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For Immediate Release
March 29, 2019

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City Council Approves Short-Term Rental Regulations

Harrisonburg, Va. – On March 26, 2019, City Council adopted new Zoning Ordinance regulations associated with short-term transient lodging commonly referred to as “Airbnbs.” These operations, unless previously approved by the City as a bed and breakfast, have been illegal in the City of Harrisonburg. The recently adopted regulations established a new term and definition for “short-term rentals.”

A short-term rental (STR) is defined as “[t]he provision of a dwelling unit, a bedroom or accommodation space within the dwelling unit, or any accessory building that is suitable or intended for transient occupancy for dwelling, sleeping, or lodging purposes and is offered in exchange for a charge for the occupancy.” Many STR operators have used services, including but not limited to Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and FlipKey, to advertise their properties.

City Council adopted the regulations with a “grace period” where enforcement of the regulations will not occur until August 1, 2019. From March 27th until July 31st, notices may be sent to property owners who have been identified as operating a STR informing them of the possible penalties they could incur if found operating on or after August 1, 2019. The notice will also provide information on how they could acquire the permissions to legally operate the STR.

Individuals currently operating a STR should stop operations immediately and decide if they want to continue the use. If they wish to continue, they must apply for and receive approval of a special use permit granted by City Council. A special use permit application must be received by the Department of Planning and Community Development no later than May 3, 2019 in order to legally operate by August 1st. To legally operate a STR after this date, special use permit applications are received on a rolling basis for upcoming Planning Commission reviews and subsequent City Council meeting agendas for final determination.

In addition to obtaining a special use permit, operators of STRs must also annually register their STR, obtain a business license, and register for transient occupancy and state sales tax.

Beginning August 1, 2019, and continuing thereafter, individuals found illegally operating a STR without proper approvals will receive a violation notice with a \$100 penalty for the first offense and a \$500 penalty for any subsequent offense.

More information on the requirements to operate a short-term rental can be found at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/short-term-rentals.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to almost 55,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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