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From: Carolyn McGown <carolyn@islandfields.com>
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To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: VR Comment

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Hi,

I'm a former VR owner/operator and although I no longer have a financial "stake" in this conversation, as a full time SJCo resident, I want to comment.

I find it irresponsible of the council to *again* vote to *re-extend* the moratorium after having not done a single study during the original moratorium + extension, as promised. The VR community has continually asked for numbers to back up anti-VR rhetoric and this has not been provided. In the meantime, hardworking residents HAVE provided well-researched and easily corroborated statistics that seem to be ignored because they don't play into the favored narrative.

I agree that our infrastructure and environment can't keep up with current visitorship and that there is a shortage of affordable, long term housing. But it's a complex situation and it's extremely one-dimensional and short sighted to pin most of the blame on VR's when the Visitors Bureau doesn't have a comprehensive plan to deal with visitorship, (nor does the county have a plan to deal with lack of living wages, that would allow people to pay more for rent). Somehow, when the spotlight shifts to the Visitors Bureau, the narrative shifts to how important tourism is to the local economy.

I think the county should be more focused on raising the local minimum wage, zoning reform (allowing more density and ADU's), increasing taxes on expensive, underused land and using the increased revenue to subsidize low cost housing.

VR's provide working income for local families (it's how our family of four has been able to make a go of it here after the marine business we brought here failed). I know of several households who live much "closer to the bone" than we do, who lost their VR's when the county did a big regulations sweep of VR's a few years ago and to this day they are struggling to make ends meet because they lost their VR's. They are seniors and families. That sweep mostly hurt low income locals and only solidified the stake of the "haves". I'm not against regulations and oversight but I give this as an example of the unintended negative consequences that can result from a one-dimensional point of view.

As far as who occupies VR's; I frequently rented to relatives and friends of locals for weddings and family reunions. I didn't have a single "problem renter", nor a single complaint from a neighbor and the sheriff was only called (and it happened several times) when we had problems from the long term renters on the property behind us (fights, screaming, threatening behavior).

And let's not forget how and why VR's developed and began to thrive. They're an affordable option for families who can't pay for two hotels rooms and every meal out, when on vacation. In my family's case, a child with a behavioral disorder prevented hotel stays and VR's allowed us to vacation, period. And of course, they bring great value to a tourist economy.

Please provide some relevant statistics (or admit that you can't) and as importantly, suggestions for a pro-active, inclusive, big picture solution that addresses more than one small facet of the problems we're facing as a community. Clamping down on VR's is not going to bring back affordable long term rental housing to the islands.

Sincerely,
Carolyn McGown