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From: Kathi C <ciskokid@rockisland.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2020 4:30 PM
To: Comp Plan Update
Subject: housing

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Dear Mr. Page and Community Development members,

Over the past few weeks we have been spending far more time than we should trying to understand the housing element one document. We have followed land use issues on Orcas Island since about 1990 when we purchased a piece of property and promptly found out that the man who owned the property next door to us was going through the steps to try to get it rezoned. We wanted to learn what it would mean if he were successful so that entailed lots of document studying and meeting attending for the past 30 or so years!

We understand the desperate need people are feeling to provide affordable housing for everyone. Housing problems have been an issue on Orcas for a long time. When we arrived in 1985 to start a good job, we found that we had to spend time living in our van at the park; more time in a completely unfurnished apt. while everything we had was in storage and a couple of months in a glorious house that was available to rent only until mid-June. That was the challenge then. People often could rent houses in the winter but had to leave so the owners could come back for the summer. Eventually we did find permanent housing.

We are impressed with the tremendous amount of work that has gone into this housing issue and Sophia Cassam is to be commended for all of her help. This included good instructions in helping us navigate the Polaris program. I realize that this is the beginning of this process so we know more questions will surface but here are a few things that popped out:

Question 1:

In reading the first paragraph of the following we wonder if there is a mistake? Should it be a minimum density of two units per acre and a maximum of eight dwelling units?

18.60.230 Rural residential cluster development.

b. A rural residential cluster development shall have a maximum density of two units per acre and a maximum of eight dwelling units.

Question 2: When our neighbor's property was rezoned from R to RR, I was told that it wouldn't affect the current 1 residence per 5 acre zoning, but unless I am missing something here, it would indeed change the possibilities for land use options:

Refer to 18.60.230

'5b. A rural residential cluster shall not be located in an urban growth area nor in any of the following land use districts: rural general use, island center, master planned resort, agricultural resource, forest resource, conservancy, natural, or any industrial or commercial district. The developed portion of a rural residential cluster shall not be in lands subject to the Shoreline Management Act.'

How many RR clusters can actually be put into an acre, 5 acres, 10 acres, 30 acres?

Draft housing goal 7, policy 3. This was written as a goal:

"Allow nonprofits and private developers to develop small-scale rural residential clusters with long term affordability restrictions and no more than twelve dwelling units each, within rural residential, rural farm forest, and Village, Hamlet and Residential Activity Centers."

Again, perhaps we have missed something, but it seems like there are some conflicting descriptions of how many units can be put into Rural Residential clusters. This needs to be made very clear.

Question 3 and 4: We see that the RR clusters are currently available to be facilitated by nonprofits or state agencies but there is an addition to the wording that would also include private developers in the opportunity to participate. What are the implications of that change? Also, how would the designated funds be distributed to a private developer?

It seems reasonable that until we have a better understanding of the implications of including private developers into this process, we should not add them into Draft Housing Goal 7, Policy 3.

Affordable housing has become a huge issue everywhere, Orcas is not unique with this situation. We appreciated that you mentioned that the current Vision Statement stresses the importance of maintaining the rural character of the island as we try to solve the problem of providing homes for more and more people. It is interesting to read that we have enough houses in the San Juan Islands to house everyone (seeing all of the housing that has been built in the Eastsound UGA in the past two years is stunning) and some of it addresses affordable housing and some does not. No matter how much we build we will not solve this problem, but we understand that we feel we must try. It seems strange that we are looking into going into our rural lands to house more people. As more tourists arrive to enjoy the San Juan Islands beauty and amenities, we need more people to serve them and then the community needs more resources to support the people who have come. We must be very clear as to how much infrastructure an island can truly provide. In the past we were told that North Beach Road has already reached its vehicle carrying capacity. I am looking forward to following the next phase of this project.

Sincerely,

Kathi and Joe Ciskowski

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