Policy on Housing Rentals

This policy applies to full unit rentals, the Common House apartment, and long term—more than one month—home sharing (owner renting a room or rooms in the house). Not included in this policy: trailer rentals, office rentals, or VRBO/AirBnB type arrangements.

Interests

1. We anticipate the need for some owners to live away from the community for work, family, or personal reasons. A rental policy can facilitate their ability to do so without having to sell their unit or incur financial loss, while protecting the community from unnecessary risk or work.

2. Rental units provide a way for a wider diversity of people to come into the community and generally provide a way for people to flow in and out of the community faster than through unit sales. Renters bring new energy and ideas into the community.

3. Renting is a good way for prospective owners to get a feel for community life as they are making a decision about buying at Cobb Hill.

4. The Cobb Hill community runs most smoothly when everyone, including renters, is engaged and contributing. In a situation when the owners aren’t present, the renters help fill the gap.

5. Owners are sometimes under time pressures around a rental. A rental policy is meant to clarify the process and help owners rent without being overly cumbersome or process-heavy.

Process

1. Owners will give 30-day notice of their intent to rent for a period of more than one month. Rentals for one month or less shall not come under this policy. In the event of sudden and unexpected changes the required notice may be shortened.

2. We ask owners to check in with the Membership Committee to identify people who have expressed interest in Cobb Hill membership, as they look for people to rent.

3. Potential renters will complete a rental application (provided by the Membership committee) including a brief bio and references. The information collected will be available to all community members. Owners are expected to share relevant background information collected through the renter vetting process with the full community. A background check (criminal and/or financial) is encouraged if the owner thinks it is needed and appropriate.
4. All potential renters will review and agree to abide by the Cobb Hill by-laws and all of the Common Rules and Agreements (CR&A’s) and policies, including the Pet Policy. Owners are responsible for making sure renters have seen and understand these documents.

5. Owners are responsible to ensure all required work expectations are covered. A partial list is below (Appendix A) and a complete list can be found in the Member Manual. The homeowner will inform the community of the agreement that has been worked out for covering these shared obligations and maintaining our shared systems.

6. Rentals for six months or longer will involve an exploration process as defined by the Membership Committee. This includes setting up opportunities for the community to meet renters and an exploration meeting. We encourage, but don’t require, a full exploration for shorter rentals. Owners are expected to introduce renters to the community and find ways for renters to feel comfortable and connected with the community.

7. A written lease should always be used when units are rented, to protect the owner, the renter, and the community. A standard lease is available from the Membership committee. A security/cleaning deposit may be requested.

8. Renting a unit at Cobb Hill is more complicated than traditional rentals and requires additional attention to help renters understand community processes and systems. Homeowners renting their entire unit are expected to hire a property manager (a current member of someone who knows the community and systems), or be fully present to help renters understand and adjust to life at Cobb Hill. Owners are expected to check in with the Membership Committee several times each year to ensure things are going smoothly from the community perspective.

9. Living at Cobb Hill includes both helping us with common work and enjoying some of the fun and social opportunities (meals, dances, music, etc). Renters are full community members with every opportunity for involvement (equal to an owner), with the exception of financial decisions.

10. Owners are expected to provide and review the New Member Guide with renters (and have the Property Manager review it if there is a Property Manager involved).

11. When owners’ absence exceeds two years, they will meet with community members to review their long-term plans for absentee membership.

Appendix A

All owners are responsible for ensuring the following shared obligations are covered while they are away, and for checking in regularly to make sure it is being done as needed. This includes:

- Garn shifts
- Wood moving
- Common House cleaning
● “Car Ballet” in the winter, as needed
● Shoveling walks as needed
● Gardening around their unit
● Emptying Composter
● General maintenance of those house systems that impact the full community (windows, heating systems, electricity use, washing machine filters, composting toilets).
● See the Member Manual for a complete list.

(Note: We are not including a policy about working with a third party rental or house swapping agency such as Airbnb or VRBO as part of this policy, mostly because we don’t know enough and there is so much variability. At this time, owners who wish to do this should draft a proposal to the Membership committee who will make a recommendation to the community. We will work with these options on a case-by-case basis until we have a better idea of what is involved.)