

## Sophia Cassam

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**From:** Jan Scilipoti <info@madronastays.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 3, 2021 10:31 AM  
**To:** Council Public Comment  
**Cc:** Lynda Guernsey; Erika Shook  
**Subject:** Public comments regarding Council meeting 01-25-21  
**Attachments:** Council Mtg 01-25-21 final letter 2-3-21.pdf

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Attached is a letter containing public comments regarding Vacation Rentals discussed during the Council meeting on 01-25-21.

Please call with any questions or if you have difficulties downloading or opening it.

Thank you,

Jan Scilipoti  
360-622-9050

Jan Scilipoti, representing **Hosting on the Rock**, Vacation Rental Owner/Host Group  
214 Military Road  
Lopez Island, WA 98261

February 3, 2021

San Juan County Council

Cc: San Juan County Planning Commission, Erika Shook

RE: SJC County Council Meeting 01-25-21, discussion of Vacation Rentals

Dear Council Members,

**Regarding the Four Work Plans that will be created:**

**1. A Vacation Rental (VR) Cap, county-wide and by island**

*We are in agreement that a cap is a positive step for the islands.*

We understand that VRs permitted in the Town of Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor are not included in the reports that are currently being generated. Is this correct, and if so, how will these permits be taken into account while evaluating total permit numbers under a Cap? For instance, it appears that while San Juan has a higher population, Orcas has more VR permits. Is this correct, or are there actually more permits on San Juan if Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor VRs are included in the counts?

*We ask the Council to be careful about imposing county-wide restrictions as a consequence of problems occurring in specific areas.* For example, Cindy Wolf mentions Eastsound issues frequently, which do not seem to translate directly to all areas in the islands.

**2. Reducing non-compliant permits**

*We are in agreement that this should be a first step.*

*Additionally, we do not think further changes with the permitting system should be done before we have seen the effects of the 2018 revisions, including reducing non-compliant permits.*

There were several comments during the Council meeting about how this is the first year we have seen the results of the 2018 revisions, and there was positive feedback about the effect of several components. We still have 360 permits that are not in compliance.

Budget concerns (for staffing) have been mentioned as a deterrent for processing non-compliant permits. The county now has VR income from the VR Lodging tax, annual permit fees, and application fees. All this income is new and in our opinion should be used immediately to stop non-compliant permit holders from renting their homes.

**3. Eliminating permits that run with the land. This could be when a property sells or could be by 'timing out' permits.**

*Our group has split opinions about whether permits from this point forward should or should not run with the land. We do not agree that permits should 'time out', or be limited to a set number of years.*

We would like more information about the implications of whether permits from this point forward should run with the land. What are the issues that have brought you to this recommendation?

If a resident does not choose to sell their property and has a permit, they should be able to operate their VR for as long as they choose. Being a VR host requires an investment of capital and time, and the income is important to many residents. Limiting the time that a VR can be operated is undue hardship to owners.

We understand that prior to the 2018 revisions, the permits will continue to run with the land.

This seems to be regarded as a problem from Councils' perspective based on discussions during meetings. On what scale is this actually happening? How often does a new owner choose to keep the permit in compliance? Of home sales in the last 3 years, how many new owners with permits chose to maintain the permits in compliance?

#### **4. Requiring approval by HOAs to run VRs.**

*If the County is trying to put caps in neighborhoods, we do not think this is a viable avenue.*

#### **General comment**

*We would like the Council to quantify or clearly describe the Harm that VRs are causing. How do you define "Over-Tourism"? Is it truly occurring throughout the islands, or just on Orcas?*

A requirement of the Moratorium is that the Council shows "Harm", or the core reason a Moratorium is necessary. The answer is not clear, but seems to be "There are too many Vacation Rentals". Yet, the number of permit applications was below average in 2020. There were only 9 permit applications after the PC Moratorium recommendation, not a 'rush'. The staffing is already under stress with their heavy work load of Comprehensive Plan revisions and with the processing of out-of-compliance VRs.

The effect on available housing if the number of VRs is reduced does not seem to be clearly documented. There is confusion about the difference between 'long-term housing' and 'affordable housing'. There seems to be no data on what VR-permitted housing will become if no longer eligible to be a VR. Our survey showed that residents overwhelmingly believe the housing will remain empty until the owners come to visit, will rarely be turned into long term housing, and will never become affordable housing.

Tourists will continue to come here. The lack of VRs will not stop them. Other types of accommodations will step up to the demand; hotels, B&B's, resorts and campgrounds. Please do not single out Vacation Rentals as the sole cause of tourism issues.

#### **Finally, we would like to list a few positive effects of VRs:**

- Island residents who are VR owners and hosts rely on this income to continue living in our high-cost county.

- VR Lodging taxes have generated over \$4 million since 2017 and have helped fund over 60 organizations in SJC.
- Tourists love coming to the islands and there are very few accommodations other than VRs. This is a time-tested and beloved way of visiting the islands.
- Our restaurants, artists and businesses need tourists. Tourism supports the quality of service and products in our restaurants, shops and grocery stores, as well as infrastructure for local entertainment and recreation.
- All 2020 COVID cases have come to the county from residents, not from tourists.
- VRs are a worldwide phenomena and many of us enjoy staying in VRs all over the world.
- Unless you were born and raised here, you likely arrived as a tourist!

We appreciate your consideration,

Jan Scilipoti

**The following island VR owners/hosts have asked that their names be included in support of the vacation rental opinions that I've outlined above.**

Dave Ambrose, Friday Harbor

Matt Basta, Friday Harbor

William (Bill) Bourgaize, Friday Harbor

Bruce & Julia Brackett

Steven & Bev Carleton, Friday Harbor

Dan Christopherson, Orcas

Bob & Meg Connor

Tim Daniels, Friday Harbor

Cathy Ferran & Jim Cardinell

David & Nancy Hodges, Friday Harbor

Kenneth Hunter, Friday Harbor

Catherine Jerome, Friday Harbor

Bill & Kelly Koral

Toni Knudson & Mark Sawyer  
Omeed Kroll, Friday Harbor  
Kathy Lauren, Friday Harbor  
Vicki Leimback, Orcas  
Trini Leslie, SJI  
Sybil Mager, Friday Harbor  
Daniel Marty  
Ryan McCullough, Friday Harbor  
Bill & Carolyn McGown  
Lydia Miller, Orcas  
Joe Olegario, Friday Harbor  
Suzanne Olson, Orcas  
Jean Oppliger, Friday Harbor  
Dianna Padilla, Friday Harbor  
Thomas Ronhaar, Friday Harbor  
Mike Scarff, Friday Harbor  
Ryan Schiess, SJI  
Jim & Kari Schuh  
Merri Ann Simonson, Friday Harbor  
Karen & Ken Speck  
Jodi Spitalli  
Marcie Stevens, Friday Harbor  
Rikki Swin, Friday Harbor  
Jamey & Laura Tisdale, Orcas  
Susan York, Friday Harbor  
Jana Young, Friday Harbor