

MR. Korcezak, It was good speaking with you last week. This is a copy of the letter I read at the 12/11/18 meeting. I hope you will read it and that we can talk again soon. Paul

Dear Mayor Bassett and Village Board Members,

As you know, I am a member of a large group of concerned village residents working to influence any legislation and code provisions that you propose regarding Airbnb businesses in the Village. Arguably, this is one of the most significant, far reaching issues to come before you. Your decisions will impact the quality of life in the village for years to come. Over the past year you have heard significant, consistent and growing opposition from your constituents and there is no question in my mind that the explosion of Airbnbs has already had a negative effect on the character of the village. If you permit this to continue, the village will be forever changed.


The working group and a majority of the village board began with the premise that Airbnb businesses are good for all communities including Rhinebeck and that Rhinebeck is no different. But, it is! With Airbnb corporate talking points in mind, committee and village board discussions proceeded and proposed code revisions were developed based largely on anecdotal information. In fact, there has been little or no data presented that support the assumptions made about the benefits that Airbnb businesses bring to a community. There has been no clearly articulated rationale to support legislation and code revisions that will legalize Airbnb businesses in the Village.

I have watched as you have struggled to balance the perceived needs of a few village residents over the clear wishes of most village residents. Sadly, your efforts to date have resulted in many unnecessary, complex code revisions that are easily misunderstood and cannot be fairly applied or consistently administered, let alone enforced. If enacted, they will undoubtedly result in unnecessary, costly litigation. Therefore, I am calling on you tonight to abandon your efforts to legalize Airbnb businesses in the Village of Rhinebeck that are not owner occupied, while continuing the development of code provisions that include a strict permitting process. Code provisions must be fair, unambiguous and enforceable.

There is little public support for your current course of action. This is evidenced by a near total lack of attendance and participation at public meetings from residents who agree that Airbnb's should be allowed in the village. A review of meeting minutes and statements disclosed as part of a FOIL request confirm this. To the contrary, village residents are overwhelmingly opposed as evidenced by attendance and public comments made at EVERY Village Board meeting and EVERY workshop meeting. Presentation of a letter of opposition signed by over 100 village residents is further evidence of the public's opposition.

It is my sincere hope that you will have the courage to reverse course and propose legislation and appropriate code revisions that will expressly prohibit Airbnb businesses that are not owner occupied from operating in the Village of Rhinebeck. In doing so, you will be acting in a manner that is consistent with the wishes of the majority of village residents. Perhaps more importantly you will be protecting the character of the village. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Paul Higgins