



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

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To: Eric Campbell, City Manager  
From: Adam Fletcher, Director – Department of Community Development and Harrisonburg Planning Commission  
Date: November 12, 2019 (Regular Meeting)  
Re: Special Use Permit – 907 Ridgewood Road (Short-Term Rental)

### **Summary:**

Request from Claudia M. McClean for a special use permit per Section 10-3-34(7) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a short-term rental within the R-1, Single-Family Residential District. The +/- 24,972 sq. ft. property is addressed as 907 Ridgewood Road and identified as tax map parcel 86-A-1.

### **Background:**

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Low Density Residential. These areas consist of single-family detached dwellings in and around well-established neighborhoods with a target density of around 4 dwelling units per acre. The low density residential areas are designed to maintain the character of existing neighborhoods. It should be understood that established neighborhoods in this designation could already be above 4 dwelling units per acre.

The following land uses are located on and adjacent to the property:

- Site:** Detached single-family dwelling, zoned R-1
- North:** Detached single-family dwellings, zoned R-1
- East:** Detached single-family dwellings, zoned R-1
- South:** Detached single-family dwellings, zoned R-1
- West:** Detached single-family dwellings, zoned R-1

### **Key Issues:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a short-term rental (STR) operation at 907 Ridgewood Road, which is situated within the Forest Hills Neighborhood. The applicant desires to rent for STR two accommodation spaces located on the second floor of the dwelling. (“Accommodation space” means any room offered for sleeping. This would not include living spaces or rooms where guests would not be sleeping.) Each accommodation space can accommodate two guests, for a total of up to four guests during a lodging period. The applicant describes the property as their primary residence and explained that they only share the home with guests when they are at home.

Section 10-3-25(28) of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) requires STRs to “provide one parking space for each guest room or accommodation space, or as may be more or less restrictive as conditioned by a special use permit.” With a request to rent two STR accommodation spaces, the property should provide two off-street parking spaces. In addition to the off-street parking spaces required for the STR, the ZO requires one off-street parking space for the non-transient dwelling unit. The property has a large driveway and a two-car garage. The applicant has explained that lodgers will park their vehicles in the driveway. Staff believes the applicant should be provided the flexibility to meet the off-street parking requirements by allowing customers to park on the existing driveway or other area of the property without delineating parking spaces.

If the request is approved, staff recommends the following conditions be placed on the SUP:

1. The site shall be an operator’s primary residence.
2. If an operator is not the property owner, then an operator shall be present during the lodging period.
3. All STR accommodations shall be within the principal structure.
4. There shall be no more than two STR guest rooms or accommodation spaces.
5. The number of STR guests at one time shall be limited to four people.
6. Prior to operation, the operator shall submit to City staff a completed Short-Term Rental Pre-Operation Form. Furthermore, the operator shall maintain compliance with the Pre-Operation Form when short-term rental guests are present.
7. Minimum off-street parking spaces do not need to be delineated and can be accommodated utilizing the driveway or other areas on the property.
8. If in the opinion of Planning Commission or City Council, the short-term rental becomes a nuisance, the special use permit can be recalled for further review, which could lead to the need for additional conditions, restrictions, or the revocation of the permit.

Condition #1 helps to prevent the City’s housing stock from being purchased by investors and then being reallocated from homeownership and long-term rentals to STRs. Condition #2 helps to protect neighbors from nuisances arising from absentee operators. Along with condition #1, for property owners operating the STR for whom this property is their primary residence (and to be consistent with Planning Commission’s recommended conditions on other applications), they are not required to be present during the lodging period. However, long-term tenants operating a STR would be required to be present during the lodging period. Condition #3 prevents the ability for the STR operator to convert or construct an accessory building into space for STR that was not previously vetted for impacts to the surrounding properties. If the applicant later wishes to create living spaces within an accessory building for STR, they must return to Planning Commission (PC) and City Council (CC) with a new SUP request. Condition #4 limits the total number of guest rooms and accommodation spaces on the entire property to two. Condition #5 limits the total number of STR guests to not more than four. Condition #6 requires that prior to beginning operations that the operator shall submit to City staff a completed Short-Term Rental Pre-Operation Form and shall maintain compliance with the form when STR guests are present. The form includes a checklist to guide STR operators through a self-inspection of guest rooms and accommodation spaces and means of egress. Condition #7 provides flexibility for the property owner to maintain the residential appearance of their property by not requiring them to create and

delineate additional off-street parking spaces. Condition #8 allows PC and CC to recall the SUP for further review if the STR becomes a nuisance.

It should be acknowledged that while the applicant has explained the plans for using this property, the SUP is not restricted to the applicant or operator and transfers to future property owners. If the applicant sold the property, future property owners could operate a STR so long as they meet the conditions for the SUP as approved. How the property could be used by any future property owner should be considered when deciding on SUP conditions.

The City has approved multiple STR SUP applications with comparable operating situations in similar locations throughout the City. Considering those approvals and the suggested conditions, staff recommends approval of the special use permit request with the suggested conditions.

**Environmental Impact:**

N/A

**Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

**Prior Actions:**

N/A

**Alternatives:**

- (a) Recommend approval of the special use permit request as submitted;
- (b) Recommend approval of the special use permit request with suggested conditions;
- (c) Recommend approval of the special use permit with other conditions(s); or
- (d) Recommend denial.

**Community Engagement:**

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission's public hearing and twice advertising for City Council's public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

***Special Use Permits – 907 Ridgewood Road (Short-Term Rental)***

Public hearing to consider a request from Claudia M. McClean for a special use permit to allow per Section 10-3-34(7) of the Zoning Ordinance a short-term rental within the R-1, Single-Family Residential District. A short-term rental is defined in the Zoning Ordinance 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.” Short-term rentals are further regulated by Article DD of the Zoning Ordinance. The +/- 24,972 sq. ft. property is addressed as 907 Ridgewood Road and identified as tax map parcel 86-A-1.

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing; the property was posted with signage advertising the request; and a notice was provided on the City's website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends alternative (b) approval of the special use permit request with suggested conditions.

**Attachments:**

1. Planning Commission extract
2. Site maps
3. Application, applicant letter, and supporting documentation
4. Public comment received as of November 4, 2019

**Review:**

There were only six members present at Planning Commission (Commissioner Whitten was absent) and the motion to recommend approval with the presented conditions, ended in a 3-3 vote. After discussion, it was decided that the action can move forward to City Council with the understanding there is a stalemate.