

Sophia Cassam

From: Jeanne Sleeper <jsleeper@jbsmgmt.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 10:41 AM
To: Council Public Comment
Subject: FW: Vacation Rental Moratorium

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(Resend with my Friday Harbor address added in signature area)

Dear San Juan Council,

Beyond the natural beauty of this area, we all enjoy restaurants, shops, the arts, professional services, choices of where to shop for similar items, that are far more plentiful than the permanent resident population of San Juan Island alone could ever support. These amenities that add diversity and quality to islander lives are financially viable because this island has had a vibrant hospitality community for which off-islanders come and spend money to enjoy.

Look around at the closed businesses. Listen to your neighbors wonder how they are going to survive after being laid off or hours cut back. Last spring and summer the off-islanders were asked to stay away to protect resident's health. The ferry cut back service to better match the tickets sold and the complaints began about the poor service. The island had a sample of the economic devastation that does occur (no guessing needed) when hospitality and retail go flat.

Lots of new rules about vacation rentals were put in place in 2018 and they only had a short time with the Covid shut down, to show that the rules were improving owner and guest behavior. Let's give an improving situation a chance to get better before the county strangles the financial life out of the amenities that make this a nicer place for residents to live.

I bought acres of raw land on San Juan on 2005, improved it through the Great Recession. Used locals to build a my home at time they had no work – construction had dried up and benefits run out. This is my retirement home very soon. In the mean time I have employed housekeepers, painters, gardeners, landscape designers, plumbers, handymen, HVAC installers , water system

designers, arborists, septic system servicers, removed noxious weeds, and on and on, maintaining and improving my home so in very competitive rental market, my home rents and the county gets their 10.2 % in hospitality taxes, their share of the sales tax on my guests' purchases and raise my property taxes every time I make an improvement or as often as allowed by law.

How much did the city and county lose from the drop in tax revenue from vacation rentals and sales tax remittances when hospitality went flat during the Codi -19 shut downs?

Don't take away my property rights and source of income in retirement by changing the rules on vacation rentals 16 years into my investment in this county. Don't take a whack at county income from hospitality taxes and sales taxes and then tell the community your budget is out of balance and taxes need to go up. Don't slam down the people who are continuously investing in and improving your community tax base, amenities and appeal.

Let's address the issues that are obviously bothering some folks and work together toward resolution, rather than starting by punishing all vacation rental owners in ways that trickle down to harm the whole county.

Jeanne Sleeper

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San Juan Island property investor, vacation rental business owner, affordable, quality rental year-round apartment provider to a local family, donor to local non-profits and economic engine that bought services and products from over 50 locally owned community businesses

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