From: Stan Winters
To: CD STRComment
Subject: Comments for STR consideration
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Commissioners,

As you continue to move toward decisions regarding short-term rentals in Chelan County I would like to ask you to consider a social phenomenon that has become prevalent and harmful in our society in general.

The phenomenon is called “bothside-ism”. It is most easily recognized in news reporting but it affects many parts of our lives. In news reporting this happens when news outlets feel the need to report on both sides of an issue equally, even when one side might represent highly regarded independent scientists and the other side might represent a fringe group attached to a commercial interest. This creates a false equivalency. The press can feel like they have done their job by presenting “both sides” but in fact the sides are not equal. The result is skewed information, which is then consumed by the public and the public is actually mislead as a result.

One possible result of “bothside-ism” in our situation here in Chelan County is that as Commissioners charged with setting policy on many things, including short-term rentals, you are responsible for weighing all of the available information. But you (and all of us) are under the influence of this relatively new social construct of “bothside-ism”. This creates an atmosphere where the tendency is to find common ground, to come to an agreement, to come to a compromise, between opposing sides.

And in this case, as in the case of news reporting, a false equivalency is created.

The vast majority of citizens of Chelan County’s residential areas, which are reserved in our county code for “dwelling as the primary residence”, overwhelmingly want to preserve their neighborhoods. They don’t want non-owner occupied short-term rentals as neighbors. They want and deserve the type of neighborhood they believed they could expect based on county code. They want to feel the security and safely of living in a neighborhood. They don’t want strangers coming and going in steady streams week after week. They don’t want to have to be the first line of enforcement of noise ordinances, fire restrictions, and trespassing.

The county code supports this. The citizens of the county support this. The city of Leavenworth supports this. More than 3,000 people have signed a petition supporting this. An

easy Google search shows cities, counties and residents around the country and the world support this.

The opposition is a much smaller group, many whom aren't residents of Chelan County. This group is mostly comprised of:

- Short-term rental owners,
- Real Estate agents, and
- People who own short-term rental agencies

It is obvious that this small group has their own financial gain as their primary interest. They have a strong motive for having no restrictions on where and how a short term rental can operate. Their claim is that a tourist staying in a short-term rental is the same as a home owner or a long term renter. I'll say that again; their claim is that a group of people who rent an STR for a weekend… is no different than a family living in a home or a family renting a home and using it as their primary place of residence. The first group is only "lodging" for a few days. They will then return to their primary residence where they actually live. The other group are the people that do live in the home as their primary residence. They live in Chelan County. They work here, they send their kids to our schools, they have an interest in where they live.

The pro-STR group makes other claims such as the demise of tourism in Leavenworth and Chelan if any restrictions are passed. What they don't say is that they took a calculated risk when they opened their short-term rental, knowing that, at the minimum, there was doubt that Chelan County code allowed STRs.

What we have, after all, is a the vast majority of Chelan County residents asking the commissioners to finally stand up for them and enforce our code. If this had been done ten years ago we certainly wouldn't be having the issue now. We have thousands of neighborhood residents saying that they want their neighborhoods to continue to be for neighbors. They want community life, with neighbors who care about each other, have some common interests in the health of the community, they want safety and security, and they want a peaceful place to live.

And on the other-hand is a small group of people with a singular financial incentive to be able to purchase any home anywhere in Chelan County, in any neighborhood, and turn it into an STR or mini-hotel for their own profit, with no regard for the impact this has on the immediate neighbors or the community. And ultimately for the overall well-being of Chelan County.

This is exactly what a false equivalency is.

You, as commissioners, are under no obligation to find the common ground, come to an agreement, or find something that both sides can live with.

Your job is to do the right thing for the people that elected you to represent them in Chelan County, and you have the support of the people of Chelan County as you face this issue.

Sincerely,

Stan Winters