



SAN JUAN COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MEMO

REPORT DATE: September 28, 2021

TO: San Juan County Council

FROM: Sophia Cassam, Planner I

SUBJECT: 2021 Annual Docket Public Hearing
Public Comments

HEARING: September 28, 2021

ATTACHMENTS: Public Comments on Docket Request 21-0003 (Build-Out Analysis)

PURPOSE: Transmittal of written public comments on the 2021 Docket for the September 28, 2021 County Council public hearing.

Sophia Cassam

From: Robb Eagle <peterrobbeagle@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 3:25 PM
To: Sophia Cassam
Subject: Docket Request 21-0003

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I urge the County Council to put Docket 21-0003 on the work plan for DCD as part of the process for completing the Comprehensive Plan update.

Robb Eagle
Orcas

Sent from my iPad

Sophia Cassam

From: jbeeman haller-beeman.com <jbeeman@haller-beeman.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 3:42 PM
To: San Juan County Council; Sophia Cassam
Subject: Support for Docket 21-0003

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Dear County Council,

I would like to support the notion of a better, and public, San Juan County buildout plan. The islands are particularly finite when it comes to water, food supply, transportation, energy, garbage... support of all kinds. Given our ferry-based transportation system, all services are particularly susceptible to limits. The notion that the population could grow to 134,000 (plus visitors) is particularly unrealistic. I would strongly support a much lower number and also support a SJC-specific study of island carrying capacity. An impact study is, at the very least, required for further growth to avoid a "collapse of the commons." Please let me know if there is anything the residents of SJC can do to help make this study happen. After all, the islands are a microcosm of the world overall. If we all act for our own self-interest, we crash the planet. If we opt for reasonable management of the commons, we can all thrive, as long as we can accept limits to the consumption of resources and our own growth.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Beeman
76 Hawk Hill Lane
Orcas, WA 98245

Sophia Cassam

From: Heather Mitchell <heatherkmitchell@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 3:58 PM
To: Sophia Cassam
Subject: Docket Request 21-0003

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I urge the County Council to put Docket 21-0003 on the work plan for DCD as part of the process for completing the Comprehensive Plan update.

Thank you, Heather Mitchell
Lopez Island

Sophia Cassam

From: Jack Hart <jhart@lclark.edu>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 4:13 PM
To: Sophia Cassam

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Dear Council members and staff, we write in support of a build out analysis as part of the comprehensive plan, a balanced approach to assessing population growth and its impact on resources and transportation services such as roads and ferries. If anything the pandemic has sharpened the focus on the need for such an assessment by providing intimations of the potential for breakdown, lapsed services, and inadequate resources as we blunder into a future without adequate guidelines to take the measure of our growth and protect the precious environment we have come here to enjoy. Jack Hart and Dianne Kornberg, Orcas Island

Sophia Cassam

From: Kate Kimball <katekimball@peak.org>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 4:22 PM
To: Sophia Cassam
Cc: San Juan County Council
Subject: Docket Request 21-0003

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Members of the San Juan County Council:

I am writing to request that you put Docket 21-0003 on the work plan for DCD as part of the process for completing the Comprehensive Plan update.

This docket item is about the county doing a full built-out analysis. To be blunt: who cares? Isn't that some esoteric idea that is a lot of work for staff but has no practical effect? Why make this part of a Comprehensive Plan update?

We humans are amazing creatures but we have some weak spots. We are equipped with inspiring creativity and innovation, but we are often at a loss when it comes to managing the effects of our collective behavior over time. We have a habit of loving places to death and then being surprised by what we've done. I don't want that to happen to Orcas, but the pattern has been pretty well set already in other communities who faced the crush of too much love.

Modern land use planning has given us tools to take snapshots of the future and decide if that future is what we want for ourselves and those who come after us. The full build-out analysis, and an assessment of whether we have the resources to support that number of people, is the best lens we have for seeing where we are heading.

If we are so afraid of the future that we are already scared to look at it, then we are already in serious trouble. Blinding ourselves makes it all but certain that Orcas will stop being a place travel journalists celebrate. They will instead write eulogies asking what happened and why the people didn't stir themselves to protect it better.

Let us stir ourselves to look calmly into the future by gathering information this docket item would produce and then talk discuss what it means for our communities. We live here and the future is ours to mold. Far from being afraid, we could be excited by this opportunity to learn how to love well a county as special as this.

Thank you for your consideration of these views.

Kate Kimball
Olga, WA

Sophia Cassam

From: Heather Nicholson <heatherfold@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 4:59 PM
To: Sophia Cassam
Cc: San Juan County Council; Christine Minney; Jamie Stephens; Cindy Wolf
Subject: Support Docket Request 21-0003

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Sept 27, 2021

Attn: SJ County Council members.

There is serious concern among the public about the proceedings of Request 21-0003, and that it is not currently fully understood by decision makers.

I appreciate best efforts to date although, I request:

- Council to add Request 21-0003 to the current comp plan work program on Sept 28.
- Short of that happening, there must be an informative two way public discussion convened with the Sponsor (Joe Symons) and Council, before proceeding any further.
- Joe Symons to be invited to dialogue with Council in the Tuesday Sept 28 meeting, with ample time to assure the public that '03 is well understood. Until the public is confident with the process, people will not have confidence in decisions made. But more to the point, the public wants the County to simply run the potential full population buildout number and fully add 03 to DCD's work program in the current Update.
- Remedy technical malfunctions of public meetings prior to Sept 28. Citizens are unable to join or hear the meetings. Public meetings should not proceed if citizens don't have access and meetings are inaudible.

The main point of Docket Request 21-0003 is to:

- Count the number of residents that our land zoning can accommodate in SJC.
- Then do an impact analysis of that number.

This is referenced as a Buildout Analysis (BOA). It's reasonable and synchronous with expectations of the public, and the Growth Management Act

What seems to be going on, is County and Council are talking about alternative measures that don't actually meet the request. Clarifications have been submitted about this, but there's been no acknowledgment.

Count the number of residents that our land zoning can accommodate in SJC. That's the potential full buildout number. It's been shown it can be done in less than a day. And it's a standalone task, meaning programmatic changes don't need to occur to get this number calculated. People have been surprised to learn County hasn't already done this small task.

Then do an impact analysis of that number. Not of a 20, 30 or 50 year forecast, but of the buildout number, since that's the reality that's coming unless we change it. That number is likely to be close to the 134,000 that's been estimated. Meaning we are not going to be compliant with our comp plan, and the world of hurt we're already experiencing will be unbearable not only for humans, but ecosystems will collapse. People aren't okay with that outcome.

Request '03 details that our living conditions need to be what the comp plan Vision carefully spells out.

From the public's perspective, seeing blame placed on the Sponsor of '03 for not accepting measures that don't meet the request is worrisome. Council member Minney's outright rejection of '03 on Sept 14, is causing concern. People had a hard time understanding her statement and couldn't find the substance or justification in her conclusion. A great amount of citizens own time as been spent communicating with the County. In terms of what the public is due from it's government proceedings, it's not meeting an acceptable standard. More so, considering how critical '03 is, and that the public unequivocally wants it implemented. The public wants a better understanding of what's standing in the way, and to work through it together.

Joe Symons docket request goes back to when the comp plan was crafted by citizens committees, which Symons was part of. They were told they could talk about anything except density. But density is ground zero for growth planning. It's a point on a timeline that is unavoidable unless you know it exists and change it so it fits with your stated Vision.

Inconsistencies ensued and a group of citizens, including Symons, sued the county in the late 90's and won. It was demonstrated to the Growth Management Hearings Board:

- "that one-third to one-half of all CP [Comp Plan] designations were inconsistent with the official maps' allowable densities."
- "These inconsistencies, caused by the retention of 1980 densities, do not comply with the GMA."

A sufficient remedy did not take effect, which is why the Request continues. This is a core critical issue in SJC. A huge amount of citizens own time has been spent to prioritize 03. Daily, residents speak of worsening infringements on their quality of life in the form of noise, air traffic, road traffic, over-development, over-tourism, common courtesy & sense of community, and above all, the disregard and abjection of the natural environment. All of these are in direct conflict with our Comp Plan and it's Vision and goals. Enormous time was volunteered by citizens to craft these, with consensus. And it's the legal obligation of SJC to adhere to it.

An outpouring of urgent letters and testimony, all imploring to implement '03 has been submitted to County this year. 118 to date.

I request Council to add 21-0003 to the current comp plan work program on Sept 28.

Request 21-0003 includes:

- Calculate what the max legal density-assigned population is and make that number public.
- "work with local stakeholders to craft a true buildout/impact analysis process, involving professional consultants and a public engagement process that fully and honorably provides extensive opportunity to shape the process by which the analysis, its conclusions, and recommendations can be brought into alignment with the Vision Statement and **codified into law.**"
- "a comprehensive "truth in planning" component of the CP specifically geared to communicate in language understood by residents not formally trained in law or land use planning, and located right up front in the CP rather than buried in an Appendix." This is an executive summary of the "Build-Out Analysis" written in layman's terms.
- Internally consistent Comp Plan and a lived reality that matches it's Vision.

County has offered that it's Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) makes it unnecessary to calculate the buildout number and it's impacts, as being requested.

But Friends of San Juans submitted a letter, explaining that efforts to date do not address or contemplate the full buildout requested in '03, and describes flaws in the LCA.

The letter provides details of the following:

1. identify continuing flaws in the 2019 Land Capacity Analysis;
2. contrast the limitations of existing reviews with the scope of information requested by the build-out analysis;

3. request that the proposed analysis be conducted during the current Comprehensive Plan update.

https://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/View/23447/2021-07-07_2021-Docket_PUB_Friends-of-the-San-Juans_Support-Request-21-0003

Submitted July 7, 2021

Submitted with encouragement of working together through these obstacles.

Best Regards,

Heather Nicholson

Sophia Cassam

From: Juniper Lane Guest House <info@juniperlaneguesthouse.com>
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 7:45 PM
To: Comp Plan Update
Subject: Support Request 21-0003

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I urge the County Council to put Docket 21-0003 on the work plan for DCD as part of the process for completing the Comprehensive Plan update. Please distribute to all Council members.

As a generational Islander raising my young child on San Juan Island, I am concerned with future growth that is not sustainable. The Islands are a unique and fragile ecosystem that we must protect with everything we've got.

Juniper Maas Mercer
Innkeeper / Owner
info@juniperlaneguesthouse.com
www.juniperlaneguesthouse.com

#360-378-7761

Sophia Cassam

From: Jan Alderton <janetmalderton@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 8:59 AM
To: Comp Plan Update
Subject: Docket Request 21-0003 Follow the Science

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear County Councilors Minney, Stephens, and Wolf,

Recognizing that a problem exists is key to addressing the problem.

This is what Joe Symons' Docket Request 21-0003 is all about.

Until you, the ultimate deciders of our County's fate, decide to recognize that a problem exists and decide to quantify the parameters of the problem, no solutions are possible.

If you decide to continue on autopilot, we are headed to be like a Los Angeles suburb suffering from acute water shortages and transportation bottlenecks.

I am fortunate to live in these very special islands because science and logic actually are useful for solving problems. One of our graduate students at the University of California at Berkeley was interested in studying this molecule called mRNA. It is a real delicate creature that falls apart at the drop of a hat.

But Matthew Winkler persisted and found ways to stabilize mRNA so that scientists all over the world could study mRNA and make discoveries.

Matthew founded a company that marketed mRNA kits that scientists bought because they were useful tools that helped them learn more about the miracles of life.

Because my husband and I helped Matthew's biotech start-up, I am privileged to live here and have the resources to keep nudging you -to keep asking you to "follow the science".

Scientists who used Matthew's mRNA toolkits are part of the string of discoveries that have made the mRNA vaccines against covid-19 possible.

As I keep trying to tell you, science is powerful.

When you ignore the science, you land in all sorts of sticky places -such as global climate disruptions.

Please don't be like the fossil fuel companies who have said, "Nothing to see here. Just keep moving along burning our products."

Please recognize that buildout is a problem.

Land use planning is not new.
Tools exist to help make rational decisions.
Please use the available tools.

But the first step is to adopt Joe Symon's Docket Request 21-0003.

Please do this to save our unique islands for people and for nature.

Thank-you for listening to my pestering.

Your persistent scientist,

Janet Alderton

Deer Harbor
Orcas Island
The Salish Sea
Planet Earth -a place worth saving

Sophia Cassam

From: Jan Alderton <janetmalderton@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 2:41 PM
To: Comp Plan Update
Subject: Without information we are powerless to alter our fate

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To: San Juan County Council
From: Janet Alderton, Deer Harbor WA
Date: 24 September 2021
Re: Docket request 21-0003

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my thoughts regarding Docket 21-0003. As you know, “03” requests the county to add essential information to the Comprehensive Plan update currently in process.

Councilors Minnie and Stephens have so far avoided a meaningful discussion of why the public desires to understand the maximum buildout potential and its consequences in San Juan County. Councilor Wolf has been open to discussing her constituents’ concerns and I commend her.

My question is “Why will the full council not take the time to understand and publicly discuss this issue?”

I have heard that there is a fear that the county would be sued by disgruntled property owners if rational land-use re-zoning were implemented.

When I search for the question, “Is Downzoning legal?” the answer is:

“If the downzoning is rationally based, it will likely be upheld by the courts.”

Our county’s Vision Statement, that is required under the GMA, states:

“GOVERNANCE

We are self-governed by informed citizens. We are equally represented by elected officials who conduct the activities of government in an ethical, fair, impartial, responsive and open manner which recognizes the independent, self-reliant nature of its citizens. Our government institutions balance responsibility with resources and costs, consolidate services where practical, manage prudently, provide reliable data, are service-oriented, and perform in a timely manner.”

As our elected officials who make the ultimate decisions for our county, your citizens require you to:

“conduct the activities of government in an ethical, fair, impartial, responsive and open manner which recognizes the independent, self-reliant nature of its citizens.”

If you refuse to address the issue of ultimate buildout and instead blindly continue “business as usual” without considering the management of essentials, such as water availability and transportation to and within our islands, then you are violating basic tenets of the Growth Management Act.

You are not giving your constituents the opportunity to even consider if they wish to be locked into a fate with 130,000 year-round residents in our county. You are not giving them the opportunity to consider alternative pathways such as transfer of development rights.

When I expressed my concerns in the Orcasonian that blindly allowing development to proceed towards full buildout would destroy this place that I love, a thoughtful conservative resident, Phil Peterson, replied,

September 15, 2021

Ms. Alderton,

I didn't mean to imply that you had the answers only that you're approach has the potential to lead us to well reasoned answers that meet myriad stakeholder interests. I don't know where the 132,000 figure comes from but it's clearly light years beyond existing resource or infrastructure physical and cost constraints.

Current population I believe is 17,778 far too small to fund future planning for 132,000 so perhaps build-out beyond a sustainable target limit might be based on a (substantial) infrastructure impact development fee that would pay for additional imported or manufactured potable water, expansion of solid waste disposal transfer station / septic solids processing, electrical grid and transportation ferry or bridge build-out. Clearly such a fee would be cost prohibitive for all but the hyper-wealthy, but adding a component for public housing (support for OPAL development) might meet the need for affordable housing and the objectives for expansion imposed by whatever entity may be requiring change.

Alternatively retaining existing land use designations and reinforcing continuing open space, agricultural and forest use to maximum extent may further preservation of the natural / rural ambiance that most of us value and the hyper-wealth may be seeking.

Just thinking out loud here, many thoughts, many stakeholders to be considered in a reasoned approach."

I agree with Mr Peterson that we, the stakeholders, must be allowed to take a reasoned approach to the buildout question. Until you authorize that a buildout analysis be carried out, citizen concerns will persist. Without information we are powerless to alter our fate.

Janet Alderton
Orcas Island, WA

Sophia Cassam

From: Lisa Lawrence <lisanajuans@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 25, 2021 4:37 PM
To: Comp Plan Update; Christine Minney; Jamie Stephens; Cindy Wolf
Subject: comment on comp plan

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September 21, 2021

Re: Buildout analysis for SJ County

Dear San Juan County Council,

Now is the time for the County to conduct a buildout analysis. The County has the tools and technology to do this now where we didn't have the technology easily accessible during the initial GMA planning & implementation. Please move docket request 21-0003 forward.

We have a climate crisis, transportation problems (ferries, bicycle tours on narrow roads) and the community is suffering from an overabundance of tourists all of whom use our precious resources. And most importantly we need to protect our resources:

1. Water
2. Agriculture
3. Marine environment

Without in-depth study of these resources and how to manage them we are heading blind into the future for our unique island community.

We also have the latest census data that can feed into this important work. The County needs this analysis for the citizens and community leaders to have a sensible discussion about potential tools to reduce potential buildout as likely the numbers will result in something unsustainable for the island's ecosystems and sense of community.

Thank you for all your service to our amazing community.

Best regards,

Lisa Nash Lawrence

Landowner, farmer, fisher
531 Boyce Rd.
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Lisa Lawrence

lisanajuans@gmail.com