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From: Bob Connor <connor@centurytel.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 11:32 AM
To: San Juan County Council
Subject: Letter in FAVOR of vacation rentals

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This letter is to voice our **strong support** for vacation rental houses in San Juan County. We are 46-year fulltime residents of Orcas Island; and we have been hosting visitors since 1990. Renting out our guest house has always been an important source of income for us, and now post retirement from all our other businesses over the 46 years of living here, now it is our primary source of income. To now have the Council threaten that income is frightening. The very loud *minority* complaining about lovely vacation rentals which along with inns, hotels, B&Bs, etc. bring into the islands the majority of the revenue, taxes, income for ALL businesses and activities, guests on our island enjoying and preserving the peaceful Nature of the islands, (NOT here to party), have just not looked at the whole picture. Maybe they just haven't lived here long enough.

I for one, have never understood on what facts all their complaining is actually based. These visitors, aside from the "tourist dollars" they spend here, appreciate our islands, and are rejuvenated by their time here. Their visits validate our decision to live here ourselves. All the more so during this on-going pandemic, when for them to just get away for a few days to our beautiful, clean, protected, safe, lovely islands, is like heaven. These people stay only a couple of days, and then they leave. You know well the numbers of permits not being used, and the relatively few in number vacation rental permits that are actually active. How many private residential houses are there in San Juan County? Either occupied fulltime or only part-time? I would think that the small number of vacation rental permits is but a drop in the bucket compared to the non-vacation rental houses!

Severely limiting or actually doing away with vacation rental houses would in NO WAY help the affordable housing situation. Vacation rental houses are for the most part expensive buildings on expensive land and would never be rented at anywhere near an "affordable" price. In Deer Harbor, the Plan included a very generous density bonus to landowners who put some of their land into affordable housing. No one has chosen to take advantage of this bonus by providing affordable housing on their land! That ought to tell you something! Vacation rental owners do not WANT to be in the landlord business. We want to be in the host business, dealing with happy, relaxed vacationers, who love our way of life, care for it, treasure it, and want to return again and again to our paradise, where we are fortunate enough to actually live in forever!

With the latest round of rules and regulations put on just this one segment of the San Juan County businesses, vacation rentals are NOT a negative element, and I do not believe that singling them out for oppressive and even more restrictive regulations is fair, nor perhaps even legal. Banning vacation rentals or severely limiting them is hugely detrimental to the island economy. The most appalling concept being touted about currently is to not allow the permits to run with the land. We have been paying extra taxes to have a vacation rental for years, and some people bought their property because it did allow a vacation rental. The extra income from renting allows some people to own property here. Stealing market value from legally permitted property is a slippery slope down which I would think the Council would not want to travel.

Please listen to the myriad of voices in FAVOR of vacation rentals. This low impact, gracious method of sharing our island with others should be encouraged not condemned. The numerous regulations already in place ensure that **lovely vacation rental houses are an asset to San Juan County and should be treated as such.**

Sincerely,
Meg and Bob Connor
Deer Harbor fulltime residents since 1975, vacation rental owners since 1990

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