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From: Trini Leslie <trinilesie@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 9:35 PM
To: Council Public Comment; Lynda Guernsey
Cc: Susan York
Subject: SJPC Vacation rental permit discussion

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Dear SJPC,

I'm writing regarding the county vacation rental permit discussion. I've worked professionally as a property manager for 28 years now managing both long term apartment rental buildings and short term vacation rental companies. I've also privately owned my own investment properties. Since I won't have any pension and not much in the way of retirement savings, my long term goal is to retire on San Juan Island and manage my own vacation rental properties as a form of retirement income. I'm also writing on behalf of Susan York, a Friday Harbor resident and vacation rental owner who has similar plans.

Currently, I have a home on Tarte Road in the Roche Harbor area that I rent as a vacation rental. It's my goal to keep this as a rental, buy another home and move to the island when I'm closer to retirement. My home is managed by Susan York who is a local Friday Harbor resident. Susan also owns her own vacation rental on San Juan Island, and has rented out two homes concurrently as vacation rentals in the past - which brings me to Item 5. of Adam Zack's memo.

In Mr. Zack's memo, it is recommended that San Juan residents be disallowed from operating more than one vacation rental and emphatically states "Two or more properties are obviously being used as investment properties by remote landlords." Susan is a local resident who has owned more than one vacation rental concurrently, and is not a remote landlord. While she currently owns one, she may wish to secure another before she retires to supplement her income. To limit one vacation rental per resident, would negatively impact her livelihood both now and her plans for future retirement. She simply can't afford to turn her vacation rentals into long term rentals.

No one wants big corporate interests buying up plots of land and properties to turn into vacation rentals. However, there is a simple remedy. By verifying that the owner of the property is an individual and not a corporation, the county can avoid this. The county is always going to have people coming from elsewhere. The economy on the islands is such that people don't live here their entire lives and retire. Retirees come from elsewhere and by limiting the number of investment properties one individual can own either remotely or locally has the potential to eviscerate an entire population. Like me, many vacation rental homeowners have purchased island homes for retirement and they need the income of renting out their property to afford that, but the ultimate goal is to be a full-time resident of the islands.

I also understand the county's desire to create more affordable housing, but there are better and more effective ways than stifling tourism and threatening the local economy. Limiting vacation rentals doesn't necessarily mean those homes magically become long term rentals. The local rental market on the islands doesn't command the monthly rents that would be required for a home that costs upwards of \$500k. As a landlord, it's just not monetarily feasible for me to have a long term rental here. It'd have to charge at least \$2500 a month rent on my small two bedroom home to make ends meet which would be extremely unlikely given rental prices on the island and not at all tenable. Without a vacation rental permit, I would be forced to sell and would most likely have to buy in another county that was vacation rental friendly. And, my small \$500k 2 bedroom Friday Harbor home would probably sell to a wealthy individual that was looking for part-time residence on the island as it's not well suited for a family nor is it particularly affordable.

A minimum wage worker needs to be able to find something that's deeply affordable such as a low income affordable/subsidized housing community. Limiting vacation rental permits on a half million to million dollar homes won't address that need. For example, the homes in the new housing construction project on Finnegan Road in Friday Harbor have been on the market for months now. (https://www.coldwellbankerbain.com/p/589-Finnegan-Way-Friday-Harbor-WA-98250/dmgid_141051447) These are two bedroom homes that are priced in the low \$300k range and have been sitting

empty. Is this the kind of affordable housing the county is trying to create by limiting vacation rentals? If so, it exists and several of these homes have been available for months now in a very competitive housing market.

The other point I'd make is most vacation rentals usually employ one to two people if not more. I pay \$35 per hour for cleaning and \$65 per hour for handiwork. \$30-\$35 seems to be the going rate on the islands for cleaning independently managed vacation rentals. Resorts and hotels by comparison pay their service people close to minimum wage. For each vacation rental the county chooses to limit, someone's livelihood is impacted. Hot tub service companies, gardeners, cleaners, handymen, property management companies and more make their livings from short term home rentals. It's an entire vacation rental industry that would be affected, not just tourism and local businesses.

There are things I absolutely do agree with in Mr. Zack's memo though. From my 15 years working with a vacation rental company located in Sonoma County, California, I can attest that disallowing parties and planned events is an excellent idea and one that works to help abate noise and disturbances. I wholeheartedly support item 9 as well as item 10 banning the use of RV's, tents and temporary shelters. Sonoma County implemented both measures and both were positively received by vacation rental owners and neighbors alike.

Sonoma County also enacted a cap on the number of daytime and nighttime guests on a property irregardless of the property size. This also was very effective in curbing noise and disturbances. I've included an excerpt of their ordinance below:

The maximum number of total guests and visitors allowed at any time in a single **vacation rental** shall not exceed the maximum overnight occupancy plus six (6) additional persons per property during the **daytime**, or eighteen (18) persons, whichever is less, excluding children under three (3) years of age.

Finally, I would just like to remind the county that we're still in a pandemic where many of our local businesses and individuals are struggling to survive. Now may not be the most prudent time to make sweeping changes to an industry that the islands rely on and will only help them to recover.

Sincerely,

Trini Leslie and Susan York

