

I want to thank the San Juan County Council for taking the time and beginning the Policy Discussion on how to solve the issue of affordable year round rental housing

I have lived on Lopez Island for 10 years and have watched with growing concern the disappearance of affordable and year round rental housing. Newly arrived people to the island are unable to find permanent rental housing and current residents are losing their housing either due to increasing costs or the conversion of their homes to short term rentals.

I worked as the Fire Chief on Lopez Island for the last 10 years with 3 fulltime Paramedic Firefighters, one part time employee and 50 volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians and Firefighters. In 2016 one of the Paramedics had to resign due to the lack of affordable rental housing and several volunteers are struggling to find or are constantly searching for their next place to live as the housing inventory shrinks. These are critical people providing emergency response to our community. If housing is not available they are forced to move away and we all lose these vital emergency workers.

The backbone and strength of our Islands community is the working class: the carpenters, plumbers, electricians, restaurant employees, teachers, classroom assistants, farm workers, caregivers, clerks and painters make up a large part of the rental market and are also the citizens we rely on to become our emergency EMTs and Firefighters. As affordable rentals are becoming impossible to find, these valuable workers are being forced to leave the Island due to the lack of rental housing and the emergency workforce shrinks.

We need multiple affordable rental options to meet the demand and keep our work force viable. Please continue to look for and support ways to improve affordable rental housing options here in San Juan County and I thank the County Council for today's opportunity to address this issue.

Jim Ghigliou  
P.O. Box 308  
Lopez Island  
360 468-3026