

Victoria McKean

From: Zak Zawaduk [REDACTED]
Sent: June-18-26 12:40 PM
To: Council
Subject: RE: Short Term Rental Proposed Regulatory Framework, Staff Report No. DEV-26-032
Categories: Inputted in to Mail Log

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Township of Esquimalt Network. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing as a private citizen, and I want to be clear that the views expressed in this submission are entirely my own. They do not represent the Advisory Planning Commission, nor are they connected in any way to my role on the APC.

I am writing to express my support for the Township of Esquimalt's efforts to regulate short-term rentals and protect long-term housing availability. The proposed Short-Term Rental Regulatory Outline is an important step toward ensuring that housing stock remains accessible to local residents, and I appreciate the Township's commitment to addressing housing pressures in a thoughtful and balanced way.

I am broadly supportive of the intent behind these regulations. Many communities in the region have experienced challenges related to unregulated short-term rentals, and Esquimalt is right to take steps that protect both housing availability and neighbourhood stability.

However, I would like to offer feedback on one specific element: the proposed prohibition on short-term rentals (STRs) within secondary suites located inside an owner's principal residence.

I understand the concern that allowing STRs in secondary suites could reduce the number of units available for long-term rental. In some cases, preventing STR use may encourage a homeowner to rent their suite long-term instead. However, in practice, many secondary suites serve flexible, intermittent purposes for homeowners, such as hosting visiting family, accommodating temporary workers, or being used as STRs only when otherwise vacant. These suites are not consistently part of the long-term rental market, and their availability for long-term tenancy is often limited by design or by family needs. In such cases, prohibiting STR use is unlikely to result in a long-term rental listing, while also eliminating potential licensing revenue for the Township.

At the same time, homeowners who do not require this flexibility and who use their suite primarily for income generation may indeed be incentivized to rent long-term if STR use is restricted.

To balance the Township's housing goals with the realities of how many secondary suites are used, I respectfully ask Council to consider a narrowly tailored exception that would allow STRs in secondary suites only when all of the following conditions are met:

- **Owner occupancy:** The owner must reside full-time on the property as their principal residence.
- **Annual night cap:** STR use is limited to no more than 60 nights per year, preventing commercial operations and financially incentivizing long-term rentals while preserving homeowner flexibility.
- **Licensing requirements:** The owner must obtain a business licence, register the unit, and pay all associated fees, ensuring accountability and generating municipal revenue.
- **Compliance with existing suite regulations:** All current requirements for secondary suites would continue to apply.

This approach maintains the bylaw's core purpose of protecting long-term housing while still allowing responsible, low-impact use of suites that may not be well-suited to long-term tenancy. For owners primarily seeking revenue, the annual night cap would encourage long-term rental. For others, it preserves flexibility without meaningfully affecting the long-term rental market. It also generates licensing revenue and significantly limits the number of suites available for STR use.

Importantly, this approach recognizes that while some suites might shift into the long-term rental market under a full prohibition, many others are unlikely to do so due to physical constraints or family use patterns.

Thank you for your commitment to balancing housing needs with fairness to residents. I hope you will consider a limited, well-regulated exception for owner-occupied properties with secondary suites, paired with a strict annual night cap and licensing requirements.

Thank you for your time and for your continued service to the community.

Sincerely,
Zak Zawaduk

Molly Harris

From: Sarah Harwood [REDACTED]
Sent: June-21-26 6:09 PM
To: Council
Subject: Short-Term Rentals - Some thoughts

Categories: Inputted in to Mail Log, Late Agenda Item

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Township of Esquimalt Network. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor and Members of the Esquimalt Council,

I am a resident of Esquimalt and would like to share my views on short-term rentals ahead of the meeting tomorrow.

My feeling on the matter is the main question centres around short term rentals within basement suites. These have traditionally provided an important form of housing for people in a very heavy rental-based municipality, particularly for the low-income end of the population. Despite signs the rental market and vacancy rates are changing positively, a reduction over time in available rental housing wouldn't serve the area.

On the other hand, are local homeowners; a small portion of whom (currently 50 from the report) are currently able to offer their suites for some visitor accommodation via short-term rental. This provides not only an important need for the community, but enables these homeowners to utilise their homes in a way which feels moderate and balanced for their privacy, work-from-home and family life. Many of whom for which long-term rental is simply not an option.

The challenge I fully understand is balancing this.

In our house we currently provide short-term rental accommodation for around half of the year. Our minimum stay is 7 days. But we have had stays for over 30-days too. We have first hand experience of how this works, why we do it, who is staying, and why I genuinely believe this works for Esquimalt too, in allowing short-term rentals within self-contained accommodation for some of the year.

For us - like many others - the decision to make our suite available for shorter stays, some of the time, is because we feel unable to provide long-term rental with the set up of our household.
Why?

- **Basement Suite Noise.**

One thing that hasn't been in the discussion is the nuanced difference of a basement suite. When sharing a whole floor, and the outer walls of the same dwelling, it feels intimate, and with the amount of noise transfer it feels impossible within some homes to think about two households sharing the space full-time. There is a big difference between having someone there all the time, compared with having people there for a week to a month or two, and then enabling entire breaks for family life. Especially when you have children. (Think Christmas, when they are amped up on excitement at 5am and no-one want to hear that!). Being pushed into permanently sharing your home is a big ask. As a family the children need some time to relax after creeping around, we also are often on the phone working from home, and really having some "normal" family time is important to us, not to mention fair for anyone living beneath us too - it wouldn't be a great long term experience.

- **Suite is unavailable for much of the time.**

Since my family are from the UK (divorced parents who visit separately), and my husband's are in Smithers, we have family staying with us for many weeks of the year at a time. My Mum, for example, will typically come for 2x 4-6 week visits a year. It is invaluable for grandparent visits and time to properly connect with those far away. For us, like many others locally with family across Canada and further still, where brief weekend stays are not possible, accommodating family for short stays is part of life.

- **A conscious choice, not simply economic.**

Because our suite is available some of the time we are able to offer short term accommodation to visitors. It is about balance for us. It allows some income (the cost of living pressures are felt by us all right now), with balancing our family and working life. Given that our suite is not rented for portions of time, it is not about making as much as possible. A typical month (on a month the suite is available) might contain 2x 1-week stays, or perhaps 1 longer stay. With gaps between stays. Having the suite rented this way does come with a cost too. We furnished it, we regularly replace items, provide the consumables, and my time to clean it - which in itself is a part-time job.

Why is a pool of self-contained short-term accommodation important?

- **Connection for the Community! Mostly parents of local residents coming to visit their children, and grandchildren.** One thing that has surprised me the most in our 2 years of short-term hosting is how few of our visitors are tourists. Most of our guests are in their 60's and 70's from other parts of Canada visiting their family right here in Esquimalt. This year alone, this has accounted for most of our guests, as well as 2 temporary workers at the Base, and 2 locals over the winter who were temporarily displaced from their rentals which flooded in the bad weather. Our very last guests came last minute from Toronto to visit their daughter who had just moved to Esquimalt, and came to be here to support following her emergency surgery.

It provides connection. Any community needs a small pool of accommodation that can house people for short periods of time - visitors of family, temporary workers, prospective new Esquimalt residents, those displaced for short times. It provides a really important niche, that any community members could rely on at any period of time. With our longer offered stays (7 days+) we get to know many of our visitors and feel even more connected to the community and their families. I have 4 different parents of local families living further away in Canada, who have asked me to keep them posted on the new rules, as they are very hopeful in their continued ability to come and stay locally.

- **Self-Contained matters.** For stays of a week to a month, hotel living is not (for many) an affordable or a feasible way of living. A pool of self-contained serviced suites provides people with what many short/medium stay visitors are looking for. Hotels and self-contained accommodation serve different purposes for different groups, and aren't often interchangeable.

- **Provides an additional important income for Esquimalt as a whole.** Which would disappear to other areas if Esquimalt couldn't house them.

What do I think is a fair middle ground for the decision tomorrow?

On reflection, I think allowing under 30-day stays for a cap of 90 booked days a year for secondary suites provides a fair and reasonable middle ground. Perhaps with a commitment to review the impact in a year/18 months from now, and whether this could be opened up a bit further. I understand why an opening-up of policy should be gradual, although I do think the Oak Bay opening this Spring to just 60 booked days in secondary suites doesn't really go far enough to address or create any meaningful benefits in any direction.

90-days is a tightening of the Provincial rules, but fits right in-line with the middle of other Municipalities across the region (who are now opening up further too following initial restrictions), as well as with the tentative opening of the rental market. Giving time and space to watch and see. It doesn't suddenly make it sufficiently attractive to those looking from an income perspective only. But reflects well on the area, as somewhere that is open and respects a group of homeowners with some meaningful balance.

I have shared in a meeting with Duncan Cavens some of my additional thoughts about the topic, but wanted to thank you all for reading and your time. I hope to attend tomorrow and look forward to hearing the position for Esquimalt!

Best wishes,

Sarah Harwood

June 20, 2026

Dear Mayor and Council,

As a resident and an Esquimalt small business, I have followed the short-term rental discussion with interest.

Recently rental vacancies have risen while rental rates have dipped slightly. With a number of projects in the region at various stages, there is set to be a number of available housing units become available which will support both availability and affordability in the region. While progress on this front remains slow, it is progress.

While housing is an incredibly important issue, so is the economy that supports the people living here. With one hotel and approximately half a dozen licensed locations in the Township, it remains a challenge to entice visitors over the bridge to support our amazing local businesses. Business ventures such as restaurants, retail and experience-based businesses are primarily relying on local business to survive in an area renowned for tourism.

Would it not better serve both the housing demands and the economic demands by finding a balance between the two needs? Certainly there are carriage houses and secondary suites which are unsuitable for long-term rentals that would better serve economic growth by serving as licensed short term rentals.

If the purpose of restricting secondary-suite short-term rentals is to increase long-term housing availability, there is far more to consider than municipal policy. Issues regarding the Residential Tenancy Act must be updated to entice homeowners to become landlords. The current Act leaves property owners far too vulnerable for many peoples comfort.

A less-restrictive policy will support homeowners being able to stay in their home as well as offering an entrée for younger people to get into the housing market in situations where a property cannot accommodate a long-term tenant.

Decisions on policy have real impacts on people in our community. Given the volatile nature of the housing and financial markets, would it not be prudent to allow short term rentals in suites deemed not suitable for rentals due to size, limited amenities or other reasons as a pilot with a review set in a year? With a course correction coming on rental rates and availability would this policy not better serve the local economy?

I respectfully encourage Council to consider a multi-phased approach that considers more than one priority before finalizing any framework. Let's consider how we are supporting housing and small business in policy decisions. This better shares the benefits throughout our community.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Heather Leary.

Heather Leary

A solid black rectangular box used to redact contact information.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing in support of allowing short-term rentals within secondary suites and garden suites in Esquimalt when they are located on the same property as the host's primary residence.

As a homeowner, I believe there is an important distinction between investor-owned short-term rentals and those operated by residents who live on-site and welcome visitors into our community. When homeowners remain on the property while hosting guests, they provide direct oversight, accountability, and stewardship. We are not absentee operators—we are neighbours who share responsibility for maintaining the character, safety, and values of our community. We are also local ambassadors, introducing visitors to Esquimalt's parks, businesses, events, and attractions.

The most compelling reason to support STRs in secondary suites and garden suites is their contribution to the local economy. Esquimalt proudly hosts major events such as RibFest, the Curling Championships, community festivals, and numerous cultural and sporting events throughout the year. These events are intended to attract visitors and generate economic activity for local businesses. However, by limiting short-term rentals to exclude secondary suites and garden suites, we are reducing the number of accommodation options available to those visitors.

Many travellers who choose Airbnb or other STR accommodations are specifically seeking a different experience than a traditional hotel stay. They are looking for neighbourhood-based accommodations, local connections, and the opportunity to experience the community as residents do. If these options are unavailable in Esquimalt, many visitors will choose to stay elsewhere, resulting in lost spending at our restaurants, cafes, shops, and local attractions. In effect, restricting these accommodations limits the economic benefits that visitors bring to our township.

Concerns about homeowners removing long-term rental units from the market are understandable, but they should be viewed within the broader housing context. Esquimalt is currently experiencing significant rental housing development, with numerous purpose-built rental projects being approved and constructed. Additionally, provincial regulations already provide safeguards, including requirements that a property be used as a principal residence and restrictions that discourage the displacement of long-term tenants for short-term rental purposes.

In practice, homeowners with stable long-term tenants are generally not inclined to disrupt those arrangements. The assumption that large numbers of rental units will suddenly convert to short-term rentals does not reflect the realities faced by most property owners. Instead, many homeowners use occasional short-term rentals within secondary suites or garden suites to help offset rising housing costs and maintain ownership of their primary residences.

Allowing resident-hosted short-term rentals in secondary suites and garden suites strikes a reasonable balance. It supports local homeowners, increases visitor capacity, strengthens local businesses, and enables Esquimalt to fully benefit from the events and tourism opportunities it actively promotes. At the same time, the presence of the homeowner on-site provides a level of oversight and accountability that helps ensure community standards are respected.

I encourage Council to support a regulatory framework that permits short-term rentals in secondary suites and garden suites when operated by homeowners residing on the property. Such an approach would strengthen Esquimalt's economy, support local residents, and allow our community to continue welcoming visitors in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hannah Larman