

**Hosting on the Rock**, Vacation Rental Owner/Host Group  
Jan Scilipoti, 214 Military Road  
Lopez Island, WA 98261

March 29, 2022

San Juan County Council Members

Cc: David Williams, Sophia Cassam

**RE: Vacation Rental (VR) Moratorium & Caps**

Dear County Council Members,

Prior to the Council meeting on April 5 when you will discuss Vacation Rental (VR) caps again, the Hosting on the Rock leadership team would like to call your attention to a few concerns. Beyond the simple decision of whether or not Caps on VR permits will be imposed, we ask you to address other related issues during your discussion:

1. Our group supports caps, but the maximum number must allow some room for additional permits. Homeowners in this expensive county need to have the option of renting their homes if life circumstances change. We must address the increasing wealth disparity in San Juan County. If 'zero growth' of permits is intended, how do you justify the loss of income to island residents?
2. During the last Council meeting, David Williams mentioned that there are approximately 800 VR permits currently. Of these, what is the breakdown per island? If Council is going to set caps for each island, it seems pertinent to begin by knowing an accurate current number.
3. Furthermore, how many of these 800 permits are Active and how many are Inactive? Is there a differentiation between permits that are Active for 90 days in a year versus those that are Active for 300 days a year? We think there should be.
4. SJC has strict "Fair Regulations" in place, as of 2018. Many residents do not have an understanding of the regulations, or of how to notify permit holders when an issue is occurring. We ask that education regarding our existing regulations which address community concerns be stepped up. The regulations are working, and we need to get the word out.
5. How do you intend to distribute permits that might become available? A lottery system has been proven to be ineffective and is not a preferred system for permit applicants.
6. We have heard no current plan for improving enforcement of the 2018 regulations, both for permit holders and for those who run rentals without a permit. This seems to be a point that nearly ALL agree on: we must have effective, timely enforcement. We would like to recommend Granicus, <https://granicus.com/>, a platform specifically designed for governmental agencies.
7. The density of VRs in certain neighborhoods (such as Eastsound, Deer Harbor and the Highlands on Orcas) has been identified as a potential issue. On one hand these are the precise areas that have been identified in the Comprehensive Plan for higher residential density, yet some residents are complaining that there are too many VRs in these areas. What can be done to resolve these conflicts? A flat cap will do nothing to reduce density in

these neighborhoods. Furthermore it has yet to be determined: what percentage of VRs is too many? According to whom, and why?

Two methods used in other jurisdictions to address density: Santa Fe, NM has a ruling that new VRs must be at least 50' away from other VRs. Savannah, GA limits the percentage of VRs based on the number of housing units in each 'neighborhood'.

8. Will there be any exception made for residents who live on the same property as their VR? Specifically, will they be awarded permits even if the cap has been met? Many other jurisdictions allow owners to have VRs on their own property regardless of the cap.
9. **Finally, what are the effects of the Pandemic on the number of year-round residents on our islands?** We hear the number of homes being lived in year-round has greatly increased. How has this changed the percentage of homes used as VRs, the percentage of homes that are vacant, and the percentage of homes used by owners and year-round tenants?

***How can we in good conscious set caps (particularly strict, zero-growth caps such as those the Planning Commission recommended), when we do not know the current demographics of our existing housing?***

We appreciate your consideration of these points, and request that you address them in your Council discussions.

Jan Scilipoti, Lopez

Vicki Leimback, Orcas

Linda Bannerman, Orcas

Karen Key Speck, Orcas