

Letter: Understanding the 2 VHR initiatives

To the community,

I attended the VHR community forum on June 9, organized by the SLT Republican Women. The topic of this forum was the future of vacation home rentals (VHR) in our community. Both sides were well represented.



Bruce Grego

Peggy Bourland lead the Neighbors for Neighbors group, whose initiative has been approved by the city clerk and El Dorado County elections as having sufficient signatures for election, and which provides elimination in three years of all VHRs in residential areas in our city with some limited exceptions for home occupied owners.

The Sustainable Community Alliance is the sponsor of a second VHR initiative with Mark Salmon leading this group. This second initiative seeks to basically accept current city ordinances permitting VHRs in residential areas with additional requirements of advisory committees to address problems and problems of enforcement connected with VHRs.

Additionally, besides the two groups, made up of three speakers each, there were six other speakers that provided additional information concerning this issue. This was a two-hour discussion and was well attended by the public.

As expected, there are divisions between the two groups as to the facts and the impacts of having VHRs in our community. Neighbors for Neighbors felt that housing for middle and lower income groups have been substantially reduced due to the 1,400 VHRs in our community; Sustainable Community Alliance disagreed and claimed that VHRs have no measurable effect upon housing. Sustainable Community Alliance felt that the reduction of VHRs will have seriously economic consequences upon TOT collection and the income of people that work to support this industry. Neighbors for Neighbors claimed that the impacts would not be substantial effecting only 12 percent of TOT tax revenue for the city. Neighbors for Neighbors complained about poor enforcement and the fact that in all the years of enforcement no one's VHR permits has been revoked. Sustainable Community Alliance agreed that the city was slow to react to these problems of noise and parking, but indicated that other groups that live in the residential areas, owners and renters have caused similar problems. Neighbors for Neighbors felt that local employers can't find employees because of the lack of available housing and high rents. Sustainable Community Alliance felt that the reduction of VHRs will result in the loss of employment for those that support this industry. Both groups claimed that they have made compromises on this issue, but there was no agreement as to that issue either.

The character of the residential areas, the right to use one's property, quiet possession, this enforcement of zoning, what is permitted in the residential zone, the economy, housing and more were discussed. I have not attempted in this letter to fully or with detail describe the approved and proposed initiatives or to fully describe the positions and arguments on both sides. My point in this letter is to identify the one clear area of agreement.

These opposing groups and even those that attended this forum, all agreed that our City Council has seriously failed to

adequately address the VHR issue and this failure has resulted in the current conflict heading for a November vote with these opposing groups. This council's failure to act, failure to seek balanced and fair compromise, failure to act timely, and failure to bring these groups together on the VHRs is why we now have strongly opposing groups ready to "go for broke" in the upcoming election in November.

Tom Davis, as business owner (not as a council member) was one of the six informational speakers at the forum. Wendy David, our mayor, attended for a period of time and left. It's a sad state of affairs when our council has failed to engage the Citizens and Voters of this Community to obtain an amiable resolution of this controversy. In speaking to some of the people present at the forum, there is still a desire for compromise, but there is no one in authority to act upon this opportunity.

Bruce Grego, South Lake Tahoe