

March 10, 2004

The Sounder - GUEST OPINION

In John Evans guest opinion submitted to The Sounder, February 18, he appears to have little interest in or use for facts and so has written a commentary full of misrepresentations and mistruths seemingly with the intent of manipulating public opinion in support of the BOCC and against the Friends of the San Juans. This is unbecoming of a civil servant and of no service to the community.

Despite what Mr. Evans says, citizens of San Juan County are not in danger of losing the right to a guesthouse. The fact is that in most cases, in most areas of the county, homeowners can have a guesthouse or a guest bunkhouse, attached or detached and I suggest there are few, if any, instances where guest quarters of some kind would not be permitted. (Any citizen can readily clarify their options and what regulations apply to them by calling Community Development and Planning at 378-2354 and giving them your tax parcel number).

In Urban Growth Areas like Eastsound, or in Areas Of More Intensive Rural development, hamlets like Olga or Rosario, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) up to 1,000 square feet whether attached or detached are permitted. The county distinguishes between ADUs that are guesthouses which have bedrooms, bath, common living quarters and kitchens, and bunkhouses which do not have a kitchen.

On shoreline properties detached guesthouses are not allowed. Attached guesthouses are generally not precluded. Attached or detached bunkhouses are permitted. In rural areas where the dispute that John Evans referred to is occurring attached guesthouses and bunkhouses are permitted. Detached bunkhouses are permitted. Detached guesthouses are not permitted under the current moratorium, however there are instances where they are permitted. For example if you own 10 acres, zoned R-5, you can build a guesthouse either adjacent to your home and give up a subdivision right or site it for future subdivision. So you see there is something for everyone in every or nearly every situation.

A guesthouse is a second home and in rural areas zoned for one home you cannot build two. This is a violation of density rules.

The guesthouse as affordable housing argument is bogus and the BOCC has lost both of its appeals using this argument because they have not been able to present any evidence that supports this claim nor were they able to convince our state representatives to legislate around this issue. The BOCC is considering a third appeal to a higher court and if they lose this appeal, which they likely will, they will open the door to claims for compensation for the legal fees of the Friends of the San Juans or possibly a frivolous lawsuit charge.

The appeals process has been lengthy and expensive, costing the taxpayers of San Juan County thousands, likely hundreds of thousands of dollars and this at a time when the county is facing fiscal shortages.

We challenge Mr. Evans and the BOCC to: 1) Give a full accounting of the tax dollars, state and county, they have spent on the comp plan and all the various challenges and appeals in particular and justify the expenditures. How many cases has the county on and lost? 2) Give us hard facts about the number of guesthouses in the county: how many there are, how many are rented, what they rent for, and what you think affordable means. 3) Explain why you refuse to negotiate the offer of settlement made by the Friends of the San Juans. 4) Explain why the BOCC has on numerous occasions ignored the advice of its own planning department and legal representatives and the results of studies. 5) Tell us why the BOCC is right on all these issues, and the Growth Management Hearings Board, the courts and the state legislature are wrong.

Mr. Evans you have questioned both the integrity and the intentions of the Friends of the San Juans and falsely stated that Stephanie Buffum and Lynn Bahyrich have guesthouses. Neither do but Ms. Buffum does have a bunkhouse. You have made similar claims previously in the San Juan Journal and they were refuted then. We suggest it is your integrity and intentions that are in question and we recommend you check your sources.

Charles Carver and Sarah McCulloch
Orcas