

From: 2rf1964@comcast.net
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: ZCE23-0001, Vacation Rental Rezone
Date: Monday, March 13, 2023 10:55:50 AM

EXTERNAL

Sonoma County c/o Gary Helfrich:

All:

I am writing in regard to Item One at Commission meeting 03/16/23.

As an owner of a single family house in rural District 5, I am pleased to see a discussion of short term rental issues in Sonoma County, and possible changed to zoning and use ordinances which govern this topic:

I have the following questions and comments.

Sonoma County is a well-recognized vacation destination, and adjacent to one of the most thriving urban areas in the nation.

Vacationers in the 1920's used to come to the Russian River on the train, for a month.

Now, it's a 3-day weekend booked on-line and everyone drives. Needless to say, things have changed and will continue to change.

I see little account of increasing traffic and parking issues, water treatment, emergency services, etc.

We saw the pinch point of emergency notification to short-term renters during the recent fire storms and it is a very relevant health and safety concern.

Has Sonoma County looked at parallel regions for innovative management of this issue? How does rural Virginia, or upstate New York handle this? What can we learn from the beach towns on the Gulf Coast?

How much will the added management and enforcement of short-term rental ordinances cost Sonoma County in the coming decade? Just maintaining the waiting list for permits will likely take a full time effort. I bet County and city staff on the Jersey shore could supply some staff hours for such work.

Does a permit fee for a short-term rental account for any funding towards these issues? If not the tax paying, full time residents of Sonoma County are subsidizing short-term renters and the owners of these units.

Is there any lever in use permits and ordinance changes to get property owners to update or meet current building standards? Many properties purchased for use as short-term rentals are marginal at best when it comes to electrical, sewer and building safety.

I have been in units with failing stairs and rails, persistent mold, overgrown walks and drives, unpermitted bathrooms, and sprawling decks and sleeping porches that have no regard for setbacks or environmental standards.

A pre-sale building inspection could be a critical method for keeping sub-standard units from being purchased and used as short-term rentals. I have watched questionable steps taken at recent short-term rentals, such as installing a spa on existing deck after a home sale, and have no idea if this was inspected or engineered.

Any thought on forbidding the construction of ADU solely for use as short-term rental? On larger parcels, I already see this happening, greatly increasing density at otherwise rural districts.

Only stating that 5% or 10% of an area is permitted for short-term rentals does not address rising density due to recent changes in State of California housing law.

A variable noise ordinance (9 pm for rentals, 10 pm for full time residents) is un-enforceable, especially in remote locations. It is almost impossible, even now, for us to determine the source of evening noise - as often as not, full time residents and their NON-RENTAL guests are the cause.

Noise is a real conflict point with many neighbors, long-term or not.

If excessive noise becomes a recurring problem at a short term rental (party house), I would propose that be a condition to REVOKE a rental permit. Don't produce a tiered, unenforceable noise ordinance, put clarity and real teeth into the revised ordinance.

I am not against short term rentals, or vacationers and have little to say about larger demographic or economic issues facing Sonoma County; however Sonoma County has to be tough and sophisticated in planning for this part of our regional lifestyle.

I look forward to seeing emerging policy that will wisely manage this issue. Feel free to condense or paraphrase the above.

Thanks,

Scott Volmer

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