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**To:** [Hilton, Keenan; Planning Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Short Term Rental Ordinance 10/5/2023 Workshop Comment  
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Hi All

I'm writing in a public comment on the Workshop for the Draft Short Term Rental Ordinance as I am unable to attend the meeting in person. As I have previously commented, I have serious concerns regarding public health when it comes to properties with on site septic systems. I will note that the "Purpose" of the ordinance states "The purpose and intent of this Section (the "Short-term Rental Ordinance") is to **protect and promote the public health, safety and welfare, ...**"

In the current Draft form the County plans to "approve" Short Term Rentals with no process for verification of bedrooms for properties with on-site septic (Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS)). This oversight or omission will result in significant public health and environmental impacts. Determining the size of an OWTS is directly related to the volume of wastewater produced from the residence. For typical residential sites current regulations state that the sizing of a system be based on the maximum daily wastewater load of 150 gallons per day (gpd) **per bedroom**. This assumes 2 people per bedroom; everybody is at home, taking showers, doing laundry and doing the dishes. Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health (DEH) maintains records of these systems in Humboldt County.

The Draft Short Term Rental Ordinance as written proposes to regulate the maximum occupancy based on the **number of bedrooms** however no provisions are made to confirm the **number of bedrooms** match what the OWTS was designed to handle. With the current ordinance as written For example, a 3 bedroom single family residence used as a short term rental would be able to have a max occupancy of 7 (one more than the design load of the septic system). For this example assume this same residence has an office room and dining room that have had beds put in them for the Short Term Rental use which would now result in a max occupancy of 11 (near double the occupancy of the septic system).

Overloading the septic system could result in failure of the leach field causing untreated wastewater to surface on neighboring parcels. I live in the Jacoby Creek Watershed and this has the real potential to negatively impact Jacoby Creek itself which supports several state and federally listed species. While this has been determined to be CEQA exempt it is not exempt of the endangered species act.

Sonoma County has an excellent example of an ordinance and permit process that if the vacation rental is to be served by a septic system the applicant provide proof of septic capacity. Applicants may need to visit the Permit Sonoma Records Division for the documentation. Where no record exists showing size and capacity of the septic system, maximum occupancy is limited to four (4) guests, not including children under three (3) years old. Also the Proposed Maximum Occupancy cannot exceed approved septic capacity.

In order to protect and promote the public health as well as environmental health it is imperative the County confirm the number of bedrooms match the number of bedrooms used in the design of the onsite septic system (OWTS).

Trevor Goff, PE