

Erika Shook

From: Andrea Peterson <morehouse.a@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2021 7:40 PM
To: Christine Minney
Subject: Vacation Rental Regulations

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Good Evening,

My name is Andrea Peterson, and my husband and I operate a short term vacation rental in an ADU on our property. We are permanent residents of San Juan Island and live here full time in our one bedroom house. We also operate an event rental business that primarily caters to weddings on the islands during the summer.

I am writing tonight to offer my views on the recent announcement of possible new regulations on short term rentals in the islands as the owner of one.

First, I think it is important to point out the difference between short rentals that are investments or second homes and small ADU's operated by a permanent residence of the islands. I hope the council will keep those differences in mind when crafting new regulations and restrictions going forward.

I would also like to share how our vacation rental has saved our small island run business this past year. As you can imagine wedding businesses have been hit incredibly hard because of the pandemic and we will be the last businesses to fully recover. As weddings are seasonal and quite large, we will likely not see much business until August of 2021. My business has needed to find a way to survive for 18 months before I can expect to perform services again. Although I was fortunate enough to receive a PPP loan, that is not enough to sustain a small business for 18 months. We have relied on our vacation rental to pay our building rent, utilities, insurance, and other expenses and will continue to do so going forward. Please remember that many island residents who operate vacation rentals do so to supplement their income while running a small business, and it is the only way that we can afford to live here.

Additionally, I would like to address complaints that these short term rentals should be used for long term housing. I can only speak to our situation but I imagine other owners are in similar situations. We live in a one bedroom house, and our ADU is a one bedroom 400 square foot guest house. Our entire family lives in the Midwest and frequently comes out to the islands to visit. As we only have one bedroom in our house they utilize the guest house when they are here. We do not have the option to rent our guest house long term, and would not do so. In addition, many owners use their rentals to supplement or live off the income that they make. The fact is a long term rental does not generate as much money as a short term rental, and especially this year, that really matters.

Going forward it is my hope that the council crafts new regulations and restrictions with input from all residents. I know that there is animosity in this community toward vacation rentals, but I hope that the council separates the short term vacation rentals owned by off island residents that are used as second homes and investments and rentals owned by members of this community.

Sincerely,
Andrea and Paul Peterson