



Subject: *Motion C24(461)- Zoning Confirmation Letters*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, September 16th, 2025
Date Prepared: August 26, 2025
Related Motions: C24(461)
Prepared by: Lee-Ann Martin, Planner & Development Officer
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

In December of 2024, East Hants Municipal Council passed a motion directing staff to explore the possibility of exempting and refunding the fee required to obtain a municipal zoning confirmation letter for residents obtaining their license and registration for short term rental accommodations.

At their December 18th, 2024 meeting, Council passed the following motion:

C24(461) Moved that staff be directed to prepare a report on the potential exemption & refund of the \$75.00 fee required to obtain a municipal zoning confirmation letter that is now required to register under the provincial Short-term Rentals Registration Act.

Financial Impact Statement

There is no financial impact with the adoption of this report.

Recommendation

Make no changes to the current requirement for a zoning confirmation letter and the fees associated with obtaining a zoning confirmation letter

Background

At their December 2024 Regular Meeting, Council passed the following motion:

C24(461) *Moved that staff be directed to prepare a report on the potential exemption & refund of the \$75.00 fee required to obtain a municipal zoning confirmation letter that is now required to register under the provincial Short-term Rentals Registration Act.*

The province of Nova Scotia introduced regulations for short-terms rentals across the province and now requires all owners and operators of short terms rentals to register under the Nova Scotia Short Term Rentals Registry. These regulations came into effect September 30, 2024. As part of the provincial registration, short term rental operators are required to provide proof of compliance with municipal regulations for short terms rentals. It is under municipal discretion what the type of compliance looks like (zoning confirmation letter, development permit, etc.)

Discussion

As per the Nova Scotia Short-Term Rental Registration Act, short-term accommodations must register to operate in Nova Scotia if they provide accommodations for 28 days in a row or less. Registration is not required for the following:

- Only long-term accommodations (like a year-to-year lease, month-to-month lease or more than 28 days in a row)
- Accommodations at campgrounds that are not roofed (like campsites where travellers bring their own tents or trailers)
- Accommodations that are only for temporary workers (like temporary workers in healthcare and building trades)

As part of the new regulations, hosts must confirm that their accommodation complies with municipal land use bylaw regulations. The province has indicated this is a one-time letter and hosts will not have to obtain their proof of compliance each year. Section 6(1)(e) of the Regulations under the Act states a requirement for registration is “confirmation from the municipality that the accommodation the applicant seeks to register complies with applicable municipal land-use by-laws;”.

East Hants does not specifically regulate short-term rentals, however as part of the process to ensure compliance, the development officer reviews each property to ensure it is zoned accordingly for a residential use and that there are no outstanding bylaw violations against the property. In East Hants, all requests related to zoning confirmation and compliance are handled through a zoning confirmation letter. This includes where hosts are required to provide proof of compliance to the province for their registration.

Other municipal units may provide other forms of compliance to the province depending on how short-term rentals are regulated across each Municipality or Town. In some cases, Municipalities regulate short term rentals under the Land Use Bylaw or through a Licencing Bylaw. In these instances, development permits or other regulatory approvals may be required and those permits can be used to provide proof of compliance to the province. Fees for those permits may be required.

EAST HANTS ZONING CONFIRMATION LETTERS

East Hants charges a \$75 fee for zoning confirmation letters. The table below shows the number of zoning confirmation letters for short term rentals since the new regulations were adopted in September of 2024.

Zoning Confirmation Letters Issued for Short Term Rentals

2024	51
2025 (As of August 2025)	26
Total	77

Zoning confirmation letters are legal documents obtained to confirm zoning on a property and whether any existing uses on the property are permitted legally. These letters can also be used to determine any outstanding bylaw violations on properties or if there are any outstanding orders on the property. Zoning confirmation letters take time to produce, and the fee charged is for the staff time and resources to have the letters completed. Zoning confirmation letters are often requested from financial institutions and lawyers for purchasing and sales of properties.

REFUNDING FEES FOR ZONING CONFIRMATION LETTERS

Zoning confirmation requests are currently received through email. When refunds are requested, they are typically processed and issued by cheque. The refunds are then mailed directly to the short-term rental host. To ensure the refunds are being sent to the correct address, confirmation of mailing addresses would need to be required for each host. This process would involve both the planning and finance departments as each refund is required to be processed individually. It may be challenging to re-establish contact with each short-term rental host in order to process the refunds, which may result in refund delays or hosts not receiving a refund.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Municipality has Legislative Authority to setting and amending fees related to Municipal policies and Bylaws under Part III.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is a cost to the Municipality if Council decides to proceed with refunding the zoning confirmation letter fees to short term rental hosts. There is no immediate cost to the Municipality with the adoption of this report.

Conclusion

The requirement to provide a proof of compliance to the province is a one-time letter. Hosts do not need to have a new letter produced each year. The requests being received today for letters, are for new short-term rental operators in East Hants

Staff are recommending that no change be made to the current process and requirement to issue zoning confirmation letters for short-term rentals to meet the provincial requirement to obtain proof of compliance with Municipal Land Use Bylaws due to the staff time and resources needed in order to produce these letters.

Attachments

There are no attachments to this report.

Alternatives

1. PAC and Council may wish to refund all zoning confirmation letters issued for short-term rentals and exempt future requests for letters from the \$75 fee. An amendment to the fee policy would be required indicating that zoning confirmation letters produced for short-term rentals are exempt from the \$75. Staff do not recommend this option due to staff time and resources to produce these letters and to have all letters refunded.
2. Amend the fee policy to exempt Zoning Confirmation Letters obtained for short-term rentals to be exempt from the \$75 fee moving forward.