

Friday, March 16, 2018  
San Juan County Planning Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item – March 1, 2018 draft Vision Amendments

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Good Morning and Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

My husband Paul and I are relative newcomers to San Juan Island. We moved here about a year ago from Portland Or where we lived and worked for about 30 years. We moved here to get back to our salt water roots, and live somewhere that my husband, who is a Brit, says we would be gobsmacked by nature each day, and so far that dream comes true, every day. We feel fortunate and blessed and proud to call this Island home.

Over the span of almost 40 years I have spent my career working primarily for the public sector in marine science, environmental and land use planning. I applaud the public involvement efforts that have occurred to date for the Comp. Plan update. Between the 22 one-on-one interviews, 3 studios on the different islands, and the online survey there have been many voices heard and discussions had about the future of the San Juan and Gulf Islands region. It is clear to me from participating in the workshop on San Juan Island and in reading some of the 4,000 plus comments for the on-line survey that the residents of the county care deeply about where they live and work, are articulate, smart and are one of the best resources the planning staff, County Council and Planning Commission have to tap in to.

During the October visioning workshop on San Juan Island one gentleman who had participated in the previous Comp Plan update 20 years ago described the incredible work of the citizen committee he participated on over several months to hash out the vision statement.

At that October workshops the public was told that the 20 year old Vision Statement would only need minor amendments to bring it up to

date. I think that assumption does not reflect the comments collected at the October workshop I attended, nor the 4,000 plus comments and subsequent testimony at the Commission's Jan. 19 and Feb. 2 meetings.

The Vision Statement work will set the tone for the rest of the comp. plan update, but it can't be done by staff alone. Staff and their consultants did a fabulous job collecting input from the public. Why not take advantage of the resources of these intelligent, experienced, and insightful residents that provided those 4,000 comments to re-craft a Vision that will take the combined County and Gulf Islands towards the future we and future generations deserve. I urge you to tap in to the residents, give them a role in the drafting the Vision Statement they can really own. Just think how much leverage there is by bringing the community wisdom and experience to this work as well as their good minds, hearts and willingness to dig in to the detail, and the devil is in the detail.

I know that this meeting is to hear specific proposed language changes to staff's March 1 draft Vision Statement. But the testimony I submitted at the Planning Commissions' Feb. 16 meeting still stands as my testimony for this meeting.

In summary, several of the statements in the present draft do not emphasize the importance of preserving scenic vistas and views both from the water towards the interior of the islands and from the land looking out to sea, as well as interior view of valleys and mountain ridges. Including words such as scenic vistas, natural scenic beauty, and preserve open spaces will help to define rural nature.

The vision statement leads to policies and regulations so we need to be sure action oriented language sets that stage. For example, language that emphasizes the importance of preserving the right for residents to have unimpeded views (within reason) of the natural beauty on the island. This could lead to the development of a Scenic overlay which could address careful siting and screening of development and establishing lower height limits. Even now some of the homeowners associations have taken it on their own to establish height limits, so the example already exists, but this needs to a county-wide requirement.

Also statements about protecting the night sky from light pollution could set the course for an outdoor lighting ordinance. I provided a such a sample ordinance to County Council at their Dec. 11 meeting when they discussed the Vision Statement.

The recent publication by the San Juan Preservation Trust and the Islands Trust in British Columbia called "A place in the Islands; How Private Land Owners Shape the Future of the San Juan and Gulf Islands" contains many non-regulatory suggestions to easily protect the sense of place that is special to the islands. The County could incorporate many of these suggestions in to the code.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony.