

Adam Zack

From: Ingrid Gabriel
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 1:34 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: FW: Citizen Input County Council Mtg 7/12/21
Attachments: VR County Comment July 12.docx

-----Original Message-----

From: Cherie L.indholm Real Estate <orcasrentals@lindholm-realestate.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 11, 2021 6:52 PM
To: San Juan County Council <councilvm@sanjuanco.com>
Cc: IngridG@ <sanjuanco.com IngridG@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Citizen Input County Council Mtg 7/12/21

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Hello Clerk Ingrid,

Would you please confirm receipt of my attached letter for input to the County Council Meeting July 12, 2021?

Many thanks,

Karen J. Key Speck

For Citizen Input/Council Meeting July 12, 2021

July 12, 2021

Dear San Juan County Council,

I am not opposed to extending the Vacation Rental Moratorium IF the months during its extension are used purposefully. Purposefully in my opinion is if the County can apply funds to hire impartial studies to arrive at empirical data. If I can condense multiple issues to the two that I believe are truly at the heart of anti-vacation rentals, I believe you should be studying:

- 1) Do vacation rentals truly impact all neighborhoods on all islands?
I suspect the answer is NO.

However, there probably are a handful of vacation rentals which are not managed well, where guests are not educated to island courtesies and island-way of life, and if we have “problem” houses...fix THOSE. Perhaps this issue doesn't even need a fancy and expensive study. Simply, educate the islands of the 2018 regulations which mandate VR owners to:

- a) Post maps in the rentals showing property boundaries to avoid trespass
- b) Comply with quiet time to reduce noise intrusion
- c) Provide parking spaces appropriate to the number of bedrooms or guests
- d) Advise of neighborhood road- posted speed limits
- e) Post notices of burn bans (maybe make a law that VR cannot have outdoor firepits. Or if there are pits, they may not be used June-September. (However, does the County have data to prove that vacation rentals have caused any fires?)
- f) Remove trash at regular intervals and store waste in proper enclosed receptacles or indoors.

- g) Guests should be made aware of water conservation. (Does the Council have data that Vacation Rentals use more water than locals?) As a property manager, I can tell when my renters on Eastsound Water are watering gardens, as I get an Eastsound Water Eye on Water alert. I've never received an alert at a VR house. Therefore, is some anti-vacation rental conversation that VRs use more water, more septic, more trash than locals, accurate? Every week I hear of locals who are excited about their visiting family who is coming, about the women's weekend retreat, about the birthday party gatherings, frisbee and soccer groups coming and other similar activities. Can we assume these locals and their guests have asked the visitors to not drink water, not shower, not flush toilets, not play outside and laugh, not drive to town for dinner so as to stay off island roads? I doubt it. I would ask the Council to be cautious about blaming VRs for taxing our resources, when we locals do it ourselves.
- h) Proper addressing of VRs. We have to be careful to not single out VR guests as being dumb, inconsiderate people. I have made a wrong turn in my travels and have turned around in someone's driveway. I bet you have too. But because displaying a VR's address prominently is one of the 2018 requirements... to avoid VR guests from making a wrong turn and ending up in the wrong driveway, perhaps address signs for VR homes could be required to be of a certain size and posted at the beginning of the driveway and then, prominently again physically on the house.
- i) VR owners or management must update their VR permit with the County annually with fire and safety, rules of conduct, septic inspections, and post an on-island contact in case there are problems. Maybe mandate that an annual notification be sent to neighbors reminding them of the 24-hour contact should a VR problem arise. No VR owner wants guests to

mistreat their house, nor abuse the neighbors, but VR owners also don't want persons reporting false infractions. Too often an anecdotal comment has turned out to be a local's personal family in residence rather than the noise, or trespassing children or pets belonging to vacation rental guests. Therefore, I think it is a fantastic idea for the County to hire a 24-hour Enforcement Officer who has the County list of Vacation Rentals in hand and the name of the contact and the address of the house and can promptly act impartially on any reports of bad behavior. This person should be trained, just as a good professional property manager is trained... to ask the right questions of the caller. Details, details, details. Often times by simply asking direct questions the Enforcement person can determine exactly what is being perceived as a guest violation...or does it turn out to be a non VR neighboring house?

The 9 points I have mentioned are already part of the RULES in place since 2018. Let's tidy them up a bit by implementing better enforcement before we ADD even more rules.

CAPS: If the purpose of CAPS is to prohibit no more Vacation Rentals than the number the islands currently have based upon the perception that "we are full up" now, I would ask how many of those VR permits issued since 1999 are INACTIVE? I think due to all the regulations and expenses emplaced upon VR owners, that their permit should run with the land. I know of several houses that earned a VR permit 15-20 years ago but those houses have been occupied by the owners or long-term renters for the last 10 or so years. Thus, if the County determines arbitrarily to say there cannot be more than 1,020 VR permits in all the islands, but in actuality only 651 are active/in compliance, it seems incorrect to not acknowledge

that a BIG number like 1020 permits is not a true picture of perceived VR impact. I think documenting INactives is very important. Thus, couldn't the County instead say that for every permit that is inactive, a potentially new one may take its place. I believe that if we project for a certain percentage of growth and build out, a similar percentage should be applied to growth in VRs - because through attrition, VR numbers are always changing. It is not correct to place a CAP and just hope that after 10-15 years, they will all "just go away". And, if you keep a set number CAPPED, it won't solve the perception of how many is too many. People who want none in their neighborhoods will never be content with CAPS as they simply want none. People who have a permit but are not currently renting as a VR may wish to reactivate their permit if life events change and they now wish to rent while they live abroad for a few years. People who wish to retire here and can't afford to buy 20 years down the road when real estate might even be higher, could buy now while they view a purchase "affordable" if they can subsidize by renting. Some people say, if you can't afford to buy, then you just can't buy....and don't expect to subsidize it by renting. But that mentality creates an even greater sociological and economic divide between the haves and have nots. Only the wealthiest of the wealthy will buy and live here. Whereas allowing a homeowner to rent allows middle-America type folks to be part of the Island-Community. And if you believe that limiting VRs limits over-tourism and lessens impacts on our resources, then shouldn't you also be limiting buildout, as people building who've held on to their raw land for many years will contribute to infrastructure stresses. Do you tell that property's owner that they are stuck with a piece of land which they may never build on, because if they do, they might just be the one person who sinks the islands from too much weight? I believe there must be

compromises to our perceptions of over-tourism, over development and who should be able to afford to live, work and rent here.

2. At the top I mentioned I thought there were TWO issues at the root of this VR discussion.

I believe the second is a perception of ...or a real lack of affordable housing. Does the County have a recent study with empirical data confirming there is a housing shortage? What is affordable housing? Only that which is in the \$500-800 per month range - yes for some persons. \$1000-1300 per month – yes for some families. Is it \$1400 to \$1800 per month? What is the benchmark that tells us when we have *enough* housing?

Think about the local laborer who shows up for work each day and is valuable to the employer, but is a year-round bad apple renter who physically trashes a rental house through disrespect for an owner's most valuable possession (a house); the laborer who shows up for the employer, but never cleans the house and destroys the structure through degradation; the valuable employee who leaves multiple dead cars, trailers and boats on a property so that the owner has to go through the grief of finding titles, filing lost titles, and junk vehicle paperwork, plus the tow fees. Isn't that valuable employee sometimes, also the person who is quite vocal about needing housing and complains they have been asked to vacate, but fails to tell the listener that they had 4 dogs and 3 cats that defecated in the house, leaving a stench that cannot be eradicated by soap and water alone.

So what data determines, accurately, when we have a housing shortage? Maybe the islands don't have enough blind,

ignorant and wealthy owners who are okay with overlooking the damage a handful of bad renters do to property so that they decide to keep investing thousands of dollars just to restore a property for the next disrespectful renter.

The Council must be careful to not create more rules and regulations when perhaps you haven't looked at all of the data and considered additional causations.

Respectfully,

Karen J. Key Speck
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