

Erika Shook

From: James Nelson <bayside25@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 7:40 AM
To: San Juan County Council
Subject: Fwd: Vacation Rental Moratorium
Attachments: Vacation Rental Moratorium.pages

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Begin forwarded message:

From: James Nelson <bayside25@gmail.com>
Date: February 22, 2021 at 6:28:53 AM PST
To: councilpc@sanjuanco.com
Subject: Fwd: Vacation Rental Moratorium

Begin forwarded message:

From: James Nelson <bayside25@gmail.com>
Subject: Vacation Rental Moratorium
Date: February 21, 2021 at 10:12:22 PM PST
To: councilpc@sanjuanco.com
Cc: James Nelson <bayside25@gmail.com>

From:
Jim & Betsy Nelson
Bayside Cottages
65 Willis Lane
Olga, Wa. 98279
Ph 360-376-4330

February 21, 2021
Att: San Juan County Council
Cc: San Juan County Planning Commission, Erika Shook, Adam Zack, Mike Thomas County Manager
RE: Vacation Rental (VR) Moratorium

Dear San Juan County Council Members,

We are writing to join the many other members of our community who are expressing alarm at the approach that the Council is taking in regard to vacation rentals, our tourism industry and the many small businesses in San Juan County that tourism helps support.

We have made every effort to responsibly operate our vacation rental business on Orcas Island for over 35 years. It is the reason we were able to make our living here and stay on Orcas Island. We have invested a lot of work and money to slowly build our business. Our rentals are permitted as required and subject to Washington State inspections and taxes. We are very grateful for the economic opportunity that a vibrant and growing tourism industry has provided.

We don't understand why the Council would want to limit that economic opportunity for those who are striving to build a sustainable economic future so that they too can continue to afford to live here. Vacation rentals offer many people in the islands a path to supplementing the costs of property ownership with additional rental income.

Restricting those opportunities harms those who need to earn a living here and only serves to limit the supply of lodging options for our tourism based economy and encourages the new construction of much larger resort facilities. Vacation rental opportunities help provide an income for many local families.

The subject of vacation rentals was dealt with in public hearings in 2018 before the Covid-19 outbreak. Many small businesses have suffered greatly during the pandemic. Our vacation rental business was closed for six months last year. Many local small business people have been harmed and some have closed entirely. **Why would we now want to put additional restrictions and limit opportunities for people to earn their living through tourism which is a proven driver of incomes for local residents? Why do this when our economy is just starting to recover?**

There is an implicit assumption in further regulation of rentals that limiting or capping those opportunities will confer a benefit of more affordable housing on those who need it. Limiting vacation rentals will provide little, if any, additional affordable housing.

It is much more likely that further regulation will limit future economic opportunity for many islanders and the support that tourism provides to the County budget.

Why not take a positive approach to increasing affordable housing? Long standing San Juan County regulations which limit accessory dwelling units (ADU's) in rural areas to five acre properties that participate in an annual permit lottery have produced very little new affordable housing over the past 20 years. These regulations were a huge mistake and a missed opportunity for affordable rental housing.

Why not change the regulations to allow ADU's in all rural and residential areas subject to a limitation that newly permitted ADU's can only be offered for rent on a year around basis? This type of affordable housing incentive is clearly supported by the Growth Management Act.

ADU's are now commonly allowed in many jurisdictions that are dealing with housing problems.

Why do we continue to limit those opportunities here?

Why not do something positive to help reverse that trend?

We encourage the Council to drop the moratorium and the idea of further limiting tourism and economic opportunities in San Juan County by further restricting vacation rentals. Instead let's focus on what the County can do in a positive way to incentivize the construction of more affordable rental housing.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide public comment,

Jim & Betsy Nelson
Bayside Cottages
Orcas Island