

From: [Gary Helfrich](#)
To: [Chelsea Holup](#)
Subject: FW: clarification/comment for Vacation Rental Ordinance update
Date: November 17, 2021 10:12:37 AM

From: Kari Svanstrom <ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org>
Sent: Monday, November 15, 2021 2:54 PM
To: PRMD-VacationRentals <PRMD-VacationRentals@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: clarification/comment for Vacation Rental Ordinance update

EXTERNAL

Hello,

I wanted to provide clarification regarding Sebastopol's Vacation Rental Policy, as some of the notes in the staff report may mis-represent how the City regulates and processes process applications (Attachment 3).

While Sebastopol's Code allows non-hosted rentals, and rentals of ADUs created after 2017 with a "use permit", this does not represent the City's strict regulation, particularly of full time/ non-hosted rentals that remove housing from the long-term housing market. The City is embarking on updates to our Vacation Rental ordinance to better clarify the limited criteria for permitting a non-hosted vacation rental. However, as you are in the midst of review for the County's Vacation Rental Ordinance, I wanted to share these thoughts with you so you could better evaluate your policies compared to 'other jurisdictions', particularly as it appears on the list that Sebastopol is much more permissive regarding rentals of non-hosted rentals (vacation rentals in your terminology) and ADUs.

The City of Sebastopol is supportive of Hosted Rentals, where the owner/permanent resident must be present during the stay, and these permits are administrative subject to various criteria (host must be on-site during rentals, noise, parking regs, etc.).

We strongly discourage full-time non-hosted rentals, and indeed had a Moratorium on any new non-hosted rentals in place in 2019/202, due to the housing situation and the high priority of our Council to preserve additional housing from being converted to short-term rentals and taken off of the market for permanent residents (in line with our Housing Element's goal of preserving existing housing for long-term residents).

While our Municipal Code states that a Use Permit is required for a non-hosted rental, the approval of these is extremely limited and difficult (requiring a Use Permit approved by our Planning Commission, of which one application has been approved and one denied since 2019). Additionally, our Code also states that a Use Permit is required for an ADU created after 2017, however the City would only support approval of these in very select circumstances (generally related to having a full-time resident in the unit).

Kari Svanstrom, AICP, Architect
Planning Director

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July 20, 2021 Permit Sonoma Workshop

Short-Term Vacation Rental Ordinance - Suggested Revisions

SUBMITTED BY: Lower Russian River MAC Vacation Rental AdHoc Committee

We are mid-way through our second year as a committee but have not completed our work yet. What follows are suggestions to changes we would like to see in the ordinance based on what we have learned so far.

This workshop is being scheduled mid-tourism season so leaves out professionals in this field who need to provide input that pertains to their business. Please consider extending the research/input time-period to later this fall/winter when tourism drops off so that these businesses can provide their input when they have time. THANK YOU.

SPECIFIC TO THE LOWER RUSSIAN RIVER

The Lower Russian River communities are especially impacted by the vacation rental business. Our area was established for recreation many decades ago and became populated with second homes, hotels, and vacation cabins. That set a precedent that cannot be ignored - BUT - our area has also evolved into the majority of existing homes being year-round homes for families.

Russian River communities are also a challenge for development. Limited roads on steep hills that lack infrastructure in a high fire and flood-risk area limit the number of new homes that can be built here. The current inventory of existing structures is mostly what we have to work with, so finding a balance between residences and commercial short-term rentals is essential for maintaining both neighborhoods for year-round renters and home-owners, as well as for our economy which depends heavily upon visitors.

Local school enrollment is also heavily-impacted by losing year-round homes to commercial businesses. Right now we are fighting to keep our highschool that serves a very large area reaching as far north as the border to Mendocino County. Maintaining a healthy inventory of homes for families is essential to keeping our communities vital and our schools funded.

VR AdHoc Committee Findings & Reports

Please visit russianrivermac.org for our reports, survey results, and information we have gathered so far to use as part of your decision-making process.

Vacation Rental-to-Resident Ratio

During the first year of our committee, we learned how other vacation and tourist-dependent communities establish limits and regulations to maintain the integrity of their hometowns. We

also surveyed locals to learn how both residents and vacation-rental businesses and support services view living with this industry.

This year our committee is gathering data that identifies short-term vacation rental **locations** so we can determine **what is a good resident-to-business ratio** that supports the industry but not at a cost to neighborhood function, integrity, and safety. This information will also help us learn what is the maximum percentage of resident housing we can afford to lose before our schools and other small businesses suffer.

Our VR mapping tool, which Permit Sonoma can do as well, helps define the boundaries of a “neighborhood” which we have defined as the area most impacted by the vacation rental in terms of parking/sound/lights. The mapping we are doing demonstrates that some neighborhoods have a high vacation rental-to-resident ratio which degrades neighborhoods into commercial districts. As our mapping work continues, we hope to demonstrate this in detail.

We SUPPORT the CAP on the number of Short-term Vacation Rentals in the Lower Russian River communities. We recommend that the Cap become permanent and that it pertains to not just our communities as a whole, but also to neighborhoods identified by proximity to the vacation rental. We also suggest that there be a CAP on how many VRs any one entity can own.

24/7 VR Contact Info for Neighbors

One of the most prevalent comments we hear from residents is how to find who to call when there is a problem with a vacation rental. The current ordinance and website/voicemail asks people to look up the property on Permit Sonoma’s website. IF it is listed and can be found, that is the **ONLY** way to find a 24/7 phone number to call the owner/operator directly. This is a difficult and frustrating process for a neighbor when lights are left on late, dogs are barking, parking spaces are taken, and/or noise levels negatively impact neighbors, etc. IF they call the owner/manager they may only get a voicemail.

People tend to call the Sheriff instead. These issues are usually not criminal in nature so the Sheriff is not going to provide a solution. Permit Sonoma is not available evenings and weekends so there is no immediate solution offered from P.S..

If Permit Sonoma funds an enforcement division that is on call 24/7, residents know they have someone to call for help when reaching the owner/operator is not possible.

If there is an easily-found 24/7 VR contact for neighbors, etc. they are more likely to call that person and resolutions can be accomplished immediately. This keeps both Permit Sonoma and the Sheriff out of the problem. **BUT**, even if complaints are solved at the property manager level, there still needs to be a system that allows neighbors to file information on the complaint and resolution with Permit Sonoma so that there is compilation of incidents in the record of a property so it can be reviewed at the time of permit renewal.

We suggest that VRs mail 24/7 contact information and Permit Sonoma complaint policies to neighbors within visual and auditory proximity of the VR at least once a year.

We also suggest that priority is placed on locally-owned property managers so that there is someone who can respond to solve the problems immediately. (see **8. Certified 24-hour Property Manager** under **(f) Performance Standards.**) This would also help the VR avoid accumulating strikes which could put them out of business.

Existing Ordinance with Suggested Changes:

Sec. 26-88-120. - Vacation Rentals.

(d) **Term of Permit.** Zoning permits shall run with the landowner and shall automatically expire upon sale or transfer of the property. *Use permits shall run with the land but may be issued for limited term, as specified by the decision-maker.* Both types of permits may be *revoked for failure to comply* with adopted standards, subject to the administrative and revocation procedures of Article 92 unless otherwise specified by this section.

“LIMITED TERM as specified by the decision-maker” is too vague. Please specify a renewal date (every 3 years?) that coincides with a review of how a property owner is complying with the ordinance. If there are no formal complaints that have not been resolved it can be a simple roll-over of the permit. But if there have been at least two unresolved complaints, the permit is then reviewed before renewal. Each complaint is reviewed for the type of complaint, and for how well the owner resolved the complaint.

*“Both types of permits may be *revoked for failure to comply* with adopted standards”* This becomes an important part of the review process and depends upon improved Code Enforcement at Permit Sonoma. In our research we found properties that do not comply with current standards yet these properties have permits.

EXAMPLE: parking spaces are required in the current ordinance *((e) Permit Requirements. 5. Parking.)* yet we found properties that advertised that they do NOT have parking, and yet they have a permit. If there are exceptions to this and other rules then those exceptions must be identified in the ordinance.

(e) Permit Requirements.

Can there be a limit on the number of vacation rentals that can be owned by any one person/company/entity?

Can there be a limit on the ratio of VRs to residences in neighborhoods which are identified by proximity, sphere of visual and auditory impact (such as hillsides facing a canyon, homes at the top of hills where noise travels down into the lowlands, etc.)?

Wastewater concerns:

1. Maximum Number of Guestrooms. Vacation rentals may have a maximum of five (5) guestrooms or sleeping rooms. Vacation rentals with more than **five (5) guestrooms or sleeping rooms may only be allowed if adequate sewage disposal capacity exists and neighborhood compatibility can be demonstrated,** subject to the granting of a use permit. For purposes of determining the appropriate level of permit required, the actual number of bedrooms in the structure plus any additional rooms intended or used for sleeping shall be used.

2. Maximum Overnight Occupancy. Maximum overnight occupancy for vacation rentals shall be up to a maximum of two (2) persons per sleeping room or guestroom, plus two (2) additional persons per property, up to a maximum of twelve (12) persons, excluding children under three (3) years of age. Vacation rentals with larger overnight occupancies may only be allowed subject to the granting of a use permit. **For homes on a conditional or non-standard septic system, or those with capacity limited by a voluntary repair, the maximum overnight occupancy for vacation rentals shall be equal to the design load of the septic system.** The property owner shall ensure that all contracts and online listings and advertisements clearly set forth the maximum number of overnight guests permitted at the property.

Current state regulations demand upgrades on septic systems to meet water quality standards that have been established in recent years

(https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/tmdls/russian_river/). If these homes are not on local sewer systems, the waste system would be an important part of inspections during permit renewal. This is especially true for properties that are within 600 feet of tributaries and the Russian River. The chance for malfunctioning septic systems is very high during tourist season so frequent inspections of these systems would ensure water quality and safety for all river users and neighbors in the water-sensitive areas. Inspections at permit renewal time would be essential.

The following (*under (f) Performance Standards*) also addresses wastewater systems so this item can be upgraded to include periodic inspections to meet our new state-imposed standards.

6. Septic Systems and Sewer Connections. The owner shall maintain a properly functioning septic system or sewer connection. In some cases, a per-room sewer fee may be applied.

Limited Neighborhood Parking Space concerns:

5. Parking. Parking shall be provided as follows: a minimum of one (1) on-site parking space for a vacation rental with up to two (2) guestrooms or sleeping rooms; two (2) on-site parking spaces for a three (3) or four (4) guestroom vacation rental. Larger vacation rentals must demonstrate adequate parking with a minimum of three (3) spaces. On-street parking may be considered for up to one (1) of the required parking spaces; otherwise, the number of vehicles allowed for overnight guests shall be limited to the off-street parking available, as demonstrated by the application materials and the property checklist, but shall not exceed one vehicle per bedroom. This maximum number of vehicles permitted for guests shall be clearly set forth in all rental agreements and in all online advertisements and listings.

Our Russian River neighborhoods, especially in close proximity to the river that are most popular with vacationers, have serious parking limitations. As stated above, we found some VRs on Permit Sonoma's TVR licensed properties list with NO PARKING AVAILABLE mentioned on their website. How can they obtain a license if they can not guarantee they can offer parking spaces that do not impact nearby residents? Every time a VR is up for license renewal it would help if they can be inspected to see if they still offer adequate parking.

(f) Performance Standards.

NOISE concerns:

- 1. Noise Limits.** All activities associated with the vacation rental shall meet the general plan noise standards contained below. **Quiet hours shall be from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.** The property owner shall ensure that the quiet hours and limits on outdoor activities are included in rental agreements and in all online advertisements and listings.
- 2. Amplified Sound.** Outdoor amplified sound shall not be allowed at any time associated with a vacation rental.
- 3. Pets.** Pets, if allowed by owner, shall be secured on the property

Noise comes up a lot when people complain about VRs in their neighborhoods. The Sheriff states that there is no noise ordinance in unincorporated Sonoma County. Yet the VR ordinance clearly defines times when noise is not allowed. It also defines amplified sound and pet noise, yet people leave their dogs to go to the beach and meals, and dogs bark incessantly in strange homes without their families. Again, if a local property manager can be called instead of the Sheriff, a solution to these problems might be easily found.

TOT TAX concerns:

- 7. Transient Occupancy Tax.** The vacation rental owner or authorized agent shall maintain a transient occupancy tax certificate and remain current on all required reports and payments. Owner or authorized agent shall include the certificate number on all contracts or rental agreements, and in any advertising or websites.

We have learned that there is not a consistent system for charging all VRs equally.

Property management companies pay a higher fee and booking agents like Air BnB, VRBO, etc. pay a lower fee than simple property owners.

We would like to see all properties charge TOT based on rooms and occupancy so that the tax is on the same structure regardless of who owns and/or manages the property.

Our hope is that a level playing field will discourage VR owners from finding work-arounds to paying TOT taxes for what they consider an unfair tax structure.

24/7 Availability of Property Manager concerns:

- 8. Certified 24-hour Property Manager.** All vacation rentals operating within unincorporated Sonoma County must have a **certified property manager who is available 24 hours per days, 7 days per week during all times that the property is rented or used on a transient basis.** Certified property managers may be professional property managers, realtors, property owners, or other designated person provided that the individual has successfully completed a training course and achieved a qualifying score on a county-administered certification test. Certification shall be granted by the County and may be revoked by the County. Once certified, a property manager must continue to comply with all provisions set forth in this Section, including timely reporting of all complaints and their resolutions, in order to remain certified. **Certified property managers must be located within a 30 mile radius of the vacation rental and must be available to respond to complaints at all times during the rental period.** Any requested change to the certified property manager for a vacation rental property shall be made through submittal of a new Vacation Supplemental Application or similar form provided by the Department, and shall include the signature of the certified property manager and the desired effective date of the change. In no case may a vacation rental operate without a current certified property manager. Operation of a vacation rental without a valid certified property manager

shall be considered a violation of this Section. **The name and 24 hour contact information of the certified property manager shall be provided to any interested party upon request.**

Although this is in the current ordinance, it does not appear to be enforced. Agin, we suggest that 24/7 contact information be handed out/mailed to all residents within impact range of the VR **at least once a year.**

PERMIT concerns:

10. Posting and Neighbor Notification of Permit and Standards. Once a vacation rental permit has been approved, a copy of the permit listing all applicable standards and limits shall be posted within the vacation rental property. The owner shall post these standards in a prominent place within 6 feet of the front door of the vacation rental, and include them as part of all rental agreements. **At the permit holder's expense, the County shall provide mailed notice of permit issuance to property owners and immediate neighbors of the vacation rental unit using the standard 300' property owner mailing list.** All advertising handouts, flyers, internet listings, or any other information provided for vacation rentals shall conform to the approved occupancy limits and standards as stated on the vacation rental permit. **Advertising may only be conducted for properties operating under a valid permit.** Advertising for a particular property inconsistent with the approvals for that property shall be considered a violation of these performance standards.

#10 ignores that properties are advertised that do not have permits. Your own web scrubbing program is designed to find these and bring them into compliance. "Host Compliance" also offers that service. We have looked up permitted VRs on the Permit Sonoma website but also online during a general Russian River Vacation Rental web search. Some of those advertised properties are not listed as permitted properties (*one permit designation could aid in this process instead of several codes for permits*) on Permit Sonoma's website. Some have expired permits. The work of finding these is too much for our tiny committee. We recommend that P.S. budget finding unlicensed VRs in order to both bring them into compliance as well as raise TOT taxes to finance a 24/7 Enforcement Division.

ADVERTISING concerns:

11. Requirements for All Internet Advertisements and Listings. All online advertisements and/or listings for the vacation rental property shall include the following:

- a. Maximum occupancy, not including children under 3;
- b. Maximum number of vehicles;
- c. Notification that quiet hours must be observed between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.;
- d. Notification that no outdoor amplified sound is allowed; and,
- e. The Transient Occupancy Tax Certificate number for that particular property.

#11 looks like a challenge to enforce. SOME advertised listings have this info but from what we found, it's the minority. Most did not have the TOT #. We had to find that on Permit Sonoma's site. In two cases they not only don;t have off-street parking - they have on their website NO PARKING AVAILABLE. Doesn't this violate the permit?

(g) Enforcement Process.

ENFORCEMENT concerns:

1. Initial complaints on vacation rentals shall be directed to the certified property manager identified in the zoning permit or use permit, as applicable. **The certified property manager shall be available 24 hours during all times when the property is rented, and shall be available by phone during these hours.** Should a problem or arise and be reported to the certified property manager, the certified property manager shall be responsible for contacting the tenant to **correct the problem within 60 minutes, or within 30 minutes if during quiet hours, including visiting the site if necessary to ensure that the issue has been corrected.**

Because FINDING a property manager with contact information easily located is so difficult, people call the Sheriff instead. The current system of asking people to look up the 24/7 number on the P.S. website just doesn't work, which is why people call the Sheriff. That 24/7 contact info needs to be EASILY found. The best solution we came up with is the **once-a-year postcard** to neighbors since P.S. regulations have required people to post it at the VR, but no one is going to trespass on the property to find it.

Can the 24/7 contact number be added to 11. Requirements for All Internet Advertisements and Listings in addition to an annual neighborhood postcard?

The certified property manager shall complete the online reporting form to report any such complaints, and their resolution or attempted resolution(s), to PRMD within 24 hours of the occurrence. Failure to respond to complaints or report them to PRMD shall be considered a violation of this section, and shall be cause for revocation of certification status.

When people call the Sheriff instead of the property manager, this aspect of enforcement never comes into play.

3. Three Strikes Penalty. Upon receipt of any combination of three administrative citations, verified violations, or hearing officer determinations of violation of any of the permit requirements or performance standards issued to the owner or occupants at the property within a two year period, the vacation rental zoning permit is summarily revoked, subject to prior notice and to appeal, if requested within 10 days. Should such a revocation occur, an application to reestablish a vacation rental at the subject property shall not be accepted for a minimum period of two years.

When people call the Sheriff instead of the property manager, it appears that violations never get on their record.

This all comes back to having that 24/7 number EASY to find - AND - goes back to the reality that national/International booking companies CANNOT be responsive to complaints. A LOCAL property manager needs to be a REQUIREMENT for owning a VR. There is no other way to accomplish the 30 or 60 minute response time for solving a neighbor's problem with guests in a VR.

4. Violation of Performance Standards –Administrative Citations.

In addition to all other legal remedies, criminal or civil, which may be pursued by the County to address any violation of the County Code, this subsection provides for Administrative Citations.

The LIST that follows this opening paragraph needs to INCLUDE:

- required parking spaces since parking on the street in our tight neighborhoods only takes parking spaces away from people who live there.
- 24/7 property manager contact info shared with neighbors.

(h) Monitoring and Enforcement Fee.

1. An annual fee may be adopted by the board of supervisors and collected by PRMD or the county tax collector to pay for monitoring and enforcement of vacation rentals.

(h) states that a fee *MAY* be adopted. If this fee can pay for 24/7 enforcement - then please make it happen.

The above covers the existing ordinance and our current suggestions. As we learn more we may make additional suggestions to help our communities thrive while being a commercial destination for tourists.

THANK YOU for considering our input,

**Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council
Vacation Rental AdHoc Committee**

Vesta Copestakes

Nic Pereira

Lucy Hardcastle

From: [E Loehrer](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Comments on Vacation Rental
Date: January 20, 2022 9:15:16 AM

EXTERNAL

I have the following concerns about vacation rentals. My home is located on Moriconi Drive. This neighborhood consists of approximately 20 homes on a dead end rural road. There are no sidewalks, fire hydrants, and parking places. The last 2 home sales were converted to vacation rental purposes. Not for full-time Sonoma County residential use. Our area is being converted from a family neighborhood to a tourist zone. I do not think there should be any vacation rentals on dead end rural roads.

Having unattended vacation rentals on dead end county rural residential streets is undesirable for the following reasons:

1. Changes character of neighborhood to tourist zone
2. Traffic and speeders on dead-end streets, risking families and children
3. Empty homes during the weekday - no neighbors- no community support
4. Every home sold as a vacation rental home is one less home for a full-time Sonoma County family. This lowers the housing stock.
5. Allowing vacation rentals is a business model that creates higher demand for these homes and raises prices of homes to further unaffordable levels.
6. This increases the risk of fire hazards. We have had 2 mandatory evacuations in the last 5 years. Will vacationers know how to evacuate. Use of fire pits by vacationers. No fire hydrants in neighborhood.
7. There is no infrastructure to support additional vacationers. Such as sidewalks and parking places.
8. Increased use of well water by vacationers. Our neighborhood is on well and septic systems.
9. Overuse of septic systems by vacationers.

Thank you Eric

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From: [Sally Baker](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Re: Vac Rentals - Neil's comments for your input
Date: Monday, February 21, 2022 3:27:55 PM

EXTERNAL

Hello Gary. I have been busy with personal health issues and a bit of grandparent "duty"(happily) so I just caught up with your message. I appreciate your making the time to respond to my comments. Having worked for the County for many years, I know how demanding it can be manage the demands and especially dealing with a high profile project such as this one. It is tough to navigate when there are competing interests and strong feelings. However, I think that overall you have done an excellent job of marshalling the needed information and explaining the issues and the developing analysis during this process. Thank you for your efforts.

There are a couple of additional comments regarding the allowance of VRs in the agricultural zones in the West County area that I wanted to pass on for your consideration. These thoughts are based on my past work with the County and the experience of having lived in the same home in the 5th District and raised a family with my wife for over 40 years.

First, I think that there are some inaccurate assumptions that are affecting how folks view the likely practical impacts of VRs in these ag zones. Specifically, there has been a tendency to assume that most residential properties in the rural ag zones are located on large parcels which would logically suggest substantially more distance between dwellings. This has led to the thinking that proximity is not an important issue and the possibility of negative impacts of permitting larger groups in non-hosted VRs in such areas is less. However, the reality is much different and resulted from the history of the County's policy approach to residential land use in ag zones. There is much detail to that history, but for present purposes I will just offer a few general observations. When the County was just beginning to take on serious land use planning heading into the 1970s, there was a fairly aggressive pro-residential development attitude that extended to ag areas. In particular, there was a zoning/subdivision approach that attempted to benefit ag owners by effectively allowing them to subdivide their property creating a small residential parcel that could be sold off while preserving larger parcels that continued to be suitable for agricultural production. Most of the smaller parcels created under that scheme had to be less than 2 acres in size. This was taken full advantage of until the attitude of the County leadership shifted dramatically away from residential use in those areas as reflect in certain specific plans and the ongoing general plan updating process. One result is that much of the residential development that occurred was clustered and located in closer proximity to one another along the edges of larger areas of ag land. This can be seen in our area along roads such as Vine Hill Road, Rio Vida Lane, Vine Hill School Road, Vellutini Road, and Maryannis Drive. Thus, on a site-by-site level there are any number of dwellings which are physically closer together than has been assumed.

This is especially significant in these more rural areas in light of a couple of factors. One is that they are by nature quiet ambient sound environments unlike a more urban or dense residential area. By late afternoon to early evening most days the predominant sounds belong to crickets, frogs, birds, and other local fauna. Regular residents greatly value this quality of life and the neighborhood usually finds a way to protect it when necessary. That has not been possible where non-hosted buildings are turned over to relatively large groups for whatever recreational purposes that may desire. I believe that the negative impacts from that are at least as much and often more in these ag areas than in more urban areas.

Second, at an earlier hearing before the BOS Supervisor Hopkins raised a question regarding the legal consistency of VRs in the ag zones. Having been aware of and affected by the VR program since it began, I have long thought that there has not yet been a persuasive case made supporting the general plan consistency of the wholesale allowance of VRs on residential parcels in the ag zones. At the start in 2010 there was a usual general form of discussion of the issue that cited language of the GP and made the simplistic observation that if it were assumed that VRs are similar to B&Bs then they might be considered to be consistent with the GP. I think that the policy development of the GP ag provisions towards the overarching goal of protecting and advancing agricultural production has been a complex and nuanced undertaking, and I think that a compelling argument can be made that the large scale allowance of short term commercial style rentals of single family dwelling properties in agricultural zones is an inconsistent use. Regardless, in enacting a program as far reaching as this one, I do think it is incumbent on the County to comprehensively set forth how it fits within the fundamental policies and guidelines that were so carefully structured to govern our ag zones.

Thanks again Gary for all of your work and I hope all else is great with you. Take care.

Neil Baker
707-829-0396

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, 6:13:08 PM PST, Gary Helfrich <gary.helfrich@sonoma-county.org> wrote:

Hi Neil and Vesta,

Hopefully I can clarify some of your questions:

1. The 24- hour hotline will allow us to track and document after hours complaints far

better than the current system of working through code enforcement. We are keeping the 3-strikes provision, and our hope is that with an easier system in place that is responsive 25/7/365, people will be more likely to use the system and we can develop a more accurate record of who is not following the rules and provide more effective enforcement. Having progressive penalties allows action to be taken at a lower threshold than three citations, allowing us to take action as early as possible. The new ordinance also provides for de-certification of property managers who fail to perform or have a history of not resolving problems with guests.

2. We are carrying forward limiting occupancy based on parking and will require that on-site spaces are configured consistent with the relevant standards found in the Zoning Code. Off street parking must also use a permitted driveway – reserving space along the public road will not be allowed.

3. Occupancy is proposed to be limited to 12 persons regardless of the size of the home and we are recommending removing the section that allows additional guests during the day and on certain holidays.

4. The noise standard, if properly enforced, is more restrictive than most people realize. The 65 decibel max during the day represents normal conversational speech between two people. Nighttime limits are 5 decibels lower. We are also prohibiting any source of percussive noise, such as firecrackers (yes, that is actually a problem right now). The new ordinance will also contain a definition of “amplified sound” so there is no ambiguity. We will require that all operators provide a handbook to their guest explaining Sonoma County regulations and reminding them that they are guests in a neighborhood.

Hope this clarifies some of your questions. Hope you will be able to attend the meeting tomorrow.

Gary

Begin forwarded message:

From: Sally Baker <knsbaker@yahoo.com>

Subject: Vac Rentals

Date: February 16, 2022 at 12:06:47 PM PST

To: Vesta Copestakes <vesta@sonic.net>

Hello Vesta and thank you for the update. I have been monitoring the recent meetings/hearings, including the continued Planning Commission meeting, as well as continuing to review related documents. I agree that there appears to have been significant progress in potentially addressing various neighborhood concerns and you and the Committee are due no small amount of credit for what may be accomplished. There has been a great deal of analysis and input but I think we are at the crucial point where we need to see an actual draft of the ordinance to be able to assess the specifics of the updated vacation rental program. I certainly understand that Gary is not at liberty to share that material with us until the County's internal review is completed; so we will have to just wait and see.

I am sorry that I have not provided comments in response to your messages but I have been dealing with out-patient surgery for skin cancer. I have another follow-up appointment Thursday afternoon and, if all's well, I will try to join the zoom meeting in progress. For what's worth at this point, here are a few inputs:

1. I think we agree that the move to licensing and a hot-line complaint process should be definite improvements. However, the remaining key element remains the treatment of violations. The current ordinance has the three strikes provision which required revocation after three verified violations, but we know how ineffective that has been. It is still unclear to me what the County's approach will in fact be under the proposed ordinance. There is talk of progressive penalties, license suspension, and administrative revocation. However, it appears that it might require more than three verified violations during a 12 month period to even possibly justify denial of a license renewal, and it is not clear that a more immediate revocation can/will result at an earlier point. The ordinance provisions and the County's administration of its provisions must insure that VR owners/property managers are held accountable for verified violations if community trust in this program is to be maintained.

2. I think the clarifications of the parking provisions are generally helpful particularly in regards to the off-site issues. The proposals thus far do address what parking must be available (i.e. minimum requirements). However, I believe in the past the County has interpreted the ordinance to set a maximum permissible on-site parking of one vehicle per permitted bedroom. In earlier presentations, Gary has referred to that element as an additional means of controlling occupancy levels. The new ordinance should carry forward that limitation.

3. Speaking of occupancy: Many of us strongly favor limiting permissible occupancy to something notably less than currently allowed in non-hosted homes in the west county. Turning over an unsupervised property to anywhere from 14 to 18 non-resident folks to recreate often has predictable negative results. Be that as it may, the notion of "daytime occupancy" is unclear. Taken at face value the additional people allowed should be expected to leave at sunset. In practice, VR operators seem to assume that "daytime" means at least up to the beginning of quiet hours at 10 p.m. In the more rural west county areas, allowing the larger group to remain that late into the night often effectively results in the same type of disruption of the neighborhood character as would an increase in the permissible overnight capacity. By 10 p.m. the principal harm has been done and it should be clarified that "daytime" means what it says.

4. I think that the reference to "amplified sound" remains ambiguous for some people. I believe many of us assume that it means any form of amplification of a basic sound input.

That would include stereos, disc players, radios, etc. However, it is common for people at VRs to use bluetooth or other stereo equipment outside and claim that it is not "amplified sound".

Thanks again for all of your efforts and I hope to be able to check in Thursday. Take care.

Neil

Vesta Copestakes
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707-889-0069 cell

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: Comment - Local Coastal Plan/Vac Rentals
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 11:54:21 AM

From: Salvador Borges <shborges@ucdavis.edu>
Sent: January 12, 2022 10:19 AM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Comment - Local Coastal Plan

EXTERNAL

We have a vacation home in Jenner that we rent out for short term rentals. We can only afford to have this second home if we rent it out when we are not there. After we retire this will become our home and not a vacation home.

If we are not allowed to rent it, we would have to sell our house.

Vacation rentals have long been a part of Sonoma County's history. Utilizing existing homes for the same residential purpose does not have adverse environmental impacts. Moreover, it has been well-established that vacation rentals increase access to California's coast, by creating affordable lodging options for visiting families and large groups that could not afford multiple hotel rooms

I would ask you to make it possible for other visiting families and ours to continue to enjoy our coastal house.

Thank you for your consideration.

Salvador Borges

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [Jack Brethauer](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Short term rental policy input
Date: January 19, 2022 5:18:58 PM

EXTERNAL

Dear Planning Commission,

My family is fortunate to own a weekend home in Glen Ellen in the Trinity Oaks development. I urge the committee to lift the moratorium on short term rentals in the burn zone. The additional income it would generate would be a windfall for us, a boost to the local economy, and a source of tax revenue for the county.

Further, I support many of the proposals and regulations commonly considered:

- Cap on total days allowed to rent (San Francisco has a common sense 90 day limit that allows homeowners to make some extra money while disincentivizing pure investors from scooping up housing stock)
- Limit number of people allowed to reside in a rental at any given time,
- License the operators
- limit the number of rental licenses an individual is allowed to hold.
- 24-hour hotline for residents that would allow a faster response to renters violating rules, creating noise, and parking in an unsafe manner.

Thank you
Jack Brethauer
12240 Adine Ct, Glen Ellen

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From: [Maia Cybelle Carpenter](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Cc: [Jean-Philippe Default](#)
Subject: Urgent request for a moratorium on short term vacation rental permits on existing residential rentals
Date: Tuesday, March 01, 2022 1:21:41 PM

EXTERNAL

Dear Gary Helfrich,

We appreciate all you do for Sonoma County and know how busy you are. We heard about the March 17th hearing and though our situation is not with vacation rental investors, we are none-the-less requesting the same moratorium on short term vacation rentals in Sonoma County on long term residential rental properties. We are reaching out in the hope that you can assist in a very difficult situation we find ourselves in with our landlords. We are a family of 3 (+2 cats) that have lived as tenants at 965 Martin Lane, Sebastopol, CA 95472 since August 2020. We are great tenants, always paying our rent on time and living a quiet family life. Since our arrival, the neighbors have welcomed us with open arms and we feel an integral part of the "Martin Lane Community". Our 2 year old daughter is currently enrolled in Brush Creek Montessori preschool in Santa Rosa where we plan on keeping her until she is ready to attend TK at one of the Sebastopol schools.

Prior to signing our lease, our landlords, Kamala Bennett and Geoff Hall who reside in an ADU at 967 Martin Lane, confirmed to us that they wanted long-term tenants. They have had multiple families renting 965 Martin Lane over the past several years. They even said their ideal tenants would stay 5+ years and become part of the community. This was exactly what we were looking for. At the time, they seemed kind and trustworthy, and it was agreed that we were all in it for the long haul.

In mid-January this year, our landlords announced to us that they were going to convert our home, 965 Martin Lane into a short term vacation rental and that they would require us to vacate our home no later than March 2022. It came as a total shock. We explained that we were in no place financially to plan a move, much less disrupt our lives, work schedule and school schedule for our daughter. Unexpectedly, my husband has also lost both his parents overseas in mid January and is deep in funeral arrangements in Europe. Our landlords have shown no sympathy and continue to harass us with messages daily, contractors and visitors who have no relevance to our current tenancy. In addition to the disruption of our schedules, our unvaccinated daughter remains at risk in her own home with all these unnecessary strangers.

The disruption to our lives in order to accommodate them is now excessive and has now impacted our home, family and working lives beyond the acceptable. Additionally, they have banned us from discussing their plans with our friends and neighbors on Martin Lane. One of our neighbors, who heard of their plans by checking the planning website, informed us that they have potentially violated planning regulations and permits on the site, namely by continuing to reside in an ADU that is not correctly permitted to be the owners full time

home while renting out the main home which is our residence.

In complete shock, we started looking for a new home rental suitable for our family, only to realize that there is an extreme housing shortage. We have communicated this to them, but again, they have shown no sympathy and are pressing ahead regardless.

Throughout our tenancy, our landlords continue to get mail and packages at our home. Their businesses (Sentient Landscape LLC), vehicle registrations, household bills remain registered to our home address, and packages arrive on our doorstep daily. They've even set up a new business during our tenancy at our home address (Inhabit Ecological LLC). We have repeatedly asked them to update their address to their actual home, 967 Martin Lane and they consistently refuse to.

All we wish to do is continue to live peacefully in Sebastopol, pay our rent and contribute to the community. We do not have the means to move as this was not in our plans, much less leave the area and pull our daughter out of preschool.

There is already a short term vacation rental property on our small lane, two houses down ([listing link](#)). It sits on the other side of a family with two young daughters. If our home were to be converted to a short term vacation rental property it would mean that the family next door would be sandwiched between two short term vacation rental properties. This would not provide a safe environment for children.

We would like to request an immediate moratorium on short term vacation rental permits on existing residential rental properties in Sonoma County. This will only contribute to decreased well water tables and other environmental impacts, further homelessness, destruction of communities and lack of homes for our local workforce. We've even seen this impact at our daughter's school that is having trouble finding teachers that can afford/find homes to live in the area. Anything you can do to help us would be most appreciated. We never in a million years thought that our landlord would do such a horrible thing to us and other families, much less during the pandemic, much less during a housing shortage.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the situation. Please let us know if you have any questions. Our contact info is below.

Kind regards,

Maia Carpenter & JP Defaut

carpenter.mc@gmail.com 510 681 6780

jpdefaut@gmail.com 415 691 1016

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COMMENTS - LOCAL COASTAL PLAN REVISION 6/2021

From: Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts

July 2, 2021

We commend Permit Sonoma staff and the county for their multi-year effort in completing the Local Coastal Plan draft and updating the prior LCP in so many important areas.

As a group of homeowners who rent or host their homes in Sonoma County and to coastal visitors on a short-term basis we were especially interested in the Land Use Element – Implementation Programs – Program C-CU-1 to establish performance standards for the use of existing residences for vacation rentals and hosted rentals. We look forward to the proposed performance standards and any public workshop that may be held to discuss them.

We have reviewed and are aware of the existing inland VR Ordinance and Special Use Standards for Hosted Rentals. We look forward in working with you in the preparation of performance standards that include coastal zone homes. We ask that you make clear that short-term renting or hosting our homes is still a residential use of our homes.

Short Term Rental Owners/Hosts Provide Public Coastal Access

Our vacation rental (VR) owners and hosts want to operate responsibly and continue to open our homes to the public by providing affordable accommodations to many Californians who would otherwise not be able to stay overnight on the coast. The revised LCP noted there are 374 hotel/motel rooms on the Sonoma County coastal zone. This is a small number of overnight facilities for a 55 miles long coastal area.

The coastal VR/short-term rentals and hosts add so many more tourist overnight facilities to these few hotel/motel rooms. They have done this for decades. These owners have been a part of the fabric of our coastal communities and have done much to ensure the public's access to the coast.

Many of the VR owners/hosts are “mom & pop” owner/hosts – some even “mom” only - who are doing their best to keep their homes, pay off their mortgages, and be part of the communities they have enjoyed for years. It is a win-win for the county and the Coastal Commission that so many of us are willing to share our homes with the public.

Most whole-house short-term rental (STR) properties are someone's home that is being rented out when they are not able to be there. The ability to earn short term income on the property is what makes that ownership affordable for them. Otherwise they may not be able to afford the home which may be their dream home where they plan to live in retirement or leave to their grandkids.

Coastal VR owners and hosts come in many versions but one thing is for sure: nearly all VR owners have only one coastal home and they work hard to keep it and share it with the public. They may have bought it for future residency on the coast. For retirees, pensions are becoming a thing of the past and owning a vacation rental home is not only a way to make ends meet, it's a retirement nest egg. These coastal owners may have inherited it from their family, or are folks who live and work in the bay area and cannot afford a home there but want to begin building equity themselves (and enjoy a weekend at the coast when they can) while continuing to work/rent down south.

Without the option to earn extra income through flexible short term rentals, siblings might have to sell the inherited family home, divorced or widowed mothers may not be able to maintain the coastal home. Only the uber-rich who can afford to maintain a vacant second home during their own absences will be purchasing. In this scenario many lovely coastal homes will be vacant and the public will truly suffer.

Most short term rental properties are someone's 2d home, or with bay area renters – their *only* home. These individuals may have hopes of retiring and living in it permanently one day, but while working they can't afford two homes, two mortgages, two insurance policies, or pay taxes on two properties. The only way average folks can retain use and still afford a retirement home is to offer it short term until they pay off the property in many years – at which time they can retire and live permanently in their coastal home.

The Sonoma Coast VR owners/hosts easily double the number of overnight tourist facilities in the coastal zone. There will not always be owners who choose to open their home to the public. The availability of VR homes will wax and wane depending on the price of the homes and who buys them. It is difficult to mandate that people live in their homes permanently or rent their homes long-term. This is often a personal decision based on family needs and personal preference. There may be a time when few coastal owners want to rent their homes short term – that will be a loss for the public seeking low cost, affordable overnight rentals.

Comments – Short Term Rental Restrictions

Allow Coastal Zone homeowners the option to choose how they wish to purpose their home, and don't prohibit lower cost housing from being used as a vacation rental, as the cost of other properties that are higher value, will ultimately make it too expensive for low to moderate income families to enjoy the Coastal Zone. This will help ensure maximum public access, because without lower cost visitor serving facilities, members of the public with low or moderate incomes would be more limited in their ability to access and enjoy the coast. **Creating an ordinance that only allows wealthy homes to be used as vacation rentals, only allows the wealthy to stay in Sonoma County.**

Hosted rentals allow anyone to use a portion of their home, for additional, flexible income. This extra income helps people make ends meet or meet their goals. Restricting hosted rentals to only 1 room limits not only the homeowner, but the supply of affordable accommodations to low or moderate income individuals. **Allow hosted**

rentals the option to purpose more than 1 room short-term, so affordable accommodations can be available to singles, couples, and low or moderate income visitors. This will help ensure maximum public access, by providing lower cost visitor facilities, so all members of the public can enjoy the coast. Food Service, if provided, could be “grab” and “go” items as in budget hotels/motels, so there is a distinction from B&B’s.

Accessory Dwelling Units that are offered short term would allow public access along the Sonoma Coast by offering affordable accommodations to lower and middle income individuals and families, as they are often less expensive than equivalent lodging in a hotel.

- Short-term rental use of ADU/JADU units offer property owners much more flexibility in how their property is being used.
- Units can be used by adult children or other family members who have short-term need of housing (school breaks, job change, visiting family).
- Units can easily be converted to full-time rentals or any other use, as the owner sees fit depending on family needs.

Comments – Additional Points

We agree with Permit Sonoma that a better way to regulate STRs is to limit the number of permits one owner can be issued. This is recommended over density limits and proximity limits – especially on the coast where so many homes are not occupied by permanent residents, and the population is about 3500.

- All existing STR homes should be grandfathered in when the coast is regulated
- There should be a maximum of 3 permits allowed for an owner
- Corporations should not be issued permits for STRs

This would be fair to Coastal Zone owners, a boon to the California public seeking coastal access, and allow private individuals the option to purpose a home short term.

Conclusion

We ask that the county not place restrictions on vacation rental or hosting in the Coastal Zone. We can work with performance standards. That can be an enhancement for the public and our communities. But placing density caps, proximity limits, and other restrictions on vacation rental homes negatively affects average folks. In their time of need, will a permit even be available for them? One never knows when some unexpected event will happen (i.e. loss of a job, care of a loved one, divorce or death of a spouse) and they find themselves needing to earn extra income – offering a home short-term could be the only way to make ends meet. Please do not close the doors on us and create obstacles to our way of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts.

From: [Craig McCaleb](#)
To: [PRMD-LCP-Update](#)
Subject: Short term rentals in Sonoma County
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 7:58:05 AM

EXTERNAL

My family loves Sonoma County. Like many Bay Area Families we have been coming to the coast and Russian River area for decades. We have camped and swam along the river. We have stayed in hotels large and small, we have eaten at local restaurants and loved the food and the ambience. My in-laws loved it so much they bought a small home near the river about 20 years ago. They lived there for a short time but were too aged to be able to be there alone. Now the home has passed on to us. We hope to retire here someday, but the only way we can afford to keep the home, pay the expenses and allow our family to enjoy it is by renting short term. Here in Duncans Mills there are no hotels for miles in either direction. Short-term rentals are necessary to provide access to the coast and customers for our wonderful local businesses. We love Sonoma County. We get along well with our neighbors because we actively manage the home and visit often. We speak to every guest before allowing them into our home. We encourage them to patronize local businesses. We tell them we have strict limits on occupancy. We tell them that noise must be kept to a minimum. We have a local person who helps us manage the property. We have a detailed contract that reiterates these restrictions. We have security cameras around the exterior so we can see if there are excess cars in the parking area or people around the property. I understand the concerns of some community members and I have no sympathy for property owners that allow parties and unlimited guests. I believe these concerns can be balanced with those of us who wish to provide short term rentals responsibly.

Thank You for your attention to my letter,
Craig and Sudia McCaleb

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: KEEP VACATION RENTALS IN SONOMA COUNTY!!!
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 11:51:57 AM
Attachments: [Unequal-Access-CA-Coastal-Report-FINAL-.pdf](#)

From: Ashley Cravens <ashley@uncorkcapital.com>
Sent: January 11, 2022 6:38 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: KEEP VACATION RENTALS IN SONOMA COUNTY!!!

EXTERNAL

Hello,

Writing in as I cannot attend the in person meeting. I urge you to keep vacation rentals a part of sonoma county. Sonoma County is a draw from around the world, people come to the county to visit the amazing terrain, coasts, vineyards and it brings a massive boost to the economy. Travelers don't want to stay in hotels when traveling in groups, they want to be able to rent homes so families can stay together, groups can enjoy evenings w/ a bottle of wine from the vineyard, they want to be able to purchase local food from the amazing producers and cook breakfast at home.

You will also limit the ability to share California with families who cannot afford the astronomical cost of multiple hotel rooms, creating more disparity between rich and poor and people of color.

Your data is not substantiated, I urge you to read the attached report before ruining part of Sonoma County's history!

|

Ashley Cravens

Director of Operations and Head of Platform, Uncork Capital

O: 650-688-1801 M: 503-764-5955

New! Get updates about our companies here: [@uncorkcap](#)

Sent via [Superhuman](#)

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From: [Michael Cutburth](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Vacation rentals
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 10:13:42 PM

EXTERNAL

Hello,

We are a two heads family living in Sebastopol. We both have local jobs with good pay and benefits. My partner has lived here her entire life. I have lived here for 11 years.

It remains out of reach for us to buy a home and have been looking for years. We believe very much that working people should have a way to live in the place they work.

And dream of living in a place where the majority of people own, live and work here too.

At the least rent is affordable and housing isn't the obstacle it continues to be. It is very frustrating especially when big investors buying and adding to their portfolio outbid families trying to make a home.

Thank you for your Your work,
Michael Cutburth

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [hdlil](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Airbnb hear comments
Date: January 19, 2022 2:49:02 PM

EXTERNAL

As the owner of an Airbnb, I find there are many benefits to the community because of extra business to local restaurants and other businesses. The occupancy is a max of two people which creates little to no impact upon the neighborhood.

HolLynn DeLil
Graton

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From: [Claire Fetrow](#)
To: [Nic Pereira](#)
Cc: [West County Gazette](#); [Sally Baker](#); [Lucy Hardcastle](#); [Esa Day](#); [Ceylan Crow](#); [Pip Marquez de la Plata](#); [Elise Weiland](#); [Gary Helfrich](#); [Nance Jones](#)
Subject: Re: VR committee notes and images for report
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 12:31:34 PM

EXTERNAL

Maybe you won't feel its enough of an enforcement, but I did get the cabin across from me red tagged for no permit. That property owner had a period of time to comply, or be heavily fined. She sold that property, and now the subsequent property owner is compliant, and doing vacation rental, but we are on MUCH different terms, she has taken positive actions, despite my skepticism, and we are on good terms, working together. She has been professional, has a really nice local property manager, and they met with the neighbors and discussed issues, and were coming up with solutions on the spot and very proactive. She even has noise detection software that texts the guests when they are being too loud! Lights are set to timers and motion sensors, per my request, and off at 10pm. They are available and eager to help 24/7.

It's nice to have good news to report. We have had two sales of homes around us recently, not sure how they will go, but if they turn, I will have four properties adjacent to me as vacation rentals.

That being said, I am still not stoked about having strangers coming and going 365 days a year, but having a property owner (you see I do not use the term neighbor here, as they are not neighbors) who is proactive right now, feels much better.

The last property owner was not, her proactiveness was texting me to tell me she did not give a damn about the neighborhoods wishes. Makes sense, she never intended to be there.

Another distinction should be made.

The river area was a vacation destination historically.....for the same families year after year, who knew each other, and functioned as neighbors, they did things together and hosted events, I had one across from me for 20 years, they are far different than what we know now.. FAR different than todays vacationers, who are brought by the massive entities of VRBO AirBNB and such. These are investment driven, thats not the same as years gone by, and should be differentiated from the current situation.

Claire Fetrow
The Hub Cyclery
Cotati, Ca
www.thehubcyclery.com

On Jun 18, 2021, at 9:59 AM, Nic Pereira <nic.rrmac@gmail.com> wrote:

These are the notes I spoke from last night, though they're not my complete remarks.

“ We need a robust mechanism to address violations in a transparent fashion. The perception in the community is that there *is no* enforcement and for the residents of the Lower River, perception is reality. We can't find a single instance of a permit being revoked for violations of the VR ordinance and without any sort of weekend enforcement, the county can be reasonably questioned about its sincerity regarding such enforcement. Permit Sonoma is critically under resourced when it comes to enforcement and we see this in other areas as well, the ongoing situation with Winery Events for example. The County doesn't even have an accurate count of permitted rental, no central database of these properties and no way to contact the owners or agents in case of emergencies or evacuations.”

~ Nic
Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 18, 2021, at 9:35 AM, Vesta Copestakes <vesta@sonic.net>
wrote:

Nic - will you please send your notes as well for nance's Meeting notes

THANK YOU

<6-17-21 Meeting Prep.zip>

Vesta Copestakes
vesta.rmac@gmail.com
707-887-0253 landline
707-889-0069 cell

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#); [Cecily Condon](#)
Subject: FW: Short Term Rentals - STRs
Date: Friday, September 17, 2021 11:04:36 AM
Attachments: [Santa Rosa STR Summary 091021 .docx](#)
[Revenue TOT Account Workbook \(1\).xlsm](#)
[SR City Complaint Manifest ef1.xlsx](#)
[Suggestions for Santa Rosa STR Policy 091021 \(1\).docx](#)

From: Eric Fraser <truthintourism@gmail.com>
Sent: September 16, 2021 3:26 PM
To: erickoenigshofer@sonoma-county.org
Cc: Short Term Rentals <shorttermrentals@srcity.org>; farmer.cmac@mcn.org; PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>; Linda Schiltgen <Linda.Schiltgen@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Short Term Rentals - STRs

EXTERNAL

Hello Commissioner Koenigshofer;

Thanks for the opportunity to engage during the Coastal MAC meeting last night.

I want to continue to provide some information to you regarding STRs, and appreciate your time to examine and process information for verifiable facts. Our involvement is to try to keep the discussion factual, and under Supervisor Hopkin's leadership that has been very difficult.

First to address some issues about County "Vacation Rental" permits inland. Gary is misleading you about whether a permit is "active" in the sense of whether the STR is accepting guests, or has accepted guests over the past X term (choose month, 6 months, year, etc.). The permit process is cumulative, in that if the permit is not cancelled through sale of the property, by enforcement action, or **voluntarily** cancelled by the property's owner, it stays on the rolls of TOT collecting/remitting properties. Don't forget STR owners must pay for the permit, so why would they relinquish it even if they are not using it? Our hypothesis is that only about 600 - 700 STRs in the inland areas have been accepting guests subject to TOT this year (2021). We have some research already that shows that the 1,900 permit number Gary uses is inaccurate. (See below for our request for more County data using PRA).

of properties operate without collecting taxes? Well, very few is our hypothesis. Gary and Supervisor Hopkins failed to mention that the County has cooperative agreements in place with Airbnb and VRBO to collect the taxes during the booking process and remit them to the County directly.

They are also deceptive by not explaining that STRs are an incremental use of property. Unused spaces are listed on the platforms for people to reserve, with obvious safeguards in place for property owners to protect their property, and to mitigate potential negative impacts. (Judging

from your comments at the meeting, it doesn't sound like you would agree with the idea that people sharing their homes are concerned about impacts to the neighbors and community, but when you look at verifiable complaints, resolutions, and interview parties involved a completely different story emerges than what Supervisor Hopkins would have you - and us - believe).

We will be able to provide a factual, peer-reviewed analysis to support the above information.

We have also successfully rebutted other important representations made by Supervisor Hopkins and other STR-detractors, and have found them to be false. This is a continuation of the disinformation that Ms. Hopkins is producing (Frankly, I can't believe that you are lining up behind this as well, having respect for your intellectual curiosity and fact-based deliberations from your prior service.) We have research specific to our area which we will gladly share with you ASAP.

- STRs do not diminish workforce housing or affordable housing.
- STRs have no impact on RHNA numbers.
- STRs are not hotels in any way.
- There is no enterprise motivation for the STR property owner (short term profits). Income from STRs offsets housing costs, maintenance, guest services, management, cleaning and the like leaving no profit, but instead a loss from operations (if STRs were actually "businesses"). That's not to say that there isn't an ecosystem of enterprise for STRs. It is certainly true that the platforms, management companies, cleaning companies, as well as the entire "tourist" economy are motivated for near-term operational profits. Research of specific STR properties in Santa Rosa shows the lack of profit, and furthermore supports the counter-intuitive reality that property owners make robust investments in their property and have higher maintenance standards than neighboring properties. (For a related parable, ask me about apples in the West County.) That's why a business license for STR properties makes no sense.

Business licenses may make sense for the actual businesses that are enterprises in the STR ecosystem including management companies, platforms, cleaners, builders, etc that service the STRs (but it appears the Hopkins business license strategy is just to single out STRs). Also, there is a stack of cloud-based companies who would love to serve the government (that's why they have no problems serving up false information about illegal STRs, missing taxes, required "web scraping", problems, problems, problems... they feed that animus that local politicians like Supervisor Hopkins thrive on. This "bought and paid for" environment is also what served up the erroneous report purchased in 2015 with the incorrect notion of STRs' diminishing affordable housing in the County.)

Furthermore we find that STRs are supportive of important legal considerations you should acknowledge:

- STRs are important for creating and maintaining affordable lodging not only where visitors have the law on their side (Coast and River) but everywhere. Obviously, STRs are used for more than vacations, so the area an STR is located in may have a different composition of visitors (people from in-County, people from the region, visiting workers, evacuees, emergency responders, people seeking medical treatment, relatives/friends of County residents, others) . Overall, the market determines whether more or fewer STRs are viable in an area. We are very interested in exploring

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Looking forward to being of service,

Eric Fraser
TRUTH IN TOURISM
707.479-8247

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Executive Summary

City of Santa Rosa

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Research led by E.M. Fraser using information provided by the City Clerk in response to CPRA requests, shows that since 2015 ~430 properties (residential and commercial) have established TOT accounts that have remittances in at least 1Q during that time. The amount of TOT collected per year ranges from \$5.00 to \$1,300,000.00. Further analysis shows ~30 Commercial properties compared to ~400 STRs historically in the aggregate. The number of commercial accounts active in 2021: **19**; 2020: **21**; 2019, 2018: **23**; 2017, 2016, 2015: **25**. STRs remitting in any one year shows 2021: **129**; 2020: **174**;

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In September 2021, E.M. Fraser and his team examined over 24,000 records provided by the City through CPRA and on-line from Code Enforcement, Police, and Fire to determine "complaints" with nexus to TOT remitting addresses since 2015.⁷ 157 records were tagged as having some relationship with a TOT remitting address since 2015. Upon further analysis, 102 were connected in some way to a commercial address. 35 of the 55 remaining complaints happened before or after the property was a STR, or irrelevant because they had nothing to do with STRs hosting guests (focus was on chickens, goats, fences, windows, etc.) Of the 20 remaining "complaints", they correspond to just 12 addresses. 9 of those addresses had only one complaint (2 from 2016, 1 in 2017, 1 in 2019, 2 in 2020, and 3 in 2021): violations include erecting a Yurt, using an RV, noise complaints (some unfounded), illegal conversion of a garage, trash cans left out. 3 addresses had a total of 11 complaints (mostly from 2020 and 2021): Montgomery 2, Knob Hill 3, and Sunrise 6. Knob Hill is a 6 br/4 bath valued by the website Redfin at \$1.4 million. Sunrise is a 9 br/7 bath valued at \$2 million.⁸

Research by E.M. Fraser's team highlights concerns about SRTBIA governance (STR owners/managers are barred from serving on the oversight/executive committee), SRTBIA expenditures and receipts, contracts with IRONMAN and subsequent economic impact analysis, Out There! Santa Rosa! expenditures and cash accounting, BIA/TOT collection from special classifications of guests (e.g. evacuees), whether BIA/TOT can be assessed on guests staying at residential properties anyway, and the City's disconnect over the role STRs play in emergencies. There are also financial impacts (mostly positive) that STRs create within a household (both guest and host), in a neighborhood, as well as in the larger community. Since we would be hard pressed to present an enterprise case using any STR property in Santa Rosa, understanding economic benefits sans profit motivations unlocks the benefits STRs bring to almost any neighborhood. We are also very concerned when government strays from verifiable facts when making policy.

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Suggestions for Santa Rosa STR Policy

Urgency:

- 1) Reinforce the existing ordinances for Noise, Parking, Special Events, Nuisance, and other property-specific sources of complaints. Inasmuch as these complaints implicate STRs, the number of non-STR addresses with multiple complaints within the past 24 months is staggering (in the hundreds) and is the real reason for ongoing constituent concerns. Inasmuch as policy makers and politicians attempt to blame STRs for a litany of negative impacts, facts don't support those narratives.
- 2) Facts do not support the premise that there are hundreds of properties in the City limits that are not remitting TOT/BIA. There is an easy fix to assure that the City collect revenue it believes it is entitled to: enter into the cooperative agreements with Airbnb, VRBO and other platforms. According to information surfaced during a PRA request, the City believes that most of the transactions occur on those platforms. As you can see for the attached workbooks, the City's accounting over STRs is in a bit of disarray. We have advocated for the City to sign these agreements for several years. The average STR is active only for a few years and does not produce much TOT when compared to commercial properties.
- 3) Other fixes to Finance Department procedures:
 - a. Issue TOT Certificates with unique account numbers. The account number must be used on all listings wherein the owner/manager advertises the property as available. Annual cost for a tax certificate to be \$25 - \$75 regardless of property size or whether a commercial or residential address.
 - b. TOT Certificates need an application. The application collects information including: Name/address/contact for Owner, name/address/contact for 24-hour manager (shared with police/fire), description of unit (#BRs offered, parking, location address), marketing platforms used, and anticipated TOT remittances for the upcoming year. The certificate might also stipulate what conditions would pre-empt its renewal.
- 4) Zoning and Code Enforcement
 - a. Code Enforcement must be equally applied across all property types. Unless there are clear penalties for violations, and for unfounded complaints then the system (alongside police calls-for-service) with continue to be manipulated by vexatious complaints as well as scoff-law violators.
 - b. "Unhosted" – Homes that accept guests without on-site hosts on the property (or adjacent to it) rise to the top of the pile of the 12 properties with some nexus with complaints over the past 5 years. Neighbors are riled mostly by the irresponsible rhetoric and their constructed beliefs (biases), but to the degree that there are actionable complaints they should be easily remedied using existing ordinances (once perhaps tightened up...see suggestion #1 above). Acceptable practice is to allow 2 people per bedroom plus 2 people when setting occupancy.
 - c. Mandatory Mediation - Complaint resolution should also include the requirement for mandatory mediation so properties (STR and non-STRs) who

have ongoing issues left unmitigated (or are victim to harassment by neighbors) can enter a quasi-legal process to resolve the issues. The cost of mitigation is borne by the parties held responsible (owner/manager, resident, or complainer) by the third-party mediator. Resolution may include a stipulated agreement for the property to limit occupancy, stop the nuisances found to be legitimate, and put people making unfounded complaints on legal notice. The mediation process and stipulated agreements would be the entry point for further legal action should that prove necessary.

- d. "Hosted" – Property owners should continue to have the right to have guests to the extent that legal occupation of the unit allows. Other than those requirements listed above for the TOT Certificate, and to operate under current ordinances in effect, no changes are needed.
- 5) The definitions within the TOT and BIA ordinances need to be clarified. No, STRs are not "hotels", and as we will see there will be more discussion as to whether STRs are legally subjected to the BIA.

STR Policy Overall

- 1) STR Policy creation needs to go through the legal process allowing for serious public participation, planning commission process, and allowing time for facts to be verified.
- 2) Stakeholders including the posse present at the 8/10/21 subcommittee meeting (PED, SRPD, activist staff, and blustering politicians) alongside STR owners/managers, representatives from the platforms, economists and other subject matter experts, visitor rights advocates, and the community must be allowed to participate.

To discuss these points:

Eric Fraser
Lead Researcher
Truth in Tourism
truthintourism@gmail.com
707.479-8247

9/10/21

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#); [Cecily Condon](#)
Subject: FW: Short Term Rentals - STRs
Date: Friday, September 17, 2021 11:04:36 AM
Attachments: [Santa Rosa STR Summary 091021 .docx](#)
[Revenue TOT Account Workbook \(1\).xlsm](#)
[SR City Complaint Manifest ef1.xlsx](#)
[Suggestions for Santa Rosa STR Policy 091021 \(1\).docx](#)

From: Eric Fraser <truthintourism@gmail.com>
Sent: September 16, 2021 3:26 PM
To: erickoenigshofer@sonoma-county.org
Cc: Short Term Rentals <shorttermrentals@srcity.org>; farmer.cmac@mcn.org; PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>; Linda Schiltgen <Linda.Schiltgen@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Short Term Rentals - STRs

EXTERNAL

Hello Commissioner Koenigshofer;

Thanks for the opportunity to engage during the Coastal MAC meeting last night.

I want to continue to provide some information to you regarding STRs, and appreciate your time to examine and process information for verifiable facts. Our involvement is to try to keep the discussion factual, and under Supervisor Hopkin's leadership that has been very difficult.

First to address some issues about County "Vacation Rental" permits inland. Gary is misleading you about whether a permit is "active" in the sense of whether the STR is accepting guests, or has accepted guests over the past X term (choose month, 6 months, year, etc.). The permit process is cumulative, in that if the permit is not cancelled through sale of the property, by enforcement action, or **voluntarily** cancelled by the property's owner, it stays on the rolls of TOT collecting/remitting properties. Don't forget STR owners must pay for the permit, so why would they relinquish it even if they are not using it? Our hypothesis is that only about 600 - 700 STRs in the inland areas have been accepting guests subject to TOT this year (2021). We have some research already that shows that the 1,900 permit number Gary uses is inaccurate. (See below for our request for more County data using PRA).

of properties operate without collecting taxes? Well, very few is our hypothesis. Gary and Supervisor Hopkins failed to mention that the County has cooperative agreements in place with Airbnb and VRBO to collect the taxes during the booking process and remit them to the County directly.

They are also deceptive by not explaining that STRs are an incremental use of property. Unused spaces are listed on the platforms for people to reserve, with obvious safeguards in place for property owners to protect their property, and to mitigate potential negative impacts. (Judging

from your comments at the meeting, it doesn't sound like you would agree with the idea that people sharing their homes are concerned about impacts to the neighbors and community, but when you look at verifiable complaints, resolutions, and interview parties involved a completely different story emerges than what Supervisor Hopkins would have you - and us - believe).

We will be able to provide a factual, peer-reviewed analysis to support the above information.

We have also successfully rebutted other important representations made by Supervisor Hopkins and other STR-detractors, and have found them to be false. This is a continuation of the disinformation that Ms. Hopkins is producing (Frankly, I can't believe that you are lining up behind this as well, having respect for your intellectual curiosity and fact-based deliberations from your prior service.) We have research specific to our area which we will gladly share with you ASAP.

- STRs do not diminish workforce housing or affordable housing.
- STRs have no impact on RHNA numbers.
- STRs are not hotels in any way.
- There is no enterprise motivation for the STR property owner (short term profits). Income from STRs offsets housing costs, maintenance, guest services, management, cleaning and the like leaving no profit, but instead a loss from operations (if STRs were actually "businesses"). That's not to say that there isn't an ecosystem of enterprise for STRs. It is certainly true that the platforms, management companies, cleaning companies, as well as the entire "tourist" economy are motivated for near-term operational profits. Research of specific STR properties in Santa Rosa shows the lack of profit, and furthermore supports the counter-intuitive reality that property owners make robust investments in their property and have higher maintenance standards than neighboring properties. (For a related parable, ask me about apples in the West County.) That's why a business license for STR properties makes no sense.

Business licenses may make sense for the actual businesses that are enterprises in the STR ecosystem including management companies, platforms, cleaners, builders, etc that service the STRs (but it appears the Hopkins business license strategy is just to single out STRs). Also, there is a stack of cloud-based companies who would love to serve the government (that's why they have no problems serving up false information about illegal STRs, missing taxes, required "web scraping", problems, problems, problems... they feed that animus that local politicians like Supervisor Hopkins thrive on. This "bought and paid for" environment is also what served up the erroneous report purchased in 2015 with the incorrect notion of STRs' diminishing affordable housing in the County.)

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Looking forward to being of service,

Eric Fraser
TRUTH IN TOURISM
707.479-8247

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Suggestions for Santa Rosa STR Policy

Urgency:

- 1) Reinforce the existing ordinances for Noise, Parking, Special Events, Nuisance, and other property-specific sources of complaints. Inasmuch as these complaints implicate STRs, the number of non-STR addresses with multiple complaints within the past 24 months is staggering (in the hundreds) and is the real reason for ongoing constituent concerns. Inasmuch as policy makers and politicians attempt to blame STRs for a litany of negative impacts, facts don't support those narratives.
- 2) Facts do not support the premise that there are hundreds of properties in the City limits that are not remitting TOT/BIA. There is an easy fix to assure that the City collect revenue it believes it is entitled to: enter into the cooperative agreements with Airbnb, VRBO and other platforms. According to information surfaced during a PRA request, the City believes that most of the transactions occur on those platforms. As you can see for the attached workbooks, the City's accounting over STRs is in a bit of disarray. We have advocated for the City to sign these agreements for several years. The average STR is active only for a few years and does not produce much TOT when compared to commercial properties.
- 3) Other fixes to Finance Department procedures:
 - a. Issue TOT Certificates with unique account numbers. The account number must be used on all listings wherein the owner/manager advertises the property as available. Annual cost for a tax certificate to be \$25 - \$75 regardless of property size or whether a commercial or residential address.
 - b. TOT Certificates need an application. The application collects information including: Name/address/contact for Owner, name/address/contact for 24-hour manager (shared with police/fire), description of unit (#BRs offered, parking, location address), marketing platforms used, and anticipated TOT remittances for the upcoming year. The certificate might also stipulate what conditions would pre-empt its renewal.
- 4) Zoning and Code Enforcement
 - a. Code Enforcement must be equally applied across all property types. Unless there are clear penalties for violations, and for unfounded complaints then the system (alongside police calls-for-service) will continue to be manipulated by vexatious complaints as well as scoff-law violators.
 - b. "Unhosted" – Homes that accept guests without on-site hosts on the property (or adjacent to it) rise to the top of the pile of the 12 properties with some nexus with complaints over the past 5 years. Neighbors are riled mostly by the irresponsible rhetoric and their constructed beliefs (biases), but to the degree that there are actionable complaints they should be easily remedied using existing ordinances (once perhaps tightened up...see suggestion #1 above). Acceptable practice is to allow 2 people per bedroom plus 2 people when setting occupancy.
 - c. Mandatory Mediation - Complaint resolution should also include the requirement for mandatory mediation so properties (STR and non-STRs) who

have ongoing issues left unmitigated (or are victim to harassment by neighbors) can enter a quasi-legal process to resolve the issues. The cost of mitigation is borne by the parties held responsible (owner/manager, resident, or complainer) by the third-party mediator. Resolution may include a stipulated agreement for the property to limit occupancy, stop the nuisances found to be legitimate, and put people making unfounded complaints on legal notice. The mediation process and stipulated agreements would be the entry point for further legal action should that prove necessary.

- d. "Hosted" – Property owners should continue to have the right to have guests to the extent that legal occupation of the unit allows. Other than those requirements listed above for the TOT Certificate, and to operate under current ordinances in effect, no changes are needed.
- 5) The definitions within the TOT and BIA ordinances need to be clarified. No, STRs are not "hotels", and as we will see there will be more discussion as to whether STRs are legally subjected to the BIA.

STR Policy Overall

- 1) STR Policy creation needs to go through the legal process allowing for serious public participation, planning commission process, and allowing time for facts to be verified.
- 2) Stakeholders including the posse present at the 8/10/21 subcommittee meeting (PED, SRPD, activist staff, and blustering politicians) alongside STR owners/managers, representatives from the platforms, economists and other subject matter experts, visitor rights advocates, and the community must be allowed to participate.

To discuss these points:

Eric Fraser
Lead Researcher
Truth in Tourism
truthintourism@gmail.com
707.479-8247

9/10/21

Dear Supervisor Gorin and Mr. Helfrich,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us this coming Wednesday, September 8 at 4PM on Zoom. We are looking forward to discussing some critical fire and road safety issues we have in relation to the recent AvantStay rentals at 17307 and 17333 Gehricke Road, as well as the future of vacation rentals up here at the top of Gehricke Road, which we refer to as Gehricke Loop.

To make the best use of our time, we felt it would be most efficient to submit in advance of the meeting the list of topics and questions we plan on covering.

Our objectives:

1. Curtail the elements of the AvantStay vacation rentals that put us in danger
2. Halt further vacation rentals on Gehricke Rd.
3. Address re-zoning all of Gehricke Road, or only Gehricke Loop, as our needs as small (under 1.5 acres) property owners are very different from the 400+ acre ranches that bear the same road name but are in fact working agricultural businesses.
4. Share our experiences and suggestions to influence decisions that will be made regarding vacation rentals, and who can purchase property for what reasons in high-risk fire areas

About Gehricke Road...

Gehricke Rd. is a 1-lane, 3.5 mile winding country road that cuts through densely wooded terrain. The lower half of the road is County maintained; the upper half is privately maintained. App. 2/3 of the way up, the road splits in two. The lower road goes to 5 agricultural ranches of app. 400+ acres each. The upper road ends in a circle (referred to by the owners as Gehricke Loop).

Gehricke Loop has 17 homes and 12 property owners (two owners live in one home and rent the other long-term, and have 2 homes on their property; Banda Investments is an absentee owner of two unoccupied homes). Two lots are undeveloped; the typical lot size is under 1.5 acres. Thus a total of 15 residences in a one mile loop.

All the resident owners but one have lived here over 30 years, and are over 70.

As houses and lots have been sold, we have witnessed a constant cavalcade of construction for 8 years. The two most recent construction projects lasted 3 years each. All 3 of those houses are presently on the market (21% of total properties). The Birch Ranch construction has been going on for over 10 years and we are assured it will continue for at least 4 more years.

All the residents love their homes and woody properties, and respect the lifestyle they chose to drive carefully, alert neighbors of any incident, and band together when needed. Our greatest community concern is safety – on the road and in case of fire.

Traveling the road is at best challenging and at worst, treacherous. The road is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass -- one has to pull off the road or into a turnout for travel to continue. There are many twists and turns that limit visibility. In the morning and late afternoon we have "rush hour" when the construction and ranch/vineyard workers are leaving.

There is no cell phone coverage most of the way.

I. AvantStay/Vacation Rentals

Review to date: In August, it was discovered that AvantStay was operating the 2 newly constructed houses owned by Banda Investments without a permit. PRMD allowed the renters to remain **8+ days** after the illegal operation was brought to their attention. Following our correspondence about that with PRMD and Supervisor Gorin's office, AvantStay's website advertised "minimum 30 days" rental. In communications with Hafeez Ismael, representing Banda Investments (absentee owners) he instructed us to interact with AvantStay, not him. He took 2+ weeks to respond to our request for responsible party, contact info, and safety information.

Update – Guests have been occupying 17307 since app. August 30, and 17333 since Sept. 2. Renters of 17333 were there for 4 days over Labor Day weekend. Neighbors have received no notification from PRMD of rental permits being issued. Website shows availability for latter half of Sept.

Questions:

- Why did the county permitting office permit AvantStay to keep operating after it was revealed they had no permit?
- What were the consequences to AvantStay and/or Banda Investments?
- What fines were levied? To Whom – both owner and AvantStay? Presuming 20-30 rental days for each house at their advertised rates average (\$2000/house/night), AvantStay collected \$80,000-120,000 during this period of illegal operation.
- What is the current status of AvantStay's permit application?
- Are there any requirements for property owners to communicate essential contact, road safety and fire/evacuation safety information to the neighbors directly bordering the rental property?
- What are neighbors to do about an absentee owner who has not responded to requests for how emergency notifications and plans have been assigned? How are the owner's responsibilities different from the management company's in this regard?
- What would you recommend from your experience we do in this situation? We feel vulnerable and that our safety is compromised by this absentee owner.
- Gehricke Rd. is designated a **high risk fire area**. AvantStay does not provide guests with any evacuation or emergency instructions. Do you consider this safe for the renters and the community?
- Does PRMD have fire-safety and evacuation requirements for vacation homes in those areas? How are they disseminated and enforced?

II. All Vacation Rentals

Vacation rentals are not appropriate for Gehricke Road. They endanger the safety and escape of residents in a fire.

Why is Gehricke Rd. inappropriate for vacation rentals?

1. It's a dangerous road.
 - *There is no cell service or GPS on over 2/3 of Gehricke Rd.*
 - There are infrequent turnouts.
 - In many areas the dropoff is too steep for a car without 4-wheel drive.
 - The increase of Amazon, UPS/Fedex and other delivery services has increased traffic and danger.
 - Most vacation renters are driving after consuming alcohol.

2. Water resources. We all have wells; the rental houses have installed huge water tanks to serve the shower, pool and irrigation needs for a population of 10 per house.
3. No responsible party for communicating evacuation plan, emergency information (PG&E power outage), dangers of the area (snakes, mountain lions, other wildlife).
4. It's a designated high risk fire area.
 - Insurance companies will not consider us for underwriting because of this designation
 - Neighbors do not want the responsibility for unattended renters in the event of a fire, rattlesnake bite, or other emergency
5. The "revolving door" of up to 20 new guests every 2-4 days (24 cars per week) is a clear and present threat to our safety.
 - Guarantees increased traffic on the road of drivers unfamiliar with its turnouts, protocols and safe driving practices.
 - In the short time the AvantStay houses have been rented, neighbors have encountered guests who did not know how to pull over, or were driving inebriated.
 - #17333 has had 7-8 cars in the driveway 2 out of 4 weekends. **In the case of a sudden exit, these cars could keep us from exiting our own driveways to safety.**

We are genuinely terrified that these additional 8+ cars could literally mean the difference for us between life and death in a fire evacuation.

III. Zoning change

We were stunned to learn that we are excluded from both the post-2017 vacation rental moratorium and other county exemptions. Other areas with more resources, greater density and much safer conditions are barred to vacation rentals.

Questions:

- How does the county decide what to make a fire zone area exempt from vacations? Are there written criteria?
- Why are we not included?
- We feel our zoning designation does not fit our community's requirements and needs. What would it take for us to apply for a zoning change of status? What other possibilities are there for us?
- In your opinion, is this something we should do?
- Since it appears AvantStay has made 17317 and 17333 long-term rentals for 30+ days, do they now NOT have to get a permit and is this a way for them to avoid 'vacation rental' rules? What are the rules for long-term rentals in the County and what information needs to be given to neighbors? Are they not now under the review of PRMD?
- What rules are the county considering for rentals in neighborhoods in order to protect these neighborhoods? How many rentals are allowed? Can we require owners to live on or near the property? How much space is needed between two rental properties?
- Has anyone looked into 'Overlay Zones', which they are using in Santa Barbara County? These Zones can target specific areas such as high fire danger areas and don't have to be County-wide.

IV. Recommendations

We recognize that county officials need to weigh multiple factors and needs when making decisions that affect so many. The list below represents the thoughts of our small group's members – hopefully our needs and concerns will contribute to the discussion and decisions currently in play to better manage vacation rentals in our beautiful, unique slice of heaven.

- **Make fire emergency and water usage critical factors in determining vacation rental zones**
- **Consider zoning inclusions of “owner-occupied” for purchase and rental (this would include second home owners as long as they don’t rent out the property more than X)**
- **Consider vacation rentals as a business, and create zoning that prohibits businesses that include X traffic as part of the business’s operations (this would include deliveries too)**
- **Consider allowing homeowners a maximum number of days they can rent out their home, with a short-term business license that’s issued for each rental**
- **Mandate neighbor notification by owners as well as PRMD**
- **Expand PRMD’s scope to inform neighbors when a permit has been *applied for*, so there is an opportunity for protest**
- **Evaluate location, access and fire danger when considering vacation rental applications.**

Thank you for your time, and your thoughtful consideration of our issues and our suggestions.

Rob Bundschu, Connie and Ronnie McCann, Jeanie and Richard Schram, Pat Summers, Jill and Ira Tager

From: [Pat Summers](#)
To: [Susan Gorin](#)
Cc: [Gary Helfrich](#); [Brietta Linney](#); [Connie Mccann](#); [Merrill Herring](#); [Jeanie Schram](#); [Richard Schram](#); [Matt T](#); [Sarah Chandler](#); [Jeff Harmon](#); [Suzanne Harmon](#); [lauren@mx.com](#); [jill Tager](#)
Subject: Gehricke Rd Fire Safe Council
Date: Monday, October 04, 2021 4:54:05 PM
Attachments: [Logo Gehricke Rd FSC.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL

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Dear Supervisor Gorin,

Thank you again for meeting with us several weeks ago to discuss vacation rental permits and zoning. To further complicate the vacation rental issue I learned inadvertently that an interested party was considering purchasing the property at 17355 Gehricke Rd as a vacation rental. I was hopefully able to dissuade them. I have an update and questions.

We have started the process of becoming a Fire Safe Council. Our mission is to ensure the safety of our community in the event of a fire. To that end, we are embarking on projects that will educate the community about wildfire preparedness to reduce our risk during a wildfire. Our primary focus is on evacuation route planning and protocols. This may include but is not limited to: a communication plan for sudden evacuation, vegetation management along the roadway (i.e., shaded fuel breaks which lower fire hazards by thinning dense tree cover and removing underlying brush); creating and maintaining turnouts for both residents and emergency vehicles; and developing strategies that lower our community risk in the event of a wildfire.

We are in hopes that the County of Sonoma will join us in our efforts and help with clearing along the county portion of the road. Personally, I have expended funds on tree and brush removal to create defensible space around my house, as have a number of neighbors.

As stated in our zoom meeting with you and Gary Helfrich, we were surprised to learn that vacation rentals are still allowed on Gehricke Rd after our high risk fire and evacuation in 2017. We were spared from the burn due to the diligence of our neighbor, Jeff Harmon, who stayed with the firefighters and put out hot spots in our neighborhood day and night. Properties further up Gehricke Rd burned in part. Fortunately no houses were destroyed. As I understood it, Mr. Helfrich stated during our zoom meeting that if we had been placed in an exclusion zone, we would have burned. I would like further clarification on this statement. I represent a house on Grove St that is in an exclusion zone and although the owner got a TOT permit, he could not get a vacation rental permit due to having been placed in an exclusion zone following the fire. He is only able to rent the house as a long term rental. To my knowledge none of Grove St or any adjacent properties burned.

According to our Gehricke Rd. Fire Safe Council Advisor, Jeff Paganini of the Schell-Vista

Fire Protection District, the Cal Fire map considers Gehricke Rd an extremely high level fire risk area. I am wondering if there could be a discrepancy between the map utilized by the County of Sonoma and the map used by Cal Fire.

I'd also like to mention that I contacted PRMD quite some time ago and spoke with Charles Rivers who was to have sent someone to meet with us and inspect the area to offer an opinion on the feasibility of vacation rentals on Gehricke Rd. After last speaking with him and after leaving a number of messages for him I have not heard from anyone.

Thank you again for your time and concern. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,

Pat Summers
Inn Wine Country
707-495-2935

From: [Natalie Goble](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Moratorium on vacation rentals
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 12:21:40 PM

EXTERNAL

Hello Mr. Helfrich,

I am writing as a local resident and business owner in Sonoma County in support of a cap on vacation rental properties.

In a world moving farther in the direction of "remote" and "virtual" an unregulated vacation rental economy poses a huge threat to the local community and well-being of its residents. I am in support of requiring permanent residency and prohibiting vacation rentals in residential zones.

I grew up in rural Sonoma county and am now raising my two young children here while running a local business in Sebastopol. I have watched the housing market soar in the past 3 years to a level that makes it impossible for me to own a home and the rental market is even more prohibitive due to such a low housing inventory and high demand.

The local residents of Sonoma county need to have access to affordable housing and an ordinance limiting vacation rental properties is an essential step toward this.

Thank you for your time,

Natalie Goble
Sebastopol, CA
c. 707.478.3493

[https://urldefense.com/v3/___http://www.handline.com_...:!!JLa0CrXIHAFkKxG7E4OLKcoH3KWtvVTGPuism1ShLhgs0wpMdK0tewkDNDI0W0_TXi5Y2ghodm34QtczkNXw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/___http://www.handline.com_...:!!JLa0CrXIHAFkKxG7E4OLKcoH3KWtvVTGPuism1ShLhgs0wpMdK0tewkDNDI0W0_TXi5Y2ghodm34QtczkNXw$)

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From: [district5](#)
To: "mark godley"; [Gary Helfrich](#); [Lynda Hopkins](#)
Subject: RE: STR Recommendations from The Sea Ranch - Balancing Stakeholders vs Self Interest
Date: Tuesday, June 08, 2021 1:35:25 PM

Hello Mark,

Thank you for writing Supervisor Hopkins and for detailing your position regarding STRs at The Sea Ranch. I wanted to acknowledge receipt of your email and I will ensure Supervisor Hopkins see it. I'll also forward your email to our District Director who has been working on the STR issue for District 5.

Thank you and be well,

Jason Wilson

District 5 Aide to

Supervisor Lynda Hopkins

575 Administration Drive 100A

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

707.565.2241

From: mark godley <mgodley21@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, June 7, 2021 9:16 AM

To: Gary Helfrich <Gary.Helfrich@sonoma-county.org>; Lynda Hopkins <Lynda.Hopkins@sonoma-county.org>

Subject: STR Recommendations from The Sea Ranch - Balancing Stakeholders vs Self Interest

EXTERNAL

Gary and Lynda - As a second-home owner from The Sea Ranch, I attended the May 25th Board of Supervisors meeting and was disappointed by the public comments that lacked reasonable disclosure of motivations. Of the people who commented during the call and in writing from The Sea Ranch, all were short-term rental owners who did not disclose their self-interest as vacation rental owners, a role that has hindered their objectivity with regard to evaluating reasonable management of STRs.

I hope you will discount the vocal minority and instead strongly consider the perspective that is the foundation of the 'model ordinance' that the Board of Directors of TSR unanimously adopted in May. That document is the result of:

- Two years of analysis from 5 members of The Sea Ranch - 3 of which are owners of STR homes - that comprised the Short Term Rental Task Force - of which I was a member (and also an owner who rents my home).
- A review of every Coastal Commission decision on short-term rentals of the past 20 years - including a f2f meeting with the Commission directly.

- A review of current Sonoma County vacation rental policy, conversations with county staff and a review of prior meetings and documentation from the county on vacation rental policy.
- A review of case law related to STRs, CCC challenges and the opinion of multiple lawyers with expertise in this legal area.
- Close to a dozen workshops and presentations with members and owners at TSR.
- Multiple meetings with Airbnb.
- Multiple meetings with Vacasa.
- Multiple discussions with members of the Bodega Bay HOA.
- Coordination with TSR members participating in the LCP process.
- Multiple meetings with 5 of 6 property management companies in Gualala serving TSR.
- A national review of STR policies enacted in HOAs and 2nd home and coastal communities.
- A survey of TSR owners that garnered the highest level of participation in recent memory (over 650 members) including over 2,000 long-form comments analyzed and categorized.
- Three Board meetings that encompassed over 12 hours of deliberation resulting in a unanimous vote of support - as well as support from our Community Manager, Jennifer Merchant.

The model ordinance voted on by the Board of TSR was called by a Board member '...the most participative and comprehensive task force work ever done on any topic at TSR...and a new standard that will be hard to match by others going forward.' And yet - you will continue to hear comments from a very, very small group of financially-driven, near-business, 'no policies are needed' zealots (who also happen to be organizing - <https://sonoma.coastvowners.org/>) wrapping themselves in distorted arguments of 'supporting access' or economic ruin. I hope you are able to recognize the loud voices of opposition for what they are - homeowners putting their self-interest ahead of other stakeholders with little regard for the consequences of their short-term rental businesses on their neighbors and the quality of life of their community.

Just as communities along the Russian River are threatened by policies and regulations of STRs that in retrospect have been 'too light', our coastal communities are at risk of being changed forever. I urge you to consider the 'model ordinance' work of TSR as a compellation of best practices that can allow STRs to thrive while also balancing the quality of life concerns of other stakeholders, neighborhoods, and communities. This work might not have 'spoken' at the May 25th meeting, but it deserves to be heard over others surely who will continue to try to persuade despite taking a one-sided view of a complex issue.

All the best,

Mark Godley

mgodley21@gmail.com

510-909-2830 - Phone

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: Tourism generated by Airbnb guests
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 11:52:41 AM

From: lisa gottreich <lisagottreich@gmail.com>
Sent: January 11, 2022 5:54 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Tourism generated by Airbnb guests

EXTERNAL

If the county makes vacation rental prohibitively expensive tourism will drop and all the local businesses that have come to depend on tourist revenues will suffer.

As an owner of a creamery I can vouch for the number of customers who show up at my storefront who are spending the weekend here at a vacation rental.

If renting become more accessible, available and less expensive on the Marin coast or Santa Cruz, Bay Area weekenders—the prominent per centage of my reservations—will simply go elsewhere. It's easy to do. A click of the mouse.

Lisa Gottreich

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From: [Carla Grady](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Re: FW: Airbnb hosting re. coastal access
Date: January 19, 2022 6:57:56 PM

EXTERNAL

Ah HA!

I am so glad I opened with the proviso that I don't get it!

I'm sorry I missed the first meeting last week -- 13th? 14th? which was apparently a Q&A? Airbnb reached out to local hosts asking us to get involved. Their initial contact said, "Attend this meeting and comment on your hosting experience." They mentioned something about coastal access, but I really didn't understand what was at issue or at stake. I wrote back to that email, apologizing for having missed the meeting, and was it too late to comment by email? They replied saying there would be another meeting soon, so there was still time to send a comment.

I'm so sorry if I wasted your time.

My guess is that the Airbnb system initiated some sub-unit called "Get Involved" that handles issues with local gov. council decision-making as it relates to, and affects, Airbnb hosting, but that this branch of the system might be in another part of the state (or country, or world even!), and whoever sent that message to me might not understand the local geography enough to understand that coastal access is not really relevant to Forestville Airbnb hosting. Maybe they were basing their outreach on zip codes and "Sonoma County". While Airbnb's original HQ base is SF, they have grown so much that who knows where the "Get Involved" team is situated! I'm guessing they have no idea that Forestville hosting is not at all relevant to Sea Ranch and Bodega Airbnb hosting.

Again, sorry to bother you!!!

I am glad you say there is no plan to limit local vacation rentals. Whenever I travel, I always choose alternatives to hotels, and I have enjoyed being a host here. It's a whole different community of travelers, usually really good & interesting people; it's fun to meet folks from other parts of the country and sometimes even from other countries, if I'm lucky.

Good luck with making your decisions.

Please accept my apologies for engaging at all, given my insufficient grasp re. the background of this.

xoxo
carla

On Wed, Jan 19, 2022 at 1:22 PM PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org> wrote:

From: Gary Helfrich
Sent: January 19, 2022 1:20 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: RE: Airbnb hosting re. coastal access

Hi Carla,

Can you help me understand the context of your comments? The issue appears to be almost the opposite of your concern: We are proposing to **not** limit vacation rentals **in the coastal zone** because rentals in coastal areas (Sea Ranch, Bodega Bay) are related to coastal access.

I'm curious about the source of this information, since it is unrelated to any policy options that have been suggested for vacation rentals.

Gary

From: Carla Grady <carladgrad@gmail.com>
Sent: January 19, 2022 12:20 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Airbnb hosting re. coastal access

EXTERNAL

Dear Commission members,

I do not fully understand what is at issue for you all re. your evaluation of vacation rentals in Sonoma County due to some problem with coastal access. It seems like a bizarre connection to make, to somehow blame visitors who stay in non-hotel vacation rentals for a problem occurring at our coastal parks. I don't get it. In any case, as an Airbnb host whose home (where my Airbnb guests stay) is in Forestville, I can attest that the majority of my guests are not here to go to the coast. I get a lot of folks coming for wine tasting vacations, so I am confident their visits help the local economy and do nothing to harm Sonoma County's outdoor beauty. Even though my place is a convenient half hour drive to Jenner, most guests are more interested in hiking inland among redwoods, not going to the coast. Many of my guests are weekenders from the Bay Area, so the coast is not their preferred destination

when they come to Sonoma County. They get plenty of beach access from their own homes.

Many guests come for weddings. In the warm months, I would say more than half of my guests from far away places are here for weddings. The other half are here for the opportunity to play in the river (my home is a few blocks uphill from the river). Lots of my summer guests do day-long kayak trips from Healdsburg to Wholer bridge if they do not bring their own gear; others bring floaties in order to do day-long floats down the river, putting in at Steelhead Beach and taking out at Sunset Beach, now that there is a convenient shuttle bus for them. The river is the destination of choice in the summer, not the coast.

During winter holidays, guests from outside the region almost never are interested in the coast. They travel all over, sometimes doing day trips to San Francisco or Mendocino. Several recent guests who come from out-of-state have come to Sonoma County to visit family who live here.

In short, visiting the coast is about 14th on the list of activities that my guests engage in. SO. If your concern is about vacation rentals impacting the Sonoma Coast, I am confident my Airbnb guests are not causing any detrimental impact in that regard.

Also, please realize that, even though my house offers a full, well-stocked kitchen, 90% of my guests eat out at local restaurants while staying here. Thus, I hope you will not consider doing any further damage to the restaurant industry in Sonoma County by restricting vacation rentals here. In my limited observation, it is visitors to the county, much more than locals, who have kept the local restaurant industry afloat during these long, tough Covid months.

Thank you for your consideration.

Please decide wisely, and with full knowledge of all the circumstances at play.

Yours very sincerely,

Dr. Carla Grady,

Forestville Airbnb host

--

Become an anti-racist.

Until justice is real,

Carla

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Become an anti-racist.

Until justice is real,

Carla

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From: [Carla Grady](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Airbnb hosting re. coastal access
Date: January 19, 2022 12:20:13 PM

EXTERNAL

Dear Commission members,

I do not fully understand what is at issue for you all re. your evaluation of vacation rentals in Sonoma County due to some problem with coastal access. It seems like a bizarre connection to make, to somehow blame visitors who stay in non-hotel vacation rentals for a problem occurring at our coastal parks. I don't get it. In any case, as an Airbnb host whose home (where my Airbnb guests stay) is in Forestville, I can attest that the majority of my guests are not here to go to the coast. I get a lot of folks coming for wine tasting vacations, so I am confident their visits help the local economy and do nothing to harm Sonoma County's outdoor beauty. Even though my place is a convenient half hour drive to Jenner, most guests are more interested in hiking inland among redwoods, not going to the coast. Many of my guests are weekenders from the Bay Area, so the coast is not their preferred destination when they come to Sonoma County. They get plenty of beach access from their own homes.

Many guests come for weddings. In the warm months, I would say more than half of my guests from far away places are here for weddings. The other half are here for the opportunity to play in the river (my home is a few blocks uphill from the river). Lots of my summer guests do day-long kayak trips from Healdsburg to Wholer bridge if they do not bring their own gear; others bring floaties in order to do day-long floats down the river, putting in at Steelhead Beach and taking out at Sunset Beach, now that there is a convenient shuttle bus for them. The river is the destination of choice in the summer, not the coast.

During winter holidays, guests from outside the region almost never are interested in the coast. They travel all over, sometimes doing day trips to San Francisco or Mendocino. Several recent guests who come from out-of-state have come to Sonoma County to visit family who live here.

In short, visiting the coast is about 14th on the list of activities that my guests engage in. SO. If your concern is about vacation rentals impacting the Sonoma Coast, I am confident my Airbnb guests are not causing any detrimental impact in that regard.

Also, please realize that, even though my house offers a full, well-stocked kitchen, 90% of my guests eat out at local restaurants while staying here. Thus, I hope you will not consider doing any further damage to the restaurant industry in Sonoma County by restricting vacation rentals here. In my limited observation, it is visitors to the county, much more than locals, who have kept the local restaurant industry afloat during these long, tough Covid months.

Thank you for your consideration.

Please decide wisely, and with full knowledge of all the circumstances at play.

Yours very sincerely,

Dr. Carla Grady,

Forestville Airbnb host

--

*Become an anti-racist.
Until justice is real,
Carla*

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From: [Karen Gunderson](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Fwd: Input on Vacation Rental Ordinance - Jan 20, 2022 Meeting
Date: January 20, 2022 12:46:55 AM

EXTERNAL

Hi Planning Agency-

Please include my comments in the record for the Planning Commission Meeting today (January 20). I sent this email on January 17th, but had the wrong email address and was just notified by gmail tonight. I hope it is not too late.

Thanks,
Karen Gunderson

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Karen Gunderson** <karen@gunder5.net>
Date: Mon, Jan 17, 2022 at 9:31 PM
Subject: Input on Vacation Rental Ordinance - Jan 20, 2022 Meeting
To: <PlanningAgency@sonomacounty.org>
Cc: <Greg.Carr@sonoma-county.org>, <caitlin.cornwall@sonoma-county.org>, <larry.reed@sonoma-county.org>, <Pat.Gilardi@sonoma-county.org>, <gina.belforte@sonoma-county.org>, <jacquelynn.oana@sonoma-county.org>, <kevin.deas@sonoma-county.org>, <Shaun.McCaffery@sonoma-county.org>, <Eric.Koenigshofer@sonoma-county.org>, <Lynda.Hopkins@sonoma-county.org>, James Gore <James.Gore@sonoma-county.org>

Dear Planning Commissioners:

I am writing to you regarding the proposed changes to the vacation rental ordinance. I want to make you aware of how rural residents on the many short dead end streets are being affected by vacation rentals .

I live on a dead-end street (0.25 mile long) of half to one acre parcels in rural Sonoma County close (2 miles) to Santa Rosa and near vineyards in the Willowside Road area. Our homes are 1960's ranch subdivision homes on large lots that cost slightly more than city subdivision homes. They are not fancy, but attractive to families who like to garden and have kids that like to run and play outside. Now also they are attractive to Bay Area residents who buy them as second homes/vacation rentals or groups of people who buy them as time shares.

Three of the last three sales on my street (Moriconi Drive) were to San Francisco Bay Area

residents and 2 of 3 sales were bought for vacation rental purposes...none were for full-time Sonoma County residential use. Our neighborhood, just because it is near grape vines, is converting from a family neighborhood to a tourist zone! **I urge you to prohibit vacation rentals in higher density, truly rural residential neighborhoods that are not located near a beach or ocean, like mine (Willowside/Moriconi Road area).**

Having unattended vacation rentals on dead end county rural residential streets is undesirable for the following reasons:

1. Changes character of neighborhood to tourist zone with different groups of partiers every weekend. Noise, traffic, parking issues, people impaired with alcohol or cannabis.
2. Unaccountable tourists/outsideers tend to speed on dead-end streets, risking families and children that recreate on the usually quiet street.
3. Empty homes during the weekdays mean there are no neighbors to ask favors, borrow an egg from, trick-or-treat at, or pick up our newspaper when we are gone.
4. Every home sold as a 2nd/vacation rental home is one less home for a Sonoma County family. This lowers the housing stock.
5. Allowing 2nd/vacation rental home business model creates higher demand for these homes to be bought by people outside Sonoma County for high prices; this contributes to high home prices and reduces affordability for local residents to buy a home here.

Here are my issues with the proximity issues suggested in the Vacation Rental Ordinance Update (ORD21-0005), dated 11-18-21, by Gary Helfrich

1. **Proximity of 300-500ft** – My dead end street is 1320 feet long with 18 residence (acre and half acre lots). For 300 feet separation, that would allow 5 homes (28% of neighborhood). With 500ft, we could still have 3 vacation homes (17%). Either of these options is not acceptable and would change the character of the neighborhood to a tourist zone.
2. **Concentration Proposal of 10%-** First how do you define the given area? Would it just be the dead end street? What about the houses that are behind our houses? We are equally impacted by vacation renters (partiers behind our home as on our own street). Rural Sonoma County has varying lot sizes, I am not sure how you will choose “given areas” in rural Sonoma County that are not near a particular tourism destination like a beach or river access. On a quiet country dead end street, even one vacation rental affects the whole neighborhood as cars zoom by and affect our safety.
3. **Rental Day Limit of 90 Days-** Let’s do a little math, there are 52 weekends in year, so on our dead end street we can expect 45 party weekends. If we count them as 3-day weekends, it is still 30 party weekends per year. That is a lot of strangers, partiers, noise and traffic on dead end rural streets each year and it will affect family neighborhoods, safety, and quality of life.

Given the negative impacts to rural residential neighborhoods, please ban vacation rentals in

higher density, truly rural residential neighborhoods with many dead-end streets that are not located near a river, beach or ocean, like mine (Willowside/Moriconi Road area).

Please put a stop to the un-hosted vacation rental business model that allow people to buy neighborhood homes and essentially convert them to tourist hotels, generating revenue for non-occupant owners, at the cost of neighboring homes and families.

Sincerely,

Karen Gunderson

Moriconi Drive Neighborhood

(Willowside Road area, west Santa Rosa)

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From: [Barry Hachmyer](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Date: January 20, 2022 10:36:30 AM

EXTERNAL

On Jan. 13 I emailed the Planning Agency regarding my concerns Re: Sonoma County recommending regulating vacation rentals in the coastal zone. Immediately thereafter, I engaged in several emails with Gary Helfrick from Planning. He answered most of my questions, but, unfortunately did not alleviate my concerns and objections to the County's proposed action. In my last communication with him I stated "it seems the County is more interested in money and keeping tabs on us then promoting the provisions of the Coastal Act which keeps tourists flocking to the Sonoma Coast.

Then, over the holiday weekend I printed out the "Policy Options: Vacation Rentals--Vacation Rental Policy Recommendations." Interestingly, it states that "absent any permit or license program, it is difficult for Sonoma County to monitor if all vacation rental operators are paying the appropriate taxes on rentals." There it is! All at the expense of the Coastal Act.

Bottom line though, these policy recommendations virtually mirror those enacted in 2016 Ordinance 6145 relative to properties located throughout unincorporated Sonoma County, but not applicable to coastal zone properties.

I would argue that these substantial, comprehensive rules, regulations and restrictions are, on their face, a violation of the California Coastal Act. Their terms MUST impact an owners ability to provide/maintain affordable lodging that provides access to the Sonoma Coast for all, which is the purpose and stated intent of the Coastal Act.

If confronted by these comprehensive rules, regulations and restrictions and owner will 1.) probably be required to increase prices, 2.) revert to long term renting (1 yr.+), 3.) go underground, or 4.) sell. Any of which would frustrate and violate the provisions of the Coastal Act, and negatively impact the vast commercial ventures dependent on the tourist industry supported by vacation rentals, etc.

We, personally, have heard of no problems with vacation rentals in our area. Please let sleeping dogs lay. If it aint broke, don't fix it. Just leave us alone.

Barry & Mary Jill Hachmyer
Sebastopol, CA

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: coastal vacation rentals
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 4:26:43 PM

From: Barry Hachmyer <hachmyer@netscape.com>
Sent: January 12, 2022 1:34 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: coastal vacation rentals

EXTERNAL

My wife and I have operated a coastal vacation rental home since 2006. It is clear that coastal vacation rentals are a significant contributor to Sonoma County's tourist industry. It is also undisputed that, as required by the California Coastal Act, they provide increased access to the coastal areas by providing affordable lodging for many who would otherwise be unable to visit the Sonoma County coast. Furthermore, allowing restrictions on coastal vacation rentals will negatively impact west county tourism and the substantial commercial ventures it supports.

Over the years we have modified the terms of our contract to address any environmental or neighborhood concerns of which we became aware. We don't believe our home has created any negative environmental impact. We are good neighbors and believe we have been accepted into the neighborhood.

If the restrictions being considered involve "regulations" comparable to those imposed by the County relating to vacation rentals outside the coastal zone (see 2016 Ordinance 6145, which does not apply to vacation rental properties within the coastal zone), the negative impact will be significant and possibly would result in reduced inventory because owners may be unable to remain in operation.

Also, please advise regarding the "public and agency comments Re: Public Review Draft and what conditions have changed along the coast since 2001," that has prompted this action. It should be re-emphasized that Sonoma County's ordinances previously enacted to regulate vacation rentals do not apply to lodgings located within the coastal zone (2016 Ordinance 6145).

Please also note that recently voters failed to approve Measure B (4% increase in TOT taxes) for coastal zone lodging properties, probably due to the unintended consequences of negative impact on West County tourism and the commercial enterprises it supports.

I submit, Sonoma County lacks regulatory jurisdiction over coastal vacation rental property per the provisions of the California Coastal Act which prohibits cities or counties from enacting regulations that would violate/frustrate the purpose and intent of the Coastal Act.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry & Mary Jill Hachmyer
Coastal Vacation Rental owners

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From: [Chelsea Holup](#) on behalf of [PlanningAgency](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: PC 1/13/22 item #1–Local Coastal Plan Update comments
Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2022 11:47:55 AM

From: Gillian Hayes <gillianquarle@yahoo.com>
Sent: January 11, 2022 6:07 PM
To: PlanningAgency <PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: PC 1/13/22 item #1–Local Coastal Plan Update comments

EXTERNAL

Honorable Planning Commissioners:

Please understand that short-term vacation rentals and Hosts like myself help increase coastal access.

Vacation rentals have long been a part of Sonoma County's history. Utilizing existing homes for the same residential purpose does not have adverse environmental impacts. Moreover, it has been well-established that vacation rentals increase access to California's coast, by creating affordable lodging options for visiting families and large groups that could not afford multiple hotel rooms.

I urge the Planning Commission to protect the ability to host for existing vacation rentals, which brings many benefits to you and the community including increased local coastal access and a strong economy.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions,

Respectfully,

Gillian Hayes

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [Jonathan Kesterson](#)
To: [Scott Orr](#); [Scott Hunsperger](#); [Chelsea Holup](#); [PRMD-LCP-Update](#)
Cc: [Janice Kesterson](#)
Subject: Opposition to Restrictions on Short Term Rentals as part of the Revised Sonoma County Local Coastal Plan
Date: Saturday, July 17, 2021 7:56:24 PM

EXTERNAL

Hello - as an owner of a Sea Ranch property since 1972, we wanted to voice our opinion in hopes you can make the right choice in this matter.

We strongly oppose restrictions on whether and when owners may rent their properties as proposed by The Sea Ranch Association (TSRA) Board in their "Model Rule 6.7". These restrictions include limits on the number of days a home can be rented, a reduction in the total number of rental homes and a minimum of 300ft between any two rental properties.

Some of the reasons are as follows:

- Restrictions on Short Term Rentals are unnecessary in the coastal zone. The California Coastal Commission has held that restrictions are justified only in cases of proliferation of short term rentals.
- The evidence indicates that there is no proliferation of Short Term Rentals at The Sea Ranch as the number has been stable for over 15 years.
- The Sea Ranch is and has always been a popular vacation destination – nearly every homeowner was once a renter.
- It is not fair that once they are homeowners that they lock the doors behind them.
- Renting a Sea Ranch home is a valuable asset that cannot be removed from the owner without strong justification. No such justification has been suggested.
- There has been no analysis of the effects of the proposed restrictions. TSRA has conducted no study, engaged no consultants and offers no opinion on the expected impacts of the proposed restrictions. This is irresponsible.
- TSRA's own Short Term Rental Task Force did not recommend restrictions, citing a lack of data, evidence or necessity.
- Short Term Rentals make a significant contribution to the local economy and Sonoma County tax revenue. Restrictions would reduce these contributions.
- Short Term Rentals at The Sea Ranch do not displace affordable long-term rental housing because at legacy real estate prices, no properties at The Sea Ranch would be available at an affordable long term rent.
- Nuisance, claimed by TSRA as justification for Short Term Rental restrictions, is not a significant issue at The Sea Ranch, in part because nuisance ordinances at The Sea Ranch are already stronger than most Short Term Rentals performance standards.

- “The Sea Ranch is not Tahoe” quoted by the Sea Ranch Security Head.

Thank you.

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From: [lmimack](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#); [BOS](#)
Subject: Thursday November 18 Coastal Commission VR meeting comments
Date: November 17, 2021 7:17:20 PM

EXTERNAL

If you establish new rules for VR owners who rents out their home different from owners who don't rent, does the VR owner now need to comply with the same rules as the paying guest when they stay in their home? Will VR owners be able to have their child's wedding at the home they rent out if their home is deemed a str?

My home has been available for emergency use for homeless during Covid and for fire victims. If time for non family use is restricted than the county and coast will lose a valuable asset in a time of need.

People need flexibility in their use of their homes. I was physically hit by a car leading to the unwinding of my career. VR renting has been a means to keep my home, my largest asset. For many of us it's our 401k.

It's my understanding that the bad players possibly 2 homes out of 581 are the ones causing trouble and pushing county supervisors to implement new plans. Why hurt 579 owners to solve an extremely minor problem. This is Government overreach.

My neighborhood has 7 VRs out of 35 homes. Many homes are vacant most of the year. My neighbors who are elderly and live here full time like the VR rentals as occupied homes help keep the thieves and vagrants away. Most VR rentals bring families with children. My elderly neighbors love hearing the laughter and play of the children. It adds quality of life on many levels.

There are not a lot of hotel accommodations on the Coast. Limiting VRs limits the general public from accessing the coast.

The 90 day limit is extreme. It will result in empty homes and a lack of the public's access to the coast.

The coastal zone is remote, therefore the 30 mile limit should be 60, and the time to respond to a complaint should be longer: 2 hours during the day, and 1 hour during "quiet hours".

Prop manager 'decertification' on the coast, for any failure to follow rules, is unreasonable. it takes away from our limited resources and hurts all VR owners.

Thank you for your time,

MJ

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From: [Michael McCracken](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Homeowner input on vacation rental rules
Date: January 20, 2022 6:23:36 AM

EXTERNAL

Hi, I'm writing to share my experience and concerns about vacation rental properties in residential streets in Sonoma County.

I own a home on a short dead-end road in unincorporated Sonoma County (Moriconi Dr), and we have seen a few instances already of people buying homes with plans to make them exclusively vacation rentals. We have been able to convince them otherwise due to the neighborhood being united in our concerns about noise, traffic issues and their impact on our kids playing in the street, and lack of recourse for any issues.

I strongly oppose having any homes in my neighborhood used for vacation rentals by owners who do not occupy them. They cause problems for neighbors who do live here, and there are not sufficient mechanisms for us to avoid problems once they get started renting. At best we have to wait until a guest causes trouble and call someone, and this can happen many times a week.

This practice also greatly impacts the availability of housing for sonoma county residents, as the housing stock is low and prices are high enough that I know of families from my school who have had to leave the area due to this.

I would like to suggest that neighborhoods could apply to become exclusion zones so that no licenses would be approved, and that no automatic licenses would be approved without neighbor input. We only found out about one of the cases on our street after the license had been approved, and I am sure the owner would not have completed their application if they knew what the neighbors' response would be.

Thank you for your time,
-mike

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From: [Tennis Wick](#)
To: [Scott Orr](#); [Brian Oh](#); [Ross Markey](#); [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Fwd: The Latest Press
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 7:46:04 PM
Attachments: [Fractional Ownership 1.pdf](#)
[Fractional Ownership 2pdf.pdf](#)

FYI

Tennis Wick, AICP

Director

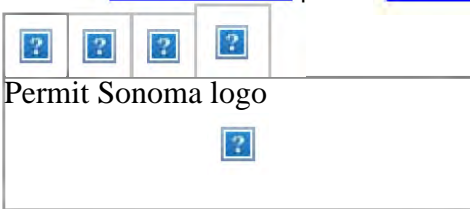
www.PermitSonoma.org

County of Sonoma

[2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403](#)

Direct: [707-565-1925](tel:707-565-1925) |

Office: [707-565-1900](tel:707-565-1900) | Fax: [707-565-1103](tel:707-565-1103)



Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tennis Wick <Tennis.Wick@sonoma-county.org>
Date: February 20, 2022 at 19:45:00 PST
To: Scott Orr <Scott.Orr@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: Fwd: The Latest Press

Tennis Wick, AICP

Director

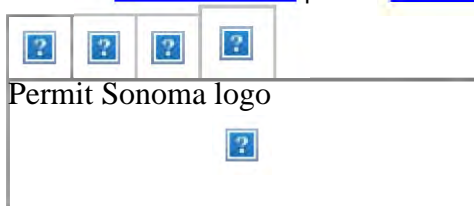
www.PermitSonoma.org

County of Sonoma

[2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403](#)

Direct: [707-565-1925](tel:707-565-1925) |

Office: [707-565-1900](tel:707-565-1900) | Fax: [707-565-1103](tel:707-565-1103)



Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: district4 <district4@sonoma-county.org>
Date: February 20, 2022 at 19:06:29 PST
To: Jan Mettler <jan@bossdogmarketing.com>
Cc: Tennis Wick <Tennis.Wick@sonoma-county.org>, Lynda Hopkins <Lynda.Hopkins@sonoma-county.org>, Chris Coursey <Chris.Coursey@sonoma-county.org>, Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>, David Rabbitt <David.Rabbitt@sonoma-county.org>, Jennifer Mendoza <Jen.Mendoza@sonoma-county.org>, Jenny Chamberlain <jchamber@sonoma-county.org>, yael bernier <yabernie@gmail.com>, Sonia BeckDoss <soniabeckdoss@gmail.com>, Pat Smidores <stoppacasonow@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: The Latest Press

Thank you Jan.!

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 20, 2022, at 7:05 PM, Jan Mettler <jan@bossdogmarketing.com> wrote:

EXTERNAL

Every town, each village is pushing back against timeshares, especially the flagship model plaguing our County. Of importance are the criteria by which the Hamptons set boundaries. Note transient occupancy and third party management (where Pacaso makes their money) are particularly relevant to Sonoma County.

The BOS needs to act now.

Respectfully,
Jan

Jan Mettler
707.433.5846
jan@bossdogmarketing.com

Begin forwarded message:

From: Nancy Gardner
<nancybobgardner@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: The Latest Press
Date: February 20, 2022 at 1:58:40 PM PST
To: Kathy Benzinger
<kathybenzinger@icloud.com>, Holly Kulak
<holly@weekendsherpa.com>, Brad Day
<day@weekendsherpa.com>, Carl Sherrill
<carl.sherril0@gmail.com>, Nancy Heil
<sonoma1411@gmail.com>, Herbert Heil
<hmhowc@msn.com>, Bruce Lane
<blane@maryspizzashack.com>, NA Lane
<nalane@maryspizzashack.com>, Gregory
Levinson <greglevinson@gmail.com>, Marina Levinson
<marinalevinson@yahoo.com>, Theo
<tt4366@gmail.com>, Tricia Smith
<smidores8891@gmail.com>, David
Appelbaum <dappelba@gmail.com>, Connie Wilson <ciaoconnie@icloud.com>, Susan McWilliams
<susanmcwilliams@comcast.net>, Paula
French <paula.french1@aol.com>, Pattie
Dullea <pdullea27@gmail.com>, Charlie
Dullea <cdullea@siprep.org>, Yael Bernier
<yabernie@gmail.com>, Jan Mettler
<jan@bossdogmarketing.com>

Here is the recently published story about the Pacaso model from a reporter in New York. (You must open both documents to read the entire article.) We spent about an hour on the phone with him a few weeks ago. This really has become a national movement!

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From: [Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts](#)
To: [Planning Agency](#); [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Public Comment for Nov. 18 Planning Commission VR Update Workshop
Date: November 17, 2021 1:29:23 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

EXTERNAL



Hey Gary and Commissioners,

Attached to this email is a [Google Doc](#) that we've made available to our folks at [Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts](#), that outlines PRMD's proposed VR policies and our positions on those policies, so hosts can form their Public Comments. Could you make this document available to the Commissioners for tomorrow's Nov. 18th Planning Commission meeting?

Here is our Google Doc:



Just want to highlight 3 positions within the [Google Doc](#):

- Most hosts seem pleased using the term “Vacation Rental Licenses”, instead of “Business Licenses” as it's both clear and accurate as the short-term rental of a home is a “residential use”.
- Instead of proximity, density, or days of operation limits, etc., we believe limits on the number of vacation rental licenses a person can be issued is fair and enough, since every resident would maintain the same rights, and limits.
- Regarding the policy statement: “The property manager is responsible for verifying that guests have been evacuated”, our feeling is the property manager should, at most, be responsible to verify that guests have been informed to evacuate from the contact information provided by the guest.

When I evacuated during the 2017 fires, folks evacuating were using both lanes on Chanate Rd., to flee the fires, so it would have been impossible for a Property Manager to drive to a vacation rental and “verify” the guests have evacuated, had such a policy been implemented. According to the County, there are 1,864 vacation rentals in the unincorporated areas. I don't think anyone wants a

scenario where just as many Property Managers are trying to enter an evacuation zone to verify guests has left, so they aren't held liable or lose their right to be a Property Manager.

Warmly,

Charles Metz

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From: [MARY MOUNT](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#); [PRMD-VacationRentals](#)
Subject: Re: Vacation Rentals
Date: Friday, January 14, 2022 8:21:06 PM

EXTERNAL

Oh Yes,
And what about the COVID restrictions ?
Keep those touroids coming in to Sonoma County
Slap those vacation folks into dirty COVID vacation rentals with no imposed
imposed county health codes.
ew
Gross

On 01/13/2022 10:24 AM MARY MOUNT <mmmary13@comcast.net> wrote:

Good Day.

The PRMD needs to pay stricter attention to Air B&B's, vacation rentals etc. regarding *redwood septic boxes*.
Starrett Hill is a mush pit of *cesspool* vacation rentals and permits for these are handed out like candy.
So are many neighborhoods here at the river.

Higher Standards.
Less Greed.

Thanks so much,
Mary

CA. Notary
Realtor
DRE#01308731
Russian River Realty
C 707-695-3980

O 707-869-0608

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Subject: Re: Vacation Rentals
Date: Friday, January 14, 2022 8:21:06 PM

EXTERNAL

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CA. Notary
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From: [ron nansi](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Neighborhoods and vacation rentals
Date: Saturday, February 05, 2022 6:31:03 PM

EXTERNAL

Hi Gary,

We are full-time residents here.

We realize that a short term rental has minimal benefits for the local job market. The tourism related jobs usually don't provide a sustainable wage, a living wage.

Short term vacation rentals can really have a negative impact on a neighborhood: more traffic, parking problems, noise from parties, trash problems.

Sometimes a residential neighborhood begins to change into a neighborhood where people invest. Investing is fine. Frequently the vacation rental owners are not "vested" in the community; the community is basically a place to do business unfortunately.

For local people, vacation rentals limit the amount of places we locals can rent.

Please be an advocate for stable, well grounded neighborhoods.

Best Regards,

Ron Goebel

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DEBORAH C. NITASAKA, M.A.
Science-Minded Thinker & Freelance Writer
P.O. Box 1054, Glen Ellen, California 95442-1054
707.996.8620; 707.318.7214 (mobile); delaire77@gmail.com

19 January 2022

Sonoma County Planning Commissioner
Commissioner Cornwall, District 1
Commissioner Gilardi, District 2
Commissioner Ocana, District 3
Commissioner Deas, District 4
Commissioner Grady, District 5
Santa Rosa, California
Sent via email 1/19/22 (PlanningAgency@sonoma-county.org)

RE: *Vacation Rentals (1/20/22 Planning Commission Meeting)*

Dear Commissioners:

As a 30+ year housing advocate (Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group, El Nido Teen Center, Vineyard Workers Services, Interfaith Shelter Network, Community Housing Sonoma County), I have studied the causes and remedies (Claremont Graduate School) and worked on the front lines of homelessness and a national housing shortage. Tragically, irresponsible policymakers, greed, and ignorance have worsened the human suffering. The expansion in scope and breadth of these social problems, for more than 30 years, can be directly attributed to these failures of leadership.

I will cut to the chase here and say simply: Converting dwelling units built for, zoned for, intended for, and taxpayer subsidized for: **RESIDENCY** – is simply, obscene.

Of course Sonoma County is short thousands of desperately needed homes. Of course the current RHNA number seems to be so staggering. Estimates as high as 2,000+ Sonoma County homes (permitted and not) are no longer available for people to live in because they have been converted into commercial businesses serving a single population: Tourists desiring short-term accommodations that lack onsite management (the perfect way to party away from your neighbors).

Why would our civic leaders adopt, promote, extend a program that takes housing from the marketplace? Why would our civic leaders elect to ignore the complaints of their constituents about noise, ghost homes, crime, loss of community cohesiveness, volunteers, students attending local schools, and many other destructive impacts?

Transient Occupancy Tax is a unique source of revenue. It streams into the General Fund and can be spent as civic leaders choose. Follow the money, ignore the price. That is the truth of it. That is the price we who have lived the nightmare have paid.

My suggestion: Hold to the meaning of words. "Residential" does not, contrary to the thinking I have witnessed from some currently serving on the Board of Supervisors, mean "Commercial Short-Term

Vacation Rental.” These businesses have no place in neighborhoods and should be “converted” back to their intended and zoned for use: Residential Housing.

In so doing, hundreds, perhaps thousands of residential properties would once more become available to the people who live in Sonoma County. Please do not make it more profitable for Sonoma County and investors to steal our precious housing!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Nitasaka', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah C. Nitasaka, M.A.

From: [Derek Norman](#)
To: [PRMD-LCP-Update](#)
Subject: Sonoma coastal access - short term rentals
Date: Saturday, July 17, 2021 6:21:10 AM

EXTERNAL

Sonoma County Planning Department,

I am a homeowner at Sea Ranch - my family has owned the home since 1986 and I inherited the home two years ago. I have learned the TSRA Board is submitting comments on short term rentals that are not reflective of Sea Ranch's diverse community of owners.

I strongly support continuing the status quo for short term rentals at Sea Ranch. There is nothing broken about the system. In my 36 years I have never had an issue with a short term renter, and I have never heard of a complaint about one. Sea Ranch is a calm and isolated place, and it attracts people who like that style.

Putting further restrictions on short term rentals is effectively an economic "taking". It should only be done to mitigate a significant downside, of which there is no concrete evidence other than hearsay. The main complaints tend to come from full time residents who represent a minority of the Sea Ranch community. They signed up and moved to a community where short term rentals were the status quo. Now they are in a place of power and would like to change it. But that is unfair, and not right.

Restricting STR will further decrease the community diversity at Sea Ranch. It will be less directly accessible to renters who likely represent a more diverse socioeconomic background. It also decreases ownership diversity by placing restrictions on how owners may finance the ownership of their property. Whether or not it is an ulterior motive, full time residents and long term renters shouldn't have a monopoly on enjoying the Sonoma coastline. STR in fact remains a crucial accessibility tool for tourists outside Sonoma to come and enjoy its coast. Isn't an underlying principle of California coastal property that it is highly accessible? Do you want to be complicit in changing this norm?

Thank you for hearing my message. I feel very strongly about this. I have learned in business that breaking and renegotiating contracts is done only in emergency circumstances.

Regards,
Derek
+1 919 360 3963

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From: [Lisa Nosal](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Vacation Rental Ordinance
Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 8:38:36 PM

EXTERNAL

I live in unincorporated Sonoma County, in the First District in the east part of the county. In the eight years I've lived here, my rural neighborhood has become a ghost town on most weekdays and extremely loud on most weekends. House after house has been converted into vacation rentals, and many others are used only as weekend homes. There are wedding receptions at rented venues going late into the night with amplified music and yelling, and the sound carries so far that I can't even tell where the source of the noise is. There's no sense of neighbors looking out for each other, because there are so few neighbors. In a time when increasing drought means increased fire risk, I don't feel safe with this many people around who are not aware of fire safety and wildfire-country protocols. I also rent my own unit, and I worry constantly that the owners are going to evict me and use the property for another vacation rental.

The town of Sonoma, and Sonoma County, already caters so much to tourists that it's hard to find local places to shop, or to want to be downtown during the weekend. Please don't encourage further loss of community. Please limit vacation rentals in Sonoma County.

Lisa Nosal
Sonoma, CA

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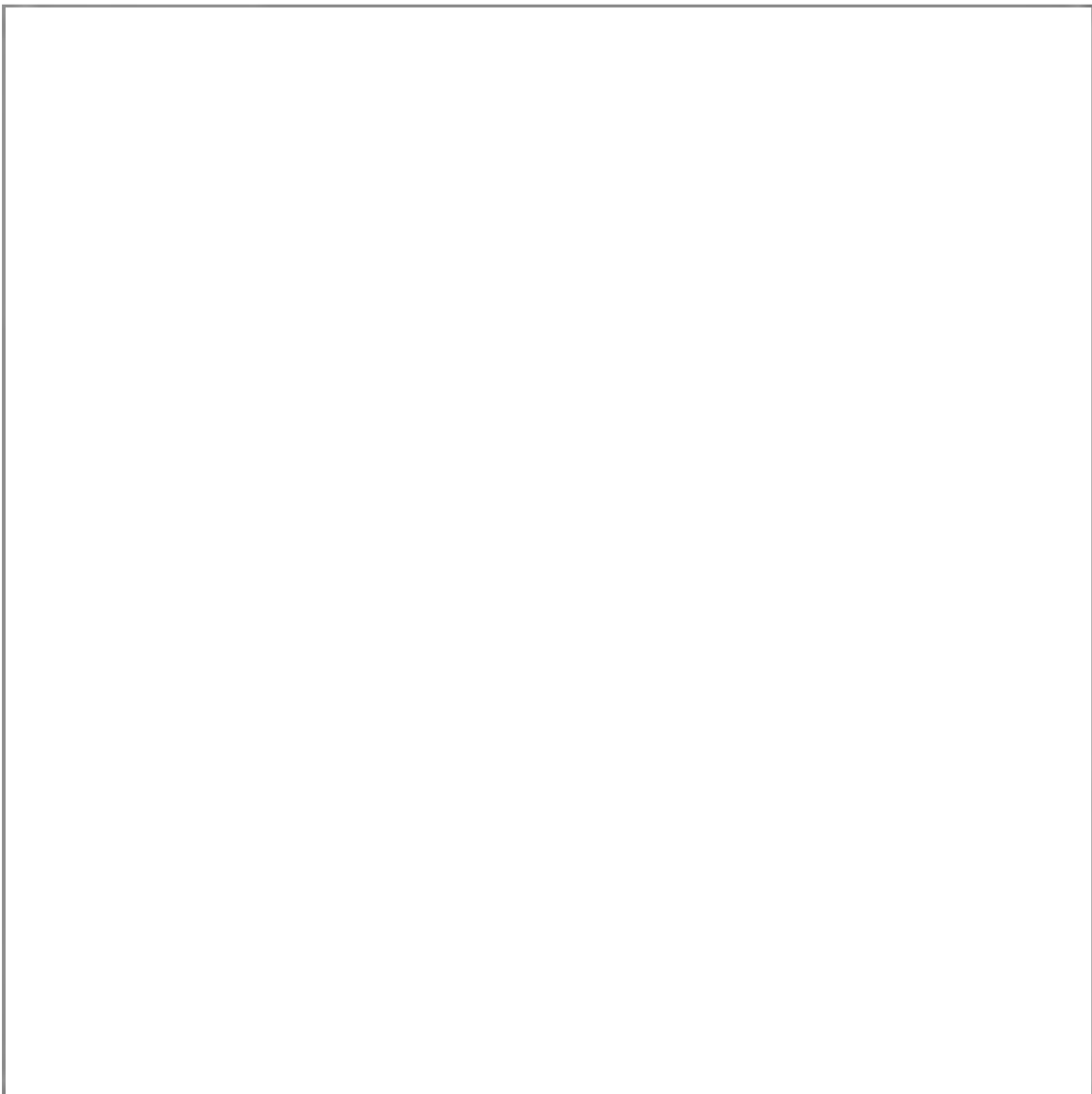
From: [Stephen Pringle](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Restricting vacation rentals in the Coastal Plan?
Date: January 12, 2022 5:28:03 PM

EXTERNAL

This is a Nimby approach and violates fair housing laws. Restricting access to housing near our coast is almost the same as saying you can't go to the beach because the rich people on the bluff own it. There are no environmental concerns and this is a hollow argument used by landowners who don't want to share our beaches and access. They want it all to themselves. Do not restrict access to temporary rentals or put unneeded restrictions on them when now more than ever we need places to stay near our coast. The environmental impact will come from more cars having to drive back and forth to the coast instead of spending a few nights near the coast. Are you really trying to control who gets to stay near the beach? The rich people who can only afford a fancy hotel room? This is wrong and shortsighted.

Thank you
Stephen

--



Stephen Pringle

Corcoran Global Living

t: 415.720.7832 | **e:** springle@sfnorth.com | **w:** www.sfnorth.com

BRE#01326676

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From: [anne roberts](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Vacation rentals
Date: January 13, 2022 9:00:29 AM

EXTERNAL

Good Morning,

I am unable to attend today's zoom meeting, but would like to share a couple of thoughts regarding vacation rentals on the Sonoma Coast.

1. Vacation rentals mean increased revenue for the County through TOT income.
2. Without Vacation Rentals many families would not have an option of experiencing the coast. There are not many hotel rooms available and some are quite pricey.

For those two reasons alone I think no changes should be made. Your efforts could then be focused in another direction.

Thank you for your time reading this.

Best regards,

Anne & Joe Roberts

Sent from my iPad

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January 20, 2022

To: Sonoma County Planning Commission re: Airbnb

From: Caroline Simon/Richard family, Airbnb host in Sonoma County

Dear Sonoma County Planning Commission,

We inherited our parents' ranch in Sonoma County in 2017. It is a beautiful property to which we are deeply attached, and a very expensive one to run and maintain.

We are not independently wealthy. The only way we can keep our family property is to make it pay for itself. There was a lot of deferred maintenance, and costs have risen dramatically since 2017, particularly for property insurance and wood. We have been able to accomplish this mostly because of the income we have received from making the farmhouse on the property available for part-time rental on Airbnb. The fact that Airbnb makes part-time rental possible also means that our family members can stay in the farmhouse for family occasions and vacations several times a year, and renew our friendships and feeling for Sonoma.

The reviews we have received on Airbnb have been glowing. We believe that being able to place our family farmhouse up for rental on Airbnb has given guests from all over the world (from Australia, the UK, and Israel, as well as across America and the Bay Area) a chance to get to know and appreciate the richness of Sonoma in a unique and lasting way that appeals to many families. We planted a small orchard in the farmhouse garden with a variety of Luther Burbank fruit trees, to showcase the bounty of our rich agricultural history and land. We give our guests wine made from our vineyard and send them for tours to visit nearby wineries. We believe this is also good for Sonoma County.

We are pleased to observe strong, sensible regulations. And we hope that we can continue to make our family farmhouse available for part-time rental, which would enable us to keep the property in our family, to stay there frequently, and be ambassadors of Sonoma to visitors from around the world.

Sincerely,

Caroline Simon

From: [Caroline Simon](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Letter re: Airbnb regulation
Date: January 20, 2022 6:21:43 AM
Attachments: [So Co Planning CommissionAirbnb.pdf](#)
Importance: High

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Planning Commission,

I am unable to attend the hearing today. Please see our attached comments.

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Caroline Simon

COMMENTS - LOCAL COASTAL PLAN REVISION 6/2021

From: Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts

July 2, 2021

We commend Permit Sonoma staff and the county for their multi-year effort in completing the Local Coastal Plan draft and updating the prior LCP in so many important areas.

As a group of homeowners who rent or host their homes in Sonoma County and to coastal visitors on a short-term basis we were especially interested in the Land Use Element – Implementation Programs – Program C-CU-1 to establish performance standards for the use of existing residences for vacation rentals and hosted rentals. We look forward to the proposed performance standards and any public workshop that may be held to discuss them.

We have reviewed and are aware of the existing inland VR Ordinance and Special Use Standards for Hosted Rentals. We look forward in working with you in the preparation of performance standards that include coastal zone homes. We ask that you make clear that short-term renting or hosting our homes is still a residential use of our homes.

Short Term Rental Owners/Hosts Provide Public Coastal Access

Our vacation rental (VR) owners and hosts want to operate responsibly and continue to open our homes to the public by providing affordable accommodations to many Californians who would otherwise not be able to stay overnight on the coast. The revised LCP noted there are 374 hotel/motel rooms on the Sonoma County coastal zone. This is a small number of overnight facilities for a 55 miles long coastal area.

The coastal VR/short-term rentals and hosts add so many more tourist overnight facilities to these few hotel/motel rooms. They have done this for decades. These owners have been a part of the fabric of our coastal communities and have done much to ensure the public's access to the coast.

Many of the VR owners/hosts are “mom & pop” owner/hosts – some even “mom” only - who are doing their best to keep their homes, pay off their mortgages, and be part of the communities they have enjoyed for years. It is a win-win for the county and the Coastal Commission that so many of us are willing to share our homes with the public.

Most whole-house short-term rental (STR) properties are someone's home that is being rented out when they are not able to be there. The ability to earn short term income on the property is what makes that ownership affordable for them. Otherwise they may not be able to afford the home which may be their dream home where they plan to live in retirement or leave to their grandkids.

Coastal VR owners and hosts come in many versions but one thing is for sure: nearly all VR owners have only one coastal home and they work hard to keep it and share it with the public. They may have bought it for future residency on the coast. For retirees, pensions are becoming a thing of the past and owning a vacation rental home is not only a way to make ends meet, it's a retirement nest egg. These coastal owners may have inherited it from their family, or are folks who live and work in the bay area and cannot afford a home there but want to begin building equity themselves (and enjoy a weekend at the coast when they can) while continuing to work/rent down south.

Without the option to earn extra income through flexible short term rentals, siblings might have to sell the inherited family home, divorced or widowed mothers may not be able to maintain the coastal home. Only the uber-rich who can afford to maintain a vacant second home during their own absences will be purchasing. In this scenario many lovely coastal homes will be vacant and the public will truly suffer.

Most short term rental properties are someone's 2d home, or with bay area renters – their *only* home. These individuals may have hopes of retiring and living in it permanently one day, but while working they can't afford two homes, two mortgages, two insurance policies, or pay taxes on two properties. The only way average folks can retain use and still afford a retirement home is to offer it short term until they pay off the property in many years – at which time they can retire and live permanently in their coastal home.

The Sonoma Coast VR owners/hosts easily double the number of overnight tourist facilities in the coastal zone. There will not always be owners who choose to open their home to the public. The availability of VR homes will wax and wane depending on the price of the homes and who buys them. It is difficult to mandate that people live in their homes permanently or rent their homes long-term. This is often a personal decision based on family needs and personal preference. There may be a time when few coastal owners want to rent their homes short term – that will be a loss for the public seeking low cost, affordable overnight rentals.

Comments – Short Term Rental Restrictions

Allow Coastal Zone homeowners the option to choose how they wish to purpose their home, and don't prohibit lower cost housing from being used as a vacation rental, as the cost of other properties that are higher value, will ultimately make it too expensive for low to moderate income families to enjoy the Coastal Zone. This will help ensure maximum public access, because without lower cost visitor serving facilities, members of the public with low or moderate incomes would be more limited in their ability to access and enjoy the coast. **Creating an ordinance that only allows wealthy homes to be used as vacation rentals, only allows the wealthy to stay in Sonoma County.**

Hosted rentals allow anyone to use a portion of their home, for additional, flexible income. This extra income helps people make ends meet or meet their goals. Restricting hosted rentals to only 1 room limits not only the homeowner, but the supply of affordable accommodations to low or moderate income individuals. **Allow hosted**

rentals the option to purpose more than 1 room short-term, so affordable accommodations can be available to singles, couples, and low or moderate income visitors. This will help ensure maximum public access, by providing lower cost visitor facilities, so all members of the public can enjoy the coast. Food Service, if provided, could be “grab” and “go” items as in budget hotels/motels, so there is a distinction from B&B’s.

Accessory Dwelling Units that are offered short term would allow public access along the Sonoma Coast by offering affordable accommodations to lower and middle income individuals and families, as they are often less expensive than equivalent lodging in a hotel.

- Short-term rental use of ADU/JADU units offer property owners much more flexibility in how their property is being used.
- Units can be used by adult children or other family members who have short-term need of housing (school breaks, job change, visiting family).
- Units can easily be converted to full-time rentals or any other use, as the owner sees fit depending on family needs.

Comments – Additional Points

We agree with Permit Sonoma that a better way to regulate STRs is to limit the number of permits one owner can be issued. This is recommended over density limits and proximity limits – especially on the coast where so many homes are not occupied by permanent residents, and the population is about 3500.

- All existing STR homes should be grandfathered in when the coast is regulated
- There should be a maximum of 3 permits allowed for an owner
- Corporations should not be issued permits for STRs

This would be fair to Coastal Zone owners, a boon to the California public seeking coastal access, and allow private individuals the option to purpose a home short term.

Conclusion

We ask that the county not place restrictions on vacation rental or hosting in the Coastal Zone. We can work with performance standards. That can be an enhancement for the public and our communities. But placing density caps, proximity limits, and other restrictions on vacation rental homes negatively affects average folks. In their time of need, will a permit even be available for them? One never knows when some unexpected event will happen (i.e. loss of a job, care of a loved one, divorce or death of a spouse) and they find themselves needing to earn extra income – offering a home short-term could be the only way to make ends meet. Please do not close the doors on us and create obstacles to our way of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts.

From: [Danielle Terhune](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: Permit Sonoma Public Comment 3/17/22
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 6:49:45 PM

EXTERNAL

To Whom It May Concern,

I understand that there is to be a Planning Commission meeting on March 17th about the new vacation rental ordinance on future rentals and I'd like to make my comment as a resident of Sonoma County.

Vacation rental trends left unchecked and unregulated cause an even more intense strain on the local housing supply, and considering that we have over 2,500 people that are currently houseless, the Planning Commission has the opportunity to reign in the negative affects that these vacation rentals can do to our community. I support a vacation rental moratorium to protect the local housing stock as a human right for the people struggling to currently survive here.

The vacation rental industry is just that, an industry, operated like any other business, and it should be treated as such. Vacation rentals are businesses, and businesses require licenses and certain oversight to operations. I think this requirement is sound and responsible.

In the spirit of maintaining our local community, a permanent cap on vacation rentals should be implemented to ensure that there is ample housing supply considering the crises that we are experiencing doesn't further reduce housing stock.

San Francisco has set a precedent for requiring that vacation rental owners be permanent residents of the city in which their vacation property is located. This makes perfect sense in order to dissuade out-of-town investors that do not help our local economy or residents from purchasing and flipping properties that are urgently needed by houseless or soon-to-be residents.

Lastly, we have the perfect opportunity to limit future intrusion into residential neighborhoods by requiring that, like commercial businesses, vacation rental properties be allowed only in commercial zoning.

Thank you for hearing out a concerned citizen who wants the best for ALL in the community.

Danielle Terhune

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From: [Christina Hernandez](#) on behalf of [PRMD-VacationRentals](#)
To: [Gary Helfrich](#)
Subject: FW: X zone permits for vacation rentals for 323 Lake St Sonoma
Date: Friday, January 14, 2022 12:40:54 PM

From: hotwiredsve@aol.com <hotwiredsve@aol.com>
Sent: Friday, January 14, 2022 11:22 AM
To: PRMD-VacationRentals <PRMD-VacationRentals@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: X zone permits for vacation rentals for 323 Lake St Sonoma

EXTERNAL

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to say something to be input into the meeting for Thursday 1/20/22 for vacation rentals.

I would like to know if X zone vacation rentals are going to be reconsidered with taking the X off so we can apply for a permit for vacation rentals.

My family bought this house in 1960 brand new and I inherited the house I am trying to get a vacation rental permit but was told I have a X at the end of my zoning.

I would like to know why and X for my area.

You have put in low income housing down the street and now a drug rehab center is going in right around corner.

So for me I would like to be considered to get a permit for vacation rentals and the X taken off of our area.

Sincerely

Gaylyn Tovar
(925) 286-7711 I would love a phone call from who makes these decisions.
323 Lake St Sonoma CA 95476

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