

From: Cedar Lane Lodge <info@cedarlanelodge.com>
greg.foster@raymondmaine.org, jackie.sawyer@raymondmaine.org, edward.kranich@raymondmaine.org,
To: "kevin.woodbrey@raymondmaine.org" <kevin.woodbrey@raymondmaine.org>,
mark.childs@raymondmaine.org, melanie.fernald@raymondmaine.org, sandy.fredricks@raymondmaine.org,
steven.clark@raymondmaine.org, robert.oneil@raymondmaine.org
Cc: derek.ray@raymondmaine.org, joseph.crocker@raymondmaine.org
Date: 06/22/2025 10:03 AM
Subject: Re: Short Term Rental Ordinance - Planning Board Discussion

Planning Board,

Good morning, hope this note finds you all well. Writing this note as a follow up to the recent planning board meeting. I was able to watch the replay and have the following additional thoughts as it relates to the Short Term Ordinance.

Additional Ordinance Feedback - We should be making these decisions based on data not anecdotal statements. In addition, we would recommend we look into an economic impact study prior to moving the proposed ordinance to the Board of Selectmen.

1. **Definition of Short Term Rental (Section 2)** - we should try and align to an industry standard definition as below. This allows to have a very straightforward definition and avoid complex definitions that can be challenged by the community. Specifically classifying properties as primary, business, non business is very broad and will lead to all sorts of confusion and potentially tax implications. We should not be trying to define someone's residency, why some is renting their property, or the ownership structure of a property. In addition, we are not sure why this information matters to the purpose of the ordinance. Recommended Language:

- **Short-Term Rental (STR):**

A residential dwelling unit, or any portion thereof, that is rented or leased, in whole or in part, for a period of fewer than 30 consecutive days to a guest or occupant in exchange for compensation. Short-term rentals may include, but are not limited to, single-family homes, condominiums, apartments, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), or individual rooms within an owner-occupied residence. Short-term rentals do not include hotels, motels, inns, or bed-and-breakfast establishments licensed under separate lodging regulations.

Types of Short-Term Rentals:

- **Hosted STR:** A short-term rental where the primary resident or owner remains on-site during the rental period. This includes scenarios where individual rooms or portions of the dwelling are rented while the host resides in the same property.
- **Unhosted STR:** A short-term rental where the entire dwelling unit is rented to guests, and the owner or primary resident is not present during the rental period. This includes second homes, investment properties, or instances where the primary residence is vacated for the duration of the guest's stay.

2. **Occupancy Limits (Section 4B)**- We agree with the idea of ensuring septic can handle the load of the property but there should be discretion from the code enforcement on exact occupancy based on specific properties characteristics. We should also consider septic bedroom size with an additional 4 people to give greater flexibility. For example our property is new construction in the last 2 years with an oversized septic and annual pumping. We are also not within the shoreline setback. In addition, we pump our septic system annually.
3. **Signage & Lighting (Section 4F)** - We would recommend removing the excess verbiage below unless it is universal to all codes. We should not have any additional lighting restrictions on STR properties that wouldn't be the same for regular properties
 - Any and all signage erected on the short-term rental property shall comply with the Town of Raymond's Land Use Ordinance, ~~with all sign lighting being Dark Sky compliant with full cut-off fixtures, so as to not adversely affect abutting properties.~~
4. **Event Hosting (Section 4G)** - I believe events should either be comprehensively covered in this ordinance or separate ordinance. The language restricting guests to occupancy limits creates all sorts of unintended consequences. For example, many people who rent our property have friends and family in Maine. As written, renters wouldn't be able to invite their family over for dinner or visit their grandkids.
5. **Complaints, Penalties, Violations, & Enforcement (Section 5)** - This written fine but the broader concern I have is fairness and abuse of ordinance by neighbors.
 - Specifically - we continue to face challenges with our Neighbor [REDACTED] who has been targeting our property since we built it.

Personal Background

Background Information on Cedar Ln - for those who do not know me or our story here is a quick background on us. My Wife and I built our house (Raymond Retreat - 12 Giselle Ln) on Panther Pond in 2017. We knew we wanted to retire to Maine later in life and felt a rental property would allow us to buy now for our vacations and rent it out over the long term to help pay it down and as an investment. Our first house was a high end lake house that rented for \$10K a week and we hosted hundreds of families with minimal issues over the years. Yes our neighbors weren't thrilled and there was tension but overall it went well and we never once had the police dispatched or any major incident. In 2022 another opportunity presented itself across the lake to build another property. Given the success of our other house we built another identical property, this time with two other family friends from childhood. We reached out to the neighborhood to make sure we could build a relationship with neighbors but were met with serious resistance. Specifically from our neighbors the [REDACTED]. They immediately started working in secret to stop our property. They tried to enact illegal road association dues of over \$5K for our property but were forced to back down after threat of lawsuit by our lawyer. We tried many ways to engage productively with them but there was a clear plan to try and ban STRs in Raymond and stop our property in specific. Throughout our rental they have questioned our guests, inquired about our rentals, and been incredibly disruptive to us and our guests. We have engaged against RaymondSTR in

the public forums multiple times these past years and the town has done an excellent job managing this issue.

In 2023 my family made a big decision to relocate to Raymond full time (which we would have never done if we didn't already have a house here). We loved Maine and wanted to raise our kids (6 & 4) here. We moved into Raymond Retreat STR property full time and took it off the rental market. Both of our kids go to Raymond Elementary and we participate in many local organizations and causes. My wife and I both work full time in technology consulting and I travel extensively for work. We love being Mainers and enjoy our lives on the lake.

The RaymondSTR founded by our neighbors [REDACTED] continues a false narrative of "out of state corporate investors" when this just isn't the reality or what the data shows. We, like everyone else, want to spend our time in Maine and owning a vacation rental is one of the few ways we can afford to be on the lake in our future retirement. We care deeply about the lakes region but believe it is critical we create a model that balances protecting the vacation rental roots of Sebago Lakes region that goes back generation with the local community, environment, and safety for residents. My fear is a small group of wealthy and privileged community members are going to try to enact extremely harmful regulations that would damage the economic base of Raymond, property owners rights, and hurt working class families who need the vacation rental business to support their livelihoods. We should exercise caution this process as poor regulation will be very detrimental to the town and its tax base.

Raymond STR Misinformation

- STRs are running in Raymond over capacity and causing septic failures - I would ask for one example of where a septic has failed due to occupancy abuse in an STR. This risk would be most prevalent in old camps that are not rented out professionally. Families with second homes / short term rentals are typically maintaining their septic systems as recommended.
- Straining on Housing Local Maine Families - While this is very valid in large cities where short term rentals are taking up apartments needed for rent, this is completely bogus for Raymond. Maine Lakes property has been second homes for generations, with shoreline land being very expensive and not typically housing for low income families. If anything we would be a proof point of the opposite where we now live in Maine full time and contribute significantly to the economic base of Raymond.
- Noise - I am awaiting a data request from Cumberland County Sheriff department but in prior data there are very few noise complaints filed in Raymond. Our neighbors have never called the Sheriff department for all the "so called" problems they experience because there are no issues. If people are acting inappropriately then neighbors should absolutely reach out to the Sheriff department and Owner.
- Large Groups - RaymondSTR continues to complain about Bachelor parties and groups of out of state people. While we absolutely host groups like this, they never exceed property capacity and are very respectful of the rules and community. I would also note it is illegal to discriminate on who you rent your property to. One of the groups they commented on was a support group for fathers who lost a child.

- Too Many Short Term Rentals in Raymond - There are ~200 short term rentals in Raymond listed on short term rental sites. This includes all types of rentals and likely has expired listings
- Out of State Corporations are investing multiple STR rentals - Absolutely no data to support this statement. Many people do buy vacation homes as an investment and operate them to make a profit. This is not new and completely reasonable. We should not be regulating how we let people invest their money in Raymond

Cedar Lane Lodge - Property Overview - Located on Panther Pond

- Luxury Lake House Located on Panther Pond at 13 Cedar Ln on 3 acres with 400 feet of frontage
- Built in 2023 as a 4 Bed / 4 Bath home with 3800 sqft
 - By developing a luxury residence we increased the tax base to Raymond from a uninhabited land to a full property that pays over \$13K in taxes
- Owned by three families and not a corporation
- Rental Season - Rented 100-150 nights a year
 - Summer Rental is weekly minimum at \$12,500 a week
 - Shoulder Season 3 night minimum at \$1,300 a night
 - Off Season 2 night minimum at \$1,100 a night
- Has never received below a 5* rating on any platform and has over 50 reviews
- Our summer renters usually consist of generational families who want an annual family trip
 - We have had three renters love Maine so much they have purchased properties themselves in the Lakes Region
- Full service rental with garage trash service, off site laundry for turnover, and 24x7 handyman on call
- We have a local handyman who can be onsite in less than hour as well as I live across the lake
- We spend over \$100K in operating costs with local providers to maintain the property (Landscaping, Snow Removal, Handyman, Cleaning, Mosquito & Pest, Dock, etc.). This revenue is critical to their businesses and supports our local economy.

We would be happy to host the planning board at our property and provide greater perspective and what a short term rental looks like in Raymond.

Regards
Mark Meister

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Cedar Lane Lodge
207-200-8826
info@cedarlanelodge.com

On Wed, May 14, 2025 at 1:04 PM Cedar Lane Lodge <info@cedarlanelodge.com> wrote:
Sandy/Joe,

Please forward to the planning board. Thank you

Dear Raymond Planning Board Members,

I am writing to share a perspective on the draft Short-Term Rental (STR) Ordinance currently under consideration. This topic continues to come up over the past years and it is critical we navigate this carefully as a community. Proponents of STR regulation have consistently presented misinformation, exaggerated problems, and poorly thought-out arguments for STR ordinances in Raymond. With the majority of Sebago Lake shoreline being in Raymond it is critical for the future of the town that ordinances on this topic don't risk the economic base of Raymond.

While I fully support the Town's intent to maintain neighborhood character and promote responsible rental activity, I believe the proposed ordinance, as written, imposes overly rigid and punitive restrictions that may harm responsible property owners, weaken the local economy, and create significant enforcement challenges—without offering meaningful improvements to community quality of life. The use of data driven insights versus anecdotal conjecture is critical as the planning board weighs an ordinance in this space.

I want to express my support for a balanced and focused ordinance—one that ensures STR registration, promotes safety (e.g., septic compliance, fire protection), and protects our natural resources. However, the current draft—driven largely by the Raymond STR Working Group—would result in one of the most restrictive short-term rental regulations in the country. It places disproportionate burdens on property owners and introduces rules that would be difficult to enforce fairly or consistently, all while penalizing responsible local hosts who contribute positively to the community.

Key concerns include:

- 1. Occupancy Limits and Rental Demographics** – A uniform cap of 2 persons per bedroom (with a hard limit of 12 total occupants) fails to consider variations in home size and design, and overlooks the reality of larger, multigenerational or family-group travel that is common in vacation communities. Safe, well-maintained homes with adequate septic and parking should be treated based on capability—not arbitrary thresholds.
- 2. Unrealistic Rental Frequency Restrictions** – Capping STRs to one rental per week with a 3-night minimum stay eliminates flexibility for guests and owners. It is especially harmful to families seeking weekend getaways, or to owners who rely on occasional rentals to support their seasonal homes. This provision alone would eliminate many bookings that generate revenue for both owners and local businesses. In addition, this would be very challenging to deploy on the major short term rental platforms.
- 3. Excessive Fees** – A fee of \$500 per bedroom is steep, especially for part-time residents or lightly used properties. Licensing fees should reflect the true administrative cost of the program, not act as a deterrent or tax on a specific group of homeowners.
- 4. Overlapping and Redundant Regulations** – The ordinance contains provisions on quiet hours, lighting, signage, parking, and garbage that are not unique to STRs and should be addressed through the town's general land use and building codes. Singling out STRs for enforcement of general property standards is inconsistent and unfair.
- 5. Restrictive Density and Shoreland Limits** – Arbitrarily capping the number of STRs in the Shoreland Zone and prohibiting more than two STRs near one another lacks justification. Well-managed properties with no history of complaints should not be penalized based solely on location.
- 6. Transfer Restrictions and Ownership Oversight** – Preventing license transfer outside of a narrow list of "permitted transferees" adds unnecessary complexity, penalizes common estate planning approaches, and creates uncertainty for longtime families and responsible owners.

7. **Enforcement Burden and Legal Risk** – The proposed ordinance places a heavy and impractical enforcement burden on the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO). Subjective standards like “peaceable enjoyment” and nuisance within 1,000 feet are open to misinterpretation and uneven enforcement. This could lead to legal disputes, administrative backlogs, and neighbor conflicts—without achieving the intended goals.

8. **Privacy and Administrative Overreach** – Requirements for owners to track and provide detailed guest data, post licenses, and allow inspections without complaint-driven cause raise privacy concerns and create a high-touch regulatory model inconsistent with the town’s treatment of other residential uses.

9. **Economic Impact on Local Businesses** – Vacation renters are vital to Raymond’s economy. They support restaurants, marinas, hardware stores, markets, and service professionals throughout the year. Overregulating STRs will reduce visitor volume, particularly in spring and fall shoulder seasons, and hurt small businesses that rely on this predictable flow of tourism.

If passed in its current form, this ordinance would make Raymond one of the most restrictive STR communities in the U.S.—more so than coastal tourist towns in California, Colorado, or national parks jurisdictions. Such a sweeping policy is out of step with Raymond’s culture of property rights, outdoor hospitality, and small business support.

In summary, I encourage the Board to refocus the ordinance on enforceable, STR-specific priorities—such as safety, environmental protection, and responsible conduct—while stripping out duplicative or excessive provisions better suited for general property governance. A fair, clear, and enforceable policy will benefit everyone—residents, visitors, businesses, and property owners alike.

Thank you for your time, your dedication to our community, and your consideration of these concerns.

Regards,

Mark Meister

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207-200-8826

info@cedarlanelodge.com

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