

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