

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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Cedar Lane Lodge

207-200-8826

info@cedarlanelodge.com

copied from email received @ 14:14 hours

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