

Erika Shook

From: Kari Schuh <kschuh18@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2017 8:41 AM
To: Erika Shook
Subject: Vacation Rental Code Amendment

Dear Erika,

Please accept this note for comment on the proposed amendments to SJCC 18.40.270.

As long time residents of Orcas Island since 1996, we saved our money, purchased a perfect home, planned on renting it part time, followed the process, and applied for a vacation rental permit. Our permit was awarded and our understanding was it would last for the lifetime of the home. Not only that, but the permit would be able to pass on should there ever be a new owner. Our permit is for 9 occupants and that is just right for our three bedroom and two bonus room sized home.

We've had a vacation rental permit with San Juan County since 2010 and have actively used this permit every summer since that time. We also are Superhosts through Airbnb as well as use online agencies such as FlipKey, HomeAway, VRBO, and TripAdvisor. A Superhost is no easy task because one has to demonstrate cleanliness, communications, reliability, and a greater social awareness with your guests. This is due to the fact that they rate and write reviews of their overall experience.

Initially, as brand new owner/operators, we did have some issues with noise and parking. However, we've strengthened our communications and our screening processes. Plus, we personally greet and go over the rules of our home and the neighborhood with each family upon their arrival. We talk to them about noise, quiet hours, parking, recycling, worm composting, other trash, how to walk the trails to town, water conservation, and all the great places and things for them to do on the island. We take this time so that our renters are fully aware and will follow the rules while still having an excellent experience. This way, these folks make lasting quality memories of their Orcas Island vacation and will want to return someday.

The taxes from all these vacation rentals go back into the coffers of San Juan County. Plus, all these visitors spend money in many local businesses, frequent the several State Park options (paying daily fees), they set up kayak tours, horseback rides, bike rentals, whale watching, they are dining out for breakfast/lunch/dinner, shopping, and much more. All of this contributes to our tourist based economy and even far more taxes are generated for the county.

WHY is the county determined to bite the hand that 'feeds' it? Why harm the business owner who has followed the rules, paid their fees, paid their taxes, and created a quality experience for guests that come to our island? There are rentals out there that don't have permits yet they are still running an operation with no financial repercussions. Not only do they have no permit but they are likely not paying their fair share of taxes on revenue. The county should put some parameters and fines in place for those that do break the rules NOT on those of us who've worked hard to ensure we are doing the right thing.

I object to just all of the proposed changes in SJCC 18.40.270. This includes new edicts on garbage removal, parking space allotments, signage, but I most object to changing the occupancy amount from 3 to 2, and limiting the vacation rental permit life to 5 years.

Finally, if affordable housing is at the heart of this issue, then the county should address that. Allow more property owners to build ADUs, (Our ADU request for a 2.4 acre parcel in the Obstruction Pass area was denied), or use some of the funds from The Land Bank to assist organizations like OPAL.

Thank you,

Kari Schuh
Alder Bungalow