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From: Suzanne Olson <storysmith8@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 8:06 PM
To: Council Public Comment
Subject: Please Revoke the VR Moratorium

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Hello. My name is Suzanne Olson and I live on Orcas Island. I'm part of the Hosting on the Rock group. I am asking that the Moratorium be revoked. The changes that were made by the Council in 2018 are working and, if those cease to work, we can address specific issues through the normal process.

Airbnb is how we, as working islanders, make ends meet and keep our property up to snuff. If we weren't renting our master bedroom out as a vacation rental, we'd be sleeping in there ourselves. There is no loss of affordable housing options here.

My husband John and I moved to Orcas in 2005 and opened our Airbnb guest suite in 2012 when, with the downturn in the economy, we were faced with losing our home and our stake on the island. The income from that first season allowed us to make our mortgage payments, stay on island and reorganize our finances.

We are licensed with the County. We pay business and lodging taxes.

We are a two-earner household and we both work hard; we are that island household that works three jobs – or five, at times. We make good wages, but just couldn't keep up without the vacation rental revenue. And, we are part of the fabric of the island: we volunteer, roll up our sleeves and contribute - making a positive impact on community wellbeing and our mutual quality of life.

We now depend on the Airbnb income to take care of major home maintenance issues that we couldn't otherwise afford. With our Airbnb revenue, we've replaced the 1970 septic system, put a metal roof on our outbuilding - which allowed us to later install a water catchment system to irrigate our garden and orchard, we replaced our antiquated wood burning furnace with a ductless heat pump – and the roof on the house is next.

We really enjoy meeting our guests and sharing our place. We aren't in a position to travel ourselves, but Airbnb gives us a travel-like experience: we meet people from all over the world and look forward to swapping stories and sharing beautiful moments. We've put a lot of elbow grease into our gardens and orchard and it's rewarding to be able to share them.

We put a lot of care and consideration into how we present our place and encourage stewardship of our beautiful and sensitive environment. We hand each guest the County's Stewardship Guide, encourage our guests to support local businesses, and have systems conspicuously in place for conservation of water and power, and waste management. In the nine seasons we've been in business, we've never had a problem with a guest (knock wood) mistreating our property or our neighborhood.

Please:

- Revoke the moratorium – or at least revise it to encompass only affected areas where empirical data supports the measure
- Keep permits tied to the property, as long as owners are in compliance.
- Use the revenue from the lodging tax to monitor compliance and actually provide incentives to islanders who are doing a good job hosting in their homes and on the property where they live. Learn from Airbnb and their SuperHost program.

It's a triple win: islanders can make ends meet, visitors benefit from invested local guides and we don't have to live in a summer vacation condo land.

Thank you.

Suzanne Olson

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