

FROM THE DESK OF
HEATHER L. & ROBERT B. DOUGLAS

161 N. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg, CA 95437

September 11, 2017

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Chair, Supervisor Johh McCowen
Vice-Chair, Supervisor Dan Hamburg
Supervisor Carre Brown
Supervisor Georgeanne Croskey
Supervisor Dan Gjerde

501 Low Gap Road
Ukiah, CA 95482

RE: September 12 BOS Agenda Item 5e.

Dear Honorable Board of Supervisors:

We are long-time residents of Fort Bragg that are actively involved in the community and who work in health care and natural resource management professions. As part of our professional employment, we are frequently involved in recruiting and hiring full-time and seasonal employees. The lack of affordable housing—as well as the high cost of living—is often cited as a reason why prospective employees decide against accepting jobs in this area or existing employees leave to seek employment elsewhere. Thus, we understand the concern surrounding housing availability, which is an extremely complex socio-economic issue not easily attributed to any single cause (e.g. short-term vacation rentals). The intent with our letter here, however, is to briefly share our perspective on the short-term rental situation and make several recommendations we hope the Board would consider.

Three years ago we purchased a second property outside of Fort Bragg as an investment to provide financial security for our family so we can continue to live and work in this community. Although we are two professionals working full-time, we found it necessary to supplement our household income to pay for childcare, pay down debt, support college funds for two children, and eventually provide for retirement. We also wanted to use this property for family events and family members visiting from out of the area. When we initially purchased the property, we considered renting it as a single family home, but given its size, we realized that renting it short-term was the only financially viable option to cover improvements and maintenance costs, that would also allow for some personal use of the property.

Our small (800 square feet), one-bedroom rental was originally built in the 1950s as a family vacation cabin. It is located in the inland zone on a short, privately maintained road. We applied for a business license prior to renting our small cabin, but our application was placed on hold after the Department of Planning and Building Services informed us that an

approved major use permit was a prerequisite for granting a business license at this location. As we researched this issue and attempted to work with the process, the estimated cost for a major use permit increased beyond our financial abilities. Regardless, we have paid our Transient Occupancy (TOT) and Business Improvement District (BID) taxes in full since first renting the property two years ago. The amount of time and money required to obtain such a permit is overly burdensome and excessive, especially when properties less than a mile away in the coastal zone are not subject to this requirement, regardless of the type of road they are on.

We agree the current system of rules governing vacation rentals is in need of revision. These rules need to be streamlined, reasonable, and less financially costly to property owners. They also need to recognize the diverse and creative ways in which property owners rent their properties to supplement income to support their ability to live in Mendocino County.

As the Board considers extending the moratorium on any new short-term vacation rentals, we respectfully request that: 1) the language of "including all related approvals (such as zoning clearance or use permits)" in the Moratorium Ordinance #4391 and extension ordinance be deleted; and 2) the Mendocino County Ordinance 20.164.015 (L) room and board be amended by completely removing the following language: "provided the parcel has frontage on a publicly maintained road. A major use permit is required if the parcel does not have frontage on a public maintained road."

We hope you will consider our request and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Heather and Robert Douglas