

Community Engagement and Inclusion Meeting June 23, 2026

Constituent Comment for the Record:

Hi Councillors,

I am writing to you as a private resident of Malden, not as the Executive Director of Congregation Beth Israel.

I read through File #307-25 on Short-Term Rental registration, and most of it is very well done. The registration process, insurance requirements, safety standards, local-contact person rule, and especially the community impact fee and Affordable Housing Trust contribution are all reasonable, enforceable tools that directly address the externalities people worry about - noise, safety, and the city not seeing any tax revenue from STR activity. I met with Councillor McDonald last fall to propose this very idea, and I support all of that as written.

However, I have to push back on the owner-occupancy requirement in Section D. 1 , paired with the one-registration-per-owner cap in C.3.c and the outright prohibition in E.I . Unlike the rest of the ordinance, that provision doesn't regulate behavior. It bans a category of operator outright, regardless of how responsibly the property is run.

A few reasons I'd ask you to reconsider it before this goes final:

1 . The data doesn't support a ban this broad. As of last spring there were roughly 200 STRs operating in Malden against a housing stock of about 28,000 units. This is under 1 %. The ordinance's stated purpose is protecting housing stock from conversion to exclusive STR use, but at that scale, an outright ban on non-owner-occupied units isn't solving a housing crisis, it's eliminating a small, easily-regulated category of activity that the rest of this ordinance is already built to oversee. For comparison, new luxury construction downtown has had a far larger effect on rents than STRs will ever have.

2. It pushes activity underground rather than eliminating it. Non-owner-occupied units that can't register don't disappear. They either close (which is fine), or they keep operating unregistered, which means no insurance verification, no safety inspection, no local contact person, no tax remittance, and no impact fee. That's the opposite of what the rest of this ordinance is trying to achieve.

3. It disproportionately affects small, family-held properties; multi-owner LLCs, properties co-owned across family members, situations where the operator manages the property but doesn't or can't reside there, versus large commercial operators who were never going to register anyway. The rule ends up hitting compliant small owners hardest while doing the least to address the actual concerns that the ordinance lists.

It's also worth noting that neighborhood disruption isn't unique to STRs; it's a risk in any rental situation, long-term or short-term. Anyone can end up with a difficult neighbor regardless of how that neighbor's housing is arranged. STRs actually carry a self-correcting mechanism that standard rentals don't: ratings and reviews. A guest who behaves badly gets a bad review and has a harder time renting again, anywhere. It's not a perfect deterrent, but it's a real incentive toward good behavior that long-term tenancy doesn't have.

Rather than an outright ban, I recommend the Council considers a tiered registration system for non-owner-occupied units - a higher fee and/or stricter inspection cadence than owner-occupied units. Or, alternatively, a citywide cap on the number of non-owneroccupied registrations. Either approach keeps the housing-stock-protection goal intact without removing the legal pathway for compliant small owners to register, get insured, get inspected, and pay into the funds this ordinance is creating.

I want to see this pass with strong fee structures, insurance requirements, and enforcement mechanisms, without the owner-occupancy ban which undercuts the ordinance's own goals rather than serving them. am happy to talk this through further if useful.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matthew

Matthew Garland, Executive Director

Beth Israel
 MALDEN

Schedule a _meeting with in _____e

Looking for a warm, affordable Jewish community? Visit MoveToMalden.org.