

SUMMARY OF THE WEST SLOPE VHR MEETING – March 4, 2026

The meeting was a public forum on the West Slope Vacation Home Rental (VHR) Ordinance, hosted by District 1 Supervisor Greg Ferrero, District 2 Supervisor George Turnboo, and Planning & Building Director Karen Garner. Tara Stout (CAO's Office), LeeAnne Mila, and Corrie Larsen from Agriculture, along with Kevin Bailey and Kevin Hart from Code Enforcement, attended. The purpose was solely to listen to public comments, not to debate or answer questions.

Speakers included in-person attendees and Zoom participants. They consisted of homeowners, business owners, farmers, winery operators, renters, VHR hosts, families of disabled residents, community members, and real estate representatives.

Opening Structure

The Supervisors outlined:

- No back-and-forth debate
- Three-minute speaking limit
- Focus solely on West Slope VHR ordinance
- Intent to bring public comments back to the ad hoc committee
- Tahoe Basin rules acknowledged as separate from West Slope needs

Content of Public Comments

Speakers gave detailed personal stories describing:

- Loss of income when their hosted rentals or ADUs were red-tagged
- Confusion and frustration with enforcement, including inconsistent inspector interpretations
- Experiences with tourists benefiting local businesses
- Hardship on retirees, disabled residents, and families relying on rental income
- Difficulties understanding rules about kitchens, appliances, ADUs, JADUs, guest houses, and "hosted" requirements

Other speakers emphasized the opposite concerns:

- Noise, parties, animals disturbed, and enforcement gaps
- A strong desire to preserve the 500-foot buffer
- The need to protect residential neighborhoods and the rural quality of life
- Concern that expanding VHR allowances could worsen housing availability or create "mini-motels."

A few speakers asked the County to:

- Clarify definitions (guest house, ADU, JADU)

- Provide more data before making changes
- Increase enforcement capacity
- Establish a fair appeal process
- Grandfather in long-operating VHRs
- Consider a tourism corridor
- Revisit outdated or inconsistent building restrictions

Closing

Karen Garner summarized the themes, noting interest in:

- Clear regulations
 - Pathways for detached units / older structures
 - Rethinking buffers based on parcel size
 - Distinguishing West Slope needs from Tahoe
 - Avoiding corporate VHR ownership
- Supervisors thanked attendees and emphasized their commitment to reviewing the ordinance.

MAJOR COMMON THEMES

1. Economic & Personal Hardship

- Many residents rely on VHR income for mortgages, retirement, disability support, or business viability.
- Red-tagging and shutdowns have led to severe financial distress.

2. Frustration with Inconsistent Enforcement

- Reports of inspectors giving contradictory information.
- Perceived overreach (e.g., peeking into windows).
- Lack of clarity on rules for kitchens, appliances, and older structures.

3. Desire for Clear, Objective, Consistent Regulations

- Definitions of ADU/JADU/guest house need clarification.
- Ordinance language seen as confusing or illogical (e.g., owner must sleep in same structure).

4. Strong Support from Many for Allowing Detached Units

- Many hosted rentals on large or rural parcels with no neighbor complaints want reinstatement of detached-unit eligibility.

5. Disagreement Over 500-Foot Buffer

- Many rural VHR hosts want removal or parcel-size-based adjustments.
- Several residents strongly oppose changes, citing noise, livestock disturbance, neighborhood character, and lack of enforcement.

6. Concern for Enforcement Capacity

- Residents question how the county can expand VHR allowances without adequate staffing, especially in large rural areas.

7. Desire for Grandfathering / Appeals / Fair Process

- Long-term VHR operators, especially those acting in good faith, want relief from:
 - one-year waiting periods
 - retroactive rule changes
 - new interpretations of old permits

8. Tourism & Business Impacts

- Winery owners, farmers, and trail stewards noted VHRs are essential for tourism revenue.
- Lack of lodging harms wineries, rafting companies, and rural business ecosystems.

9. Housing Policy Conflicts

- Confusion about how ADU/JADU rules for affordable housing intersect with VHR restrictions.
- Request for County to explain intent and to align policies.

10. Special Situations: Disabled Residents and Older Historic Structures

- Families caring for disabled adults need future rental income options.
- Owners of pre-permit-era structures want pathways (e.g., amnesty) to bring historic barns and outbuildings into compliance.