

Town of Encampment  
Joint Workshop  
Town Council & Panning Commission  
Short-Term Rentals  
January 26, 2026  
5:00 p.m.

The Town of Encampment met in a workshop session in for the purpose of discussing short-term rentals in Encampment. Those present were Senior Councilman and Planning Commission Chairman Steve Reichert; Stas Banach; Ashley McKinney and Susan Munson, Council, Planning Commission members present were William Acord, Ted Benedict, Carl Lembke and Dawna Martin. Also present was Doreen Harvey, Clerk/Treasurer. Audience members present were Bob & Ros Herring, Scott & Shelli Ward, Jay & Vicky Ward, Nick & Karen Taylor, Anthony & Mackenzie Rakness, Charles Keisel and Jeff Goldy.

Senior Councilman and Planning Commission Chairman Reichert called the workshop to order at 5:00 p.m. He advised the audience that Mayor Fagan was under the weather and advised that the workshop was intended for discussion, decisions would not be made at this time. Clerk/Treasurer Harvey advised the audience that the officials had been given lists of pros and cons on the issue collected from prior discussions and that all were present to decide a way forward. Acord distributed a draft breakdown of building usage in Encampment.

Discussion ensued about existing short-term housing in Encampment. Clerk/Treasurer Harvey advised that there fifteen permitted, but that two had changed hands and were no longer believed to be active. It was noted that there were 22-27 listed on VRBO sites. It was decided that the data likely included Riverside and outlying areas. Other items discussed were seasonal residents versus what was termed as 'empty' housing on the breakdown.

Lembke noted that his take away from previous discussions was that one way to handle the issue was to limit short-term rentals. Another approach would be to focus on the 30 'empty' houses and anything that is already existing. It was noted that for the most part the 'empty' housing was not necessarily vacant. Most are absentee owners not choosing to rent property out in their absence. They pay water and sewer bills year-round, perhaps hoping to retire here. Mr. Herring noted that he would like to see focus on the residences being used as long-term rentals. Munson noted that the town did not keep data sets on the status of available housing, noting that perhaps real-estate agents have it. Lembke noted that another argument for limiting short-term rentals was that there are not enough long-term rentals.

Discussion ensued on what 'occupancy' would be considered and what occupied 'seasonally' was considered. Ms. Herring noted that some people occupy seasonally just to claim residency. It was noted that it would be nice to know the percentage that rental housing was occupied by a resident or by a short-term renter. It was noted that the 3.5% of short-term rentals noted on the spreadsheet might be lowered substantially by what was being termed as 'empty.'

Munson advised the group that the discussion needs to focus on whether we are going forward to change the use or not.

Scott Ward noted that he had done some comparisons and that one common thing implemented was an annual permitting process and an annual fee for review of permits. Munson noted that the State of Wyoming does not have law that governs short-term rentals. Lembke noted that some sort of a review fee as part of the ordinance could put the money into a community development fee or purposed toward something. Clerk/Treasurer Harvey noted that the Town of Encampment does not have existing ordinances for licensing businesses. Those ordinances would need to be established first.

Mr. Goldy noted that if the rationale behind the discussion was that a person could buy a home, pay a local contractor to upgrade it, making improvements to the area. He questioned who was to say that was a bad thing to limit that? Who benefits? Scott Ward noted that the community cannot keep people employed due to housing. Mr. Goldy advised that the issue should be looked at with cost of living per similar communities before making decisions.

Mr. Lembke advised that some of the cons were that short-term rentals would worsen the issue for teachers and hollow out the community as there would be no vested interest. It was noted that some upset people are a loud group, but the focus needs to be evaluating the downsides. Audience members noted that some people have to commute here to work because they cannot afford to live here. Scott Ward noted that tourism is a 5-billion-dollar industry. Lembke noted that the area is not solely dependent on tourism. There is ranching, the refinery, school and other businesses. The goal should be to find the balance between the two. Everyone present agreed that it was a good conversation to have.

Ms. Herring noted that some tourists have come here, saw what a lovely community it was, bought a house, but cannot tolerate the wintertime. Mr. Herring noted that in his opinion the school suffers, lack of family housing affects the school enrollment. Short-term rentals bring in people, but they do not necessarily shop here. Tourists or locals do not shop in their store in the wintertime. There is no business in the Business District. Lembke noted that he actually moved to the valley because of a VRBO. He cold called to find and purchase his house.

It was noted again that funding a balance between the two may be the best way. Lembke noted that it did not seem that the town wanted to grow. Discussion returned to termed, 'empty' occupiable housing. Mr. Herring noted that he had contacted some owners asking if they would be willing to make it into a rental. It was also noted that the school had contacted some owners and that the town hall had also fielded questions as to where renters might find housing.

Mr. Ward interjected that there were also several houses on two lots in a district where three lots were required to build. The houses could not be torn down and rebuilt because of the requirement. Clerk/Treasurer Harvey noted that the topic was a separate topic and worthy of a conversation with the council.

Benedict noted that as a bus driver for the school, he has 25-30 students that live past the junction. Parents chose the Encampment school because of its personnel, learning, experience, teachers, etc. He noted that parents may have wanted to live here and not been able to find a place. Some started in

Saratoga but came here because it was a better school. Susan noted that those students are still funded by the district.

Mr. Kiesel noted that he was not necessarily against short-term rentals, but he was against having too many of them in a residential neighborhood. Discussion turned to areas in other states that struggled with too many VRBO's and not enough workforce housing, limits that might be placed, areas for long-term rentals. Reichert noted that we cannot be compared to areas in other states. He stated that he feels that as a property owner he has the right to use his property as he sees fit. Mrs. Taylor questioned the short-term rentals being allowed as a business use of a residential area. Vicky Ward noted that she thinks that they should be limited to the business district and not in residential areas.

It was agreed that not every town is a one-size-fits all approach. Others noted that the area is missing opportunity for revenue. Clerk/Treasurer Harvey noted that the current short-term rental practice allows the Planning Commission to say 'no', they just have not made the choice to do that. Mr. Benedict noted that he like the idea of reviewing the permits annually. Munson noted that regulations would have to be in place for that. Banach noted that the current ordinances were in place before short-term rentals became popular.

Discussion returned to data-set information. It was noted that the Town does not collect short-term vs. long-term rental data. Banach asked Mrs. McKinney, who is a teacher at the school, if she knew how many parents lived elsewhere. She advised that she has not discussed the issue at school.

Those present decided that the next step should be to ask the council to contact the town attorney to see if short-term rentals can be limited by percentage under the current ordinance. Mr. Herring noted that they should be limited as to how many in a neighborhood. Munson noted that we already have the process to do that, but have had concerns about property rights. Scott Ward reiterated that annual permitting could capture use for review.

Discussion turned to enforcement of ordinances. It was noted that the ultimate enforcement for the town was the police officer. The Town Attorney would be involved if someone established an illegal use. The penalty by ordinance is \$750.00 per day with each day being a new violation. It was reiterated that annual review of permits would require changes to existing ordinances.

Munson agreed that permission to contact the attorney with questions could be added to the next council meeting agenda. The questions being whether or not we could establish an annual permit review process under our current ordinance, and whether or not we can legally limit short-term rentals.

Clerk/Treasurer Harvey noted that the application itself could definitely be reviewed to seek additional information that falls within the existing practice. Advising about insurance needs, lodging tax and other pertinent information.

Lemke noted that the bottom-line is that small towns that have made short-term rental decisions with a rational basis, are defensible decisions. Munson noted that the Town of Encampment may not be able to

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afford the defense in a lawsuit against private property rights. It was agreed that the ordinances would continue to be reviewed.

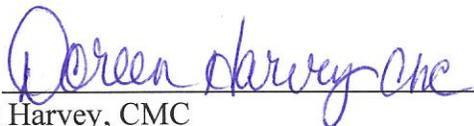
The Council and Planning Commission thanked everyone for taking the time to come and take part in the important discussion.

Reichert declared the workshop adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Doreen Harvey, CMC  
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved: February 12, 2026

  
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Steve Reichert, Senior Councilman

Attest:   
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Doreen Harvey, CMC  
Clerk/Treasurer