

Adam Zack

From: Lynda Guernsey
Sent: Thursday, August 19, 2021 9:23 AM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: FW: Tracey Cottingham/VR comments

Lynda Guernsey, Administrative Specialist II – Direct Line (360) 370-7579
SAN JUAN COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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From: Tracey Cottingham <outdoors@rockisland.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 19, 2021 9:16 AM
To: Lynda Guernsey <LyndaG@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Tracey Cottingham/VR comments

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Dear Lynda,

I have just sent my VR comment letter to vrcomment@sanjuanco.com.

I received a message it was not received. Can you check on this and confirm or please get my letter below to the right address.

Thanks much,
Tracey

Dear Planning Committee Members,

August 19th, 2021

I've watched with interest through the years of the dedication and time commitment you make to be part of our county's planning commission. I've lived over 2 decades on Lopez and have been part of the community conversations for land conservation through the Land Bank and National Monument, attended round table discussions on sustainable tourism and currently represent Recreation and Visitor Services for the San Juan Islands National Monument Advisory Committee. I attended one of the VR zoom meetings to listen to all sides in July.

I will discuss my personal situation and how it may relate to caps or future planning on VR rentals.

My views agree with points on both sides of the argument for continuing to allow, cap or increase short term vacation rentals on Lopez. We are primary full-time resident homeowners on inland property and have yet to rent out either our main house or a studio house during these 20 years. That doesn't mean we would never consider renting out our resident in the future, most likely for travel or an extended time away. We have a 2nd house that is only used as an office studio work house, on 2nd tax lot neighboring property that we have never rented out and to do so would most likely take a \$200,000 improvement budget, as nothing works for living conditions that would be considered a living space. That would

take many years to recoup that investment to rent out short or long term, if for any reason the space is not being used as work office/studio. It would never recoup the investment until we were to sell it, which is currently not part of the plan. We are in our 60's and 70's and see the value of having the future ability to rent out our primary resident for possible income and would not consider a full-time renter, only short term, possibly over or under 30 days. We support the ability for future permits to be available and not grandfather in only the current VR permit holders with none available in the future, as in 5-20 years.

I have the following points to make as you deliberate the pros and cons of working towards a sustainable proposal for regulations for VR's.

1. Now is not the time to set in stone what the caps should be, as the past 1.5 years has been a huge changing time for living on Lopez. We do not yet know how the ability to work virtually will play out in the longer term and what the demand will be Post Covid and recovery time. To base the decision on the increase in demand for VR's or traveling to Lopez via ferry during this pandemic time does not give an accurate forecast for the future. For this reason, I support a moratorium on any increase in VR permits for the next 2 years in the San Juan's but principally on Lopez, where we do not have the support systems such as return ferry reservations, restaurants that are open 6-7 days a week or a stretched thin medical or emergency services to support an increase in short term visitors. The pandemic has increased this lack of support systems for residents and non-residents/visitors to support increase in short term stay tourism through VR rentals.

2. I would like to see flexibility in VR permits so the same residents don't lock in the permits for the long term and shut out the ability for new permits for situations as I might imagine we would desire as we age on Lopez and change our current situation to consider short term rental. I'm aware of some of the housing HOA's that already prohibit short term rentals, and this makes sense as they are a home-owners association to decide what is best for their neighborhood. I know this is common in other areas where we do rent VR's such as the Methow Valley. I don't know enough about farm stay permits and how these may differ from VR's but if they are the same, I would indeed consider farm stay rental permit for our farm property in the future, thus placing a less flexible policy that locks in caps for current permit holders is like pulling up the drawbridge for future needs, especially farm or more sustainable visitor stays.

3. I disagree with the argument that VR's take away from the full-time rental housing stock in a major way, and agree with Jan Scilipoti's data to back this up on where we have a lack of modest houses that would be available for full time rental for the service and other workers. This has been a problem for many years not just during the rise of popularity with VR's and internet booking. I have known friends 15-20 years ago who to make ends meet on their mortgages would vacate their houses during the summer months to make up their budget shortfall and camp or travel all summer. Their houses would never have been converted to full time rentals. This continues today, and made easier by the internet booking services.

4. The rights of part time or seasonal residents need to be protected for the same rights that full time residents have, as property taxpayers for island services, water, roads, ferries, etc. We cannot discount how their tax dollars support the infrastructure that our community relies on.

5. Consider the size of the VR rental and not have only the permit the same for any VR, as there is a huge difference for a cabin that sleeps 2-4, or a boat, vs a large family compound house that sleeps 12-15. Would there be a way to regulate permits based on number of beds/bedrooms available vs number of permits regardless of size?

5. The San Juan's are unique in so many ways, so borrowing successful plans for other places can be a guideline for ideas, such as Bellingham or other smaller tourist towns that don't have the isolation and ferry transportation issues.

Please be creative and flexible in your proposal not just for current issues that are much wider than just VR number of permits. Please use the County's sustainable tourism report, and widespread support in the San Juan island community.

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1391/San-Juan-Islands-Visitor-Study>

<https://siclandbank.org/results-from-the-islands-wide-survey-about-tourism-and-visitor-management-in-the-san-juan-islands/>

Thank you for all the time you have put in on planning for the future of vacation rentals in the San Juans.

Tracey Cottingham

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Lopez Island

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