

Ame Wren & Andrew Hickson
229 Lankford Ave
Charlottesville, VA, 22902
(Owners of 46 Martin Rd, Kittery, ME)

December 12, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a property owner in the town of Kittery, writing regarding the town council hearing about STR permits. Please read this statement at the hearing, in lieu of my live attendance (I have a newborn and live out of state so cannot attend).

I grew up in Eliot and Kittery and adore the region. My father was a lifelong Mainer and had a deep love of the Seacoast region. After high school I moved to Boston for college and stayed there for twenty years, returning to Kittery a few times a month to visit my elderly father, who was living in a rental unit near the harbor.

It became clear around 2016 that renting was no longer ideal for my dad, as he had increasing health issues and needed to be in a one-story home, plus he had a service dog that needed access to a yard. Though I was just beginning my career and it was a financial stretch, I decided to invest in a home in Kittery so my father could live out his final years in the town he loved.

While we agreed that it would be a good idea for me to buy a house, it was with the knowledge that my father wouldn't live much longer, so I planned to rent the house following his eventual passing to offset the cost. Given that I wanted to continue spending time there in the summers and on occasional weekends, I planned to rent it via Airbnb.

Following my father's death in early 2020, I contacted the town of Kittery asking if I needed any special permit to offer short term rentals. I was told that I did not, and was *not* informed that this would change, so I outfitted the house for Airbnb and listed it. Shortly thereafter the pandemic began, and Airbnb was temporarily shut down in Maine. When it restarted a few months later, I began hosting guests.

Since then, I have been renting the house for both longer-term rentals in the winter and shorter-term rentals in the summer so that my husband and I can spend 4-6 weeks there in July and August. Throughout this time, I have remained unaware that Kittery now requires an STR permit as I was never contacted by anyone after my initial inquiry.

Last summer I hired a property manager to assist with the rentals as I was expecting a baby. She informed me of the STR permit requirement. I was shocked! I contacted the town again to inquire after getting one and was told that it was a five-year waiting list. Since then, I have shifted the rental requirements to be 30 days or more, which has dramatically decreased my bookings.

My home in Kittery will never be a full-time rental unit because we plan to continue to spend summers there. I recently had a baby boy and want him to grow up on the beaches of Kittery, as I did.

I hope that the town reconsiders the STR requirements. We have only had kind, responsible guests via Airbnb, and many of them became friendly with our neighbors during their stay. Our property is kept to the highest standards, and we are active and motivated members of the community, albeit from afar. I am now a doctoral student and the income from the Kittery rental has been crucial to my ability to pursue higher education.

Thank you for your consideration and please reach out if I can be of service to the STR process.

Sincerely,

Ame Wren