

14 Renting Your Cottage

Whether by choice or necessity, many islanders decide to rent their cottage for some or all of the summer. This chapter will help you understand what is important to consider if you plan to rent to people who are unfamiliar with the island's "special" nature.

Advance Planning

It's always a good idea to speak to others who have rented their cottages in the past to find out what works and what doesn't work. Check past issues of *the Store Porch news* to find out who previously has listed rentals.

Decide if you are going to rent from Saturday to Saturday or some other duration. Most renters are accustomed to arriving after 3:00 pm on Saturday and leaving by 11:00 am the following Saturday. This schedule allows for daylight arrival and departure on the *Lilly B.*, as well as for housekeeping turn-around.

Consider what you must do to turn the cottage around for incoming guests, if you have renters back-to-back. For example, you might need to change and clean linens (however, on Bustins you probably will want to require renters to bring their own). The kitchen and living areas most likely will need a cleaning. You may need to replace broken dishes or make other repairs. You will need to check supplies such as toilet paper and paper towels, kerosene, and firewood. The wastebaskets may need emptying and trash removed.

Be sure your home-owner's insurance policy covers renters. It is a good idea to carry an umbrella policy in the event of a tragedy.

If you plan to rent for more than 15 days in a calendar year, the State of Maine requires you to file for an ID number and pay a Use Tax. You can find information on www.maine.gov/revenue. As of 2009, the Use Tax is 7%. Be sure to include the Use Tax in your rental agreement, either as an add-on (\$700/week + 7% tax) or included (\$749/week).

Pack up all personal items that you do not want renters to use and store them in one place, either in a locked container, closet, or room, so that they will be protected and you will have easy access to them when you return.

Advertising

The best advertising is word of mouth, or you can place a notice in the winter and spring issues of *the Store Porch news*. It's always advantageous to get referrals through people who are familiar with the Bustins way of life.

If you advertise publicly, be prepared to educate your renters about life on an island with few conveniences. Make sure they know how to work the systems in your cottage, where to go for help, and what to do in an emergency.

The Rental Agreement

Be sure to sign a contract with your renters. You should be able to find a template on line or use an existing contract if your renting neighbor is willing to share. Customize the contract to reflect what is important to you. It helps to include special circumstances as an attachment to the contract so

you can mold it to the specific renter. For example, you might include an attachment covering agreements regarding pets, children, linen, propane, and firewood.

Ask for a deposit of 50% of the rental fee a couple of months in advance. It will be impossible to find a replacement on short notice if your renter decides they cannot fulfill their obligation. Also, it keeps well-intentioned friends and family members from canceling at the last minute without putting some thought into it. You can always negotiate the return of a deposit depending on specific circumstances.

Setting Expectations

Be very clear about what is included in your rental, and what is *not* included, such as mainland parking, transportation to and from the island, use of a dock, boat, kayak, dinghy, firewood, propane, bed linen, staples (salt, pepper, spices, other condiments), paper products, trash bags, soaps, shampoos, towels, and use of bikes and lawn and garden equipment.

- è Note that parking in the lot behind the French School in South Freeport is not available for renters; it is for Bustins and Freeport residents only. Also, it is recommended that renters not leave their vehicles parked on the streets in South Freeport.

Be very clear about expectations regarding removing trash, recyclables, leftover food, doing laundry, lawn care, and clean-up. Be sure that you are also clear about conserving water and that cutting vegetation is not allowed.

Make sure your tenants know what your policies are regarding additional guests, parties, or loud noise and how it impacts your neighbors.

Make sure you are clear about whether or not your renters can bring pets. If they bring pets, make sure they understand that their pets must be under voice command control or on a leash when walking around the island, and that they must be either tied up in the yard or left in the cottage when no one is home.

Post small 3- by 5-inch cards or notes in appropriate places as “reminders” of the rules of the house. For example, “No candles or flames on the second floor” can be mounted discreetly at the bottom of the stairway to the second floor.

Post emergency numbers and instructions where they can be easily found. Review with your renters the instructions for handling fire and medical emergencies. Leave a copy of this guide in an obvious place where your renters can refer to it; provide them with information specific to your cottage upon arrival.