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Sent: Thursday, October 14, 2021 11:15 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Caps on vacation rentals

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Dear Council Members and Planning Commissioners of San Juan County,

Thank you for listening to concerns about the future of our Islands and the spectrum of issues regarding capping the amount of allotted vacation rental permits in San Juan County. It is clear you are dealing with what my late Grandmother would refer to as a “sticky wicket”. I may be the lone V.R. owner that is in support of the original caps the Planning Commission decided to go with during the August planning session.

As a generational Islander who is raising a 6th generation son here on San Juan Island, I implore you to hear the cries of fellow islanders that are feeling the pain of over tourism and the proliferation of vacation rentals in San Juan County. I often find myself in a crisis of conscience being someone that is dependent on tourism for my livelihood, but has seen over the last 18 years of being an innkeeper, a dramatic shift towards just downright ruining the future of community, sustainable living, and the ability to have an economically diverse population.

We haven't totally ruined it and exploited the islands past the point of no return, yet, but without bold action, that is what will happen as we've seen in so many other locations that have a dependence on tourism, and with the Airbnb phenomenon, we have become a commodity. As all of us who sincerely love our home, we realize this is a FINITE commodity. It makes me feel hopeless feelings knowing that the almighty dollar typically wins and we are squeezing out any semblance of the island life we all love, the things aside from the geography that make living here great.

Without sensible regulation, this vacuum will continue in full force. Why wouldn't it? I was just messaging with a V.R. owner on Orcas who is in very strong support of no capping at all of vacation rentals. She told me that she has almost broke even after opening her Airbnb in 2015. In 6 years, you can outright own a beautiful home with a guest house on Orcas Island if you rent your property on Airbnb! I truly feel for Orcas Islanders, I watched as Airbnb exploded all over their Island, Eastsound especially. Can you imagine if the separately incorporated, Town of Friday Harbor, with the ferry docking in the main village, didn't already have rules about vacation rentals in place? The rule makers at the time weren't time travelers that could foresee the impact of, let's call it what it really is, the MASSIVE corporation Airbnb (now the worlds largest hotelier), they recognized that outside of the areas designated as business, one could not have a vacation rental in residentially zoned areas, because they are businesses.

We own three adjacent tax parcels on the edge of Friday Harbor that total one acre, they are historically commercial and are zoned RGU. We built a 5 room Inn on one parcel, that I'd like to quote Lopez Islander, Nathan Donnelly, who called into the August planning commission comment time, and say it was a true “Hail Mary” in every aspect from building it on a budget with a handful of talented friends and family, to walking the gauntlet of getting a BnB permit on SJI with the planning department in 2004, and the \$10k plus I put in to permit and attorney fees. On the adjacent lot, I obtained a vacation rental permit for an existing cabin built in 1980, and that was a cheap and easy process.

I have been following this process, listening in and writing when I can. I read a lot of murmurs and threats of litigation and illegality. I'm certain that the high percentile of people writing in opposition of caps are VR owners or involved in managing or selling real estate. I can totally relate, I had a file of non permitted rentals with screen shots and years of

reviews etc. I was mad, I had done everything right and no one on the county level wanted to protect my business and implement regulations. I certainly shouldn't be the one to rat on people? I wanted to sue your pants off, too! But, alas, here we are in a sticky wicket, myself and a whole lot of islanders hope that you can do what will be best for the future of the islands, and implement caps based on the August 2021 unanimous decision from the planning department.

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