

Minutes
Bar Harbor Long-Term Rental Registration Task Force
Monday, January 10, 2022
Council Chambers- Municipal Building
93 Cottage Street
5:30 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM. Members present: Michele Gagnon, Planning Director; Todd Hardy, Landlord representative; Erica Brooks, Landlord representative; Philip Galperin, Resident at large; John Mountford, Ellsworth and MDI Housing Authority representative; Joe Minutolo, Town Council representative; Jennifer Richardson, Resident at large; Matthew Bartlett, Bar Harbor Fire Chief; and Angela Chamberlain, Code Enforcement Officer.

Also present: Michael Gurtler, Deputy Code Enforcement Officer.

Members absent: Amber Howard, Tenant representative; and Heidi Hambrecht, Tenant representative.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

The members all introduced themselves.

III. REVIEW THE “PURPOSE” OF THE LTR REGISTRATION TASK FORCE

Ms. Chamberlain read the purpose of the LTR registration program. She explained that all recommendations should be in keeping with, and meet, that purpose. She noted that development of a rental registration program was also an action item for strategy 9 “Ensure Quality Rental Housing” in the 2019 Housing Policy Framework adopted by the Town Council in 2019.

Ms. Chamberlain went on to explain that she and Mr. Bartlett were ready to examine options for a rental registration program because the current complaint-based system isn’t adequate. She explained that their vision was to find ways to ensure that dwelling units provide fundamental safe and healthy accommodations without being overly burdensome to landlords.

The task force discussed how often long-term rentals turn over and when the landlords have the ability to inspect their units. A registration program could help landlords have more frequent access to the units to see what kind of condition they are being kept in. The group also discussed tenant rights and how tenants know what their rights are.

Mr. Bartlett asked the landlords how they were kept informed of code changes that might impact their rentals. He cited a recently enacted law that requires every dwelling unit with an appliance fueled by propane to have a fuel gas detector installed in the unit. He noted that an inspection process would ensure that those code changes wouldn’t slip through the cracks.

IV. PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

Ms. Chamberlain outlined the tentative schedule which she pointed out was outlined in a document in each members packet. The task force discussion evolved into ways to ensure buy-in for a program from the public, landlords, and the council. The group briefly discussed housing needs, incentives to encourage housing, and layers for the inspection process.

V. BRAINSTORM TOPICS TO COVER

- 1) Registration process
- 2) Inspection component
 - a. Frequency of inspections
 - b. Inspection checklist items
- 3) Fees (including possible incentives)
- 4) Exceptions to the registration requirements
- 5) Issues you have experienced as a tenant or landlord

The group briefly discussed these items and suggested other items be added for discussion: a definition of long-term rental; a minimum size requirement for units; method of notice of inspection to the landlord; and possible enforcement issues.

There was a discussion on an option of implementing a registration program without an inspection component to gather data on the number of LTR units in Bar Harbor, and then in a phased approach, implementing the inspection program later.

VI. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

- 1) Meeting schedule

The group agreed that they preferred a standing meeting day and time, and agreed that the first Thursday of each month at 4:00 PM worked for everyone.

- 2) Election of officers

Ms. Chamberlain noted that the election of a Chair and Vice Chair would be the first order of business at the next meeting. She explained that the role of the Chair would be to facilitate the meetings and assist staff with the creation of the agenda and other administrative issues. The role of the Vice Chair would be to fill-in when the Chair was unavailable. She urged everyone to consider volunteering and be ready to make appointments at the next meeting.

- 3) Remote meeting policy

Ms. Chamberlain explained that the remote participation policy gives the task force the ability to meet remotely, rather than in person, should the need arise. She asked the task force to review the draft policy and be prepared to hold a public hearing and vote on it. She added that the task force can adopt it as it's written or can amend it as they see necessary. There were no questions on the policy.

Mr. Bartlett moved to schedule a public hearing on the remote participation policy on February 3, 2022. Ms. Brooks seconded the motion and the task force voted 9-0 to approve the motion.

VII. BASIC RULES OF MEMBER CONDUCT

Ms. Chamberlain explained that under the Freedom of Access Act (FOAA), the public has the right to be present any time a quorum of the task force meets. She added that the meetings are open to the public and all documents, including emails exchanged among the task force members, are subject to the FOAA. She explained how the public is notified of meetings and urged the members to err on the side of caution and refrain from using email as a means to have substantive discussions about anything other than administrative issues such as attendance, meeting date conflicts, or questions that can be brought back to the task force to discuss in an open meeting.

There were no questions.

VIII. QUESTIONS

Carol Chappell, a member of the public, asked if there would be an opportunity for the public to speak. Ms. Chamberlain stated that this was an opportunity for her to comment and there would be a public comment period on the next agenda.

Ms. Chappell urged the task force to offer incentives to the landlords and not to expect too much from them.

Ms. Chamberlain asked the group to take some time before the next meeting to look at some other communities and get some ideas on what they are doing and what may or may not have been successful.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The task force adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Minutes approved by the LTR Registration Task Force on February 3, 2022.



 Todd Hardy, Chair
 Long-Term Rental Registration Task Force

2/3/22
 Date