

Jerome regulates vacation rentals

By **VYTO STARINSKAS**
The Verde Independent

JEROME - The Town Council approved regulations that will allow the town to license short-term rentals, as several members expressed alarm about the number of residents being displaced from the tiny community.

The town was aggressively trying to limit vacation-home rentals when Doug Ducey signed Bill SB 1350 on May 12, 2016, a law prohibiting local governments from banning vacation rentals.

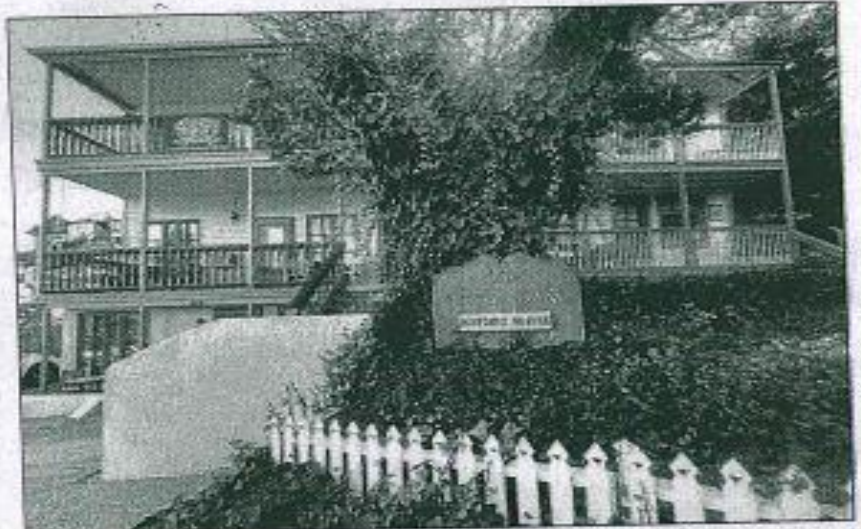
However, when Ducey signed Bill SB1168 last July, it gave municipalities tools to reign in vacation-home owners who operate under a town's radar.

Jerome has not wasted any time.

The Town of Jerome is ahead of other towns, according to Councilmember Sage Harvey, by taking

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Sage Harvey



The Million Dollar View and Miners Cottage are both listed on Airbnb. (VVN/Vyto Starinskas)

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advantage of the new law and approving the ordinance at their special meeting in the Jerome Council Chambers on Wednesday, Sept. 21.

"I have been waiting and waiting and waiting for a law that would give us some teeth, and this one does it," Harvey said at an Aug. 9 meeting. "The most important points are that municipalities can now at least have some regulation."

The City of Sedona is still building out its system to require business licenses, said spokesperson Lauren Browne. The city is requiring emergency contacts now, but expects to require business licenses of its 1,000 short-term rentals around Jan. 1.

The Jerome Council ap-

proved the ordinance amending Article 8-7, Short Term, Rental Regulations of the Jerome Town Code, so short-term rental owners will now have to obtain a permit issued by the Town of Jerome before operating.

They must also show liability insurance and have proof of a valid Transaction Privilege Tax (sales tax) license.

Jerome vacation-home owners will now be required to post a visible Emergency Point of Contact inside the short-term rental, vacation rental or transient-lodging establishment, according to the ordinance.

The owner of the vacation rental will have to comply with zoning, building and health codes and not rent for the purpose of "housing sex offenders, operating or maintain a sober-living home, selling illegal drugs, liquor control or pornography, obscenity, nude or topless dancing and or other

adult-orientated businesses," the ordinance states.

The owners or their designee "shall conduct a sex offender background check of every guest and retain the records of the full background check for a minimum of 12 months," states the ordinance. The owner or designee must provide a copy of the background check upon request by a police officer.

However, the ordinance said this would be waived if an online lodging marketplace performs the background check.

The ordinance also requires short-term rentals be registered with the state as a tax-paying entity. They must have a TPT license in order to get a Town of Jerome business license.

Harvey helped draw up the ordinance, with Zoning Administrator Will Blodgett and Town Manager Brett Klein. It was applauded by the other councilmembers and the

mayor. It mirrored the regulations in the new bill.

"I can count at least two dozen residents that have been displaced from Jerome just this year," Harvey said, adding that their population has gone from about 457 to 416 residents.

The town of Jerome counted 157 residential structures, then-Town Manager Candace Gallagher said in 2019. "Given that some are multiple family residences, the number of individual residences may be closer to 200, based on our utility billings."

An unofficial scan of the site Airbnb showed 20 short-term rentals in Jerome, including entire homes, apartments, rooms and one hotel. Harvey said she found 28 vacation rentals advertised in Jerome.

The penalties are also "a great deterrent," Harvey said. The renters will have to be li-

censed by the town within 30 days from when the ordinance went into effect.

"If they do not come into compliance with the ordinance, SB1168 allows for us to implement a 30-day warning," Harvey said. "If they don't come into compliance within that 30 days we can make them stop offering the STR for rent and fine them \$1,000 per 30 days not coming into compliance."

"Thank you, Gov. Doug Ducey, for giving us some relief, finally," Vice Mayor Alex Barber said at the Sept. 13 first reading of the Jerome ordinance.

She thought the town has lost even more people since SB1350 (which banned vacation home regulation) was passed by the Legislature.

"It has almost taken 100 people out of our community," she said at the council's Aug. 9 meeting.

By Vyto Starinskas October 2, 2022 12:05 a.m.