Short Term Rentals Working Group
Meeting Summary

Date: June 7, 2021
Location: Webex Teleconference
Attendance: Rafe Sacks, Rob Ferguson, Eldon Wong, Noam Dolgin, Kenny Hammond, Hanna Wolff, Mo Vaziri, Karen Dar Woon, Rob Takeuchi, Kelly Riopelle, Kristie Starr,
City Staff: Claire Thompson, Matthew Yong, Koji Miyaji
External Facilitator/Scribe: Maria Stanborough, Matthew Campbell
Regrets: Patrick Audley

Meeting start: 6:40 pm

Introduction (Maria)

- Land Acknowledgement - acknowledgement of Kamloops Residential School discovery and a desire for greater action on reconciliation

Updates (Maria)

- Article published in CHOA related to topic of previous meeting - *Prohibited Buildings Program helps protect Vancouver strata corporations from unauthorized short-term rentals* https://www.choa.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/J135597T-CHOA-Spring-2021_WEB.pdf

Review (City staff)

License Application Process – what the City has heard from group

- There needs to be more accountability for STR license applicants – more documents up front; permission from landlord/strata council; online issuance "too easy."

Part 1 – Presentation – Licensing and Enforcement (City staff)

- Review City of Vancouver's Guiding Principles for STR
- Updated STR Market data including post-COVID-19 decline; 74 -78% licence compliance rate
- STR Regulations 101 – how are STRS enforced?
  - Scan datasets to identify bylaw violations
  - Casefiles are generated from platform data, City of Vancouver license data, screen scrape data, and community complaints
  - 'Boots-on-the-ground' site inspections
  - Unlicensed operator non-compliance results in legal orders, fines, & prosecution
  - Non-compliance of licensed operators results in audit, suspension & further escalation
  - Priorities of enforcement: unlicensed operators, unsafe and commercial non-principal residence STR operators, and community nuisance operators.
  - Enforcement done on operators on all STR platforms

- Case study overview and timeline of non-compliant operator
- Highlighting enforcement actions as of May 6, 2021– available on City of Vancouver website (https://vancouver.ca/doing-business/short-term-rentals.aspx#documents)
- Future considerations for the City
  - Advocate to the Province for a higher level of oversight in STR market
  - Continued engagement with platforms
  - Additional bylaw considerations

Questions and Comments (Working Group and City staff)

Q: Is enforcement community driven? How do people report?

City: Enforcement is both community and data driven. Residents can contact City through 3-1-1 and VanConnect – City will need physical address and URL/listing of STR

Q: Are STR bylaw violations a higher priority than other bylaw violations?

City: No. All complaints received by the City investigated.

Q: What are the roadblocks for platforms removing unlicensed/non-compliant operators?

City: With current licensing and enforcement regulations, City does not have the tools to regulate global online booking platforms. City continues to advocate to the province to regulate platforms. City is responsible for enforcement of non-compliant operators. Platforms will remove properties for safety reasons.

Q: Concerns over tenants running illegal STRs still being protected by RTB, should be clearer path to prosecution and more data should be required to validate permission to operate an STR

City: RTB and tenancy issues are provincial jurisdiction. City does work with owner/landlord to respond to illegal operators

Part 2 – General discussion about regulation involving a 'night cap' on STR rentals – *Night cap: limit on number of nights an entire unit can be rented in one year* (Working Group)

- Concerns that more regulations adds extra complexity to an already difficult to enforce system and looking to understand how it would be enforced
- Concern that 'bad actors' will manipulate the system while good actors are further restricted; advised City to better understand unintended consequences
- One member already has a night cap included in their home insurance
- Group advised additional clarity needed for specific goal that night cap would potentially support
- Concern that night cap restrictions may limit tourism initiatives or create peak times of availability
- Night caps identified as opportunity to prevent entire homes from being on the STR market permanently, and could improve the amount of long term rentals
- It was stated by members that a night cap could discourage commercial operators

- Discussion on number of nights, i.e. 90 or 120 nights. Advised more analysis needed

Closing Round – As STR program moves forward, looking for input on value of considering a STR working group in some future form.

- Majority of group members agreed that it would be useful to continue a working group. Suggestions for future consideration:
  - Breakout groups would help the group discuss issues in more specificity
  - More clarity on the specific problems the group is helping solve
  - Some concern that the group was too diverse and that it didn't allow for adequate time for confronting specific issues (e.g. strata bylaws, renters vs owners, entire single family home use, single room use, long term rental markets, neighbours, etc.)
  - More focused groups that meet on specific topics and then report back to a larger group

Meeting end: 8:08 pm