

From: davet3900@aol.com
To: [Village of Empire Deputy Clerk; Mark Dunphey](#)
Subject: Re: response to Mr. Blacquier's letter to the Village of Empire
Date: Thursday, February 15, 2024 10:15:28 AM

Good morning, Alacia. Again, could you please have this letter read at the STR village meeting on Thursday 2/15.

I am in receipt of Mr. Blacquiere's letter dated February 4, 2024. I have read it but I am having a tough time understanding his logic. He continues to voice his opinions, none of which are facts. He believes there are three comprehensive and compelling reasons for a STR regulation.

His claim....."Regulating Short Term Rentals prioritizes the well-being and cohesion of all members of the community".

This claim, to my knowledge has never been proven and is nothing but an opinion of Mr. Blacquiere's.

In his letter to the village, he states that throughout Michigan and the USA, communities have enacted needed regulations that require permits for STR and put caps on the number of Short-Term Rentals allowed in their communities in order to preserve community life for its residents. Communities such as Suttons Bay and Holland are two exemplary examples of the positive outcome of adopting STR policies.

My take on his research is.....He has done no research on this matter and again just his opinion. I'm not sure why he called Holland, MI an exemplary example, Holland is located over 160 miles from Empire, has a population of over 34,000 people and a land mass that covers over 17 square miles. Based on FBI crime data, Holland has a crime rate that is higher than 79% of Michigan's cities and towns. In the past 10 years there have been 7 murders and 278 rapes, along with a very violent gang population who are committing many other crimes. With this being said, I'm not sure why Mr. Blacquiere is using Holland as a comparison to Empire but I pray to God, ourvillage never becomes what Mr. Blacquiere calls "an exemplary example of what we should become".

Mr. Blacquiere also lists problems with the STR's that he believes negatively impact our community.

Excessive noise, especially late-night parties and gatherings, along with increased traffic and speeding, Increases in vandalism and disregard for neighboring properties and privacy. My take on this observation, again, is just his opinion and has no merit as there have been no studies that have stated that STR's are to blame for any of this. I believe Mr. Blacquiere is looking for a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist.

Aside from the issue of property owners' rights, the fact is that there's a huge tourism demand in our village for comfortable, homey, authentic accommodations. The thousands of tourists visiting Empire every year shouldn't be limited to choosing between a hotel and someone's primary residence. Everyone here needs to be smart about where you draw the line, so that we're not creating unintended consequences that needlessly eliminate parts of this valuable, job-creating industry that clearly has the right to exist. I strongly urge you to consider all of the consequences of this proposal before us, before making a careless decision that would significantly harm so many people.

Why I believe this proposed short term rental ordinances should be abandoned.

The proposed short term rental ordinances arise from the complaints of a small, and vocal, group of influential homeowners in "The New Neighborhood and the M22 Neighborhood who wish to hold an entire group of responsible short term rental owners to task for the alleged actions of one, or two "bad apples." If indeed the renters of the problem properties (STRs or otherwise) are in violation of law, by all means cite them under existing nuisance laws. Those laws apply equally to property owners, long term and short-term renters and are already on the books. Instead of targeting the purported problem the Village proposes to enact sweeping, onerous, regulations for all the STR owners in Empire. Ironically, the proposed ordinances won't address, much less solve, the claimed (but unverified) problem that caused the ruckus in the first place. The problem, if there is one, is not STRs in general, it is those particular owners and the conduct of the people they rent to. Bad neighbors exist in every community, and it has always been so. They can be owners, renters or people visiting said owners and renters. Broadly speaking, there is no evidence that STRs cause any more issues than any other group and they likely cause less problems since STRs are rarely occupied full time. In other words, if you are going to have a bad neighbor, wouldn't you rather have it be one that goes away on Monday rather than a long-term owner or renter who causes problems constantly and won't leave?

Anecdotally, one must question whether there is even a problem.

While the proposed ordinances proclaim both that STRs have created "crisis" and that they are a "threat" to Empire.

Neither assertion is supported by a shred of actual evidence and all of the available evidence directly contradicts such assertions.

My renters partake of the local restaurants, stores, bars and various other attractions and in so doing spend far more on any given weekend than the average local resident. In addition to our renters, we have introduced numerous friends, and family members, to the area, all of whom have become fans of Empire.

I also believe the STRs in Empire are doing just fine without a whole raft of vindictive regulations which won't even solve the isolated issue which started this whole mess and is doing nothing but dividing the people of this village.

The proposed ordinances should be abandoned, and the Village of Empire should start fresh and look for thoughtful ways to embrace this group as an economic partner, in a positive way, for the long-term benefit of the entire community.

In my educated, professional opinion as a real estate appraiser and a STR owner of two properties in Michigan for over 20 years, I can tell you that in a area where wages do not match housing costs, we cannot be taking away homeowners' only means of staying in true single-family homes or we will have only the wealthy and rentals in our neighborhoods. Short term rentals make it possible for lower income people to own or rent a home here in the Village of Empire. Have a heart!

Sincerely,
David Taghon
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Empire, MI 49630
231-730-5200

Mark and Tina Dunphey
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Empire, MI 49630

On Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at 02:59:07 PM EST, Village of Empire Deputy Clerk
<deputyclerk@villageofempire.com> wrote:

Short Term Rental Registration/Ordinance Development Committee
February 6, 2024 @ 2 PM

Planning Commission Public Hearing and Regular Meeting
February 6, 2024 @ 7 PM

New Village Office Committee
February 8, 2024 @ 11 AM (Google Meet)

Village Council Work Session
February 8, 2024 @ 7 PM

If you do not wish to receive village news and meeting information emails, please respond to this email at
deputyclerk@villageofempire.com to be removed from the list.

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Visit the Village of Empire website