

**From:** Eric Markson <[ericmarkson@gmail.com](mailto:ericmarkson@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 16, 2022 5:26 PM  
**To:** Gary Helfrich <[Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org)>  
**Subject:** SCHA regulation concerns

March 16, 2022

Dear Sonoma County Planning Commissioners:

The Sonoma County Hospitality Association (SCHA) represents a wide range of area businesses, from small restaurants to large hotels, wineries, breweries, transportation, attractions, and guest facing retail. Most of these are small, locally owned companies who depend on visitor spending to survive. As a trade group SCHA tends to focus on training, networking, member relations and advocacy. SCHA believes in “stronger together” and recognizes that decisions made that have a negative effect on one effect all

The SCHA supports fair and balanced regulation of short-term rentals based on facts and data.

While the staff report refers to extensive stakeholder outreach, in fact, outreach has been extremely limited compared to the discussion of past ordinance changes. In the past there was extensive outreach to vacation rental property owners and neighbors of vacation rentals, with multiple opportunities to attend workshops across the county. There are many hospitality and community organizations that were never contacted to provide input and perspective over the last 9 months. And for those that have participated, the current recommendations are significantly different from the recommendations discussed in previous meetings and outreach. The community and stakeholders deserve a much more inclusive process.

The recommendations, especially the combination of the proposed ban on new rentals each in vast sections of the county, along with the countywide cap set based on the number of permits, not active permits, and the 10% cap which does not take into consideration the uniqueness of certain areas is likely to have a chilling impact over time on the Sonoma County economy, jobs, tax revenue for the general fund, property resale values and the many small businesses that depend on spending by local homeowners and visitors. Small businesses in Sonoma County that depend on visitor spending have begun to recover faster than in more urban areas largely due to the strength of vacation rental guest spending locally. Now just as small businesses are recovering, they face new challenges including dramatic inflation and the volatility created by the international crisis in the Ukraine. Now is not the time for the county to add to these headwinds.

We note that while housing stock is a critical issue locally, after many years of speculation that vacation rentals were contributing to a loss of housing stock and lack of affordable housing, the Eyler Report did not find evidence to support this widely held belief.

We urge the Planning Commission to advocate for more extensive outreach and more creative approaches to balancing the benefits of vacation rentals to the County with the need to preserve neighborhood characteristics and protect the safety of residents and visitors alike. We also recommend that an economic impact study be completed to understand how these changes will impact the health of the local economy, jobs, small businesses, and property values. We are not

advocating for no regulation, but rather a thoughtful approach that truly works with the vacation rental community. Rather than outreach to a few groups or HOAs, invite permit holders to a town hall to really engage them in the process.

We encourage the County to take a step back and engage in more outreach and engagement of the community before making any final decisions.

Thank you.

Sincerely

Eric Markson

President and Chairman

Sonoma County Hospitality Association

--

Eric Markson

[ericmarkson@gmail.com](mailto:ericmarkson@gmail.com)