

**From:** [Gary Helfrich](#)  
**To:** [Alisa Sanders](#)  
**Subject:** FW: March 16th meeting comment, ZCE23-0001, Vacation Rental Rezone  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 15, 2023 10:18:54 AM

---

**From:** Eleanor Hanson Wise <[eleanorhanson@gmail.com](mailto:eleanorhanson@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2023 7:49 AM  
**To:** Gary Helfrich <[Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org)>  
**Subject:** March 16th meeting comment, ZCE23-0001, Vacation Rental Rezone

## EXTERNAL

Dear Mr. Helfrich,  
My comment/letter below.  
Thank you!  
Eleanor Hanson

To all those concerned,

I am writing to oppose the rezoning of parcels within the Hacienda district to a 5% cap of vacation rentals. I am an owner of a home there which I run as a vacation rental when we are not using it, but have also spent quite a bit of time as a resident there - some years, four days out of 7, some years, 3-4 months at a time.

We just got through a lengthy revision process of the vacation rental code which attempted to strike a balance between residents' needs, business leaders' desires, and homeowners rights in the area. Now I have just received notice in the mail with only two days notice of a meeting to occur only in person to revise the new law while the first process has not even had a chance to even go into effect as vacation rentals are still not even open to new applications after the moratorium. This feels like 1. There is not enough notice or fair and equitable access to this meeting. 2. This also feels like a way for a small number of individuals to undercut the extended and balanced review of the code that concluded in the past year and has not had time to go into effect.

One of the reasons this area, especially the Forest Hills area, was built originally as summer homes, was because it was recognized that this was a flood plain. The houses are small and some, like ours, are made out of cinderblock, so that in the event of a flood, you can wash it out easily. This also makes it unable to be raised (so I have been told by the county) so floods are part of owning there. Vacation rental use make the most sense in a flood disaster because visitors can be canceled when there is flood risk, material losses are reduced, and traffic/congestion is reduced, providing increased access for emergency vehicles. Vacation homes have less damage, less

trash, less loss of material possessions, less need for help or residential/relocation services in the case of a flood. The proximity to the river and the swampy floodplain ground also reduces fire risk for the immediate neighborhood.

The Forest Hills area as well as much of the area marked for reduction in the percentage does not have evacuation route strangleholds as there are multiple close access points to River Rd. I also find it odd that the higher elevations of Summerhome Park or Hacienda, with their tiny and winding roads that do have access and parking issues are excluded from this resolution if this is a main concern.

The Forest Hills area does not have a lack of parking for residents or renters, either off street or on street. The only problems with parking are from non resident or non vacation renters in the area who are visiting Mom's Beach in the summertime. This could be somewhat relieved by the county in adding more parking, perhaps a small lot under the Hacienda bridge.

While I understand I would not be affected by this resolution, as my permit will be "grandfathered," I do not think this change is necessary for the area. I think it is unfair in the balance leaning heavily towards specific homeowners in the area who do not like vacationers in any form, while not taking into account the historical and specific context of the neighborhood, business leaders needs and desires, nor homeowners who have specifically purchased homes and acquired loans with the intent of renting them out at least some of the time. While an increase in vacation rentals could slightly reduce housing stock, the petitioners are asking for an effective reduction in vacation rentals in the area. So this is not about preserving residential character, this is about increasing permanent residents in an area originally intended for and well suited for summer vacationers.

I would also like to point out the benefits of bringing people to the area. While the added business to restaurants and shops is well known, introducing people to this beautiful area has many added benefits as well. We first found the Russian River valley through staying at a vacation rental home. We immediately fell in love and found a home to fix up soon after. We focus on attracting small families to our vacation rental and have had many comments about how it is such a magical wonderful place. Some of these people return year after year and even go on to join the community themselves.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my perspective.

Best,

Eleanor Hanson

THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED OUTSIDE OF THE SONOMA COUNTY EMAIL SYSTEM.

**Warning:** If you don't know this email sender or the email is unexpected, do not click any web links, attachments, and never give out your user ID or password.