

Sophia Cassam

From: vjusela@mac.com
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2022 9:38 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Public Comment for May 17, 2022 Hearing re Proposed Caps on Short-term Vacation Rental Permits

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May 16th, 2022

Council Member Christine Minney
Council Member Jamie Stephens
Council Member Cindy Wolf

Dear Members of the San Juan County Council:

As a resident of Orcas Island I am writing to you today to strongly urge you to cap the number of Short-term Vacation Rental (STVR) permits at the **July 31 , 2021, level of Active and Compliant permits.**

Due to the continuing escalation of Short-term Vacation Rentals we have many businesses that struggle daily to find and retain employees because of the lack of long-term housing.

The character of some of our neighborhoods have changed from tight knit communities into high turnover short-term vacation rental spots. One of the tools owners of short-term vacation rentals use to limit their liability in the event of a legal claim against them is to create an LLC and take out a loan against the property for up to 80% of the value of the property which limits their financial exposure to 20%. The county and/or residents of the HOA's or road associations will bear a disproportionate cost for legal claims. The local island residents derive no benefit from a short-term vacation rental that is owned by a person(s) who lives out of state, a local absentee owner or a corporation but are burdened with the liability risk.

Lastly, I would like to call your attention to the fire in Friday Harbor on April 7th. The initial loss estimate was \$10M dollars – a staggering figure. The location being in the center of town provided for quick access for fire crews and EMS personnel. Additionally, since the fire was discovered and reported in the early morning hours, before the buildings were occupied and the streets were clear of traffic, it was easier to move in resources to fight the fire. Imagine if there was a fire in an area populated with short-term vacation rentals that are private homes without the same type of access, without sprinkler systems, abundant fuel load in the forest, little to no cell reception and no land line. What would have been the cost in lives lost and property damaged due to a quickly spreading fire? Fire trucks and medical personnel could not make it up many private roads to quickly fight the fire and provide medical attention to injured individuals.

Please act now to enact county wide caps on the granting of short-term vacation rentals at the number of “active and compliant” STVR permits per each island as of July 31, 2021.

Sincerely,

