



City of Manzanita

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Short Term Rental Workgroup

Special COVID-19 Impact Briefing Report to the City Council

May 6, 2020

Preface

The City of Manzanita Short-Term Rental workgroup offers the following overview, recommended guidelines, and potential policy considerations as they relate to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and the influence on the City of Manzanita short-term rental program. The following information is intended to be an analysis of the issues and considerations that are facing the City of Manzanita as it begins to review the existing STR closure.

Shut Down of the Short-Term Rental Program

Faced with increasing evidence of a world-wide pandemic, and the recognition that the community was not capable of dealing with a large-scale Coronavirus infection, The City of Manzanita shut down all short-term rental activity on March 22, 2020. Tillamook County, as well as the entire North Coast of Oregon quickly followed suit.

Since the shut-down in March, the City has achieved, by all accounts, exceedingly good compliance with the order. There appears to be little to no effort to disobey the shut-down or act in defiance of the city direction. However, as time continues to pass, there is understandable and increasing pressure from the industry to begin the process of reopening, particularly as the community enters the high season when revenue and occupancy is the highest.

Workgroup Efforts to Date

The STR Oversight Workgroup had intended to work throughout 2020 as directed by the October 2019 Mayors appointment. To that end, multiple meetings were held through the fall and winter working through various community livability and regulatory issues involving short-term rentals in Manzanita.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the workgroup redirected their efforts toward identifying strategies that might be considered for Council action involving Covid-19. The workgroup has, over the past weeks, met multiple times and created a number of key documents, including a cleaning checklist, educational PowerPoint and video presentations, a draft letter intended for transmission to the STR stakeholders, a draft letter to homeowners and residents, and a briefing report intended for the City Council. Pending concurrence from the full Council, the workgroup will continue their pandemic response efforts but will remain flexible to change course or mission based on the direction is received from the Council.

Restarting the Short-Term Rental Program

The Short-Term Rental program is one of the most significant activities in Manzanita, both in terms of tax revenue generated and serving as the base foundation for an active business climate. The shut-down of the STR program has had a profound effect for those directly involved in providing lodging, including ancillary support industries, such as housekeeping and maintenance services. As many local businesses and residents are negatively affected economically, there is a growing recognition for the need to restore the program as soon as it is prudent to do so. At the same time, we acknowledge and strongly believe that any reopening should be done only after following the Governor's State of Emergency orders and in concert with Tillamook County and neighboring jurisdictions.

It is also equally clear that many members of the wider community remain extremely concerned about the introduction of any visitor population back into the City. The fear of the virus gaining a foothold, particularly with travel into Manzanita from more highly infected areas, is a valid concern. In addition, Manzanita is arguably at greater risk from the Covid-19 outbreak due to an older resident population. The ability to balance the needs of the community, with the recognition of the importance of STR's to the business climate of Manzanita, will be a difficult and somewhat bumpy road.

Guiding Principles

- To the extent possible, all City decisions should be based on the recommendations of qualified public health officials, industry experts, and Federal, State and Local Government.

- We recognize that a surge of visitors will likely arrive in Manzanita once the statewide shelter-in-place order is lifted and the State Park system is actively operating. Our role as the Short-Term Rental Workgroup will be to help educate STR homeowners, agencies and renters as to any additional guidelines, orders or regulations that will be required. We will also provide to the Council and other governmental and industry organizations any suggested regulatory changes that might be necessary to ensure for the safety, security and health of the community.
- Decisions by the Council to close, or otherwise restrict, activities of commerce, should only be made to assure the safety and welfare of the citizens, residents, workers and visitors to Manzanita.
- To the extent possible, City leadership at all levels should provide and encourage mechanisms to allow for the dissemination of important information and to create opportunities for receiving input and questions from the community.
- We acknowledge that any guidelines we suggest cannot control the activities and actions of daily visitors who are not renters.
- These guidelines and the opening of STR's may change as the year progresses and going forward, the City should remain particularly flexible. However, the Council should be prepared, in the event of a local Coronavirus outbreak, to order an immediate shut-down of STR activity. If it becomes necessary to again slow or shut-down STR's in Manzanita, guidelines for doing so should be developed prior to any re-openings the Council may authorize.

Work Group Recommendations

- a. We recommend any reopening of STR activity be, to the extent possible, in concert with the Governor's phasing and implementation schedule. In addition, and at a minimum, continue to coordinate with Tillamook and Clatsop County prior to announcement of a reopening date. The ability of the City to introduce more restrictive guidance is not contemplated at this time but is available should the Council choose to move in that direction. The specific shut-down of STR's was not contemplated within the Governor's order, but the directive came from both County and City government. As a result, the decision to restart does rest with the City, but common sense dictates that order to restart should be consistent other governing authorities after input from the community, healthcare and industry experts.
- b. Disseminate widely in the community, through multiple forums, all available information regarding the strategies to be employed during a start-up of STR activity, including recommended practices for vulnerable populations.

- c. The reopening of STR activity should be introduced in a “soft reopening” configuration that includes the ability to monitor the program on a daily and weekly basis. The workgroup recommends that the program not be restarted on a national holiday as the influx of renters and visitors may exceed the tolerance of the community and the ability to monitor large number of visitors. Any incidents occurring during or after startup should be reported to the City Short-Term Rental Coordinator immediately for dissemination to Council and the STR Workgroup.
- d. The safety, security, and health of the community is of paramount importance. To that end, the committee has prepared a “Best Practices for Cleaning” paper, video and PowerPoint presentation. The availability of these tools should be disseminated to all STR owners and rental agencies.
- e. We recommend that owners and agency representatives sign and return a city generated form indicating that they have read the reopening announcement and watched the instructor led PowerPoint or Movie presentation. The guidelines developed should be sent out as soon as possible so that owners and agencies can best plan for future rentals.
- f. We further recommend that the signature form be required as part of the license renewal package and required prior to the issuance of a new STR license.
- g. In order to provide a safer environment for housekeeping personnel to conduct cleaning and sanitizing, we suggest a minimum 24-hour turnaround time between rental agreements.
- h. Housekeeping staff and adjunct services should be provided with adequate PPE for all workers and routine and consistent monitoring of the use of PPE should rest with homeowners or their management firms.

Summary

Standards for operating the Manzanita Short-Term Rental Program going forward have been developed and will serve to provide guidance to the community, owners, and the short-term rental industry. The decision as to when the start-up of the program should occur should be coordinated with other government and public agencies in a coordinated fashion to prevent confusion, over populating smaller communities and to ensure the ability of Manzanita to provide oversight and enforcement functions. The workgroup recommends not starting the program on Memorial Day as a large influx of visitors and renters could overwhelm the community. When the program is once again initiated, the workgroup highly recommends a soft reopen format which will ensure the ability of any oversight efforts to capture both positive and negative aspects of the program. The workgroup is prepared to establish a methodology on how best to initiate a soft reopening that will limit the number of rental units in operation.

Special Thank You

The Manzanita Short-Term Rental Workgroup extends their deep appreciation to the following individuals for their assistance in developing the attached guidelines and educational material.

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