

Date: February 14, 2020

To: Ryan Castle

From: Joe Goode and Sasha Maliniak

RE: Survey Results – Barnstable County Vacation Rentals Poll Results

Executive Summary

County residents are overwhelmingly supportive of vacation rentals and fully appreciate the economic impact they have in Barnstable County. There is no broad-based call for additional regulations. On the other hand, arguments in support of vacation rentals perform quite well. However, many voters are troubled by nuisance issues – noise, traffic, parking and litter. In addition, there is a sense that rental properties do limit the amount of housing available for people who want to work and live in the County and drive up costs. While not critical, addressing these nuisance, cost and availability issues would further strengthen support for vacation rentals.

Current Standing

Voters are overwhelmingly supportive of allowing property owners to rent out their homes as vacation properties (81 percent favor) and appreciate the positive impact that rentals have on the local economy.

Unease with vacation rentals is largely driven by the perceived impact that these properties have on overall housing availability and affordability. Women, especially those under age 50, and renters are most sensitive to the impact of vacation rentals on the overall housing market.

In addition to concerns about vacation properties on the housing market, there are additional underlying concerns about the nuisance problems caused by vacation rentals (noise, parking, etc.). Voters are split on whether additional regulations on vacation rentals would prove to be too burdensome for property owners.

Residents react favorably to most of the proposed regulations to address problems with vacation rentals, especially health and safety inspections, trash disposal requirements and limits on the number of people who can stay in a rental home. Notably, the most popular restrictions are not related to the short-term nature of the rentals. The value proposition of

these regulations to vacation rentals is unclear, given the already overwhelming support for allowing the practice.

Strong majority favor allowing homeowners to rent their homes for vacation rentals.

Eight-in-ten voters support allowing vacation rentals, and the support is intense (46 percent strongly favor, 81 percent total favor). Overall, 13 percent of voters oppose vacation rentals, but only 5 percent of voters are strongly opposed. Support is overwhelming among all demographic groups, with intense support especially high among Republicans, conservatives, men under age 50, and college educated men.

Opposition – while limited overall - is relatively high among women under age 50 (7 percent strongly oppose, 21 percent total oppose), women without a college degree (6 percent strongly oppose, 20 percent total oppose), voters age 18 to 34 (2 percent strongly oppose, 18 percent total oppose), renters (6 percent strongly oppose, 18 percent total oppose) and liberals (5 percent strongly oppose, 17 percent total oppose). While opposition in the town of Barnstable only slightly outpaces opposition among others on the Cape, there are nearly double the number of strong opponents (9 percent strongly oppose, 16 percent total oppose).

Almost half of voters are aware of a vacation rental in their community. Forty percent of voters say they are aware of a vacation rental in their community and that they have not experienced any issues, while just 4 percent say there is a problem vacation rental in their neighborhood. Voters in the Lower and Outer Cape are most likely to be aware of a vacation rental (64 percent), while those in the Upper Cape are least likely to have a rental in their community (35 percent).

Vacation rentals impact home availability. A majority of residents (57 percent) say that vacation rentals have at least a medium impact on the availability of homes for people who want to live year-round in their community; just over a third characterize the impact as huge (17 percent) or big (18 percent). The remaining third say that the rentals have only a small impact (18 percent) or no impact (14 percent). Renters (38 percent huge impact), young women (37 percent huge impact), voters age 35 to 29 (29 percent huge impact), and voters in the Lower and Outer Cape (28 percent huge impact) are most sensitive to vacation rentals limiting housing inventory. Women (44 percent huge or big impact) are more likely to see a connection between vacation rentals and a lack of homes than men (25 percent huge or big impact), and renters (54 percent huge or big impact) see a bigger effect than homeowners (31 percent huge or big impact).

Survey Methodology

American Strategies designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 450 adults (400 weighted), age 18 or older, who indicated they were registered to vote in Barnstable County, Massachusetts. The survey was conducted from February 3-5, 2020.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents were reached on wireless phones, nine percent on VOIP phones, and thirty-five percent on landlines. Quotas were assigned to reflect the demographic distribution of registered voters in Barnstable County, Massachusetts and the data were weighted to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The sample was drawn from a third-party vendor voter file. The overall margin of error is +/- 4.9%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.