

Adam Zack

From: Lynda Guernsey
Sent: Wednesday, August 18, 2021 8:52 AM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: FW: San Juan County Planning Commission Aug 2021 letter
Attachments: San Juan County Planning Commission Aug 2021 letter.docx

Lynda Guernsey, Administrative Specialist II – Direct Line (360) 370-7579 SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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-----Original Message-----

From: Karen Speck <karen@lindholm-realestate.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 9:25 PM
To: vrcomments@sanjuancounty.com
Cc: Lynda Guernsey <LyndaG@sanjuanco.com>; Cindy Wolf <cindyw@sanjuanco.com>; Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>; Christine Minney <christinem@sanjuanco.com>; Ingrid Gabriel <ingridg@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: San Juan County Planning Commission Aug 2021 letter

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Hello All,

Please confirm receipt of the attached letter for public input for the Planning Commission meeting August 20, 2021.

Thank you,

Karen J. Key Speck
P.O. Box 884
Eastsound, WA 98245

San Juan County Planning Commission

Cc: San Juan County Council, Erika Shook; Director, Adam Zack; Planner

Re: Vacation Rental (VR) Moratorium, CAPS discussion

August 17, 2021

Dear Planning Commission Members,

The Commission is considering CAPS on the number of vacation rentals in San Juan County and I hope the validity of the current moratorium and into the future as the Comp Plan is in review. Clearly, you have and will receive much input from both sides of the VR vs Anti VR contingents. The Department of Community Development Staff Report of July 1, 2021 suggested the Planning Commission consider CAPS on VRs. I'd like to distill the "issue" down to what may be the two *main* components as to why the County is considering restrictions on VRs. Purportedly, A) VRs infringe upon the character of neighborhoods and B) VRs have reached a saturation point untenable to part of our island community with a subset of thought that VRs reduce long term housing opportunities.

- A) In 2018 the County adopted new vacation rental regulations that included requirements to address neighborhood nuisances. The Commissioners admit that the enforcement officer for regulating Vacation Rentals was redirected to other departments for other needs. The reason for this has never been explained. If through a \$160 annual permitting fee the County brings in over \$100,000 – (a generous salary for one or even reasonable wage for two employees), why cannot the County restore this position and fully give the 2018 regulations the chance to work?
- B) Other than hold public comment and presumably gather legal counsel on the legality of some of the proposals discussed by Staff and Public, what has the County done since the moratorium began January 2021? If the County is unwilling or unable to afford to fund professional, independent studies to gather data on the merits of CAPS, then what result can we expect CAPS to achieve? I suppose the proVR side should throw a bone to the antiVR side, and if the County is attempting to listen to all constituents, (rather than the loudest ones in any given month), then the County should consider CAPS, but doing so seems arbitrary, and possibly fraught with unintended consequences of costly law suits, less tax dollars to conduct County business and less money for the Million dollars plus the Lodging Tax produces in any given year benefitting nearly 30 different organizations.

And if the cohesiveness of a neighborhood is improved because the neighboring house is no longer a transient rental, that too will please some. But it will not please the islander who needs long term housing. A person who buys an island home either comes in with a lot of wherewithal and will never need to rent the house either for long or short term – and presumably elevates the haves versus the have nots in the County to an even higher level than current. Or the person buying isn't that wealthy and hoped to rent their home to offset their expenses until they could retire and move here full time. More often than not the mortgage will be higher than an "affordable house" for island workers. Not too many owners can afford to subsidize the difference between a going market rental rate and the rate they have to pay their banker. So, we return to square one. How do we assist our island work force with rental housing?

We rezone what little vacant land is still available. We open up greater densities than currently allowed. I love that we don't have cookie cutter neighborhoods on every block. That aesthetic is

what we all love about the islands. We cannot have our cake and eat it too. We cannot say we must hold the remaining open space for non- development and take it off the tax rolls, but also complain about a need for housing.

I have heard it rumored that the old Lavender Farm property on Orcas behind the FunHouse is being considered for rezoning. I hope that is true. I hope any Airport Overlay conflicts can also be mitigated. This eleven acre parcel is one of the last few bastions of hope we have in Eastsound to direct growth. It would be a perfect place to build multi-family housing, or yurt or tiny house neighborhoods, or seasonal housing reserved for only those who seek summer employment.

The County could enact an additional 1% tax on Vacation Rentals with that money going specifically into coffers to fund more middle to low-income housing.

The Planning Commission, the Eastsound Subarea Plan and the Growth Management Act must recognize wiggle room is required. Either our economy shrinks and our businesses reduce because there are not enough laborers due to not enough affordable housing and we islanders accept less services, less choice, less dining establishments, etc, or the islands (specifically Orcas) compromise. We cannot have it both ways.

Respectfully,

Karen J. Key Speck
P.O. Box 884
Eastsound, WA 98245