

Executive Summary

Proposed Legislation for Short Term Rentals in the Town of Taghkanic

With the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs) throughout the Hudson Valley, residents of Taghkanic and neighboring towns have had to take a hard look at the impact of STRs on their communities.

There are no provisions for STRs in the Town of Taghkanic's current zoning laws, so in April 2020, the Town's Zoning Commission requested that the Town Board appoint a Task Force to study Short-Term Rentals in the Town.

The mission of the Short Term Rental Task Force was straightforward: ***"To assess the impact and growth of Short Term Rentals in Taghkanic, and to draft realistic, clear, and achievable Local Laws and regulations, to recommend to the Town Board for its consideration and implementation."***

While it is agreed that STRs can contribute to local economies through increased tourism and potential job creation (home service providers, restaurants, etc.), there are other factors that must be taken into consideration. These include the potential for the negative impacts of loss of affordable housing, inflated real estate values from commercial use of residential property, and the hazards posed by STR properties that may not meet local safety and health standards. Perhaps the most important consideration in Taghkanic is the need to maintain a sense of community and to protect the area's rural character as outlined in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Coming up with a proposal that neatly balances these potentially conflicting needs has had an added element of urgency as it would ideally be completed before the Zoning Commission wrapped up its draft of new zoning laws for the Town, and before Columbia County concluded its preparations to implement an occupancy tax on STRs.

For the better part of a year, the Taghkanic Short Term Rental Task Force has taken a 'deep dive' into the subject of STRs and their potential impact on the community. Activities have included:

Short Term Rental Research:

- Reading recent media coverage on STRs in national, regional, and local publications;
- Researching existing New York State laws and regulations regarding STRs;
- Participating in webinars offered by NYS (on understanding community impact and legislation) and Granicus (on 'data scraping' and monitoring STRs).

Local & Town Analysis:

- Reviewing the Town of Taghkanic's Comprehensive Plan, paying particular notice to the importance of maintaining the area's rural and residential character;
- Identifying areas of concern and opportunity specific to STRs in Taghkanic, weighing the impact on the community's quality of life, economic opportunity, and other factors;
- Meeting with Dennis Callahan, who provided insight and expertise in his position as the Town Building Inspector, a member of our Fire Department, and a resident of Taghkanic, and shared his suggestions for managing registration and STR law implementation.
- Identifying and beginning to categorize existing STRs in the Town of Taghkanic
- Examining recent STR legislation in other towns in Columbia County and the region, including conducting interviews with individuals who participated in the development of local laws in other area communities, to consider the area's STR law 'best practices.'
- Conducting a survey of residents and property owners in Taghkanic, to 'take a pulse' of community opinion.

Drafting Legislation and Supporting Materials:

- Preparing a Glossary of Terms used in the proposed STR laws
- Developing a procedure for registering existing STRs to create a smooth transition to regulation and enforcement.

Using this extensive research, the Task Force set out to draft legislation.

Each element proposed has been given careful consideration to the desire to maintain Taghkanic's rural character, protect the fabric of its residential community, and provide building safety guidelines for short term rental owners, proprietors, and short term rental guests.

Also considered were the potential risks and benefits of the various types of STRs to the quality of life, property values, and income potential for residents of Taghkanic, and the impact on the Town itself, including essential services.

Our research showed that in Taghkanic, STRs are primarily entire dwellings that fall into two categories. The first are properties used by owners for a good portion of the year (seasonal dwellers, weekenders, or full-time residents who are absent only when on vacation). The second are properties belonging to absentee owners engaging in short-term rentals entirely as a business venture, with little interest or investment in the community.

Our recommended legislation aims to bring as many of our present STR operators as possible on board with new regulations, quickly and efficiently, without overburdening the Town's limited resources for permitting and regulating STRs, and to implement procedures that address future growth of STRs in Taghkanic.

Throughout the process, ***the Task Force has aimed to develop legislation that makes compliance easy, and failure to comply costly***, with a clear and specific schedule of fees and penalties.

The Short Term Rental Task Force is pleased to present its recommendations for town laws and ordinances related to STRs, and looks forward to the Zoning Commission's feedback and insight.