

Sandy Hook Community Association

5916 Skookumchuk Road,
 Sechelt, BC, V0N 3A4
 Email: sandyhook@sechelt.net
 Web Site: <http://sechelt.net>

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DELIVERED BY HAND

Mayor and Council
 District of Sechelt

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Re: Commercial Short Term Rental Issue

In response to your request for submissions and letters on this subject we first wish to re-enforce our support for the letter previously presented by the G8. We wish to make it clear that the signing of that letter by the Sandy Hook Community Association was after a full discussion and with the unanimous support of all board members. Our position has been advised to the **entire community** by newsletters. So it is with the signing of this letter as well. To date only one objection to our position has been advised to our board by a resident of Sandy Hook.

We are united in demanding the District of Sechelt enforce the current zoning bylaws relating to residential communities. This means stopping immediately what are being called 'commercial short term rentals' in any community which is zoned residential now.

We accept the informal description of 'rentals' developed by the G8 and repeat it here for clarity:

"In Sechelt any homeowner can rent out 1 or 2 rooms or suites if the house or cottage is occupied by the owner and the rental period is one month or longer. Of course, the homeowner may also operate a B&B by meeting the licensing requirements.

In our friendly communities, while it is not spelled out, we easily accept an owner infrequently renting out their house to anyone for any time period provided: the house is usually used by the owner and family as their full-time home or part-time vacation residence; they do not advertise or distinguish the house in any way or have anyone else advertise or promote the rental of it, and; they rent the entire house as one unit.

Of course, everyone understands that if there are complaints appropriate bylaws may be enforced." This letter is based upon this description.

Zoning exists to create neighbourhoods and maintain the integrity of a community. When someone purchases a home in a residential neighbourhood, it is with the understanding that it will stay a residential neighbourhood with all the desirable aspects of such a neighbourhood. When someone buys into a residential area of Sechelt, they anticipate being able to live a certain kind of rural and peaceful lifestyle. We believe it is the duty of Council to help maintain this lifestyle and perhaps even enhance it. Enforcing existing zoning bylaws is merely the minimum that a Council must do. Clearly, the existing bylaws exclude short term rentals – a commercial activity.

Short term rentals do not improve the quality of life for the residents of the community but instead

degrade it. This council and the prior ones have been fully versed on the problems presented by these rentals. Is there a need to repeat the long list of issues again? Let us know if that is so. Why is there even a need for this letter? In 1999 this entire issue was dealt with including full public participation and yet here we go again. Tax dollars are again being spent for public input notwithstanding the thorough report of 1999. We cannot help but suspect, rightly or wrongly, a hidden agenda in support of these nefarious intrusions into our lives - an agenda that apparently hopes repeatedly raising the issue will exhaust the community and have them acquiesce. We say any such an agenda will fail and so should be abandoned.

The only possible legitimate reason that we can perceive for this issue once again being raised is the difficulty and expense encountered in enforcement. With this we sympathize as council attempts to maintain reasonable tax levels. The cost of enforcing the laws of a state are part of the basic expenses that must be born by the taxpayers whether for a bylaws officer or for the RCMP. To suggest that the police force should ignore drunken driving infractions to save taxpayers' dollars would, we believe, be met with shock. To select that one set of laws pertaining to zoning should be ignored for the sake of tax dollars is equally repugnant to this community.

This council should ask itself a series of straight forward questions and then the conclusion on this issue should be clear:

1. Which is a more valid expense to a community; completing a new meeting building or enforcement of the laws?
2. Who is more important to the community; the current residents or transients and absentee landlords?
3. Who should be listened to; the residents or a small group of commercial operators in violation of the bylaws?
4. Who is to pay for the 24/7 policing of short term rentals if they allowed or are they to operate in a rule free environment?
5. If there were rules for short term rentals, what possible assurance could there be that they will be abided by since the current operators are demonstrably ignoring the bylaws and regulations now?
6. What assurance is there that the same expensive scenario in the courts would not be the result in any new environment which allowed these rentals?
7. These operations represent: no increase in the property tax base, an increase in administration costs, a hindrance to new tourist investment, a long term reduction in residential property values and they have a detrimental affect on the quality of life so what possible benefit is there to the District of Sechelt in allowing them?
8. Would you, Councillor, as a resident of a peaceful residential neighbourhood, want the house right next door to you rented out to different total strangers every night of the year as if it were a motel?

If any allowance is to be made for this type of operation then let them exist where the residents have openly accepted them from the day they purchased their home – that is, by establishing this as an accepted use in NEW residential areas. Special rules along with the enforcement of them might be established by the developer and the District along with proper notice to potential buyers.

In conclusion, we repeat our demand that the laws of the District of Sechelt be fully enforced recognizing the complaint driven process accepted by the community and we call upon council to act decisively.

Yours truly,
SANDY HOOK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Per:

Bob D'Arcy
President

cc: G8 representatives on line
The Coast Reporter by email