge tainted with distain and insult (inferring naive perspective and shallow research). Then they offered nothing themselves

Please - this is an important issue - let's look at this as an occasion for healthy productive dialog, rather than embracing every difference with criticism. A collaborative conversation between neighbors and colleagues with different opinions would be a pleasant change.

A bit of a rant but I mean every word.. These articles will inform the discussion.  
Enjoy

[https://thetvee.ca/Analysis/2021/12/17/Housing-Human-Right-Profitable-Asset/?utm\\_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm\\_medium=web-email&utm\\_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections&fbclid=IwAR2eV0Ib0uyBEy4gD0SpLnlyZojarrscSVA-v5fAwxMPGdwhrEkW-R2T9g](https://thetvee.ca/Analysis/2021/12/17/Housing-Human-Right-Profitable-Asset/?utm_source=Sightline%20Institute&utm_medium=web-email&utm_campaign=Sightline%20News%20Selections&fbclid=IwAR2eV0Ib0uyBEy4gD0SpLnlyZojarrscSVA-v5fAwxMPGdwhrEkW-R2T9g)

On Jan 16, 2022, at 8:52 AM, Nan Wile <[nanwile@gmail.com](mailto:nanwile@gmail.com)> wrote:

An important article was posted to a reminder of Tuesday's SB meeting (FaceBook)

".. And analysis conducted by the *Economic Policy Institute*, a non-profit, non-partisan American think tank, found that the economic costs of Airbnb likely outweigh the benefits:"

".. Research conducted by the *Harvard Business Review* across the US found that Airbnb is having a detrimental impact on housing stock as it encourages landlords to move their properties out from out of the long-term rental and for-sale markets and into the short-term rental market."

[https://www.forbes.com/sites/garybarker/2020/02/21/the-airbnb-effect-on-housing-and-rent/?sh=559879e82226&fbclid=IwAR1TIDU9zOGg-WT56D0v5Jq11S5AzJFOtjOeEkwiifZlo\\_6qCFMZeUhm9g](https://www.forbes.com/sites/garybarker/2020/02/21/the-airbnb-effect-on-housing-and-rent/?sh=559879e82226&fbclid=IwAR1TIDU9zOGg-WT56D0v5Jq11S5AzJFOtjOeEkwiifZlo_6qCFMZeUhm9g)

Hope you all are safe and cozy during this cold snap. Warm MLK day greetings to you.

N

NAN WILE  
413-429-5695

909 South Main Street 1-C  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

**From:** Mark Pruhenski  
**To:** Carmen Morales; Ed Abrahams  
**Cc:** Amy Pulver  
**Subject:** RE: Email to the board  
**Date:** Thursday, January 20, 2022 2:20:25 PM

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Thanks Carmen. Can you send that along to the full board and also post it with the other STR comments on our website?

-----Original Message-----

From: Carmen Morales <CMorales@Townofgb.org>  
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2022 1:58 PM  
To: Ed Abrahams <cabrahams@Townofgb.org>  
Cc: Mark Pruhenski <MPruhenski@Townofgb.org>; Amy Pulver <apulver@Townofgb.org>  
Subject: RE: Email to the board

-----Original Message-----

From: Ed Abrahams <cabrahams@Townofgb.org>  
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2022 1:48 PM  
To: Carmen Morales <CMorales@Townofgb.org>  
Subject: Email to the board

Claudia Leslie said she sent a letter to the SB through the contact us form on the website but I haven't gotten it. Did you receive it?

Thanks.

Ed Abrahams  
413-717-1043

---

From: Great Barrington MA via Great Barrington MA <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, January 19, 2022 2:22 PM  
To: Amy Pulver <apulver@Townofgb.org>; Morales, Carmen <CMorales@Townofgb.org>  
Subject: Comments/Questions to Selectboard & Town Manager

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Submitted on Wednesday, January 19, 2022 - 2:22pm Submitted by anonymous user: 2603:7080:b53f:6a2:a930:479e:eca5:9bd6

Submitted values are:  
Subject: Comments/Questions to Selectboard & Town Manager

Message:

Dear Select board and Town Manager,

My notes, following last night's discussion on 1/18/22, are as follows:

- 1) There are rentals available here and there, per the notices I forwarded on to Chris, through MLS. While everyone acknowledges that there is not a glut of housing available for affordable LT needs, and this is a deep concern for our community, there are many units in the planning process and should be readily available before too long. However, Leigh's statement that there is no long term housing available just cannot stand.
- 2) Statements regarding how our neighborhoods are changing for the worse due to airbnb style STRs- what facts or evidence supports this? From previous meetings my understanding is there has been no impact and zero calls to police. We cannot lose sight of the fact that most airbnb rentals (with some exceptions) are extremely well kept, updated, grass cut, fresh paint, etc. Its the nature of the business to have a well kept home and yard or owners get a bad review. If tenants are unruly or disrespectful they also get a bad review and do not return.
- 3) What is it in the language regarding "short term rentals" vs "commercial ventures" that Leigh has issue with? I 100% agree that the purpose needs to be stated clearly so we are all completely clear on the agenda. What is the purpose and reasoning behind this severe STR restriction? Let's hear exactly what it is rather than skirting around with vague, non-specific language.
- 4) What is affordable? How is this being defined? This has been asked through citizen speak numerous times...

Anyone with a Zillow payment calculator can look to see what a monthly payment looks like with mortgage, taxes, and insurance plus the cost of maintenance and renovation, etc. A house that is purchased for \$430,000 (modest house for GB!) comes to roughly \$1850/month plus maintenance/upgrades and the purchaser is easily into \$2500, add in just 20% for the work, time, etc., and it brings the mortgage to \$3000/month for a very simple house.

The goal seems to be continually changing from creating affordable housing to creating any housing for locals who want to live here, again, confusing and how does eliminating airbnb create this?

There are houses for sale in Great Barrington, in a variety of prices (albeit not many) but this upsurge in sales is coming from urbanites wanting to escape climate change and Covid. More people (younger families!) are coming to the Southern Berkshires to raise their families here and to live here full time. It's very exciting. That said, most people who would be willing to pay \$5000 and up per month, in rent, would rather make a down payment and buy a house rather than rent. They might rent for 6-9 months to get acclimated, but these "outsiders" who want to move here are trying to decide which town they want to live in and are not trying to rent LT for any longer than they need to. Leigh's focus on stressing the need to find LT rentals for affluent people who want to live in GB is just wrong headed... these people can find these 6 month rentals through airbnb! Then they can purchase a house through any one of the numerous real estate offices in town. I know how it goes because these are my people... I have worked alongside them since 2005!

For the affordable housing needs (I suppose this would be between \$700/month - \$1600/month... but again not defined) this is a completely different story. As a rental specialist and a real estate broker I have seen first hand the unmaintained squalor that includes old tired peeling lead paint, pest infested, mold, failing septic systems (unchecked for years) ancient heating systems. Who is monitoring and regulating these "affordable" options?

For "corporations" or anyone willing to take on these broken down properties they need a deep pocket to be able to bring them back to life... we should be welcoming anyone who wants to breathe life into these old buildings. Instead, this comes off as a witch hunt to penalize these "investors". I know many of them and most are local residents buying and redoing houses to rent both long or short term but they do not become affordable - not with the costs associated with a purchase, taxes, renovations, etc.

**NONE OF THE 56 AIRBNB HOMES WILL BE "AFFORDABLE" TO LOCAL RESIDENTS.**

The many units currently in the works hopefully will be!

ADUs are a terrific option that allows in-laws, elderly, or local workers to live affordably in town. I love the creativity in this option - exciting! What else can be done, creatively instead of restricting and piling on more taxes on everyone?

The town voted down the option to renovate the high school for a variety of reasons, one being that the town demographics were aging... this seems so crazy to me... of course, if we dont create a fresh welcoming high school, no-one will want to come here, stay here, etc., and it is a fait accompli that our town dies out... Our world has since changed and now we have actually people coming in droves to seek out more green spaces, clean air, and a yard to be in... are we going to keep restricting and penalizing until we are back to empty storefronts again?

To be perfecting transparent, if this bylaw goes into effect it will minimally impact my rental business, while likely creating more real estate transactions. I will still be able to keep offering the houses on a 30 night basis, or longer, and I have a strong clientele for that and every homeowner will also have the option. (PLEASE NOTE: all STR revenue to the town will end as it only applies to 31 nights or less!!) The proposed bylaw does not bring the result of accommodating more LT rentals but it will still allow for the robust summer season and the ski season - for those economically entitled enough to afford the cost of long terms stays, while cutting out pretty much anyone else who wants to come for a weekend or holiday. I can also offer transferring families longer stays while they hunt for a more permanent solution. In many ways cutting out short stays makes it easier for me, my time, energy, overhead, etc. Its a ton of work but I do it because it benefits everyone: my homeowners, my office, the town, services, housekeepers, handyman, etc etc.

My focus is solely for the health of the economy GB is currently enjoying and how much this will be affected if airbnb rentals are severely restricted, which will be the case.

Thank you again for the very lively discussion last night. I found it very enlightening.

Sincerely,

Claudia Laslie  
CLAUDIA LASLIE  
Berkshire Rental Properties  
claudia@BerkRentals.com  
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<\.png>  
Licensed Broker Associate  
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==Please provide the following information== Your Name: Claudia Laslie Your E-mail Address: claudia@berkrentals.com

Organization:

Phone Number: 4138547422

==Address==

Street: 29 Benton ave

City: Great Barrington

State: Massachusetts

Zipcode: 01230

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.townofgb.org/node/2/submission/6576>

**From:** [Mark Pruhenski](#)  
**To:** [Amy Pulver](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Statement on STR and Evictions in GB  
**Date:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 5:30:31 PM

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Thanks Amy.

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**From:** Amy Pulver <[apulver@Townofgb.org](mailto:apulver@Townofgb.org)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 5:08 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Statement on STR and Evictions in GB

This and the one from yesterday were uploaded

Amy Pulver  
Office Administrator  
IT Coordinator

Town of Great Barrington  
334 Main Street  
Great Barrington MA 01230  
(413) 528-1619 ex 2900

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**From:** Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 4:24 PM  
**To:** Amy Pulver <[apulver@Townofgb.org](mailto:apulver@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** FW: Statement on STR and Evictions in GB

Another comment re: the STR bylaw proposal for the website. -m

---

**From:** Kathleen Jackson <[jacksonpaddle@outlook.com](mailto:jacksonpaddle@outlook.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 2, 2021 2:43 PM  
**To:** Mark Pruhenski <[MPruhenski@Townofgb.org](mailto:MPruhenski@Townofgb.org)>  
**Subject:** Statement on STR and Evictions in GB

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Hi Mark,

I was told to send my statement to you? I hope that was correct.

RE: Statement on STR and Evictions in GB

[www.jacksonpaddle.com](http://www.jacksonpaddle.com)

This is Kathleen Jackson new email address: [jacksonpaddle@outlook.com](mailto:jacksonpaddle@outlook.com)

Please discard Kathleen Jackson's old address: @hotmail.com.

The hotmail account will not longer be checked or used.

Robert & Renee Slonaker  
12 Gilmore Avenue  
Gt. Barrington, MA 01230

December 10, 2021

Dear Select and Planning Boards and interested parties,

The short-term rental proposal now before the board is clearly fueling passions on both sides of the debate. Much of what is presented and talked about on the tenant / low-mid income side seems to put all the landlord / owners into the wealthy out-of-towner category. I feel my wife and I need to speak up, as we fall somewhere in the middle of all this.

We moved to GB in 2015 from Canaan, CT after realizing we spent most of our time here and wanted our daughter to attend MMRHS. We had lived in Canaan since 1999, and my wife was born and raised there, so we feel as though we qualify as locals. We bought a bank-owned house on Gilmore Ave with the proceeds from selling our house in Canaan and lived in it while bootstrapping our way through a transformative renovation. We are quite proud of the work we did and of the finished product and have been complemented by nearly all who have witnessed the renovation.

In 2018 we were able to purchase the house next door to us — a “weekend” house of a couple from Long Island who had owned it for the last 30 years. They were getting on in years and just not using it as much. This house is what would probably “qualify” as affordable housing at 1,000-sq. feet with a simple floorplan of three bedrooms and one bath. This purchase was possible for us from an inheritance from my father’s passing the year before, and since then we have been slowly working our way through a less-intensive renovation.

Our goal of purchasing this house was for an investment of my inheritance in a more solid asset than the stock market, and which has the potential to pay for our daughter’s college education. In addition, my wife’s parents are getting older and at some point, we anticipate one or both, living in this house to be closer to us so we can care for them when the time comes.

We have been able to realize this goal so far using the Airbnb platform, and to date this little house has made it possible for our daughter to attend college debt free. I make a comfortable living but would not be able to pay for the college tuition on what I earn. In addition, we’ve been able to continue to make improvements to this property with the income provided. We added solar panels last year and now the house generates more electricity than it consumes.

Several families and groups of friends have rented our house for stays of varying lengths from one night to several months. The feedback from those that have stayed with us is very positive.

Guests frequently report that a stay in our little house creates a more natural visit to the Berkshires as opposed to a hotel room.

We are concerned that the rules concerning Airbnb rentals as proposed would dramatically affect our situation. And they wouldn't much help those looking for affordable housing either. Even if we placed the house on the long-term lease rental market, the monthly rate we could get for it would not be affordable by market standards. And based on recent market prices for house sales in our neighborhood, the price we feel we could ask if we decided to sell, would barely be affordable for most people affected by the housing shortage.

We have lived in resort and desirable areas like the Berkshires before and the affordable housing situation is always the same. Most low to middle income workers cannot afford to live in the town where they work, and we experienced that personally. The affordable housing for that category of worker has always been provided by organizations like the CDCSB, etc. Asking private property owners to offer their property for less than market value is not feasible or fair. We wish we could afford to offer our little rental house at a rate that a low-to-middle income family could manage. But being at the same level of income earner as many of those in question, we don't have that luxury — and should not have our hands tied in trying to earn as much value out of our investment as we can.

We have saved carefully over the years, not lived extravagantly, and through the fortune of receiving a family inheritance have been able to put ourselves in a comfortable position heading into our retirement years. Not every homeowner who makes a side income from their real estate is a wealthy, out of town, evil evicting-you-on-Christmas-Eve monster that we feel we are being cast as. I am curious how many other STR owners are in a similar position. There seems to be much speculation about the number of STR's and said ownership of such banded about, but little if any hard facts have been presented other than the spreadsheet provided by Chris Rembold at the 11/29 Selectboard meeting.

We agree that affordable housing is hard to come by and having experienced firsthand the challenges presented by that, we have tremendous sympathy for those in search of it. As we walk around town, we can't help but notice what appear to be vacant homes and properties. What is the true status of properties like these and has the town or affordable housing advocates reached out to the owners? If adjustments need to be made to the STR situation, please consider those of us who might get thrown out with the bath water.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,

Rob and Renee

Statement from Kathleen A. Jackson.  
Full time year round resident of Great Barrington since 2004.

- 1.) My name is Kathleen Jackson.
- 2.) I am a member of the New York Bar and Massachusetts Bar. I earned my JD from McGill Faculty of Law.
- 3.) This statement was created solely to inform the committees and people making determinations regarding STR in Great Barrington. It is not meant to be copied or disseminated or used for other purposes.
- 4.) The following statement represents at least 100 conversations I have had with various tenants and their families in Great Barrington between May 2021 through till today.
- 5.) I am unable to provide the names and addresses of the people involved due to the nature of my work. I have also left out any identifying details so this statement is greatly limited in information.
- 6.) I am writing this statement from the perspective of a Housing attorney who weekly represents tenants in Housing Court.
- 7.) Western Massachusetts Housing Court handles evictions from Berkshire County, Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden County. It is a traveling court that is headquartered at 37 Elm Street in Springfield.
- 8.) 50% of my current practice is landlord tenant law.
- 9.) I have been working as a landlord/tenant lawyer based in Great Barrington since 2007.
- 10.) To the best of my recollection, in the 14 years of doing landlord tenant law, not one Great Barrington tenant has ever called me because they were being evicted.
- 11.) Of the 400 plus tenants I have represented over the years, I have never represented a tenant from Great Barrington or from any town in South County.
- 12.) All of my previous tenant clients were from Pittsfield, Northern Berkshire County, Hampshire County and Hampden County. That all changed this summer.
- 13.) Since May 2021 I have been contacted by **over** 20 Great Barrington tenants because they were being told they had to move out. I will refer to these tenants as the GB tenants throughout the rest of this statement.
- 14.) All of the GB tenants that contacted me were being asked to move out for one of the following two reasons:
  - 1.) Their house is being sold.
  - or
  - 2.) Because their house was being renovated to be used "for another purpose."

15.) They were all up to date on their rent.

16.) Almost every single one of the tenants who called me believed that they were being asked to move out so that their unit could be renovated and rented out on Airbnb. None of the landlords have as of yet completed the renovations so I cannot confirm or deny which buildings will be converted to STR.

17.) How are so many long term tenants being evicted in Great Barrington at once? Because entire buildings that contain multiple apartments are being evicted all at once in one sweeping gesture.

18.) Almost all of the GB tenants I have spoken to have opted to move out of the apartments and into temporary living arrangements rather than facing the humiliation, stress and heartache of being formerly evicted in court.

19.) Most will quietly leave, thus the number of GB evictions will not be documented anywhere, not by the Berkshire Regional Housing Authority and not by the courts.

20.) Why aren't the GB evicted coming to your meetings to explain their situation? Well, some, for example, are currently being sued by their landlord in housing court to get out immediately and cannot make public comments about an ongoing lawsuit.

Kathleen Jackson

## Housing Statement

My name is Kristin Grippo and I've rented a one-bedroom apartment in a duplex at 30 Pine Street, aka the "Other Hill," for nine years. I presently live in the upstairs unit with my husband and toddler. There is a single person living in the downstairs apartment. The house has been on the market since October and we've had a realtor coming through almost every weekend to show it. We have specifically overheard a buyer's agent talking about renting the apartments via Airbnb.

As you know, there are *zero* rentals presently available in Great Barrington, and even if there were, they would likely be out of our upper-low-income price range. We are making arrangements to move, in part because we have outgrown the space, but also because we are aware that we may be evicted at some point when the house sells.

I am a self-employed teacher with a master's in education and my husband is also a self-employed local who grew up in Stockbridge. We both work part-time so that we can be home with our two-year-old son. We cannot afford to continue living in Great Barrington, and will be lucky if we can find an affordable house to purchase in a neighboring town. As you can imagine, this has caused a great deal of stress to our family, knowing that there is a possibility that we will have to relocate over an hour away from our nearby family and community.

I understand that this committee is looking for personal stories from renters. Are you aware that people who are working to make ends meet have less time to dedicate to town meetings and advocacy? Perhaps the sob stories of wealthy homeowners have lulled you into believing that regulating their passive income would be detrimental to their lives. Please consider the truth, that there are working-class people in this town who are worthy of affordable places to reside. Not knowing if you'll have a place to live next month is a different kind of stress than whether or not you can take a second vacation. I personally know at least *eight* other individuals or families who have been pushed out by the wealthy second-home owners and short-term rentals. Those people are comprised of farmers, young families, veterans, artists, and educators. We are quiet because we are tired and overwhelmed by a system that has left us with nowhere to go.

In my nine years living in this community, I have seen a drastic change. As co-facilitator of the Generosity Economy, I witnessed people sharing resources big and small, and a community where people were supported. People used to look out for each other; things like passing along a lead to an affordable apartment were common. That is simply not happening and is not possible anymore. It saddens me that the hard-working low and middle-income residents of Great Barrington have no support in this matter.

This is where the town comes in. 30 Pine Street needs a great deal of work. It is an excellent example of a two-unit home that the Housing Trust could purchase, renovate, and subsidize to maintain two affordable downtown apartments. Regardless of the fate of that particular house, I hope the committee will consider moving forward with the regulation of short-term rentals as well as planning to redevelop blighted properties for affordable housing. I understand that there is revenue to be gained from short-term rentals, but let's face it, the Berkshires are not going to slow in popularity any time soon. Leave the hotels and B and Bs for the tourists. Give us our rentals back.

## Mark Pruhenski

---

**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 at 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

---

**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 **DRAFT for review**  
Claudia Laslie

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  
 Master Planning  
 Construction Management

17 Bridge Street, Suite 1  
 Great Barrington, MA 01230

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

---

**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

Residents 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.

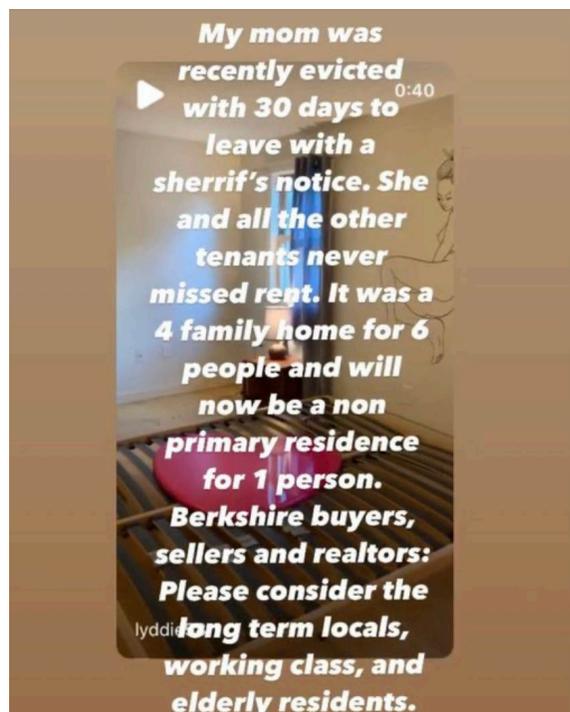
Thank you

Nan Wile  
Great Barrington

---

**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 now will 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.

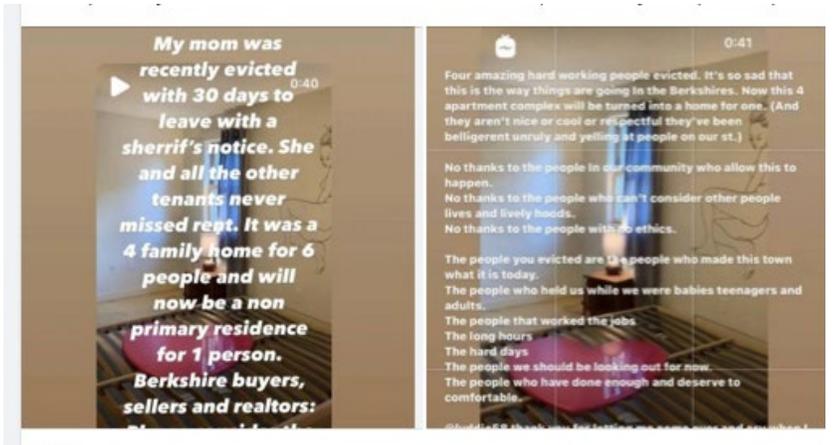
### Crane Morehouse

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
<b>New York</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can't rent out entire apartment (hosts must be present)</li> <li>2. Can't advertise an apartment</li> <li>3. Up to 2 paying guests</li> </ol>	May 2011	\$1,000 - \$7,500 (illegal advertising of apartments)	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sales and use tax</li> <li>2. Hotel room occupancy tax</li> </ol>
<b>San Francisco</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must register as a business and as a short-term rental</li> <li>2. Hosts must be permanent residents</li> <li>3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts</li> <li>4. No income-restricted affordable housing</li> </ol>	Feb. 2015	≥ \$484 (per day)	\$250	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transient occupancy tax</li> <li>2. Business personal property tax</li> </ol>
<b>Los Angeles</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain licenses</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence</li> <li>3. Up to 120 days a year</li> </ol>	July 2019	≥ \$500 (per day)	\$89	Transient occupancy tax
<b>Washington DC</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain license, additional "vacation rental" endorsement for renting out an entire unit</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence</li> <li>3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts</li> </ol>	Oct 2019	\$500 - \$6,000 (per violation)	TBD	Transient lodging tax
<b>Chicago</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license</li> <li>2. Hosts with 1 home-share unit register through the rental platform</li> <li>3. Hosts with ≥ 1 home-share unit must obtain license from city of Chicago</li> <li>4. Vacation rental must obtain license</li> </ol>	March 2017 (host registration)	\$1,500 - \$3,000 (per day)	\$0 - \$250	Hotel accommodation tax
<b>Boston</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain license</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence or an secondary unit at their primary residence</li> <li>3. No income-restricted units</li> </ol>	Jan. 2019	\$100 - \$300 (per day)	\$25 - \$200	Same tax as hotel
<b>Seattle</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license</li> <li>2. Hosts must register as a business and as a short-term rental</li> <li>3. Up to 2 units</li> <li>4. If operate 2 units, one must be primary residence</li> </ol>	Sep. 2019	\$500 - \$1,000 (per violation)	\$75	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retail sales tax</li> <li>2. Lodging tax</li> <li>3. Business and occupation tax</li> </ol>

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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**\*\*This is an external email, be vigilant\*\***  
**\*\*\*Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender (and their email address) and know the content is safe\*\*\***

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 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

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share input on the draft bylaw to regulate short-term rentals in Great Barrington. I am pleased to be able to offer comment to help strengthen the proposal as it progresses forward.

First, I would like to recognize the challenge of housing availability. We know that there is a scarcity of both year-round rental units and entry-level homes available for purchase in our town and in the larger region. This is a housing inventory problem of significant complexity that has been building for years, and I know that many of us are committed to taking a multi-faceted approach across sectors to help make our town more accessible.

While this bylaw seeks to prohibit the rental of second or vacation homes as short-term rentals with the intent to help increase general affordability of housing, I do not think it is the right tool to achieve that goal.

Many homes here that are used as second or vacation homes, tend to sell at price points in a range that is not at all affordable to many of our prospective first-time homebuyers. If we were to pass a bylaw prohibiting the use of second homes as short-term rentals with the hope that those homes would then return to the market for potential sale to those seeking starter homes, we would have a major mismatch between market price points for many of these homes and the financial capacity of many first-time homebuyers.

Instead, the home might be purchased as a second home by someone with the financial means to allow it to remain vacant when not in personal use. The same disconnect is true of the idea that these homes might make affordable year-round rentals; there is again a general mismatch between the potential inventory and its suitability and price points.

Because some second homeowners use income from short-term rentals towards mortgage and other payments related to their second home as a means of affording it, it seems unfair to pursue a policy that would effectively penalize this group- the proposal could potentially necessitate the sale of their homes for financial reasons. This infringement on property rights could cause serious unintended harm.

Any second homeowner in Great Barrington has the potential to become a full-time resident of our town, now or in the future, and we should value the vibrancy and diversity that they can add to our community. The same can be said of our visitors and short-term renters, who are very important to sustaining our shops, restaurants, and services at the heart of our local economy and whose interest in exploring our town brings refreshing energy and enthusiasm.

Therefore, I would urge us not to prohibit the use of second or vacation homes as short-term rentals.

We have a clear interest in ensuring that all residents and visitors alike abide by town rules, including those that pertain to noise, trash, and parking, amongst others. Enforcement of our existing bylaws to protect our quality of life will ensure that we can maintain the high quality of

life that we all value greatly here. The requirement included in the draft for a local contact to address any issues that may arise with a short-term rental is a smart approach to take.

Thank you for allowing me this time, and for the work that you continue to do on behalf of the town. I look forward to continuing this conversation and am happy to share any resources or data that may be helpful.

Eric Steuernagle  
President Berkshire County Realtors  
Broker/Owner  
FAIRground Real Estate  
413-528-1849 office  
413-717-0276 cell

Statement from Kathleen A. Jackson.  
Full time year round resident of Great Barrington since 2004.

- 1.) My name is Kathleen Jackson.
- 2.) I am a member of the New York Bar and Massachusetts Bar. I earned my JD from McGill Faculty of Law.
- 3.) This statement was created solely to inform the committees and people making determinations regarding STR in Great Barrington. It is not meant to be copied or disseminated or used for other purposes.
- 4.) The following statement represents at least 100 conversations I have had with various tenants and their families in Great Barrington between May 2021 through till today.
- 5.) I am unable to provide the names and addresses of the people involved due to the nature of my work. I have also left out any identifying details so this statement is greatly limited in information.
- 6.) I am writing this statement from the perspective of a Housing attorney who weekly represents tenants in Housing Court.
- 7.) Western Massachusetts Housing Court handles evictions from Berkshire County, Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden County. It is a traveling court that is headquartered at 37 Elm Street in Springfield.
- 8.) 50% of my current practice is landlord tenant law.
- 9.) I have been working as a landlord/tenant lawyer based in Great Barrington since 2007.
- 10.) To the best of my recollection, in the 14 years of doing landlord tenant law, not one Great Barrington tenant has ever called me because they were being evicted.
- 11.) Of the 400 plus tenants I have represented over the years, I have never represented a tenant from Great Barrington or from any town in South County.
- 12.) All of my previous tenant clients were from Pittsfield, Northern Berkshire County, Hampshire County and Hampden County. That all changed this summer.
- 13.) Since May 2021 I have been contacted by **over** 20 Great Barrington tenants because they were being told they had to move out. I will refer to these tenants as the GB tenants throughout the rest of this statement.
- 14.) All of the GB tenants that contacted me were being asked to move out for one of the following two reasons:
  - 1.) Their house is being sold.
  - or
  - 2.) Because their house was being renovated to be used "for another purpose."

15.) They were all up to date on their rent.

16.) Almost every single one of the tenants who called me believed that they were being asked to move out so that their unit could be renovated and rented out on Airbnb. None of the landlords have as of yet completed the renovations so I cannot confirm or deny which buildings will be converted to STR.

17.) How are so many long term tenants being evicted in Great Barrington at once? Because entire buildings that contain multiple apartments are being evicted all at once in one sweeping gesture.

18.) Almost all of the GB tenants I have spoken to have opted to move out of the apartments and into temporary living arrangements rather than facing the humiliation, stress and heartache of being formerly evicted in court.

19.) Most will quietly leave, thus the number of GB evictions will not be documented anywhere, not by the Berkshire Regional Housing Authority and not by the courts.

20.) Why aren't the GB evicted coming to your meetings to explain their situation? Well, some, for example, are currently being sued by their landlord in housing court to get out immediately and cannot make public comments about an ongoing lawsuit.

Kathleen Jackson

## 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

**\*\*CAUTION:\*\***

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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

---

**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

**\*\*CAUTION:\*\***

**\*\*This is an external email, be vigilant\*\***

**\*\*\*Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender (and their email address) and know the content is safe\*\*\***

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 **DRAFT for review**  
 Claudia Laslie

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:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Owner / Operator</b>	<b>Units</b>
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  
 Master Planning  
 Construction Management

17 Bridge Street, Suite 1  
 Great Barrington, MA 01230

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

---

**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

Residents 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.

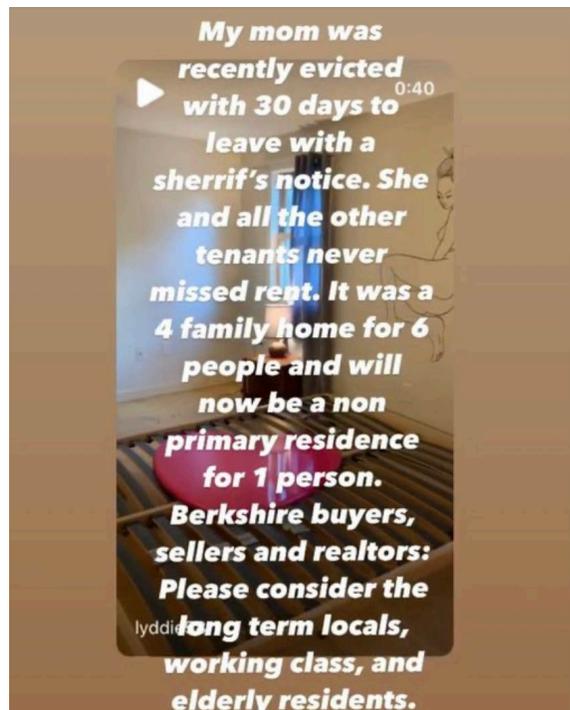
Thank you

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 now will 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.

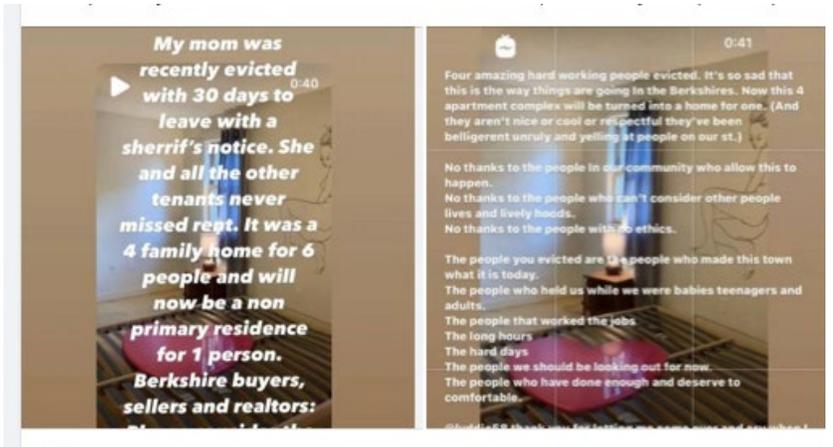
None of these evictions are for non payment, they are all for the benefit of investors.

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can't rent out entire apartment (hosts must be present)</li> <li>2. Can't advertise an apartment</li> <li>3. Up to 2 paying guests</li> </ol>	May 2011	\$1,000 - \$7,500 (illegal advertising of apartments)	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sales and use tax</li> <li>2. Hotel room occupancy tax</li> </ol>
San Francisco	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must register as a business and as a short-term rental</li> <li>2. Hosts must be permanent residents</li> <li>3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts</li> <li>4. No income-restricted affordable housing</li> </ol>	Feb. 2015	≥ \$484 (per day)	\$250	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transient occupancy tax</li> <li>2. Business personal property tax</li> </ol>
Los Angeles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain licenses</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence</li> <li>3. Up to 120 days a year</li> </ol>	July 2019	≥ \$500 (per day)	\$89	Transient occupancy tax
Washington DC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain license, additional "vacation rental" endorsement for renting out an entire unit</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence</li> <li>3. Up to 90 nights a year without hosts</li> </ol>	Oct 2019	\$500 - \$6,000 (per violation)	TBD	Transient lodging tax
Chicago	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license</li> <li>2. Hosts with 1 home-share unit register through the rental platform</li> <li>3. Hosts with ≥ 1 home-share unit must obtain license from city of Chicago</li> <li>4. Vacation rental must obtain license</li> </ol>	March 2017 (host registration)	\$1,500 - \$3,000 (per day)	\$0 - \$250	Hotel accommodation tax
Boston	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Must obtain license</li> <li>2. Must be primary residence or an secondary unit at their primary residence</li> <li>3. No income-restricted units</li> </ol>	Jan. 2019	\$100 - \$300 (per day)	\$25 - \$200	Same tax as hotel
Seattle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Short-term rental platforms must obtain license</li> <li>2. Hosts must register as a business and as a short-term rental</li> <li>3. Up to 2 units</li> <li>4. If operate 2 units, one must be primary residence</li> </ol>	Sep. 2019	\$500 - \$1,000 (per violation)	\$75	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retail sales tax</li> <li>2. Lodging tax</li> <li>3. Business and occupation tax</li> </ol>

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 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

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share input on the draft bylaw to regulate short-term rentals in Great Barrington. I am pleased to be able to offer comment to help strengthen the proposal as it progresses forward.

First, I would like to recognize the challenge of housing availability. We know that there is a scarcity of both year-round rental units and entry-level homes available for purchase in our town and in the larger region. This is a housing inventory problem of significant complexity that has been building for years, and I know that many of us are committed to taking a multi-faceted approach across sectors to help make our town more accessible.

While this bylaw seeks to prohibit the rental of second or vacation homes as short-term rentals with the intent to help increase general affordability of housing, I do not think it is the right tool to achieve that goal.

Many homes here that are used as second or vacation homes, tend to sell at price points in a range that is not at all affordable to many of our prospective first-time homebuyers. If we were to pass a bylaw prohibiting the use of second homes as short-term rentals with the hope that those homes would then return to the market for potential sale to those seeking starter homes, we would have a major mismatch between market price points for many of these homes and the financial capacity of many first-time homebuyers.

Instead, the home might be purchased as a second home by someone with the financial means to allow it to remain vacant when not in personal use. The same disconnect is true of the idea that these homes might make affordable year-round rentals; there is again a general mismatch between the potential inventory and its suitability and price points.

Because some second homeowners use income from short-term rentals towards mortgage and other payments related to their second home as a means of affording it, it seems unfair to pursue a policy that would effectively penalize this group- the proposal could potentially necessitate the sale of their homes for financial reasons. This infringement on property rights could cause serious unintended harm.

Any second homeowner in Great Barrington has the potential to become a full-time resident of our town, now or in the future, and we should value the vibrancy and diversity that they can add to our community. The same can be said of our visitors and short-term renters, who are very important to sustaining our shops, restaurants, and services at the heart of our local economy and whose interest in exploring our town brings refreshing energy and enthusiasm.

Therefore, I would urge us not to prohibit the use of second or vacation homes as short-term rentals.

We have a clear interest in ensuring that all residents and visitors alike abide by town rules, including those that pertain to noise, trash, and parking, amongst others. Enforcement of our existing bylaws to protect our quality of life will ensure that we can maintain the high quality of

life that we all value greatly here. The requirement included in the draft for a local contact to address any issues that may arise with a short-term rental is a smart approach to take.

Thank you for allowing me this time, and for the work that you continue to do on behalf of the town. I look forward to continuing this conversation and am happy to share any resources or data that may be helpful.

Eric Steuernagle  
President Berkshire County Realtors  
Broker/Owner  
FAIRground Real Estate  
413-528-1849 office  
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