

**RAVENNA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
JANUARY 28, 2025  
6:00PM  
RAVENNA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Mr. Seman called meeting to order at 6:05 PM

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	Mr. Barber	Present
	Mr. Contant	Present
	Mr. Hairston	Present
	Ms. Laudato	Present
	Mr. Seman	Present
	Mr. Jennings	Present
	Mr. Smith	Present
	Mr. Finney	Present

Also in attendance: Larry Silenius 123 N Walnut St., Paul Moskun 1036 Park Avenue, Clifford Soudil 464 Woodland St., Tim Calfee 910 Murray Avenue, Rob Wolff 259 Lawrence Street, Skip Gray 5200 McCormick Road.

**MINUTES:** Approval of minutes November 26, 2024.

**Mr. Seman entertained a motion to approve minutes; Mr. Hairston made the motion and Mr. Contant seconded.**

**ALL AYES: Minutes Approved**

**NEW BUSINESS:       None**

**OLD BUSINESS:       Sonya Stanley of 249 Lawrence Street (Airbnb Rental)  
Transient (Temporary) Housing Discussion  
Parcel #31-366-10-00-187-000       Zoning: R-2**

**Mr. Finney:** Sonya decided after reading previous meeting minutes that she was not going to subject herself to a meeting such as this, she did submit in an email, and I will read it to you.

There were a few copies of it on the podium if you want one for yourself, we can also make this available to everyone. (Attached email was read).

One of the discussions that we had last year, did she register her rental property and there was construction that had taken place, both of which she has filled out her application, she has had her rental inspection and she submit for a building permit for the steps, we are in the inspection process, there was snow on the ground so I could not see the foundation and I was out of the office, but we will get that taken care of. When a permit is pulled, they have 12 months to complete the task, and she has been very willing to work with us, and has not been an issue. The rental inspection results were approved as noted; the notes are she is going to have to do some trim work when the weather breaks, painting of some wood trim on the exterior and smoke/CO2 detectors, which is what we require on our rental properties.

**Mr. Seman:** I am disappointed that she is not here tonight, I think that Mr. Finney has done as much as he can do right now, but this is a work in progress. Council has been taking up some of the conversations about some of things that have been proposed and have a list that was sent out that Carmen put together. It is in the minutes, and still working on that document, there still are some other parts we need to research to present to Council and this committee can make recommendations to them, and there have been discussions. I don't want you to think it has fallen out of sight and we are not moving forward, we are.

**Ms. Laudato:** I appreciate the communication, I think it sounds like she went through the minutes, and she reached out to the city and did her due diligence, but I think as Planning Commission and Council exam it further we need to not just look at the individual but look at the situation of how do we feel about short-term rentals, because maybe she is the most upstanding of Airbnb rentals but maybe another person might not be that way. I think we need to blind to individuals and their backgrounds and look at what we can do and how do the residents feel about the Airbnbs. Even if we just say she wrote this and she explained, and we drop it, then we could have another Airbnb come along that could be very problematic and we are going to be right back here having the same conversation.

**Mr. Seman:** There are other temporary rentals that also need to be looked at, I appreciate the effort that Ms. Laudato has put into this.

**Mr. Wolff:** 259 Lawrence Street, I can vouch that she does not live there, the driveway is right next to my house there is no traffic there, they will bring the trash out once a week. Contrary to what she may say, she is not living there. Where are we at with getting something in place so that she abides by the rules? I have a rental property, and I have to go through the inspections, does she pay the fees, and does it come under the rental tax, as far as the bed tax?

**Mr. Finney:** We do have something, and she would fall under the rental tax, it is an old ordinance from 1995, which most of us didn't realize existed.

**Mr. Wolff:** I would like to believe everything she says about 5-star people, but she is not living there, and there are horror stories about these everywhere. The steps you saw, my guess is that her room is up there, but the people renting have run of the house.

**Mr. Finney:** I was not the one that inspected, but I will talk to the inspector to see if she added a kitchen, she shouldn't of added a kitchen without a building permit. That is one of the things we look at when we inspect houses, how many kitchens.

**Mr. Wolff:** I will go on the record to say there isn't, but I don't know. If you haven't seen the backyard yet, it is beautiful, I can see where you could have a bachelor party there or a bridal party and just go nuts. This is a city lot, so I hope we can get something in place to make sure she takes care of what she says she is going to do.

**Mr. Finney:** We understand your specific concern, since you are on the street, but as Ms. Laudato said, we need to look at the whole city. The difficult part is that the city was forced into allowing property owners to opt out of rental inspection, it had to do with the city of Bedford lawsuit case, so we had to back out of our requirement. So, if a landlord opts out, we have to accept it, it was 4<sup>th</sup> amendment violation, according to the lawsuit and many communities have followed suit. Some how we need to find a way to allow us into these properties, just collecting a tax, is not achieving the goal and I am not sure if there is a way to require them to submit a statement of how many stayed with them throughout the year, so we can get a better idea of what has taken place.

**Mr. Seman:** We do have more to do, and we don't intend to run away from this, and we will try to get this taken care of.

**Mr. Gray:** I own a house adjacent to the Airbnb, at 245 Lawrence Street, I am curious about where we are with the ordinances and differences between rental property and the different classifications, you have multi-family rental, single-family, and Airbnbs. I think Airbnbs would be in a different class, because they do not have consistent 12-month leases that the others would have. Are you looking into categorizing rental property?

**Mr. Finney:** Transient Housing is what is currently defined in 1995, meaning they are not staying very long. I agree the city needs to further define and add definitions so we can pinpoint what transient housing is.

**Mr. Gray:** I have rental properties and single family, or duplex is normal living, when you have an Airbnb and every other weekend there are different people and different scenarios, that is

what I am concerned about. Having a bachelor party there every other weekend, that is not normal single-family housing, if you are going to allow it, then the city should require permits and get some money.

**Ms. Laudato:** I'm sure other cities have already done that work, so that should be easy to establish.

**Mr. Hairston:** But it could be more complicated, I have been to different cities and different states, and they all seem to be different.

**Ms. Laudato:** We should have something to build from, it wouldn't be us creating the wheel for the first time, on how to define Airbnbs, in a code.

**Mr. Hairston:** I think before we can build something, we need some communication from Mr. Cimino, so we know what we can or cannot do, so we don't run into issues. There should be no concept out there that we are going to drop this and go the other way. My point is that we have to look at it as two different situations; the one on Lawrence we need to set some rules and restrictions to follow and if not, then there are consequences. I agree 100% that if they are making money from Airbnb then the city should be getting a portion.

**Ms. Laudato:** The city is charging the lowest in Portage County, so that was one of the recommendations to increase it, most everywhere else is charging the maximum.

**Mr. Soudil:** 464 Woodland Street, recently a friend sent me an article about an Airbnb that was rented out and the first couple of times it worked out well, but the last time it was rented out the owners came home, someone had rented it for 3 days and cooked meth in it. One of the problems now is that all the money the family had saved by renting it out now had to be used to clean their house. There are a thousand different horror stories online about Airbnbs, but of course when Airbnb sends us information, of course they are going to say everything is fine because they make money from it. Also, I am going to say where I live, right now within 500-feet of me there are four empty houses, not for sale, but still makes me cringe that I could have an Airbnb near me, in my neighborhood, so let's deal with before it affects everyone.

**Mr. Calfee:** 910 Murray Avenue, a recent search on Airbnb shows that there are 5 properties within the city of Ravenna.

**Mr. Seman:** Did they give the location?

**Mr. Calfee:** They don't give the exact location, but it shows on the maps that it is within the city limits.

**Mr. Seman:** We do know that there is a couple in Riddle Block 9, on the top floor, and have been there a couple of years, so there are 2 that we don't know about so we will track that

down. We do want to get this in place as quickly as possible, but I don't know that we can write something that says you cannot do it.

**Mr. Finney:** It would surprise me if we could prohibit properties from transient rentals.

**Ms. Laudato:** I do not want to do that, I want to make that clear and on record, that is not the position I advocate for. The position I do advocate for is that the city gets the maximum amount of benefit with the least amount headache. It is about enforcement, and the part that is written in the ordinance is that if they don't file right away and don't fill out the paperwork, that the city can go back and retroactively collect fines for that with interest, is that something the city is pursuing?

**Mr. Finney:** No, not yet.

**Ms. Laudato:** I know we talk about enforcement all the time, but we must enforce what is already there, before we start piling on, because that is something we are entitled to as a city. So, if they have been in Riddle Block for four or five years, then we as a city are entitled to collect back those years plus penalties. I don't necessarily have a problem with Airbnbs, but I do if we are not going to benefit from them.

**Mr. Finney:** Do you know if there is a way to require the property owner to submit their leases of the temporary rentals? For example, they register, they get an inspection, and they say they have only rented it for 2 weeks this year. How can we be successful and how do we know they are telling the truth?

**Mr. Hairston:** That brings the point of documentation, and who is going to enforce, what group enforces the registration, what groups enforce collecting fees, what group enforces that they are documenting and sending in their information? All of that is what has to be put on paper for City Council, that has to be part of the recommendations that we are talking about. You can make the rules and all the fines but if there is no one established to monitor it, then we are just spinning our wheels.

**Mr. Gray:** What is a description of "transient rental property" and how many of these do you have in city?

**Mr. Finney:** That is the term used in the 1995 ordinance, meaning less than thirty days.

**Mr. Gray:** That is allowed in a non-commercial residential zone?

**Mr. Finney:** We do define transitional use, "means a permitted use or structure that by nature or level and scale of activity acts as a transitional or buffer between two or more incompatible

permitted uses.” That definition is for use, not what we are looking for, that is the only definition we have.

**Mr. Kairis:** 771 Woodside Avenue, I looked at the ordinance, I don’t remember the definition, but it defines either a motel or some sort of transitory rental, the difference is the number of units; if it has a certain number of units, it is defined as a motel, if it has less than that number it is defined as this other thing and described them as rental units rented out for thirty days or less and the 3% would be applied. I also remember seeing a code that requires the landlord to submit the names of everyone who rents and requires them to collect the fee from those renters and pass on to the city, but it doesn’t define who does this, and that is a very good point.

As President of Council, we pushed this onto you (Planning Commission) and that is your role, you are charged with new legislation in an area like this, so we are looking forward to whatever you develop. My only concern is how soon you can put something together; we don’t want to rush and get it wrong, but we also want to make sure it is in place when it comes up again. I believe this Commission floated the idea of a moratorium at one point, I think that is problematic, because it doesn’t stop any existing ones from operating, it only stops new ones from coming in. It is a temporary fix, and I know on Council, when we passed them, we then put the issue aside and waited until the moratorium expired before we did anything. I would suggest that you come up with a rough timeline of when you can present something to Council, and I think they will act quickly.

**Ms. Laudato:** Did you read the recommendations that we put together so far?

**Mr. Kairis:** I briefly glanced at it before this meeting, and most of them look very good. Limiting the number could be problematic, I am not sure, but it may be a legal issue. Another thing to consider is heavy fines for how people behave in the properties, I have seen codes in other cities, where if a temporary rental is cited more than twice for noise, then they get fined a heavy fine, which would make sure the owner has more control over the property. I would encourage that kind of restriction to benefit the neighbors that live nearby.

**Ms. Laudato:** Does that violate a law by creating a penalty for landlord than regular owner?

**Mr. Jennings:** I go back to what Mr. Hairston observed a few months ago, we could go many ways by regulating an Airbnb, but what do we want to accomplish? If we make them adhere to the rental code, make them submit and pay the proper taxes and make sure they are subjected to the nuisance ordinances, is there something else we want to accomplish with this or does that cover it? There are many things that we could do, I am not clear what we want to do.

**Mr. Kairis:** I think those ideas do cover what we want to do, I think there is still some disagreement over whether we want to prohibit them or not. I will say that I don't think we should prohibit them. I work for Neomed, and some of the students must go to another city for 6-7 weeks, and the only option they have would be an Airbnb, and we have a hospital that participates in that apprenticeship. I am not against Airbnb's, but I do think they need to be highly regulated for the benefit of their neighbors.

**Mr. Gray:** Is your objective to revise the 1995 ordinance, to bring it up to 2025?

**Ms. Laudato:** Yes, that is the basis of most of these recommendations, it starts with revising ordinance 1995-146.

**Mr. Barber:** I think talking to the neighbors is the concerns, and how detailed do we have to make the standards? If you are looking for us to write a regulation then we are going to need help, because that is not something that you just sit down and do, you are going to need that legal review and people who understand it. How does this affect the value of my house, that is my biggest investment, I need that protected. If you are going to have an Airbnb short-term rental, I want to make sure that doesn't affect my property. Then you have a safety issue, I am sure that doesn't happen widespread with the Airbnb's, but it only has to happen once, so we need something in place for safety concerns. We need something in place to keep it clean, to meet the standards of the neighborhood, and that could be difficult, you have a person come in, buy the home, and they don't keep it up to the same standards. There are a lot of nuances in how we are going to put this together and I am not sure this Commission has the expertise to do that. How much detail does City Council want from us?

**Mr. Kairis:** I think what you have presented is a very good start, but as much detail as possible. It is not guaranteed that Council will approve verbatim, what you submit. This has been going on for many months now, and this could just linger, so that is why I suggested a timeline.

**Mr. Finney:** How would Planning Commission feel about a subcommittee? We could have 2 Planning Commission members and not consider it a full meeting, who would be interested in working on this and we could present it to Planning Commission and vet out more items, a one hour meeting a month is not enough.

**Ms. Laudato:** I will volunteer, if it is after 6pm.

**Mr. Hairston:** I will also volunteer.

**Mr. Finney:** I will chair the Planning Commission subcommittee, are we able to ask a council member to be present also?

**Mr. Kairis:** You can ask; if you want me, I could be there.

**Mr. Hairston:** To the 2 gentlemen that live on the street, to this date have you had any instances or disturbances that have brought an issue?

**Mr. Wolff:** No, but here's the thing, she brought the property in August, did some things to it and got it running and then it was rented. This year she will have a whole summer with the pool, so I guess I am just bracing myself, because I have a pool, and I want to enjoy it but if I have to listen to what is going on there I am concerned. The neighbors that lived there were very respectful, and we were respectful, I don't know if we can pass that on to someone that will be there for 2-3 days. I guess if that happens then we will make a phone call, we call the city police, we call Airbnb and complain. She sounds like a lovely person, but she doesn't live there, if I was staying there with my family, I wouldn't want the owner to be there either. You can't go into your house because someone else is using it, so you are confined to your little space, I think she is just covering her tracks. I think you are on the right track, but she came out of nowhere with this and I think we are just flying by the seat of our pants.

**Mr. Finney:** One of the other components is that your street is predominantly owner occupied.

**Mr. Wolff:** Yes, I am not aware of anyone that is renting on our street, at least in the block that I live on, they are all established residents.

**Mr. Finney:** Ward 4 is still predominantly owner-occupied, there are some rentals and unfortunately, we will probably start to see more. There are creative folks who try to get around the rules such as the Bedford case and the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment, we now have landlords opting out. We received a notification that PMHA wants our city's inspection certificate to be presented before they will allow a tenant to rent from a landlord, but the landlord opted out, and then they call us and want to know what we can do for them. Hopefully Airbnb doesn't go the same direction with some laws that we are not aware of. It has been strange to see how our society changed so quickly over the last twenty years of things that we cannot react to when we have something else to deal with and the short-term rentals that pop up on websites. Our code allows two unrelated people to live in a house, a family plus two non-related, and not be considered a rental property, so the owner goes away on vacation but the two non-related are staying there. It gets very gray in what we are trying to do, and are these folks being honest? Are they truly renting it out 6 weeks a year and paying their percentage and how are we going to set that up?

**Mr. Barber:** Airbnb's and VRBO's are everywhere and most of in here have used them, it is one thing to focus in on what could happen, I think you write the regulations to say, this is how we want to protect it and you might not get 100% done, if you want to make it 100% then you probably will not get anyone coming in to use them. The idea is you have to take a look at the



organizations that people work under, those that have contracts with VRBO or Airbnb and see what those requirements are because if they have places that have a lot of problems with them, then their reputation goes out the window, so they have a vested interest to make sure that doesn't happen. We can sit here and think of all things that could go wrong, and we could not make a move, but if we want to make use of these properties and city to make money and have people come into the town, go to the restaurants, buy stuff at the stores, then we have to bring people into town.

**Mr. Gray:** Is there something you could add to the ordinance that if there were a certain number of infractions with the property, that you would have the power to shut the operation down, instead of you aren't allowed to do that. If you are going to allow transitional rentals, then they will have to be permitted and when they apply that would have to be in the language; stating this is what you have to abide by, then if it was violated the city would have power to say this is what you agreed to, and you are done.

**Mr. Finney:** I think contacting VRBO and Airbnb to see what the municipalities have the ability to do, and if that is case and we reported it, would they be dropped from the website?

**Mr. Silenius:** 123 N. Walnut Street, what do you think of making rentals conditional, so they have to come to Planning Commission and tell you what they are going to do, and you tell them what the laws are, it seems like a way to slow it down and make sure everyone is working together from the start.

**Ms. Laudato:** In researching about requesting their revenue, it said you have to list it in the legislation that they must agree to review their accounting, which would be their 1099K, which is what they have to fill out for the IRS. That could be something we could be mindful of when we have our meetings and put that in there, we probably can't do anything about the ones that already exist.

**Mr. Hairston:** That is one of the things we need to ask Mr. Cimino.

**Mr. Seman:** I do wish that she was here so we could have talked to her, but I appreciate you being here tonight, and we did cover good ground. I think it is moving forward but needs to move faster and that is what we are aiming for.

Mr. Seman entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Barber made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Laudato seconded.

**ALL AYES: MEETING ADJOURNED**

**Next meeting February 25, 2025**

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany Holloway, Planning Commission Secretary