

Support for 1% Increase in Resort Tax

Recent Real estate reports show that Big Sky average sales price for single family homes increased 33% from \$1,681,667 in 2018 to \$2,234,112 in 2019. The average sales price for condos increased 17% from \$459,000 in 2018 to \$550,500 in 2019. While this may be great news to current property owners, those prices are WAY off the charts for many working people who want to call Big Sky home. Ask any business owner their #1 challenge- it's finding workers. Why? Because there is nowhere for workers to live. Local workers have not only been priced out of the market, but there are few long term rentals available, as the trend towards short term rentals has escalated.

While major local employers like Big Sky Resort and Cross Harbor are investing heavily to build/buy seasonal housing for their workers, this does not solve the housing problem for dedicated year round workers who want to make Big Sky their home for the long haul. Big Sky Community Housing Trust (BSCHT) was formed in 2017 to address this issue and has developed a plan to build 500 for sale or rent units by 2023 which will be allocated strictly to long term local workers.

One of the biggest challenges for the new Community Housing Trust organization is finding property available to build upon which has water and sewer rights. Without these rights, properties cannot be developed. While our local Water and Sewer Board has been interested in supporting the Workforce Housing cause, the current sewer plant's capacity has limited ability to meet existing needs and has caused the Board to turn down requests for additional water and sewer rights for potential workforce housing projects.

While no one likes tax increases, the reality is, Big Sky needs to keep up with and fund the support systems that are essential for our growth. Expanding our Water/Sewer plant capacity and increasing disposal water quality must occur. This requires a large investment which should not be borne by property owners alone. Many visitors benefit from the beauty and bounty of this special place, and I believe the cost of expanding our infrastructure should be shared with them. The proposed 1% increase in Resort Tax will share the cost for the new water/sewer plan between residents and visitors. The expanded capacity will allow us to build needed homes for those at wage earner levels of income. As Director of the BSCHT, I appreciate the willingness of the BSWSD Board to commit water and sewer rights for future workforce housing projects when the expanded plant capacity comes on line. I urge voters to support this important initiative.