

July 11, 2018

Monterey County Planning Commission

RE: July 11, 2018, Workshop on Short Term Rentals

Thank you Chairman Vandevere and members of the Planning Commission. My name is Kirk Gafill and I am speaking today on behalf of the Big Sur Local Coastal Plan Defense Committee.

The current staff report recognizes that the availability of housing for residents and workers is a critical constraint identified in the Big Sur Land Use Plan and that with the existing policies limiting the number of caretaker units, Short Term Rentals will likely have an impact on the long-term housing market and affordable housing in Big Sur.

“Home stays” are another type of Short Term Rental that are inconsistent with the current Big Sur Land Use Plan as they contribute to additional visitor serving activities with attendant impacts on Highway 1 traffic capacity and negative impacts on available housing and will further erode the viability of the local community.

The Big Sur Local Coastal Plan Defense Committee was formed to offer a voice to the local community and all others with an interest in the continued preservation of Big Sur on issues related to the Big Sur Local Coastal Plan (LCP). Its purpose is not restricted to the issue of Short Term Rentals, but rather advocates for the adherence to the LCP as the best way to preserve Big Sur and the goals embodied in the LCP.

While we understand that our position on Short Term Rentals, including “Home stays,” in the Big Sur Planning Area, may be interpreted as NIMBYism or inflexible, we believe that the existing adopted and certified restrictions and limitations found in the LCP provide for the critical balance of environmental protections, community viability, and visitor access to the Big Sur Coast.

The number of overnight visitor serving accommodations in Big Sur is already the largest as a proportion relative to the residential population within all communities in Monterey County and allowances for additional overnight accommodations already exist in the form Bed and Breakfast establishments that to date have not been utilized. We can see no basis for compromising on the protections of the Local Coastal Plan to add yet more overnight visitor serving accommodations, however named or described, with the resultant increases in traffic and negative impacts on residential housing.

Please keep in mind that the creation of the Big Sur Land Use Plan in the 1980’s, with its dramatic downzoning of residential properties and highly restrictive limits on number of visitor serving accommodations, represented a Grand Compromise of Big Sur area residential, business, and environmental interests to preserve the environment, local community and allow for visitor access to the area.

Clearly, times have changed and will continue to do so, but the importance of the values of the LCP have not and to the extent that they can be better served by updating and amending the current Plan, then that is the process that should be undertaken to address changes to the Plan.

We thus urge the Planning Commission to direct staff to exclude “Home stays” and “Low-frequency Short Term Rentals” from the Big Sur Planning Area in its drafting of a countywide Short Term Rental Ordinance.

Thank you.

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