

Concern that our original short-term lodging ordinance isn't working

The Bethlehem Gadfly Airbnb, Neighborhoods, Northside, Serious Issues, Short term lodging

 *Latest in a series of posts on Airbnb and short-term lodging* 

In our last post in this series about the Planning Commission consideration of this proposed new **Short-Term Lodging amendment to the City Zoning Ordinance**, we listened to discussion led by one Commissioner about limiting the duration of a transient's stay in short-term lodging and limiting the total time annually in which a home-owner could offer short-term lodging. Both questions related to the impact of short-term lodging on the quality of neighborhood life. Good.

Next, to understand the concern of Bruce Haines, managing partner of the Hotel Bethlehem — and “representing a neighborhood” — one has to back up to the passage in 2017 of the original attempt to control the perceived and experienced dangers of short-term lodging to the Northside Historical District represented by Airbnb: **Article 1741**.

Article 1741 was designed to address the concerns of neighbors about Airbnb (and no doubt similar businesses), and the current proposed zoning amendment requires that short-term lodging hosts must comply with “all aspects” of 1741.

So here's Haines framing the purpose of 1741:

<https://youtu.be/QijYMVM7MG4>

Haines's present “beef,” if you will, is that the zoning amendment under consideration by the Planning Commission does nothing to address the shortcomings of 1741 (shortcomings of enforcement?). He identifies, for

example, two specific properties in the Northside Historical District that have separate apartments and thus are not single family homes yet are licensed by the City for short-term lodging — even after being reported to the City.

<https://youtu.be/bYtFSOBVhuI>

“The ordinance that’s in place has been an utter failure . . . and this isn’t going to help it. . . . The only time you should allow transient visitors in a residential community should be if they are sharing the space.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Haines seems to have run into the wall of compartmentalization. The Planning Commission chair focused just on the zoning amendment at that moment before the Commission and not this shortcoming of what we might call the “parent” 1741 ordinance.

And thus all Mr. Haines could do was make known his disappointment that persisting problems with short-term lodging in his neighborhood weren’t being addressed.

And so the long-standing “Airbnb” issue in the Northside Historical District is still not resolved despite legislation supposed to address their concerns.