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From: Judith Scott <judithscott863@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 2:25 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Public Comment to SJC Planning Commission on CAPs on Vacation rental permits

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To: San Juan County Planning Commission

Re: Public Comment on Vacation Rental Code Amendment: Permit Cap

Dated: September 16, 2021

I am a full-time resident on Orcas Island. I am writing to strongly support the San Juan County Planning Commission's decision to recommend an ordinance to the San Juan County Council that implements both a county cap and island-by-island cap on the issuance of new permits for vacation rentals; such caps to be based on the number of active and compliant vacation permits as of July 31, 2021.

It's critical that the proposed ordinance take into account the fact that our county is already suffering the detrimental impact of too many short-term vacation rentals and that we cannot afford more.

I understand that as of July 31, 2021, the County data shows Orcas with 211 active and compliant vacation permits on file and 123 inactive vacation permits, resulting in 334 vacation permits overall. That means that Orcas residents could actually face an additional 123 vacation rentals converting from inactive status to active status, adding even more stress on the island's resources and neighborhoods than we currently experience. I understand we may be stuck with that eventuality due to the current design of the vacation rental system. But at the very least, the County should set a cap on the issuance of **new** vacation permits on Orcas at the number 211. This limit would prevent our situation from deteriorating even further.

To open the gates to new permits in the future would seriously exacerbate the acute stress we've already observed on our islands' natural resources, housing stock for our working families, the intended nature of our residential neighborhoods and the adequacy of our island services.

I join with other community members of San Juan County in urging the Planning Commission to recommend to the San Juan Council the adoption of an ordinance with caps on new permits for each island set at the number of active and compliant permits as of July 31, 2021. Again, I wish to emphasize:

1. The proposed ordinance does NOT place a new burden or restriction on anyone who currently holds a vacation rental permit.
2. Current permit holders, whether they are in active or inactive status, will continue to be treated as they were under the old ordinance.
3. The 2018 ordinance already requires that a vacation permit issued after 2018 expires automatically (without the need for an enforcement hearing) if it is non-compliant. The county needs to effectuate that part of the 2018 law.
4. The proposed ordinance simply sets a limit on the number of NEW vacation rental permits to be granted in the future. (Unfortunately, that means we could still see a growth in active vacation rentals on our islands in the coming months and years, should people choose to activate an existing and compliant permit that they had previously left dormant. However, I understand that accommodation may be required under the existing legal framework.)
5. The significant change is that someone seeking a NEW vacation rental permit will have to wait until the number of active and compliant permits on their island and county-wide fall below the assigned CAP number. (The allocation of new permits at that time could be made according to the applicant's priority in line, by lottery, or by some other neutral system.)
6. The cap for the number of active and compliant permits should be set as of July 31, 2021, which reflects the reality of our current situation and addresses the harmful impact we are already experiencing. It makes no sense to set the marker at a future date when the situation is even worse.

In conclusion, I urge the Planning Commission to move forward on this recommendation as expeditiously as possible . Should someday in the future our

community conclude that the finite resources of our islands can -- or cannot --- withstand more vacation rentals than allowed under these caps, the County Council will be free to adjust them. But without these proposed caps in place as soon as possible, the damage will be irreversible. The very nature of our beautiful islands is at stake.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Judy Scott
Olga, WA