

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED SHORT-TERM RENTAL REGULATIONS

### **What is a Short-Term Rental (STR)?**

In Camden, a short-term rental is a term used to define the use of a dwelling for rent to transient occupants for a period of no more than 28 consecutive days or one calendar month, whichever is less.

### **Why develop a more comprehensive Short-Term Rental ordinance?**

While the Town of Camden recognizes that short-term rentals contribute to the local economy, it is committed to maintaining the small-town character, distinct neighborhoods, scenic beauty, and natural resources that are the foundation of the Town's economic strength and quality of life. The purpose of this chapter is to regulate Short-Term Rentals to safeguard the public health and life safety of the residents of the Town of Camden and their visitors and guests, while preserving the residential character of neighborhoods, minimizing nuisances, and providing equity with other residential and commercial uses.

The Housing Chapter of the Town's Comprehensive Plan identifies recommendations and strategies to address the ongoing housing affordability and availability crisis, and specifically acknowledges that low-income and moderate-income households and seniors need the ability to rent or purchase adequate housing. The Comprehensive Plan further recognizes the need to balance the issues of "long time homeowners who because of escalating property values and associated taxes may face increasing difficulty holding onto their homes".

In addition, it is clear, based on the number of STRs on the online platforms (Airbnb, VRBO etc.), that existing STRs in Town are not complying with the Town's current regulations. This is evidenced by approximately 35 STRs currently registered, while information provided by AirDNA and Granicus indicate that there are anywhere between 215 and 400 STRs available for rent in Camden during the height of the tourist season.

### **How are the *proposed* short-term rental regulations different from the *existing* regulations?**

The Town's existing regulations for Short-Term Rentals require that a Short-Term Rental property be registered with the Town in instances where: 1) the property owners of the STR do **not** claim that the property is their "*Primary Residence*" and 2) the owners do not reside ( defined as an "*un-hosted*" Short-Term Rental) on the property where the Short-Term Rental is located.

For more information on the existing codes for Short-Term Rental registration requirements, please select the following link: <https://ecode360.com/38284846#38284846>

If forwarded to the voters and approved in June, the proposed Short-Term Rental regulations will enable the town to implement a more comprehensive Short-Term Rental program. This Short-Term Rental program will require all Short-Term Rental operations to meet typical, but important, standards that have been developed to protect the community's natural resources, public safety, the safety of the transient guests and the character of our neighborhoods.

For instance, the proposed regulations require applicants adhere to standards that address the life safety of their transient guests, adequate septic system/drain field capacity, and even "good neighbor" policies that require applicants to provide to transient occupants an "informational packet" that explains rules that pertain to such issues as parking, noise violations, public safety, and solid waste requirements.

The proposed amendments identify and regulate three types of STRs, and they are defined as:

- 1.) Commercial STRs- A short-term rental where the rental is owned by the Licensee, but the licensee does not claim primary residency on the property and operates a short-term rental(s) on the property.

- 2.) Residential STRs- A short term rental where the rental is located on a lot where the owner claims primary residency, and the owner may or may not be “in residence” during the tenancy of the short-term rental by Transient Occupants .
- 3.) Seasonal STRs- A short term rental located within a building containing a single dwelling made up of a room or group of rooms containing facilities for eating, sleeping, bathing, and cooking, but has water service available only seasonally and is occupied only seasonally. These structures typically do not contain insulation, or whole house heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

Finally, current regulations require a 7 consecutive day minimum stay. Under the proposed new regulations there is no minimum stay requirement. Life Safety inspections will also be required to ensure the safety of the transient guests that are staying in STRs.

### **Will STRs be banned, prohibited, or capped at a certain number?**

There is a lot of misinformation out there. The Town has been receiving comments that under the proposed new regulation STRs will be banned in Camden. The Planning Board has never proposed a ban or prohibition on STRs in Camden. What the Planning Board has been concerned about is the number of dwellings that have been converted to STRs and have been taken out of the long-term rental or the housing market. The Planning Board understands the desire to take advantage of the STR market given the fact that based on Air DNA data the average revenue generated by a STR in Camden is \$72,000 per year. This revenue is a significant incentive to rent short term as opposed to long term. However, the negative impacts of a lack of available housing and long-term rentals in Camden are significant. Therefore, the Planning Board is recommending that the number of Commercial STRs be capped at 150. Many communities that have adopted STR regulations have capped the number of STRs in a community at anywhere from 1% to 9% of the communities housing stock. There is no cap being proposed for Residential STRs and Seasonal STRs.

### **Where are Short-Term Rentals allowed?**

Short-term rentals are allowed in all zoning districts that permit residential uses. This means that Short-Term Rentals are not permitted in the Industrial, Rural Recreation and Natural Resource Protection Districts in Town.

### **When would the new regulations become effective?**

Due to the seasonal nature of most STRs, should voters approve these regulations, the new regulations would not become effective until January 1, 2025. The existing Chapter 215 would remain in effect until that time. . Because the program is new, if these regulations get approved by voters, applications will be available property owner(s) can pick up an application packet to be completed and submitted to the Planning and Development department in the Town offices.

### **What will I need for my Short-Term Rental License application?**

Applicants for a Short-Term Rental License will find all the required forms in their applicant packets, available in the town’s Code Enforcement Office. Depending on your specific Short-Term Rental type, the Town will require such documentations as: Affidavits showing proof of Primary Residency (if required), Proof of Ownership of the property, Proof of Public Sewer connection or proof of septic tank capacity, Proof of Property Insurance and General Liability Insurance affidavit, proof that abutting property owners are notified of your intent to operate a STR, appropriate documentation demonstrating a homeowner’s association/ restrictive covenants, declarations, etc. allowing for the operation of Short-Term Rentals, if required.

### **Does my STR need to be inspected under the proposed STR regulations?**

Yes, a life safety inspection conducted by the Code Enforcement Officer, or their designee is required every three years. This is to ensure compliance with applicable health and life safety codes. It has come to the attention of the Planning and Development Office that some current STRs are renting STRs with more bedrooms or sleeping rooms than have been permitted by the town and/or exceed the number of bedrooms in Town Code and Assessing records and exceed the number of bedrooms that a septic system has been designed for. This

is a significant life safety and health concern, as bedrooms and sleeping rooms require certain means of egress such as an egress window. We have found certain situations where people are using basements or rooms in a home that lack required egress for bedrooms or sleeping rooms. This is a life safety issue that the Town takes with the utmost seriousness and urgency. In addition, in terms of septic systems we have found STRs that indicate a number of bedrooms that exceed the septic design capacity for that home. This is a significant environmental health issue especially in terms of lake water quality, and we have had to ensure that septic systems are expanded to accommodate the number of bedrooms, and the change of use to an STR. It is also important to note that the State of Maine has included STRs in the design capacity table for septic systems and has increased the capacity requirements for STRs. Without regulating STRs there is no way to ensure that septic systems meet the new STR design criteria for septic systems.

**How much is the license fee?**

The licensing fee is set by the Town of Camden Select Board.

**How long are the licenses valid?**

All Licenses expire on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. Renewal applications are due on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. If you currently have an existing *Registered* STR with the Town of Camden, you must apply for a License/ License Renewal before your Registration expires. The Town has 30 calendar days in which to either Approve or Deny your application for a STR License. When operating a Licensed STR, as long as you apply on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, you may continue to operate your Short-Term Rental.

**Who do I contact for questions about the application or registration process?**

Please contact the Town of Camden Planning and Development Office at: 207-236- 3353.

**How do I report an STR that is illegally operating or violating a town ordinance?**

Please contact the Town of Camden Codes and Development office at: 207-236- 3353.

**I registered my short-term rental property with the Town of Camden prior to June 2024, is my registration still valid?**

Currently, our regulations provide for a short-term rental **registration** of all “un-hosted” short-term rentals of property that the owner could not claim as their Primary Residence. Before your current registration expires, and if you wish to renew and apply for a new License, you will be subject to the new regulations for short-term rentals. For example, you must apply for your License before the expiration of your existing registration, regardless of the new deadlines of on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**What is the effective date of the new regulations?**

The effective date of the new regulations is January 1, 2025. The initial application period will be determined by the Planning Department.

**If you have questions on the proposed STR Code amendments?**

Please contact the Town of Camden Planning and Development office at: 207-236- 3353, or email Planning and Development Director Jeremy Martin at [jmartin@camdenmaine.gov](mailto:jmartin@camdenmaine.gov)