

Mark your calendar: Next year's rental meeting will be held on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018

Watermark

401 North Atlantic Ave.
New Smyrna Beach, Florida 32169

Annual Rental Group Meeting

Oct. 21, 2017

Present: Donna/Kirk Maupin (103); Donna Schuiteman (105), Jayne/John Allison (202), Sandy/Bill Dunn (203), Brian Goymour (301), Judy/Mark Maler (502), Bud Chappell (503), Barb Ayash (402), Alisa/Ron Laramy (404), Sherri/Dee Daniel (602); Bill Biedenbach (603)

Welcome

Bill Dunn opened the meeting by highlighting the 'very busy' year since we last met...

- ✓ The snowbirds enjoyed their first full winter with the heated pool.
- ✓ The 'Inspector' program combined with the Rental Group's cooperation on deep cleanings brought about a huge drop in snowbird complaints.
- ✓ The transfer of all rental responsibilities from Beachside Realty to the Watermark managers made for more efficiency in billing, confirmation and payment procedures.
- ✓ By featuring pictures of each rental and allowing prospective renters to choose, the new website fundamentally changed how units are assigned. Launched eight months ago, the site has generated 18 bookings thus far. It also provides renting owners with useful content (rental policies; list of must-have furnishings; a repair resource guide; bulletin board materials; minutes of previous meetings, etc). This rental-specific content is archived in the owners-only area, and can be accessed with the ID, *marker401* and password, *loggerhead*
- ✓ The pool was resurfaced, deck area and pool house refurbished. Bill thanked the board for coming to the rescue of our top rental amenity that had fallen into some disrepair.
- ✓ Donna & Kirk were applauded by members in attendance for their timely damage control after Hurricane Irma. Their coordination with ServPro saved renting owners time, money, headaches and, in some cases, bookings. They were presented with a restaurant gift card as a token of gratitude from the Rental Group for their post-hurricane response and assistance.

Managers Report

Donna filled us in on these key stats & trends...

- ✓ 16 units rent in the summer; 22 in winter
- ✓ 163 deposits currently on file
- ✓ Winter trends: All Jan –Mar '18 slots are full (89 on the waiting list)
- ✓ Summer trends: With earlier school starts, late July bookings are becoming less automatic

- ✓ Off season Fall trends: October, November '17 rentals are up significantly over last year (October, up 16 weeks; November, up 9 weeks; December, up 8 weeks)
- ✓ May was down by 8 weeks year over year (7 weeks from a group of regulars who did not come this year -- part of a group that went to Hawaii)
- ✓ September was down from last year by 6 weeks due to Hurricane Irma which cost us \$4421 in lost revenue from hurricane refunds and people who could not reschedule their reservation
- ✓ Despite a nationwide trend of more people traveling with pets, 99% of Watermark owners strongly support our current no-pets policy for renters unless the unit has been previously designated "pet-friendly" by its owner.
- ✓ A recent NSB tourism survey shows the average stay of overnight visitors is 3 nights... avg party size is 2.7... avg age, 53... avg household income, \$79,400; 74% are married; 81% drive here; 15% fly. NSB visitors come mostly from Florida, of course, followed by GA, NY, NJ, NC, OH, IL, MI, PA and SC in that order; NSB's international feeder markets are primarily Canada followed by the UK, and then by Germany, Australia, Austria, Belgium, China, Denmark, Finland, Argentina.

Rental Rates

- ✓ The group agreed that there was no compelling need to further adjust rates after doing so just a year ago. Donna said she had no negative feedback concerning those increases.
- ✓ At the suggestion of Chris Garvin (106) we'll take another look at the pros and cons of holiday rates. For 10 years, we have not charged extra for holidays, but a number of oceanfront condos in NSB hike rates during holiday weeks by 25-35%.

Website update

- ✓ The redesigned website has topped 4100 sessions in 8 months, according to figures provided by our website host *hostingsnb*. About half those hits have come from different people.
- ✓ The site has directly resulted in 18 bookings, a pace that if maintained over the site's first full year would translate to 27 bookings.
- ✓ Top locations of people checking out the Watermark site: FL, NY, MI, GA, PA, NJ, OR, TN, TX, KY
- ✓ 49% of the site's traffic comes from Google
- ✓ 35% of it comes directly from people who already know the site name
- ✓ Highest number of sessions in one day: about 50 on June 30.
- ✓ How to grow website traffic is our biggest challenge now. One proven way, we're told, is regular blogging. In old-school terms, a "blog" is the website equivalent of a short article or column – 300-500 words on a topic of predictably high interest to a segment of online browsers who checking out NSB. If we are going to experiment with blogging, we'll need to do some brainstorming of content ideas and contribute writers. We welcome your thoughts.
- ✓ Our website creator/photographer Shea Crawford has agreed to reshoot any rental units whose website photos have become outdated, for a flat \$50 fee. This is a great deal for anyone who has remodeled since last December when he took the first batch for the site. The fee include the photo session plus taking the current photos off the site and replacing them with the new images. Call the office to arrange.
- ✓ It is the responsibility of the renting owners to keep accurate their unit's descriptive content as it appears on the site. Call Donna with any changes.

Marketing

- ✓ We will be putting together a volunteer Marketing Study Group to consider the full range of promotional opportunities available to us moving forward and recommend which strategies to pursue. This group will also come back with recommendations on how to pay for whatever marketing initiatives. Jim Greene (#303) has already done considerable legwork on how the Rental Group might create a marketing fund. The group has never had dues, but we would obviously need a source of funds to pay for any brochures, newspaper ads or pursue more sophisticated strategies to enhance website traffic. Please contact Bill and Sandy if you have marketing experience and are interested in helping with this. For starters, Ron Laramy has volunteered to serve and begin by reviewing a thick directory of NSB's existing tourist marketing ties. He'll get back to us with his thoughts.

Hurricane lessons from Irma

- ✓ Water penetration occurred in 33 of 36 units and had to be sopped up with towels. Packing old towels along the tracks of your sliders before the storm was a somewhat effective way to cut down on water penetration inside the unit. Baby diapers, we've been told, work even better. Rolling up large area rugs and storing them well away from your sliders prior to a hurricane is also recommended, as several nice rugs got soaked and had to be pitched out when mold set in during recovery efforts. Keeping a separate box of old towels on hand may reduce the need in future hurricanes for the managers to use your good towels to mop up with.

Misc

- ✓ The board is aware of WIFI performance issues and looking into alternatives.
- ✓ For safety sake, candles will be removed from the must-have list for rental units.
- ✓ Several members spotted and claimed their items from the Lost & Found table.

Election

- ✓ Sandy & Bill (203) were reelected for another term as co-chairs.

2018 rental meeting

- ✓ Next year's rental meeting will be on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018 (a week earlier than usual).