

*SHORT TERM RENTAL
ORDINANCE
DISCUSSION DATA*



March 4, 2025

**Narragansett STR Community
Discussion**

Narragansett Community Center

Hosted By:

**The Center for Mediation and
Collaboration**



GOAL STATEMENT

TO AFFORD RESIDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARTICULATE THEIR POINT OF VIEW WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE ORDINANCE AS DRAFTED, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO WHAT THEY BELIEVE THE CRAFTERS GOT RIGHT AND WHERE THEY RECOMMEND THAT IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES CAN BE MADE.



SUMMARY

PREPARED BY: CAROLYN MARK
AND TRICIA DRISCOLL



SUMMARY

AT THE REQUEST OF THE NARRAGANSETT TOWN COUNCIL, CAROLYN MARK AND TRICIA DRISCOLL FROM THE CENTER FOR MEDIATION AND COLLABORATION RI FACILITATED A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION REGARDING THE SHORT-TERM RENTAL ORDINANCE, WHICH HAD BEEN CRAFTED BUT NOT IMPLEMENTED, FOR THE PURPOSE OF GARNERING INPUT FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING WHAT, IN THEIR VIEW, THE CRAFTERS GOT RIGHT AND WHAT CHANGES, IF ANY, THEY WOULD RECOMMEND BE MADE REGARDING CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE ORDINANCE. THE OUTPUT OF THIS DISCUSSION WILL BE USED TO INFORM THE NEXT STEP IN THE ORDINANCE REVIEW PROCESS, SLATED TO BE A COMMUNITY WORKSHOP TO BE HELD AT A LATER DATE.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, OF WHICH THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 90 PEOPLE, CIRCULATED THROUGH FIVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS, CONSIDERING FIVE CORE QUESTIONS. A “PARKING LOT” WAS ALSO PROVIDED FOR COMMENTS NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE FIVE CORE QUESTIONS. BELOW ARE SOME KEY THEMES THAT EMERGED, BUT PLEASE NOTE: THERE IS SOME OVERLAP ACROSS SECTIONS, AND NOT ALL COMMENTS ARE NECESSARILY CAPTURED IN THESE KEY THEMES. SPECIFIC AND COMPREHENSIVE FEEDBACK CAN BE FOUND IN THE VERBATIM WRITE-UP OF THE FLIP CHART COMMENTS INCLUDED AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT. THE ORIGINAL FLIP CHART SHEETS HAVE ALSO BEEN PRESERVED.

GENERAL OVERREACHING THEMES

- WHILE SOME BELIEVE THE ORDINANCE IS SUFFICIENT AND NECESSARY “AS IS”, OTHERS HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT - INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, STREAMLINING THE REQUIREMENTS SO THE ORDINANCE DOESN'T OVERWHELM THE TOWN OR PROPERTY OWNERS, AND TAKING SEASONALITY INTO ACCOUNT.
- THERE IS A DESIRE FOR TRANSPARENCY AND AN ARTICULATED RATIONALE FOR ALL DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE WITH RESPECT TO THE SHORT-TERM ORDINANCE.
- THERE IS INTEREST IN CREATING ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING LAWS/RULES/REGULATIONS RATHER THAN CREATING NEW REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIC TO SHORT TERM RENTALS.
- THERE ARE QUESTIONS/CONCERNS REGARDING HOW ALL ASPECTS OF THE ORDINANCE WILL GET ENFORCED, BY WHOM, AND AT WHAT COST TO THE TOWN IF FINES AND FEES RELATED TO THE ORDINANCE DON'T COVER ALL OF THE COSTS - AND HOW TO DETERMINE WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE FEE AND/OR FINE.
- TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF THE SHORT-TERM ORDINANCE, BUT TO EASE THE TRANSITION FOR CURRENT RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS, THERE ARE QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER THESE GOALS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED UTILIZING GRANDFATHERING, ATTRITION, AND LIMITING GROWTH.

**THEMES THAT EMERGED
SPECIFIC TO EACH OF THE
DISCUSSION AREAS**





APPLICABILITY AND GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The ordinance establishes the permitting requirement, a minimum number of nights, lack of transferability, and expiration (upon sale or transfer) and inspection requirements. In your view, what about these sections did its crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Does the town have the legal ability to limit STRs? If so, who decides and based on what? There is interest in transparency and a sound rationale.
- Does it make sense to have different limits and requirements for different seasons? (eg May-Sept and Oct-Apr) A seven-day rental is much more challenging in the off-season.
- Might there be a public purpose in differentiating between owner occupied and those that are not regarding minimum nights, fees, transferability, and renewals?
- Might there be a public purpose in differentiating between owner occupied, Narragansett resident, RI resident, and out-of-state?
- Might there be a public purpose in differentiating between residential neighborhoods and properties that are located in business districts?

APPLICABILITY AND GENERAL REQUIREMENTS CONT.

- What is the right balance between ensuring safety and having inspection requirements that are too onerous for owners?
- There is interest in having transferability clarified and/or reconsidered.
- How were fees set? Will fees cover the cost of implementing and enforcing the ordinance, or will additional taxpayer funds be required to cover a gap? How to balance the cost of the fees for owners while also ensuring that resources exist to pay for the ordinance's implementation?
- Is there a public purpose to considering grandfathering in existing STRs (including pre-existing rental agreements) and managing growth through future ordinance limits?
- Requirements regarding parking and bedroom size don't necessarily reflect the reality of shared parking lots and older cottages. Is there an opportunity to align these requirements with requirements established elsewhere rather than create new/unique standards? (eg If a bedroom is considered a legal bedroom, it would qualify as one under the ordinance no matter its size.)



2) PERMITTING LIMITS

THE ORDINANCE ESTABLISHES LIMITS TO THE NUMBERS OF PERMITS THAT SHALL BE ISSUED. IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT ASPECTS OF THIS SECTION DID ITS CRAFTERS GET RIGHT AND ARE IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE (IN SPIRIT OR IN ACTUAL NUMBER) AND WHAT REVISIONS, IF ANY, WOULD YOU RECOMMEND BE MADE AND WHY?

- Does the town have the legal ability to limit STRs? If so, who decides and based on what? There is interest in transparency and a sound rationale.
- How to balance the needs of a residential community with an owner's property rights.
- Need to consider how to handle already agreed upon leases in the event of a transfer or permit renewal issue.
- How to create a fair and equitable application process.
- Might permits with specific requirements and enforcement address the major concerns and limit STRs without imposing limits?
- Might there be a public purpose in grandfathering in existing STRs? Might future limits be achieved through attrition? On what basis would future limits be set?
- Might there be a public purpose in giving residents priority in the permitting process?
- Why reduce the number of permits over time, and how will it be determined, fairly, who keeps their permit and who doesn't? A cap on growth could be another approach.

3) PERMIT ISSUANCE, EXPIRATION, AND RENEWAL

The ordinance establishes that (once all requirements are met) the Building Official shall issue permits (within established limits), that all permits shall expire August 31, and must be renewed according to an established timeframe. In your view, what about these sections did its crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Might there be a public purpose in allowing families to transfer properties and permits?
- Might there be a public purpose in grandfathering in existing properties, and auto-renewals when there are no issues?
- Might the STR period be the calendar year instead of expiring August 31?
- Concerns about getting a permit one year but not the next.
- Is there a balance to be struck between frequency and cost of inspections?
- Might current landlords have the opportunity to renew before new applicants on the waitlist?
- Might renewal be made easier when there are no infractions and inspections are complete?
- Need for clarity on inspection criteria and timeframe allowed to correct infractions.



4) OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

THE ORDINANCE ESTABLISHES CERTAIN OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS DESIGNED TO PROTECT RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER, TO ENSURE THAT RENTERS ARE FULLY INFORMED OF RENTAL REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND ARE PROVIDED CONTACT INFORMATION. IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT ABOUT THESE SECTIONS DID THE CRAFTERS GET RIGHT AND ARE IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE? WHAT REVISIONS, IF ANY, WOULD YOU RECOMMEND AND WHY?

- Some consensus that the crafters of this section got it mostly right.
- There is some agreement surrounding the importance of providing short-term renters with the expectations of neighborly conduct ahead of the beginning of the rental regardless of time.
- Is a 4-hour response time reasonable?
- Revisit excluded activities and how this would be enforced. Do certain activities need to be excluded or allowable as long as they comply with other restrictions? If they are excluded from rentals, should they also be excluded for homeowners?
- To whom is it made known who the local representative is for a property? The town? Adjacent property owners?
- Revisit the purpose of the extensive posting requirements.
- Concern about what it means to preserve “residential character”. Is this non-inclusive language?
- What is the role of hosts vs town official's vs police in responding to, halting and preventing conduct?
- What is the role of the town in calling “hosts” 24/7 for “non-serious issues”?
- Ordinance should align with other legal contexts. (eg if a bedroom is a legal bedroom, its square footage shouldn't matter.)
- Certain prohibitions (eg paint color) seem like overreach.

5) FEES AND FINES

The ordinance establishes resident and non-resident application and permit fees as well as a schedule of fines for minor and major violations. In your view, what about this section did its crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Concerns that fees (which seem high to some relative to other towns) won't support the true cost of the ordinance, and that the true cost will be borne by residents. Conversely, if there are excess fees, where would the money go?
- Concerns around equity re: RI residents vs. Narragansett residents.
- Need for strict leases, enforcement by landlords, and heavy fines - possibly commensurate with the seriousness of the infraction. Will there be an appeals process for fines and possible revocation of permit? How high should fines be for not abiding by the STR ordinance?
- How will complaints be investigated to determine the validity of the complaints? Will there be a compliance officer investigation? To the extent that there are fines, will they be duplicative of other fines such as for violating a noise ordinance?
- How to streamline the application and permit process to make it efficient, cost effective, and least burdensome?
- Should the ordinance requirements be in line with online travel agencies such as VRBO and AirBnB in terms of what qualifies as a contract and what is included?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION OUTPUT

THESE ARE THE WRITTEN COMMENTS
FROM THE CHART PAPERS



1) Applicability and General Requirements

The ordinance establishes the permitting requirement, a minimum number of nights, lack of transferability, and expiration (upon sale or transfer) and inspection requirements. In your view, what about these sections did its crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Question the number of nights. How and who will determine the number?
- 7 nights? 3 nights? No minimum?
- ✓✓ Minimum night then
- no fire Inspections
- no Insurance
- Owner occupied should be 1-2 days
- Who will determine # of nights?
- Based on what?
- ✓✓✓ No limits on nights
- Are the inspection requirements too detailed? To limit # of nights
- Town cannot supersede the state court case # C.A. WC-2024-0372
- Should there be different requirements per season?
- Transferability needs to be clarified
- What happens to previously agreed upon rentals that are under the current permit.

Applicability and General Requirements Cont.

- Get rid of ordinance and start over!
- Who will do inspections? Paid for by what line item? Inspections should be done electronically by photo
- Full week price point very high
- Dense neighborhood noise levels (creative zoning?)
- Focus on enforcement ✓
- General Inspection:
 - Parking shared lots - allow share lots
 - Transfer good for the year
 - Automatic renewal
 - When/if home is sold permit goes back into pool for anyone on the waitlist - it does not get sold with the house
- Re: inspections:
 - Safety of space
 - How many people can occupy space safely
 - Does the same renewal rule(s) apply to owner occupied?
- Re-inspection should be less expensive# of Nights:
 - Avoid student rentals through flexibility of schedule - 3 days/nights
 - Very short (1&2 night) party heavy ✓



Applicability and General Requirements (cont.)

- ✓ # of nights should be 2 minimum, and max should depend on the renter - not nightly restrictions on how many “allowed”. There should be no stipulation on up to 2 rentals in one week
- 3 nights should be allowed in off season - but only once a week
- 7 night minimum in the summer
- Don’t like minimum of 7 as a traveler - only get away 2-3 days
- Shoulder season - no one can book 7 nig
- Inspections: no inspections
- Inspections - if mandated for STR, should be mandated for year-round
- Transferal of permit
- Minimum # of nights - 7 does not work all-year round; shorter stays should be considered, especially off season (2-3 days in “shoulder season)
- Timing of license period...Aug31/Sept 01? Jan-Dec? In key “in season period? Academic year?
- What is overall objective we are trying to achieve? So we can put each topic into consideration
- How can neighbors/residents contact a “rental liaison” or get concerns addressed?
- How did license fee get decided? Just in order to fund a position?

Applicability and General Requirements (cont.)

- 2nd highest in town (\$250 for garbage, \$100 for dance hall, \$10 cesspool, \$25 motel)
- Inspections: 1) No annually 2. Initial application 3. 5-year renewal inspection
- I disagree with # of minimum nights, many families cannot afford to go away from work etc. There is 0 difference in issues that I've seen.
- Transition is loud/happy/7 day
- People need short term rental in winter
- 7 days for stability for communities, tourist, 0 neighbors, 7 days will ↓ the renta
- 7-day minimum May-Sept, Oct-April 3 day minimum
- Agree for legal inspection as state warrants
- Permit should be grandfathered for transfer
- ✓✓✓✓2-night minimum
- 7 days minimum stay for stability of neighborhoods
- Bedroom sizes - how do old cottages exist with requirement sizes
-

2) Permitting Limits

The ordinance establishes limits to the numbers of permits that shall be issued. In your view, what aspects of this section did its crafters get right and are important to preserve (in spirit or in actual number) and what revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Limit the # of permits is against state law
- Transfer should allow for leases/agreed on STR's (for next year)
- No limit
- Be forthcoming with # of permits
- First come...first serve...several(?) valid people won't have a chance to apply
- Everyone who wants a permit should get one
- If there is a cap, there has to be specific reasons
 - Why it is issued or not issued
- A limit on the # of permits is essential to maintaining a balance in a residential community.
- How many STRs currently? STR + LTR count as 1?
- Is it legal?
- Property rights
- Can we grandfather pre-existing permits
- Yes, to permits (safety and info) no to limits
- Projected future # of permits? What happens in 2027?
- Do residents get first rights for permits? What % of houses/permits?
- How do you make sure permits are fair and transparent?
- 1100? Rental registrations - How are they determining who keeps it when they reduce the # of registrations every year?

2) Permitting Limits Cont.

- Yes, to a cap, but sentiment is against reducing the # over time - Is this fair?
- Disagree with the limits.
- Is it legal for the town to restrict the number of permits allocated?
- Enforcement becomes critical because the “responsible” rental owner can be penalized for all the irresponsible owner’s actions
- Balance through limits?
- Enforce # of STR by infractions, not with a set #.
- Grandfather in all rentals, as they sell, they are not automatic rentals, use selling of homes to achieve limits.
- There needs to be a limit.
- Prioritize resident and local landlords
- Establish first how many rentals exists before setting any limits to permits
- Establish baseline first based on registration from 1st year registrations
- Limits should be set for the right reasons, not arbitrary limits
- Cap important for future planning for the town, schools/community
- Need a plan for fairness for how permits are allocated, cannot financially switch between year-round vs short term easily
- I disagree with permit quantity limits, unless grandfather-in (owner grandfathered) and also phase in later. This will bankrupt owners. This is many of us that is their income. Lottery is not fair. Gives way to preference and favors.
- We should always ask “Why”! If you are a great landlord, why should be lose your rights to rent??

4) Operational Requirements

The ordinance establishes certain operational requirements designed to protect residential character, to ensure that renters are fully informed of rental requirements and responsibilities and are provided contact information. In your view, what about these sections did the crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend and why?

- 4-hour response time questionable
- Revisit activities excluded; wedding, etc.
- Local representative made known to adjacent property owners
- 549 F-6 - What is the purpose of posting the current lease? ✓✓
- Complaints from who?
- Who determines who gets the permits?
- Residential character? - a racist comment
- What is “hosts” role in “responding” & “halting” and “preventing” conduct...What is role for police?
- Are we deputizing Mrs. Kravitz to call “hosts” 24/7 for “non-serious issues”?? To what end??
- Government overreach on Bachelor/Bachelorette, tc.? ✓✓
 - Is a host obligated to control/request this etc.
 - Restricting the use in advertisements?
 - f(4) on what has to be posted...ie the trash schedule
 - f(7) legally enforceable?? For what purpose...
- Landlord response - 4 hours

Operational Requirements Cont.

- D2 (?)no weddings on site
- Tenants should have same rights as residents as long as they respect the neighbors
- Operational requirements section should stand as written.
- Full time residents need these rules.
- I think the crafters got this provision mostly right. You can quibble about whether “odors” should be included! ✓✓✓✓✓
- Bachelorette parties should be allowed providing they comply with other restrictions.
- Paragraph D needs clarification
- If you are going to ban specific types of events in rentals, are they also getting banned at all other properties - including full time residents.
- Local representative timing requirement seems unreasonable (4 hours)
 - What are punishments?
 - What needs to happen within the 4hr period?
- Room sq footage is unreasonable - a room is a room.
 - If its a legal bedroom, it shouldn't matter the square footage.
- Get rid of entire ordinance - very hard to redesign this ordinance
- Concern of wasting taxpayer money when all of this gets protested in court
- Agree with a local point of contact
- AirBnB/VRBO contract should count as the contract.
- Each STR with the necessity of having a lease is impossible!! AirBnB does not make these leases available for post

Operational Requirements Cont.

- Any difference between owner occupied - less restrictions?
- We find the ordinance properly addresses residential character
- The prohibition of painting a house a certain “color” is overbearing
- Enforcement by the landlord is the key!
- Change D to “No Tenant” can bring a boat/RV/etc.
- ~~14-59 Weddings should be allowed~~
- D (2?) Too restrictive
- 4 hours is unreasonable/reasonable?
- Events restrictions should be qualified as not the primary purpose of the rental
- Licenses/permits pulled for short-term wedding/banquets/etc.
- There is agreement surrounding the importance of providing short term renters with the expectations of neighborly conduct ahead of the beginning of the rental regardless of time.
- Minimum 2-person bedroom - 100 sq ft
- Clarification on response → phone call received? On-site?
- Parking 9/18
- Dedicated parking ← not necessarily “on-lot” ← condo parking lot
- 0 maximum total occupancy limit (ex. 8 maximum regardless of # of bedrooms)
- Allow for a summarization of regulation rather than attach entire doc to ad.
- Education the 5% of bad apple landlords ← and punish those ones
- Feels like collective punishment

5) Fees and Fines

The ordinance establishes resident and non-resident application and permit fees as well as a schedule of fines for minor and major violations. In your view, what about this section did its crafters get right and are important to preserve? What revisions, if any, would you recommend be made and why?

- Fines will not support the ordinance and associated cost of enforcement
- Inspectors going to cost \$\$
- Landlords should charge tenants who are violating
- Have very strict leases
- Should have fees and fines
- Will taxpayers eventually pay for enforcement
- Permit fees are exorbitant - especially considering other town fees
- Fines should be hefty
- Did you put out an RFP for companies from the outside to come in and enforce the STRs? How much does this cost?
- If you're a RI resident owner, the application and permit fees should be the same as a Narragansett owner.
- Who is doing inspections? How often?
- No inspections, or every 5 years ★
- Fees should be equal for residents/non-residents
- Fees are exorbitantly high compared to other municipalities

Fines and Fees Cont.

- We believe that the ordinance should be rewritten entirely.
- Fines and violations should be investigated to prevent unwarranted fees for bogus complaints. Rental compliance officer should investigate. Compliance officer must follow state laws.
- 1 in 7 of us live locally and agree with getting parking passes and other discounts.
- Streamline application/and permit (incorporate application and permit)
- Clarify re-inspection is: annually or after offense? Every 5 years
- Major violation could be cause for re-inspection
- Ok with fees
- Homestead exemption owner should get lower fees.
- Fines should be higher!
- Permit fees should be high

Perspective of fees -

- Licensing fees
- Rental → business
- How often should these inspections occur?
- How many violations have there been historically?
- Building inspection vs. inspections for rentals.



Fines and Fees Cont.

- Harry says he's ok with the fees.
- What is the purpose of the fees?
- Control of fee rate increase
- How many short-term rentals are there now?
- Danube fee for STR and LTR?
- 3rd category for "out of state" nonresident
- Fees too high
- Privilege of operating business in residential zone
- To self-fund ordinance - can we restrict the expenses for the program i.e. self-inspect
- Do multiple major violations incur higher fines
- Can you reapply if you lose your license
- Owner occupied have less fees
- Where are the fees going to for permits and inspections; those \$ will add up
- If a landlord owns multiple properties can/do the fines only pertain to 1 property or all
- Permit fees are too high
- Duplication of inspection fees
- Fees provide capability of enforcement

Fines and Fees Cont.

- No annual inspection - fire should be done every 3 years
- Fees reduced!
- Differential between non-resident/resident/non-resident (in state) - 3 categories
- Do other ordinances already cover some of these fines? Are they redundant?
- OTAS (online travel agencies - VRBO & AirBnB) do not comply w/ sec14-550 - record keeping which would be a major violation(\$1,000 fine and auto-revocation of permit)
 - Fee is unreasonable
- When people bring young children, it could trigger an occupancy violationWe don't the fees!
- Fees are OUTRAGEOUS
- Enforcement is a concern!!
- Residents should be paying a lot less than stated as they are already paying taxes
- Nonresidents should be paying more.
- Fines to not register should be high
- Appeal Board for fines/revocation of permit
- Should have permitting
- Why not fines (noise, litter)
- Noise complaint consistent business and short-term rental

Parking Lot

- Need clear accountability for landlords
- Exceptions for owner operators any amount of nights
- Allow no night restrictions in business/mixed use areas
- Look at the history and intent of each neighborhood to determine how many STRs to allow per neighborhood.
- Where are the occupancy limits addressed?
- We all agree supply went down, the question we need to ask is why? Is it because of all the families moving to town or do STRs play a role?
- Occupancy (2) persons 100SF NOT 120 SF
- Parking space to be 9x18 NOT 10x20 or 300SF
- Parking needs to be looked at again. Not in favor of the current one.



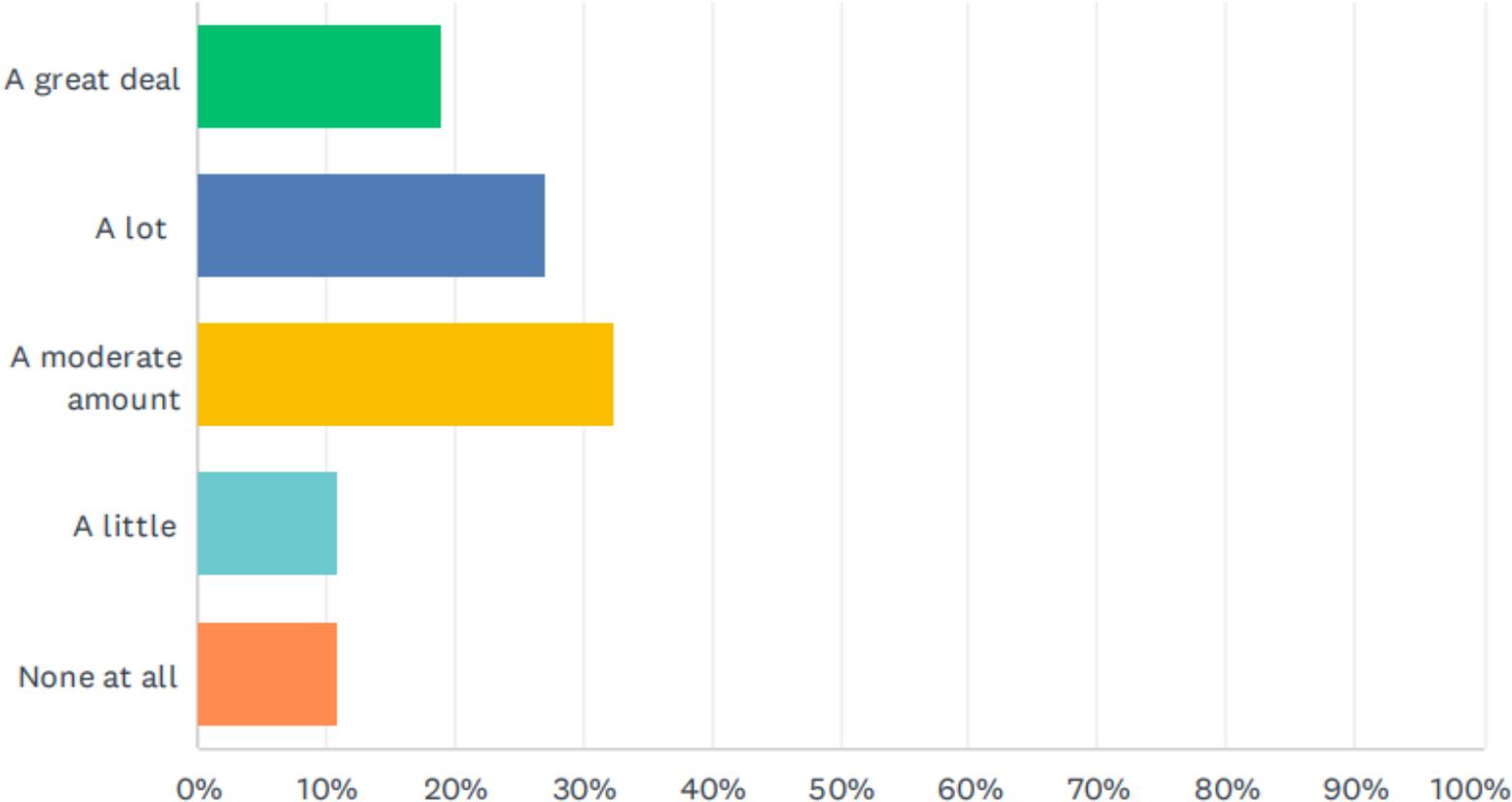
EXIT SURVEY RESULTS



Narragansett STR Community Discussion Survey

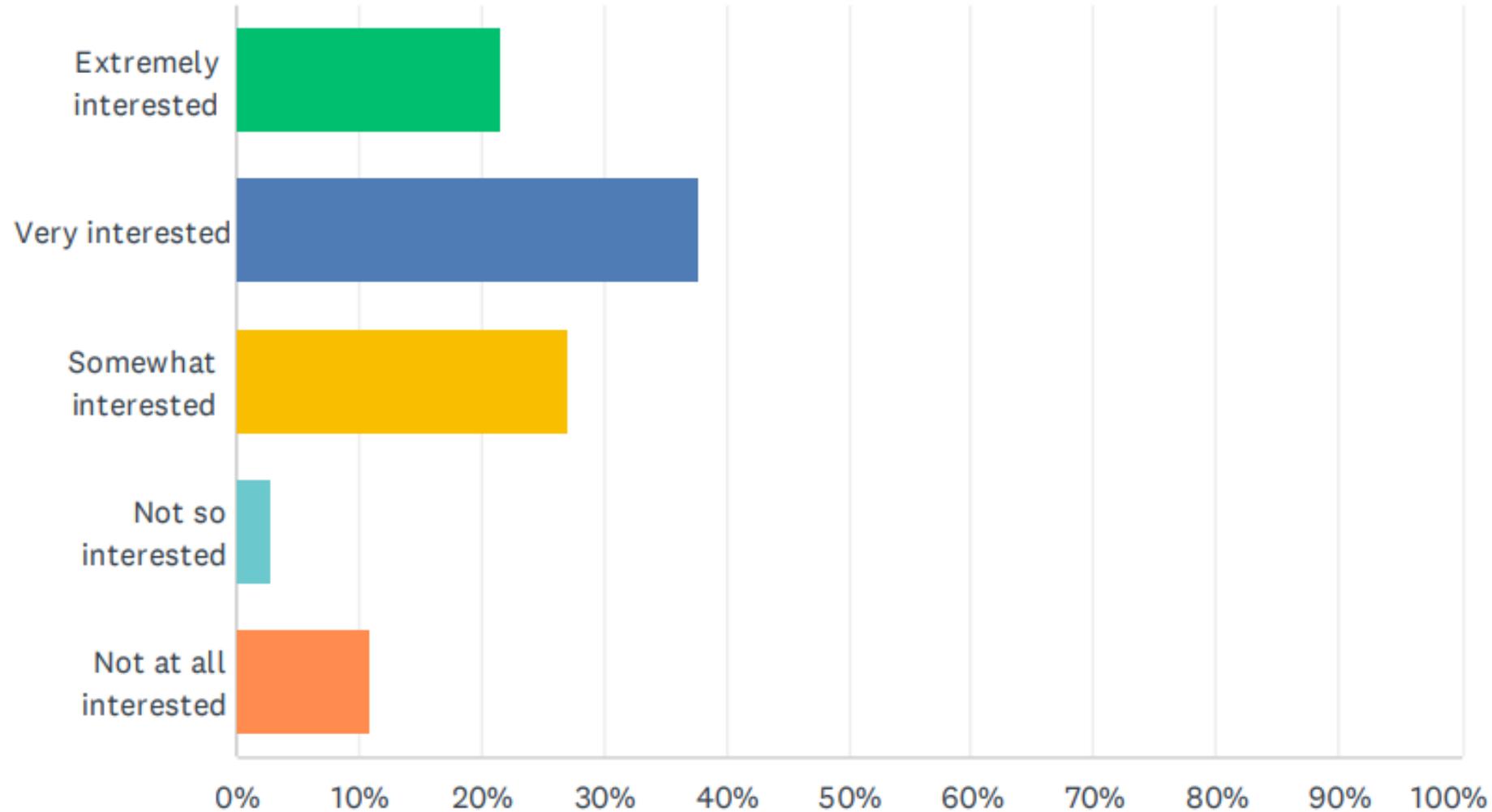
Q1 Did you find value in the community discussion?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



Q2 Would you like to see more of these types of discussions take place in our community?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0





*THANK YOU FOR
YOUR
PARTICIPATION
AND INPUT*

Narragansett Town Council

Alex Menzies, President

James Durkin, Pro Temp

Jason Colonies

Ryan Torrealday

Donna Vignali