

Sophia Cassam

From: Cindy Wolf
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 7:12 AM
To: Ingrid Gabriel
Subject: Fwd: Vacation Rental Moratorium

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From: sybil@sybilmager.com <sybil@sybilmager.com>
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 6:45:36 AM
To: Christine Minney <christinem@sanjuanco.com>; Cindy Wolf <cindyw@sanjuanco.com>; Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>
Cc: San Juan County Council <councilvm@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Vacation Rental Moratorium

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Dear Council Members,

I'm disappointed in the rash decision made by the council to place an emergency moratorium on vacation rental permits applications. I'm even more taken back by some of the recommendations being made in the work plan and how these decisions impact one small faction while ignoring the detrimental effects on the county as a whole.

I am a former vacation rental business owner, former vacation rental owner, former island restaurant owner, former island retail owner, and active real estate professional that works across the county. My son is a third generation islander. I have permitted 3 of my personal residences in the past 18 years I've been on San Juan Island. Our family did this to rent our home out for 3 months of summer to assist with our mortgage payments. We were like many young families that had multiple hustles to make a life for ourself. We would not have been able to remain on the island without the ability to rent our homes. I am friends with, and have worked with many others like myself over the years – islanders trying to make it financially.

Additionally, our permitted vacation rental has given us a way to support our community. For years, we have offered our home to family members of FHHS graduating seniors, families coming up for local islander weddings, supplying housing to visiting Island Rec coaches, and offering stays to be auctioned at various island fundraisers. During Covid, we made our home available to a relocated caregiver working with the elderly in our community.

During the recession, we helped several people properly permit their homes so they could rent to offset the financial impact they had endured. It allowed many people to continue to afford their homes until they could get back on their feet. For many people today, they are in a similar financial crisis. This moratorium placed into effect without notice is certainly removing a possible solution to the livelihood of many islanders.

Vacation rentals are not a new issue. The County and public went through due process regarding changes to the vacation rental regulations in 2018. I believe we are just starting to see the effects of these changes. For example, more owners are now properly permitting their properties and code enforcement has a system in place to identify and handle non-permitted/compliant owners. As a former vacation rental owner, I feel the county is still working through some of its implementation from 2018, but feel that the systems in place have consistently been improving. An example of this is with submitting our annual compliance information.

It's clear from the comments that there are concerns in the Eastsound UGA and Deer Harbor. Would it not be beneficial to look at these areas rather than impacting the entire county? The Town of Friday Harbor has been able to simplify vacation rental in the town core – you must be in a commercial zone or its not allowed. If you are connected to TOFH water it is not allowed. Simple. Could this be a possibility for Eastsound or Deer Harbor? Homes in TOFH limits will never be vacation rentals and lend themselves better to the possibility of affordable housing. Additionally, as a real estate agent I'm aware of what HOA's are open to vacation rentals and which ones do not allow them. This makes is simple and clear what properties are appropriate for the clients I'm working with depending upon their wants and needs.

Please give consideration to the short sightedness that this moratorium has on our community. You are impacting many business including construction, restaurants, real estate, grocery, retail (and I'm sure I'm missing many others), in addition to tourism. It was explained to me by one councilmember that this moratorium had a "60 day shelf life", but this is clearly not the case. Reading Resolution 03-2021 it states in title the moratorium will be extended through January 13, 2022. Please consider how this will greatly compact the economic pain our community has already endured from the pandemic.

Again, please consider discontinuing this moratorium. Please make decisions that consider both sides of this issue and how all the communities in our county will be impacted.

Sincerely,

Sybil Mager
PO Box 2763
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
360-298-0627