

To the Short-Term Rental Ordinance Committee and Empire Village Council:

It was great to hear Meg Walton speak at the last Council meeting about how much we all love our Village. Unfortunately, what's happening does not feel much like anyone is looking for common ground/common values among our neighbors. And, when I say neighbors... I am referring to the entire Village and the neighborhood that is Empire. Instead, what is happening is:

1. Discussing government intervention for problems that don't exist. The resounding theme is that Empire is different – Our attractions are different; our way of life is different; our pace of life is different. These are things we should be excited about and be happy to share with all kinds of visitors.
2. Speaking pretty. Starting to repeat at all your meetings that “no one is trying to shut anyone down”. Well, the report says otherwise. It says, “limiting the number for short term rentals allowed in the Village.” It seems like you're deciding to make short term rental ownership so burdensome that people will stop renting!
3. Unintentionally, I am sure, you have created an atmosphere that is dividing this community almost neighborhood by neighborhood rather than building a stronger sense of Village wide community.
4. Our Empire community has always been committed and willing to address any problems our neighbors face - without the burden or interference of government. What has made this topic so awkward/confusing/polarizing is that the problem is not one of garbage, noise, septic or number of bodies in a building.

You have the power to slow down and change course – you can go back and suggest the Council or another committee take on the issue of building community character with short term rental owners. Maybe the community has a committee that could do that type of work!

Thank you
Justin Baker
Empire Resident