

Lauren Davidson

From: Adam Kaufman <awheelerkaufman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2016 7:21 PM
To: Lauren Davidson
Subject: Comments on Zone Code revisions

March 14, 2016

Dear Lauren Davidson, Administrative Secretary, Okanogan County Regional Planning Commission,

I am writing to submit comments regarding the proposed revisions and additional proposed changes to the Okanogan County Zone Code.

I am urging you to allow for revisions and changes in the Zone Code that would allow for more open regulations and ease of permitting for Bed and Breakfasts and Overnight Transient Accommodations. The permitting has been too strict and costly in the past and the time has come to allow greater access to the nightly rentals market, including Airbnb and other online rental portals. I understand that Okanogan County Planning Department is considering creating a conditional use permit to simplify the process and costs of overnight accommodation rentals in the Methow Valley. I applaud this move by the planning department for several reasons:

1. The economy and consumer preferences are shifting rapidly toward a thriving sharing economy and the county would be wise to get ahead of the curve.
2. The "Nightly Rentals" program is a system that is biased in favor of existing businesses that wish to monopolize the market and protect themselves from competition.
3. The cost of current Overnight Transient Accommodation permits is prohibitively high; it would take three years of Airbnb earnings to pay for the cost of a nightly rentals permit.
4. Middle income modest homeowners wish to rent their guest room occasionally to offset their ever rising expenses.
5. Airbnb owners and their guests put their money directly back into the local economy, thereby providing a net-positive boost to the local economy and tax base.
6. Airbnb owners in many cities pay local hotel taxes and it would be simple for Airbnb to collect those taxes for County businesses and submit them to the county.
7. It is legal to have a full time housemate. A full time housemate uses more water, expels more sewage waste, drives the roads more frequently, and clutters the driveway with vehicles much more than the occasional overnight guest. For homeowners who are struggling to pay the mortgage, overnight guests provide an equivalent rental income with a fraction of the impact on the home, utilities, neighbors and neighborhood.
8. An affordable conditional use permit with a low fee will bring all nightly rentals into the open in full legal cooperation, while an exorbitant fee of \$5,000-10,000 exceeds the annual income from part time overnight rentals and therefore will spur a continued proliferation of unpermitted nightly rentals.
9. The OTA permit doesn't fit my business model. I applaud the county for developing an affordable and streamlined process that matches the profile of the small-scale local owner renting out a room within their house rather than an occupancy unit, with annual income from the rentals of less than \$10,000.
10. It is indicative of hotel owners' recognition of the changing economy that many hotels and licensed nightly rentals in the Methow Valley are now advertising their properties on Airbnb, even at the same time that they are condemning its use by other users!

Furthermore, I am writing to urge you to keep the new system as fair as possible, providing equal opportunity to all home and business owners to obtain a permit. It would not be fair to allow conditional use permits in certain neighborhoods and parts of the Methow Valley but not in others.

Please ensure that the PD requirement is dropped from the new conditional use permit process. Where I live in Edelweiss, there are certain nightly rentals that were grandfathered in under the sunset clause in 2005. This is not fair. If any properties are eligible in a given neighborhood, then all properties ought to be eligible.

Thanks for providing fair representation to all county residents and taxpayers in your role as planners. I think in this case, it is important to uphold free market principles and cut through the red tape surrounding overnight transient accommodations.

Sincerely,

Adam W. Kaufman

Adam Kaufman
PO Box 493
100 Highland Road
Winthrop, WA 98862
509-996-2290