

## Erika Shook

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**From:** Anders <acgoranson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 17, 2021 4:38 PM  
**To:** Council Public Comment  
**Subject:** Vacation rental moratorium

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**Council Members,**

**Thank you for taking the time to listen. First of all, we share, understand, and agree with many of the concerns raised about affordable housing and appropriate land use but do not see the moratorium as making a positive impact on those issues nor do we see any objective data to support it.**

**We want to remind the council that nearly everyone came here first as a visitor. Our family first visited the island in the late 1950s when my dad stayed at Beach Haven as a child. Throughout my childhood we continued that tradition and eventually my parents bought land near West Beach in the 1990s and built a home.**

**My wife, children, and I spent many summers and winters visiting the island to spend time with family that live here. As our families and careers developed (we both work as front line healthcare providers), we started looking for a home that would eventually be where we would retire ourselves. As we looked, we witnessed the prices skyrocketing. A home we had considered went from \$600k to over a million. We did some simple math, if we didn't buy now, we wouldn't be able to in the future.**

**We bought a home with the plan to rent when we are not using it. In 15 years, when we could retire, we planned on living there full time. Short-term rentals would allow us to afford buying here and being close to my aging parents as well as build and maintain the long-term relationships we have in the community.**

**During the pandemic, I lived and worked here full time. I grew closer to my community and to my neighbors. My children got to spend invaluable time building memories with their grandparents and developing connections in the community. We respect the island and share in the same values of this community—be it organizing a shared work crew to maintain our road or helping a neighbor with a fallen tree. We have had a relationship with this island our entire lives and care as much as anyone about this special place.**

**When we bought our home, we worked with our neighbors in how to collaboratively and inclusively make a rental work that did not impinge on anyone's enjoyment of the island. We got involved in supporting community non-profits and in contributing to our community. My 14 yo son alone raised \$23k for a local Orcas charity this last summer. I'm turning wooden bowls to sell this summer to support a local non-profit. When we bought, we also paid nearly \$15k in land grant fees and affordable housing fees. Which we were glad to and reflect our community-minded values.**

**In reflecting on the moratorium, we are unconvinced that we could rent our home long term in this community. We must be honest, it is simply not financially within reach of the population struggling with affordable housing. Currently, 30% of homes here sit empty year round. Stopping permitting would only increase this percentage and do absolutely nothing to improve affordable housing and could negatively impact the average annual income of islanders (which is already below the state average).**

**In addition, we estimate we have put \$200k in the local economy (builders, taxes, real estate fees, house repair, housekeeping, fees) in the last 2 years. This continues with every housekeeper, repairman, landscaper, load picked up**

at Ace or Island hardware, and many services run by local people. That doesn't even take into account the substantial money our guests spend on groceries, dining, and at numerous local businesses.

We came here as visitors, like nearly all of you, and support reasonable restrictions on the number of permits as well as comprehensive enforcement of existing permits. However, a blanket shut down is not the way. It will cost the community economically and the debate, so far, has not addressed this nor brought objective data to support their claims. The idea that these homes would just be bought by people who will live here full time is an unproven hypothesis and does not reflect the reality of the 30% of vacant homes currently in the county. Also unrealistic is the idea that these homes would be rented at an affordable rate to year round residents. What we will be left with is more empty homes, owned by exceedingly wealthy people who occasionally visit, massively decreased economic input into the community, and the affordable housing issue (which predates the growth of Airbnb) will still persist.

Certainly there are costs to over tourism. Although it is the life blood that feeds much of our industry, overuse has significant costs to the quality of life and culture. I do not want this, nor do I see Orcas becoming Friday harbor or Ocean Shores. But addressing it in a binary way will also have significant costs economically to the community. I ask that the council closely examine the economic impact that they are risking if they address this in non-nuanced way. Most of us came here as visitors, fell in love, and grew a dream of living here. I know several council members for whom this is specifically true. Do not pull up the ladder now that you have realized your dream. That is certainly not in line with our values either. As the sign says at Doe Bay, "between the opposites lies the middle path." But let's chart that with facts and a sober evaluation of the benefits and costs of the choices in front of us.

Thank you,

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Sent from my iPhone