

Sophia Cassam

From: Lovel Pratt <lovel@sanjuans.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2020 9:42 PM
To: Comp Plan Update
Subject: Comp Plan comments for SJC Council and Planning Commission - REVISED (Ignore earlier email)
Attachments: Friends_of_the_San_Juans_Comp_Plan_Comments_6-18-2020.pdf; 2019-12-18-Ltr+from+VR+Work+Group+to+County+Council.pdf

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Please provide the attached revised comments to the Planning Commissioners and Council Members.

Please replace these with those sent earlier today.

Thank you,

Lovel

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P.O. Box 1344
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To: SJC Planning Commissioners and Council Members
From: Lovel Pratt, Marine Protection Program Director
Date: June 18, 2020
Subject: Comp Plan update comments

Submitted via email: compplancomments@sanjuanco.com

Thank you for considering these comments on the following draft elements of the SJC 2036 Comprehensive Plan update. Requested changes are imbedded in the text as underlined additions and strike-out deletions. Comments are italicized. Attached is the December 18, 2019 letter to the SJC Council from the Vacation Rental Workgroup which we recommend for additional policies and goals.

UTILITIES – March 30, 2020 draft

It is imperative that the planning and permitting for the location and extension of utilities includes the protection of natural resources and consideration of a changing climate.

Goal 5 Protect and preserve natural habitats and environments while also providing for the location and extension of necessary utility facilities:

Page 9, lines 2-6: *Retain Policy #1*

Goal 9: Recognize that propane as an important is used as a heating source in the County *A goal specific to propane should also include goals and policies for transitioning from this non-renewable fuel. We recommend working with the Transition groups in the county to identify appropriate language.*

We support the Planning Commission's request for a policy related to safe transport and storage.

Page 12, lines 14 – 20:

2. Allow ~~Support~~ the ongoing, historic use of historic barge landings that have served as landing sites for transporting bulk fuels, with appropriate environmental review for expanded or new uses.

3. Work with the Ports, the Town of Friday Harbor, WSDOT and propane distributors to develop safe transportation and circulation routes for the transport of propane that ensures the safety of human and natural communities.

Overall comment: use "renewable energy" in place of "alternative energy"

CAPITAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES – May 11, 2020 draft

It is imperative that the planning for capital investments and needed services includes the protection of natural resources and consideration of a changing climate.

Introduction

Page 3, line 11:

Planning ahead for capital investments and needed services is good management because capital facilities usually have long lives and significant costs. Advance planning helps San Juan County use limited funding wisely and most efficiently to maximize revenue sources and opportunities and improve resiliency to a changing climate. Planning ahead for capital investments and needed services must also address the future need for and the protection of the county's natural resources. By determining future needs, the County can identify funding and projects needed to implement the County's 2036 Vision.

Page 9, line 14:

Is it appropriate for the Comp Plan to include section 7.1.G 2036 CAPITAL FACILITIES HIGHLIGHTS, which specifically addresses two projects that are included in the Capital Facilities Plan?

7.2.A GENERAL GOALS AND POLICIES

Page 10, line 18:

Policy #1. Consider the geographical location and capacity of existing capital facilities and services in the designation of future land uses and land use district boundaries, and analysis of potential effects on adverse impacts to resource lands, special districts, natural resources, and critical areas.

7.3.A SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES

Page 15:

There should be policies and/or goals about increasing recycling, re-use, composting, etc. We recommend working with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee on this.

INTRODUCTION AND VISION – May 19, 2020 draft

Page 4:

Insert where appropriate in the 1st paragraph: San Juan County has 410 miles of marine shoreline and 72% of the county's 621 square mile area is the marine environment.

Page 4, line 6: *SJC is part of an archipelago.*

Page 4, line 8: *Are the "workers" different from the permanent residents (as are the seasonal residents and visitors)? Suggest deleting "workers" from this sentence unless seasonal workforce is specified.*

Page 6

BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Our islands are places where people are safe, day and night. The drinking water supply is clean, adequate, quantified, monitored, and conserved as a vital resource. Health care [previously suggested adding "including mental health and victim services" – include again?] and help in

time of need are accessible and affordable. Making a life here is not limited by lack of access to basic human needs.

GOVERNANCE

We are self-governed by informed citizens. We are represented by elected officials who conduct the activities of government in an ethical, fair, impartial, responsive and open manner that recognizes the independent, self-reliant nature of its people. Our elected officials and government institutions lead, communicate and collaborate with regional partners in areas of mutual interest. Our government institutions balance responsibility with resources and costs, consolidate services where practical, manage prudently, provide reliable data, are service-oriented, and perform in a timely manner. Planning for capital investments and needed services includes the protection of natural resources.

Page 8

ECONOMY

We support a diverse, resilient, and sustainable economy while respecting the natural world. This economy serves the needs of our community, and recognizes the rural, residential, quiet, agricultural, marine and isolated nature of the islands. We plan for and provide services to tourists and part-time residents without impacting the availability of affordable housing, essential services, and water resources for our year-round residents or the environment. Our economy comprises a wide spectrum of stable, year-round activities that provide wages that allow islanders to live, work, and thrive locally. We encourage new ideas and new technology for improving the quality and profitability of our goods and services. Communication systems support our economy.

Page 9

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

We have water, land, and air transportation systems commensurate with our island culture. Transportation plans carefully consider multimodal transportation, and the protection of natural resources and rural character. Expansion or construction of transportation systems, infrastructure, and facilities occurs only based on demonstrated local public need and considers climate and the environment. Advanced communication infrastructure is encouraged.

Page 11, line 32:

The County has the responsibility of planning for growth management. The San Juan County Council is primarily responsible for the implementation of the *Plan*. The *Plan* is also implemented by various parties throughout the County.

Page 14, lines 3-4:

At 173.91 square miles of land, San Juan County is the smallest in Washington by landmass, though it has the greatest amount of marine shoreline and 72% of the county's 621 square mile total area is marine waters.

Page 14, line 8:

San Juan County is known for its scenic landscapes and marine environment. Among them: rocky shorelines, sandy beaches, dense forests, sweeping prairie, arable farmland, and delightful villages and hamlets.

Page 15, line 43 (to address ocean acidification impacts):

They create concerns for human well-being, the health of the marine ecosystem, sustainability and economic prosperity everywhere.

Page 15, line 30:

Rural character and environmental protection:

This sub-section relates to the tension between growth and development pressures and the health of the underlying natural ecosystems. This foundation of our economy and sense of place is not covered in any other element.

Additional sub-section:

Natural Resources: The economy, culture and sense of place within San Juan County is deeply connected to the health of our natural environment. Growth and development pressures will increase and strong protections for marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems as well as resource lands are essential. The entire county is recognized as a Marine Stewardship Area because of the important role a healthy environment plays in supporting human communities.

Page 15, lines 48 – 49:

Prioritizing a diversified economy, systems resiliency, adaptation planning and goals that remediate, sequester and 49 reduce carbon emissions are incorporated into the elements of this updated plan

APPENDIX 2

SAN JUAN COUNTY AND TOWN OF FRIDAY HARBOR COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES, INCLUDING JOINT PLANNING POLICIES

2.1 POLICIES FOR DESIGNATION OF THE FRIDAY HARBOR URBAN GROWTH AREA

Page 5, *suggested new 1. d. (based on October 18, 2017 comments submitted to SJC by Islands Climate Resilience):*

Consider climate change risks and avoid areas projected to have an increased risk of flooding, landslides, and/or severe erosion, as well as areas that are needed by shoreline species as sea levels rise.

2.5 POLICIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Page 13, *suggested new #5 (based on October 18, 2017 comments submitted to SJC by Islands Climate Resilience):*

The housing elements should include policies that improve the affordability of housing and achieve climate co-benefits by investing in energy efficiency, energy conservation, and renewable energy generation, which can reduce energy costs for residents.

December 18, 2019

Vacation Rental Work Group
Yonatan Aldort, Chair
Lisa Byers, Vice Chair

Jamie Stephens
Rick Hughes
Bill Watson
San Juan County Council
350 Court Street, #1
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Dear Councilmen Stephens, Hughes and Watson:

We, the Vacation Rental Work Group Steering Committee, write to provide you with recommendations for regulations that we believe would significantly reduce the negative impacts arising from the proliferation of vacation rentals in San Juan County, and to ask you to take immediate action.

We will not use this letter to enumerate the concerns we have raised with each of you about how the proliferation of vacation rentals is harming the islands and our community. Our findings from research and community meetings are posted on www.vacationrentalsorcass.com.

The following recommendations evolved out of three public meetings on Orcas, attended by more than 200 islanders, from research we have conducted on the impacts of unrestricted growth of vacation rentals on small communities, and from study of regulations enacted by other jurisdictions that have effectively limited these impacts. This letter, delivered by e-mail, includes hyper-links to examples of regulations enacted by other jurisdictions.

1. Convert from the current land-use permit system to a business license, renewed annually.

a. Advantages:

1. New source of revenue to the County (it is our understanding that enacting such a system would result in all businesses being licensed by the county).
2. Eliminate the need for the Community Development staff to write reports and the Hearing Examiner to review permit applications.
3. Reduce speculation on the transfer of properties that hold permits.
4. Allow for attrition of permits when properties are sold (based on a system of phasing out existing permits upon sale of property).

b. Examples:

1. [Manzanita, OR](#)
2. [Golden, CO](#)
3. [Crested Butte, CO](#)

- 2. Distinguish between Home Shares (owner in residence with one room for rent under the same roof) and Vacation Rentals (whole house). Home Shares would be subject to a separate cap.**
 - a. Advantages:
 1. Supports people who need additional income to stay on island.
 2. Residents who share their homes serve as ambassadors for visitors, limiting the potential for negative impacts on neighbors.
 - b. Examples:
 1. [Santa Monica, CA](#)
 2. [Golden, CO](#)
 3. [Crested Butte, CO](#)

- 3. Place a cap on the total number of VR permits allowed in the county.** Start by setting the limit at the level of total permits that are *compliant and active* on 3/13/2020 (the two-year anniversary of the implementation date for the last revision to VR permits). Also set caps for UGA's, LAMIRD's, and possibly neighborhoods or census tracts.
 - a. Advantages:
 1. Assures that vacation rentals will not become a dominant use of residential properties.
 2. Limits the scale and rate of change.
 3. If implemented at a neighborhood scale, enables neighborhoods to re-gain a predominance of homes that are occupied year-round.
 - b. Examples:
 1. [Manzanita, OR](#)
 2. [Austin, TX](#)
 3. [St. Augustine Beach, FL](#)

- 4. Limit the location of future vacation rentals based on distance from one another.** For example, no VR may be located within 1,500 feet of the property line of a parcel with an existing VR.
 - a. Advantages:
 1. Enables neighborhoods to retain a majority of residences as owner-occupied or year-round rentals.
 2. Reduces the drain on community resources that results from the concentration of VR's in close proximity.
 3. Ensures/Protects a sense of rural community, in which people know who is living nearby.

- b. Examples:
 - 1. [Santa Monica, CA](#)
 - 2. [Austin, TX](#)
 - 3. [San Antonio, TX](#)

- 5. Align the occupancy allowed for Vacation Rentals with that for B & B Residences, and include sign-off by homeowners' associations, water-user associations, and road associations on application.**
 - a. Advantages:
 - 1. Prevents VR's from occupancy that is in excess of allowed septic-system design.
 - 2. Levels the playing field between VR's and B & B's.
 - 3. Reduces the chance that the county will issue a VR permit for a property where private CC&R's prohibit that use.

- 6. Revoke Permits upon Violations (3-strikes rule) – Owners who operate without a license, or who fail to address two or more neighborhood complaints in a timely manner pay a fine, and, after three violations, lose their license. They are not allowed to re-apply for another license for three years.**
 - a. Advantages:
 - 1. Removes bad actors, which in turn reduces the negative impacts of VR's.
 - 2. Levels the playing field.
 - 3. When paired with the business licenses (instead of land-use permits), reduces the County's costs for dealing with violators, since revoking a business license is not as cumbersome as revoking a land-use permit.
 - b. Examples:
 - 1. [Sonoma County, CA](#)
 - 2. [Palm Springs, CA \(see hotline info\)](#)
 - 3. [Savannah, GA](#)

- 7. Publish list of local contacts for each VR permit**
 - a. Advantages:
 - 1. Increases transparency and allows for neighbors to present concerns directly to the appropriate party.
 - 2. May reduce the frequency of neighbors relying on the sheriff to address concerns.
 - b. Example:
 - 1. [Palm Springs, GA good neighbor brochure & hotline](#)

8. Require each VR to have a water meter and to provide data to county on usage.

a. Advantages:

1. Provides data for our collective effort to better steward a limited water supply.

b. Examples:

1. [Fremont County, ID](#)

Recognizing that the Council and county staff have many demands on their time, we stand ready to help. We would be pleased to participate in a work session to provide information on sample regulations from other communities, or to otherwise collaborate with the county in order to address this issue as swiftly as possible.

Finally, we ask that you immediately place a moratorium on new vacation-rental permits. As of the date of this letter, 1,853 people have signed the petition on change.org in support of an immediate moratorium. We believe this move is necessary to prevent the proliferation of vacation rentals while the county considers revising its regulatory structure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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