LOCAL WATER USE EFFECT OF LUXURY TOURISM

1. Luxury hotels and tourist operations are resource intensive.

Fact: From Green Lodging News: 97 percent of the Earth's water is non-potable oceanic saltwater. Of the 3 percent remaining freshwater, close to three-quarters of that is confined to icecaps and the poles, which means that less than 1 percent of the water on this planet is accessible and fit for human consumption. At last count, the hospitality industry alone utilized an estimated 21,537 gallons of water per day overall and an average of 218 gallons per occupied guest room. According to the EPA, this accounts for 15 percent of the total commercial water usage in the United States. These staggering numbers helped prompt the EPA to establish its WaterSense certification program in 2006.

Fact: From Hotelier: This varies, but most studies indicate hotels use between 100 and 200 gallons of fresh water per occupied guest room per day. This averages out to about 36,500 to 73,000 gallons of water per room per year.

2. In a small town that is resource isolated, existing resources must be shared by all.

3. Luxury developments are not always locally owned. Many are owned by remotely located wealthy investors.

Tourism operations may start out local but they are developed to be bought out by larger corporations which are managed remotely, some of which are not even in the hotel or restaurant industry but the financial industry, such as hedge-funds. That means that in the management of finite resources, corporate profits and shareholders are the financial beneficiaries, not local stakeholders. As he stated at the Planning Commission, Mr. Doumani is currently speaking to 5 corporations including the owners of the Beverly Hill Hotels (the Sultan of Brunei) and most likely Starwood (owners in Stamford, Connecticut).

4. Local investors in local land use, growers and residents, are at a financial and political disadvantage in prioritizing local use of local resources compared to the influence of major corporations.

A scenario in which local residences watch their home investments decline for lack of resources while luxury commercial investments succeed becomes likely since the supply of resources is projected to not increase in the long term. The City depends partially on well water. The question then becomes, should local people fund the infrastructural support of the luxury commercial market? This can be avoided at the beginning by pursuing other forms of commerce or sustainable tourism that are not water resource intensive?

5. A cost/benefit analysis should be outlined at the outset. A hotel like Doumani's would use:

Assuming 65% Occupancy, average for Napa County in 2012 (55% is average in St. Helena) = 55 rooms of 84. (From: City of St. Helena Transient Occupancy Tax/NVTID Cash Flow Projections Fiscal Year 2011/2012). Doumani is forecasting 80% occupancy.

365 Days X 55 = 20,075 Room/Nights. 20,075 Room/Nights/Days X 150 Gallons/Day (conservatively, hotel industry predicts 200+), would mean a use of 3,011,250 gallons/year or 9.2418 acre feet of water per year.

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Such a hotel would use 9.2418 acre feet of water per year. Luxury hotels can be expected to use more than non-luxury and this does not include the restaurant or spa that is also planned for the Doumani site. Restaurants and spas are also planned for the other hotels.

[One acre = 43,560 sq. ft.; One cubic foot = 7.48 gals.; Volume= 43560 x 1 = 43,560 acre feet . 43560 Volume x 7.48 gals = 325,828.8 gallons; therefore 1 acre/foot = 325,828.8 gallons]

The Calif. Homebuilding Foundation suggests model standards for a new three bedroom single family home with four occupants to be 174,000 gallons of water per year. The least residential users of water are those living in multi-unit dwellings.

Therefore 3,011,250 hotel gallons per year divided by 174,000 residential gallons per year means that 17 residences, not counting landscape use, are equivalent to one 84 room luxury hotel at 65% occupancy -- higher occupancy is predicted. *This is what makes the Council and the Chamber's approach to economic vitality dysfunctional in the here and now. The luxury hospitality market has been emboldened by the recent changes made to the proposed General Plan in which the Council has removed the cap for restaurants and hotels. St. Helena has already approved 2 other hotels. In the state of California in 2014, luxury hotels may not be sustainable and or wise for a small town without many future water options.*