

Sophia Cassam

From: Linda Bannerman <lindaj@teleport.com>
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 3:38 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: To council members and public record
Attachments: Early morning thoughts 4422.2pdf.pdf

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Please place in the public record and ask county members to read:

The greatest perk, among countless others, that comes from loving someone right now, just exactly as they are, instead of waiting for them to change, is that you get to love someone right now.

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San Juan County Council
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April 4, 2022

Dear Ms. Minnie, Ms. Wolf and Mr. Stephens,

Ms. Wolf and others have misunderstood our cry for data. We are insisting upon LOCAL, empirical data. While anecdotal data and emotional pleas are, as Doug Whittaker wisely reminded us, quite useful to draw council's attention to a perceived problem, lawmakers are then charged with the weighty and sober responsibility of gathering empirical data to quantify and substantiate those complaints and to determine the cost/benefit ratio of any considered policy to address those complaints.

Respectfully, what this council may be preparing to do is to pass policy in knee-jerk fashion, responding to the organized outcry from a very small percentage of our population who, in a closed group, have fired one another up by reading about harms of short term rentals in studies financed largely by the hotel industry. This group is politically active about many issues for which I very much admire and appreciate them. But council should take into account that this activist history has made them well practiced at alerting public officials to their concerns. They have long been using a greased process for doing just that. But that doesn't mean they represent the whole of council's constituents though their loudly repeated voices might make it seem so. I would suggest the vast majority of people whose lives they are about to affect may not even know this conversation is happening and may also not understand how their lives may one day be affected. So it is incumbent upon public policy makers to know. Policy makers must take the lives of the less vocal into consideration as well.

In this long period of the moratorium when such data about OUR county should have been collected, none has been.

- How many active and compliant VRs are there on each island? We don't really know because we don't even know our own definition of active.
- How many days out of the year do those active VR owners in San Jan County actually rent? We don't know.
- What will be the economic impact in San Juan County just now recovering from the pandemic and how will the potential pain such a policy will cause to those people compare to the perceived pain of disgruntled neighbors? We don't know.
- What might be the cost of potential litigation should a policy based upon arbitrary assumptions be enacted? We don't know.
- What has been the impact of enforcing the 2018 regulations? We don't know.
- What efforts have those experiencing "pain" made to use existing regulations to resolve conflicts without lowering the hammer on non-offending homeowners and stripping them of their right to use their property in legal ways? We only know that one or two have said they don't want to.
- How much relief to the affordable housing crisis would this policy bring? We don't know.

- How many of the increased numbers in our islands are actually tourists staying in VRs rather than new residents who now live here and their friends and relatives? How many are tourists using other accommodations? We don't know.
- How much and what kind of impact on our environmental resources can be attributed to guests who stay exclusively in VRs and how much relief will be gained by CAPPING VRs without also restricting hotels and visitors who stay with residents? We don't know.

The recent updates county has made about the actual number of "active" and compliant vacation rentals reveals the sky never was falling. To now enact a policy based upon reactive misinformation, a policy that could bring real harm to the less visible, is, frankly irresponsible. Perhaps even negligent. And I can't help but notice that at least two of our council members are beginning to get that.

Lift the moratorium. If the urge to set CAPs is still present, don't do it now. Instead, seek empirical information from an unbiased source about OUR county. Continue to aggressively enforce the 2018 regulations and inform our community about tools they have to address the pain of the few individuals we are hearing from. Keep all data about vacation rentals in San Juan County current and public. Commit to revisiting this issue in two years.

That's leadership.

Linda Bannerman
Orcas Island
Sea Forever Guest House