

The notes below were made by an attendee of the Town Hall Meetings at Oro Station and at Jarratt.

April 25, 2019: Oro Station Community Hall Meeting Notes

Given that the Township decided to embark on licensing, a group of concerned citizens got together and decided that they should let members of Council hear the thoughts of home-owners in a forum that was more inclusive of other points of view about solving the short-term rental problem. Furthermore, people were becoming increasingly concerned that they were not being heard and that voices supporting the existing disruptive short-term rental operators were being allowed to go unanswered.

A community hall meeting was held at Oro-Station on April 25, 2019. Over 70 people (standing room only) attended and many asked questions and let Councillors Greenlaw, Keane and Scott know their thoughts. The Township had decided to pursue licensing and the members of Council were interested in hearing the community's thoughts. **The overwhelming sentiment: no one wants to have to put up with disruptive rentals.**

No one had any interest in being a night clerk for these 'ghost hotels' and calling the police or Municipal Law Enforcement. Councillors heard that some residents were afraid to call the police for fear of retribution.¹ One woman, who had sat silently throughout the meeting, came up at the end and said that she was so fearful for her safety that she didn't even feel comfortable speaking up at the community hall meeting.

The view of the people who attended and spoke up at the meeting was that commercial short-term rentals should not be allowed in residential neighbourhoods. **No one spoke in favour of licensing short-term rentals.**

One gentleman, a Mr. XX who spoke up at the meeting later added that he lived in a rural residential zone and had not one, but two disruptive rentals next to him. One was a recent start-up - a new build. It had received an occupancy permit and had begun carrying on business after the Interim Control By-Law had been passed. Despite numerous complaints to the Township dating back to 2017, the disruptive behaviour had continued unabated. As far as Mr.XX. knew, no charges had ever been laid against either operator. Both properties were not occupied by the owner. The owner did not live there. It was not the owners' home.

Near the end of the Oro-Station meeting, a noteworthy comment came from one participant. He is a lawyer who lives in Shanty Bay and practices real estate law. Mr. YY told the assembly that it will all come down to zoning and what uses the current zoning permits.

¹ The fear is real. On January 1, 2020 at around 12:20 AM a home owner C. walked over and complained to transients staying next door at a short-term rental. They were setting off fireworks that were exploding in C's mix of coniferous and deciduous trees. The home owner was met with a large group (more than 20) comprised of 20 to 30 years olds who told her what they were doing was legal and to just go away. One male began to follow her home and warned her not to phone the police. Feeling threatened C. returned home and did call the Ontario Provincial Police but continued to worry about retribution the rest of the night.

May 29, 2019: Jarratt Community Hall Meeting Notes

At an open meeting of concerned citizens at the Jarratt Community Hall on May 29, 2019, people learned what many suspected - that commercial short-term rentals may not be permitted in residential zones. The meeting was attended by about 55 constituents. The late Councillor Scott MacPherson and the late Deputy Mayor Scott Jerney were in attendance along with Councillor Shawn Scott. At the meeting, homeowners learned that short-term rentals may not be legal in residential zones. This came to light when one constituent stood up at the meeting and persistently questioned the Deputy Mayor about the 2015 zoning by-law amendment which specifically excluded 'commercial accommodation' in a 'dwelling unit'. The section from the Township's zoning by-law to which he was referring has been reproduced here:

“Dwelling Unit [By-law 2015-192] Means one or more rooms in a building, designed as, or intended as, or capable of being used or occupied as a single independent housekeeping unit and containing living, sleeping, sanitary and food preparation facilities or facilities for the installation of kitchen equipment and has an independent entrance. For the purposes of this By-law, a dwelling unit does not include any commercial accommodation or a recreational trailer.”²

This is the same section of the Zoning By-law that the LeMay's lawyer had referred to back in November 2017. With this public revelation, so began the unravelling of the pretext for licensing. Many informed residents began to believe that if the existing STR uses were illegal, then licensing and corresponding zoning changes would be unnecessary. There could be no question of grandfathering existing commercial uses since the existing uses were already illegal. For a use to be grandfathered, a use had to be legal prior to passing of a subsequent zoning by-law amendment. It therefore followed that licensing was not required since STR uses could be most efficiently controlled by enforcing the existing zoning by-laws.

²Township of Oro-Medonte Zoning By-Law 97-95 at p. 6-10