

## **Aven, Heather M.**

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**From:** Pool, Lisa A.  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2018 8:57 AM  
**To:** Sepler, Rick M.; Nabbefeld, Kurt D.; Aven, Heather M.  
**Subject:** FW: Comments regarding AirBnB in Bellingham ordinance hearing

See below.

-----Original Message-----

From: JESSICA WILLIAMS [mailto:jessie.williams@me.com]  
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2018 11:09 PM  
To: Pool, Lisa A. <lapool@cob.org>  
Subject: Comments regarding AirBnB in Bellingham ordinance hearing

Dear Ms. Pool,

I would like my comments to be on the record regarding your upcoming hearing of an AirBnB ordinance in Bellingham. I feel so passionately about this issue that I would love for my comments to be read aloud at the hearing.

I am a resident of Berkeley, California and have twice visiting Bellingham and stayed in charming AirBnB rentals. I discovered Bellingham through AirBnB and never would have thought to visit there except that I found these sweet places to stay. The hosts were fantastic, "Super Hosts" with the highest ratings. I would not have chosen to fly up there for a visit if I had had to stay in a hotel (too corporate) or a Bed and Breakfast (too intimate, I've never liked them).

Staying in a charming local home made me really able to experience your fair city as a local and I fell in love with it. The host had so many personal recommendations and made the whole visit a total delight. The sign that says "Welcome to Bellingham" rang true to how welcome my AirBnB host made me feel. This ordinance would take the welcome out of Bellingham. As I said, I never would have come to visit at all had it not been for discovering it on AirBnB. Once there, I spent money in local businesses and have been raving about it as a vacation destination to friends because of my positive experience.

Taking away the AirBnB option will surely put a big dent in your tourism industry. Why would you want to do that? Why would you take this business opportunity away from your AirBnB hosts who are just trying to run a small hospitality business and provide a highly personal welcome to visitors? It makes no sense to me!

My proposal is this:

Grandfather in existing AirBnB venues that have the highest ratings to continue to offer this as a lodging option! Keep these good businesses that are bringing tourism to your city but just cap them for the time being so that you protect your housing market for residents. PLEASE don't take away the AirBnB option for visitors like me who want to bring tourism dollars to you. I won't be back to Bellingham without this option.

Sincerely concerned,  
Jessica Williams

## **Aven, Heather M.**

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**From:** Pool, Lisa A.  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2018 3:04 PM  
**To:** Aven, Heather M.; Sepler, Rick M.; Nabbefeld, Kurt D.  
**Subject:** FW: Comments for STR ordinance

See below.

Lisa

**From:** Caroline Abbott [mailto:caroline9180@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2018 3:00 PM  
**To:** Pool, Lisa A. <lapool@cob.org>  
**Subject:** Comments for STR ordinance

As a resident of Whatcom County and rental property owner for 20 years, I support the Planning Commission's efforts to create a legal process for short term rentals. I have paid all required license fees and am proud to generate lodging tax dollars from my STR for the Whatcom Museum Foundation and many other fine groups.

I do not support differentiating non-occupied STR's by requiring a Conditional Use Permit. All STR's should have the same permit type.

Because of the high standards STR owners must keep in order to maintain good reviews, there is no difference in oversight between owner occupied and non-occupied. There should not be presumption of bad behavior. Would you require a landlord to live on site in a long term rental to ensure good behavior of the tenants? Without exception, everyone I've ever talked to believes owning an STR sounds like too much work. It requires constant communication with guests, cleaning and supervision to stay in business. The irony about this "supervision" concern is that long term "rent it and forget it" generates way more documented noise, trash and partying problems than STR's.

I don't think the ordinance should stipulate how many days the place can be rented. This should be a business decision. Once an owner has invested in furnishings and startup costs and met the permit requirements, I see no additional impact to the neighborhood to rent it 90 days vs 300 days. Of course complaints could forfeit that permit or limit the number of rental days.

I do support the cap on the number of permits issued, as this is a logical way of addressing concerns about uncontrolled proliferation throughout the neighborhoods.

The nexus between the affordable housing shortage and STR's seems tenuous. Others have made this point well. Perhaps targeting STR's is an easy gain for the City to be "doing something" about affordable housing. Strangling the STR market may net a handful of long term units but what will we lose in the process?

- Frustrated visitors go elsewhere as they are unable to locate the housing options they once used
- Bellingham's "visitor unfriendly" reputation gets around in media, social media
- Local businesses and tourist events suffer

Here's a sample of the reasons my visitors came to Bellingham over the last year in support of local events, institutions and businesses:

- Participate in local sailing event
- business trip, brought spouse to shop and explore while he was working

- Haz mat contract employees working at waterfront and refinery
- Participating in Seattle to Vancouver bike ride
- Nooksack middle school counselor new hire, relocating but apartment not ready yet
- out of state illustrator meeting with local colleagues
- out of state small business owners in auto industry taking local technical course
- Mountain biking and kayaking group expeditions
- Out of area landlord in town to coordinate repairs on her rental
- Attending WWU conference
- Mountain biking workshop
- Official with soccer tournament
- Attending mindfulness training within walking distance of the house
- Musicians playing at concert celebrating life of deceased local musician Lucas Hicks
- Taking an abstract painting class
- Two authors nominated for Chanticleer Book Award attending ceremony at Bellwether
- Several families checking out area in consideration of a move from out of area/state, meeting with local realtors

I hope you will give some thought to what people will do the next time a conference or festival or workshop is offered in Bellingham and they can't find a lodging option that meets their needs. Thank you for work and consideration of these many complicated issues!

Thank you,

Caroline Abbott  
2208 Lynn Street

## Aven, Heather M.

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**From:** Kelly Booker <kelly@kellybooker.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 26, 2018 7:06 PM  
**To:** Grp.PL.Planning And Development Commission  
**Subject:** Short Term Rentals Comments

Bellingham Planning Commission

210 Lottie Street

Bellingham, WA 98225

February 26, 2018

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I'd like to offer some insights based on my experience with vacation rental properties in Bellingham. There seems to be a lot of anxiety about hundreds of owners suddenly converting their home or long-term rental into a short-term rental. The fact is, demand for short term rentals in Bellingham is very seasonal. My units are booked steadily during the summer months, with a vacancy rate of about 20%, but demand is very low for the other 9 months of the year, with vacancy rates closer to 80% during the months of September - May. I actually lost money when the properties were offered as year-round short-term rentals. There is simply not enough profit during the high season to make up for the loss of income due to low demand the rest of the year. In addition, there is significant time, labor and expense involved in setting up and maintaining a furnished rental, including purchasing furniture and decor, kitchenware, linens, and other supplies, plus utility expenses, cleaning costs, higher insurance rates, additional taxes, and percentages paid to hosting sites- these costs limit the profitability of short-term rentals. Additionally, short-term rentals are significantly more work than leased rentals, with numerous hours devoted to communications, shopping and restocking supplies, countless loads of laundry, meeting and greeting guests, and other requirements. The demands of hands-on time and labor discourage absentee landlords from pursuing short-term rental options for their properties. These factors, as well limited market demand, will certainly limit the number of viable short-term units that Bellingham can sustain.

I have several properties that I offer as vacation rentals during the summer months, and as leased academic year rentals. It would absolutely be easier to simply offer the homes for standard twelve-month leases, but I have a huge extended family and enjoy hosting multiple summer time visits to Bellingham every year. I love that visiting family or friends can have a separate space for themselves for their visit; sometimes too much time together can be overwhelming both for hosts and guests. In addition, I have several neighbors who have booked the homes for their own visiting family. In the downtown historic neighborhoods, the homes tend to be older and smaller, and have just a single bathroom, and many families simply don't have the space to accommodate

out of town guests. Many folks appreciate having an option available within their own neighborhood to maximize harmonious family time and minimize the discomfort of an over-crowded home.

I have found that I am more hands-on with my properties as vacation rentals than when they are leased rentals. I am in the homes every week, or even more frequently. I have more regular contact with property neighbors when I'm hosting short-term guests than I do with leased rentals. Guest reviews motivate hosts to keep their homes in great condition, since poorly maintained homes with negative reviews don't get booked. I think that responsibly managed vacation rental properties are a positive addition to a neighborhood.

When traveling with my family, I always prefer to book a vacation rental home or apartment. With 4 people in one room, even a single night in a hotel room feels crowded and uncomfortable. Another complication is that my son has a severe food allergy. I need a kitchen to have some peace of mind while vacationing, so that we can eat meals and feel confident that our vacation won't involve an epi-pen injection and a trip to the emergency room. I appreciate being welcomed by a friendly local owner who knows the area and can make helpful recommendations for us in terms of must-experience and under-the-radar local attractions. I'm certain that plenty of folks who choose Bellingham as their vacation destination have similar needs and desires. Hotels can be great for singles or couples, but they simply aren't the best option for many families.

I would love for Bellingham to officially recognize short-term rentals as an important part of the Bellingham community. Having a variety of housing types available to welcome family, friends, and visitors will help maximize tourism. Providing comfortable accommodations for groups will result in longer stays and more tourism dollars invested in the community.

Thank you for considering another point of view.

Regards,

Kelly Booker

**Aven, Heather M.**

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**From:** Jam Robinson <darwinismyhomeboy22@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 27, 2018 8:05 AM  
**To:** Grp.PL.Planning And Development Commission  
**Subject:** Short Term Rental Public Comment

Hello. My name is Chris Robinson and I live in the 1100 block of Grant Street. In the Spring of 2017 I was notified that my company was going to be shutting down. In order to find alternative employment, I purchased a college rental across the street from our residence, fixed it up and made it available to short term rental--see before and after pics below. In doing so:

1. I have been able to gain employment (nearly daily cleanings and maintenance of the property along with a lot of laundry).
2. The income from our short term rental property has been invaluable to our family.
3. I also believe that due to the maintenance and oversite required of a short term rental, I have improved the quality of my neighborhood, decreased the amount of noise due to parties and increased the available parking. Again, see before and after pics below.

One thing we heartily considered before buying the property was the impact on taking a house off the rental market. After looking at many "entire home" offerings on airbnb, we concluded that the vast majority of those "entire homes" were *not* actually entire homes but rather backyard studios, basement dwellings attached apartments, campers, tent sites, boats etc, many of which were not actually suitable for traditional rentals. Ultimately, I believe that the positive impact from short term rental opportunities available to hundreds of Bellinghamsters is much greater than the perceived or actual negative impact to housing stock. I also believe that short term rental situation in Bellingham is does not resemble New Orleans or San Francisco or even Seattle and believe a large scale conversion of rental properties is highly unlikely.

I strongly encourage the planning commission to consider limiting the restrictions on the citizens of Bellingham to rent parts of their property--including detached parts-- on a short term basis. Thanks you.

BEFORE

AFTER



