Sophia Cassam

From: Alexandra Gayek <gayek07@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2021 12:53 AM
To: Sophia Cassam; Cindy Wolf; Christine Minney; Jamie Stephens
Subject: Letters on 2021 Docket Requests
Attachments: Docket Request 8 to County Council.pdf; Docket Request 1 to County Council.pdf; Docket Request 3 to County Council.pdf

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Hello Sophia,

Thank you for all your work on the 2021 Docket Requests, including your presentations to the Planning Commission and tomorrow to the County Council.

Attached please find three letters, addressing three different docket requests: #8, #1, and #3.
Thank you so much!

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek

2021 Docket Request 1, Composting on Agricultural Resource Lands

Dear Council Members Wolf, Stephens, and Minney,

I think our small island farmers should be able to create compost on their land, advertise for other islanders to contribute compostable yard waste that would otherwise go to the dump or be burned, and sell the resulting compost to other islanders.

As Mr. Bennett states in his Docket Request, healthy soil is fundamental to healthy ecosystems, healthy farms and gardens, and is a huge carbon sink. Farmers can also benefit from the additional income stream, islanders could support their neighbors, and new jobs could result. I love that islanders want to create this kind of thing themselves and not rely on county government to do it for us.

But I do not agree that this Docket Request should be passed as is, because simply adding "Commercial Composting" to allowable uses of Ag Resource land would allow our precious agricultural resource land needed to grow food to be converted into huge industrial composting operations.

We need limits to what is allowed.

I would favor Ag Resource zoning to allow very small scale organic composting operations, restricted so that they result in:

-no new impervious surfaces (roads, parking areas, roofs, etc)
-no loss of land available for cultivation of plants and other agricultural use
-no shipping of compost off of the island where it is created
-limits to the numbers of trucks coming and going, and to the hours of operation
-limit to the amount (not percentage) of a parcel that could be devoted to creating compost as opposed to growing food for islanders.

This would be an important contribution to regenerative, self-sustaining islands.

Thank you for your consideration.

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek
Orcas Island

2021 Docket Request 3, Land Capacity Analysis

Dear County Council Members Wolf, Minney, and Stephens,

There is enormous anger and desperation on the part of the thousands of frustrated islanders who are watching our ocean, forests, meadows, shorelines, rural communities, and the open spaces in our towns be eaten away, parcel by parcel, tree by tree, and replaced by new and wider roads and parking areas and lawns, and more and more buildings, more and more boat and air traffic. Our peaceful neighborhoods and surrounding waters and skies are filled with more and more traffic, tourists, tourist attractions, and noise.

We want the county to adopt limits to growth in the form of restictions on development so that our islands don't become even more than they already are like "paradise paved over for a parking lot."

We don't want those restrictions to be limited to the minimum requirements of the GMA.

But many islanders feel county staff don't seem to understand this.

Meanwhile, county staff look at Joe Symons's annual pleas to at the very least be forthright in the comprehensive plan about what is possible with development on our islands as market forces appear to be the only thing guiding development, with frustrations of their own.

"But we've already done a Land Capacity Analysis!"

"But 2019 statistics show county population isn't growing much."

"But building permit applications are about the same number they were last year."

"Joe Symons' number of 132,000 future islanders at maximum buildout is just a scare tactic."

These are all statements I have heard in public meetings from county staff in response to Joe Symons' annual docket requests. It would seem that to staff those same islanders just don't see the reality, don't appreciate what county staff have done, and are only reacting based on fear.

Where is the disconnect?

It seems the county staff are trying to meet the strict requirements of the GMA, while taking into account the fact that we aren't starting from a blank slate. We're starting from a situation in which half a century ago, land division and development popped up all over the county in ways that don't match current rules.

County staff are also under huge pressure to not only do more tasks than they can accomplish with their budget and number of employees, but also to respond to pressure from those who clamor for growth and development.

Staff also feel pressure to justify their positions with statistics and existing laws.

But we islanders can see that statistics always lag behind what we can see with our own eyes happening around us. We want forward thinking *prevention* of problems before they become entrenched, not

responses that can't be implemented because it's too late or too expensive.

We see that every existing law that attempts to control environmental destruction is routinely disregarded by people all around us, and that there are inadequate county staff to enforce the laws, and inadequate will to reinforce the spirit of the laws without strong, clear, unified support and guidance in that direction from County Council.

We see that federal, state, and county laws are written with the assumption that growth is an unquestionable goal, that economic growth is more important than the lives of human beings and all other forms of life, that the earth is an infinite natural resource that should be used without limitation for the pleasure and profit of humans, that humans are the supreme life form, and technology can surely solve any problem.

We see that these assumptions have created a way of life that is completely unsustainable on a planetary scale, and very visibly on our small islands.

We see clearly that we do not have enough water or power generation or waste management infrastructure or an adequate stormwater management system to support the existing population of residents plus tourists with the accompanying level of development, much less a growing population with growing development.

We see that our lifestyle has killed off the salmon, the whales, the toads and native frogs, and countless other species that once created the biodiversity on land and in the oceans necessary to sustain a livable planet, and we are now experiencing the beginning of an unlivable planet.

More studies are not needed to justify a massive change in the way we approach development.

We need to reach far beyond the minimum requirements of the GMA.

We need to find a way to balance past development that is denser than currently allowed with future development LESS dense than currently allowed.

Let's start with a moratorium on new development and divert county staff resources from processing building permits to doing the kind of tight land and water and power use planning we actually need to create a regenerative economy and regenerative land use, and begin to restore the ecosystems we have destroyed.

Fulfilling the Stormwater Management Docket Request and doing the assessment requested by Joe Symons in his Land Capacity Analysis Docket Request are good next steps.

Thank you for being brave enough to face the opposition of those who prefer short term gains for the few at the expense of both short and long term protection for the many, creative enough to find new ways of managing development, and doing what is smart and necessary for the future of our islands even if not politically popular in the moment.

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek
Orcas Island

2021 Docket Request 8, Stormwater Management

Dear County Council Members Stephens, Minney, and Wolf,

I am grateful that the Planning Commission has approved and Environmental Stewardship staff are already planning to begin implementation of the Stormwater Management Docket Request I submitted.

I am writing to thank the County Council in advance for also supporting it.

I would like to highlight three aspects of this docket request:

1) That changes need to be made not only in the storm and surface water sections of the comp plan and county code, but also **Code section 18.60.050 Density, dimension, and open space requirements.**
2) That the regulations must take into account the actual nature of development—that not only newly developed parcels, but gradual development over time, both permitted and unpermitted, on already developed parcels, is impacting surface and stormwater, and aquifer recharge. Therefore, the changes must apply to existing as well as new development.
3) That human behavior other than development is impacting our ground, surface, and stormwater as it reaches streams, lakes, and ocean. This behavior, such as use of pesticides and other pollutants, must be regulated in order to protect the ecosystems on which we depend.

Thank you for your consideration.

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek
Orcas Island