

Sophia Cassam

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Subject: May 17 Public Comments

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May 15, 2022

Council Member Christine Minney
Council Member Jamie Stephens
Council Member Cindy Wolf

Dear Members of the San Juan County Council:

This is about Community Survival.

We are here today to ask the County Council to place limits on the proliferation of commercial Short Term or "Vacation Rental" business activity in our San Juan County community. At the core of this request is the concern that tourism – in particular the siting of high-traffic, high-turnover tourist facilities in our residential neighborhoods – is transforming them into something fundamentally undesirable and remote from what County residents chose when they elected to live here.

On May 5th we presented the CC with a petition signed by 720 San Juan County residents in support of countywide caps based on "Active and Compliant" permits in the county as of July, 2021. The county staff tells us that number is around 413 permits.

That petition was but the latest in a history of public expressions asking for VR limits. Early in 2019, the EPRC and Deer Harbor PRC voted unanimously to ask the council to impose a moratorium. Throughout the rest of 2019, five public meetings on three islands, attended by as many as 230 island residents, echoed the EPRC and DHPRC votes. The overwhelming sentiment was for the establishment of an upper limit, or cap, on VR permits at the level of active permits at the time. Again, the number is about 413.

The VR issue dominated the runup to the 2020 election. Fully one third, or 30 of the 90 minutes of both of the League of Women Voters candidates' forums were devoted to VR questions. And elections matter; over 6200 county voters elected Councilmember Wolf, who made multiple campaign promises to address the issue as a councilmember.

It is time! At stake is the right of all citizens to a safe and peaceful life in rural San Juan County. There are many related issues such as affordable housing, bad behavior by permit holders, bad behavior by VR customers, water use, generation of trash, trespass and parking woes, adequacy of liability insurance, off-island or out-of-county ownership, emergency vehicle access on narrow private roads, transparency and accountability of VR permit holders, traffic, congestion, noise, and more.

All the above issues are important and must be addressed. But it starts with establishment of the upper limit, or cap, countywide and/or by island, on permits allowed to operate on a permanent basis. That needs to be set at or

near 413, which is what we have today, which is what brought us to this point, and which will demonstrate to all that the community has a voice in determining its future quality of life.

Thank you,

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