

Sophia Cassam

From: Yonatan Aldort <yonatanaldort@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 15, 2022 5:26 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Vacation rental cap
Attachments: Regarding San Juan County Vacation Rental Policy.docx

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Dear Councilmembers,

Attached is a letter pertaining to the issue of Vacation Rentals and local housing policy and stating my support for a cap on VRs in San Juan County.

Thank you for your time and work on this matter,
Yonatan Aldort
Orcas Island



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Regarding San Juan County Vacation Rental Policy May 15, 2022

Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing you to sincerely request that you take up the recommendations put forward by the Vacation Rental Work Group and others to cap Vacation Rental Permits in San Juan County at the number of active and compliant permits as of July 2021.

It is extremely frustrating to me that after years of sustained community outcry about this issue, we are still having many of the same conversations and repeating the same mistakes. Housing and tourism management have become banner issues in San Juan County, and both are inextricably linked. We need more housing and we need, frankly, fewer tourists. Our present rate of tourism has our county barely able to function, with housing-driven labor shortages that even reach into such critical areas as emergency services, county government, and education, not to mention our ever struggling ferry system.

It has been many years now since the growth of the tourism industry began to exceed sustainable levels and start doing measurable harm to our local communities, particularly working class people. The explosion of the modern web-based short term rental industry has made it easier than ever to own a mostly vacant second home in SJC and given property owners an easy alternative to long term rentals with more upside and significantly less risk.

As a property manager of 10 affordable rentals on Orcas Island, I am also very concerned because I see that recent local and state government's management is actually helping drive more homeowners AWAY from long term rentals and into short term.

Our state legislature recently saw fit to pass laws adding further restrictions to when landlords can require problematic tenants to leave their property. There is no data to support such a decision, and I personally know multiple landlords who have quit long term renting altogether as a result. At a time when we desperately need to incentivize long term rentals, we are doing just the opposite. Meanwhile, for the last 3 years, I have only heard that we cannot act on Vacation Rentals because we lack clear data. Yet we are freely able to further restrict long term landlords without evidence of need, increasing their already substantial costs and risk.

To say I am disappointed by all this is an understatement. It is time to take sensible action to incentivize what we want (long term housing) and limit what we already have too much of (VRs). Please begin by setting a hard cap on Vacation Rentals and follow with policy that works to better balance the needs of our community and our economy.

Thank you,

Yonatan Aldort
Eastsound