

March 8, 2024

PINE PLAINS ZRC MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 5, 2024
5:00 PM
In-Person and Zoom

IN PERSON ATTENDANCE: Rich Brenner
Scott Chase
Rory Chase
Wesley Chase
Sarah Jones
Michael Stabile

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Casazza, Town ZEO
Members of Dutchess County Planning
Dept
Members of the Public including
Jeanine Sisco and Kevin Walsh

ABSENT:

The meeting commenced at 5:00pm.

Short-Term Rentals (STR): Stabile said the board was meeting with Dutchess County Planners to discuss the Short-Term Rental (STR) situation. Stabile said the board met with the town board last month and gathered what the issues are regarding STRs, the main issue being affordable housing.

Heather LaVarnway from Dutchess County Planning gave an overview of what a STR is and said that Pine Plains has one of the highest averages of percentages of STRs in Dutchess County.

S. Chase asked LaVarnway how the county knows how many STRs there are in Pine Plains. LaVarnway said the county contracts with a web-based program called "Granicus" which goes through all the rental sites and relays the information of units in Dutchess County. LaVarnway said Airbnb will also collect a tax and remit it to Dutchess County on behalf of their hosts on a quarterly basis as a hotel occupancy tax. A member of the public, Kate Osofsky, asked if the tax was based on an entire dwelling or a room. LaVarnway said it's safe to say that the tax is probably not based on a room in a house.

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Stabile asked when Granicus does the research are they able to get the addresses of the Airbnb. LaVarnway said they do not know the address, but there must be a way to get it.

LaVarnway said the county has an offer to communities if they adopt regulations regarding STRs they may reach out to the county's finance department and they will foot the bill for two modules, one is an address identification module, and the other is a compliance monitoring module.

LaVarnway said doing away with STRs will not solve the affordable housing crisis but it does probably contribute to it, but less choices do increase housing prices.

R. Chase asked are there things that they know of that are impacting affordable housing. LaVarnway said there are all sorts of things, but these days high interest rates are making it harder to borrow and to buy and also having some people stay put where they are. R. Chase said he would be interested in hearing from people at the meeting who own STRs and why they have chosen that route instead of renting at market value for 6-12 months of the year. Jeanine Sisco, a town board member, said she owns a STR that is a small cottage on her property that belonged to her father. Sisco said she wanted to keep the cottage so that family could stay there when they visited, so that is why she does the STR. Sisco said she makes less doing that than renting it out. Sisco said Dutchess County does tax her 4%. Sisco asked what happened to that tax and could it somehow be parlayed back to the town of Pine Plains so that the town can benefit. Sisco said she is present and knows exactly what is going on in her STR but the issue is large corporations are coming in and buying a bunch of places and then it is a business and they are not nearby. Sisco hopes the town will look into that.

LaVarnway said she doesn't know where the tax money goes to - that is up to the county legislator. Stabile asked if the town could add their own tax and LaVarnway said she believes the town can. S. Chase said the point of a room tax is to take that money and put it into the budget to promote tourism. Stabile asked if there were any studies done that show how much an Airbnb would benefit the local economy. LaVarnway said Dutchess County Tourism must know what tourism brings into the local economy.

LaVarnway said there are different types of STRs, such as an owner living on site and renting out a room or an accessory dwelling and then there are investment owned STRs. It's more of

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an issue in bigger cities, but the town could limit STRs to primary residences or a lot where the owner is on site. Stabile said when they spoke with the town board they said perhaps not a primary residence on site requirement but a primary residence in the town.

W. Chase asked if there was a goal to limit the number of STRs because it is affecting low-income housing here in Pine Plains or is it to limit STRs because it is not a good thing going on, i.e. bothering neighbors, etc. W. Chase said there needs to be a constructive way where the STRs are limited but encourage more housing for economical purposes. LaVarnway said the town could decide and craft your regulations where you decided if an accessory dwelling unit can be a STR.

LaVarnway said it is important to begin with a community conversation. LaVarnway said you want to decide what your overall goals are.

Osofsky said there aren't a lot of places to stay in Pine Plains and STRs benefit the town, or perhaps owners do not want a long-term renter.

Jones said a lot of people have second homes here and she feels people should be able to rent their home out when they aren't using them. LaVarnway said some other communities have allowed a nonprimary resident to have a STR but they will only issue them one or two permits.

W. Chase asked if other towns have tried to limit the STRs through regulations or have they rewarded, through zoning, long-term rentals. LaVarnway said the other codes have varying degrees. LaVarnway said if you're trying to encourage ADUs (accessory dwelling unit) because you want more opportunities for housing in the community, that is great, but if you're concerned that ADUs will become STRs, then you can make sure if you develop STR regulations that there is a stipulation that an ADU is not eligible to be a STR.

A member of the public, Jean Valentine Chase, said she has noticed that certain companies have become corporate and are buying up houses in this community and nearby and renting them through Airbnb. Valentine Chase said she noticed one company, Red Cottage, has 88 listings in the general area and how do you combat that and what sort of guidelines can you impose. Valentine Chase said she doesn't feel this is the spirit of Airbnb and she would hate to see this become prevalent in Pine

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Plains. LaVarnway said that is why you must find out all the goals and objectives of the community and then start figuring it out from there. LaVarnway suggested looking at what other communities are doing in their regulations.

Stabile asked about the investment and rehabbing houses that are in disarray. LaVarnway said that is certainly held up as one of the potential benefits to STRs.

Stabile said after the meeting tonight he feels there should be a public meeting regarding STRs to understand how the community feels about STRs. Kevin Walsh, a town board member, said it is being spoken about around the town and people are both for and against it.

W. Chase said the board needs to figure out what the goal is, is it to limit STRs because there are too many loud parties or is it because it is driving people out of their houses. S. Chase said affordable housing is a real problem and STRs may not be the issue.

Sisco said more statistics are needed before there is a public hearing.

Walsh said he liked to see the percentages of STRs compared to the number of second homes - is Pine Plains prone to STRs due to the type of community that it is.

Casazza said that most of the STRs wouldn't be rentals because they wouldn't be affordable.

R. Chase said if the town could receive a grant for ADUs then people may be more likely to add one if the path was easier. There may be easier ways to add more affordable housing.

LaVarnway said one thing to keep in mind is that even if you don't feel STRs are a problem now, they may be in the future, so the town could always craft a regulation to accommodate what you have with wiggle room, but if nothing is crafted, then the doors are open to whomever. Jones thinks the town would like to discourage the purchase of investor units.

Another ZRC meeting was set for April 2nd at 5pm.

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The meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Tricia Devine

Michael Stabile