

Chapter 3.16 UNIFORM TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX¹

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3.16.010 Short title.

This chapter shall be known as the "uniform transient occupancy tax ordinance" of the county. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.020 Definitions.

Except where the context otherwise requires, the definitions given in this section govern the construction of this chapter:

A. "Hotel" means any structure, or any portion of any structure, which is occupied or designed for occupancy by transients for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes, and includes any hotel, inn, tourist home or house, bed-and-breakfast house, motel, studio, hotel, bachelor hotel, lodginghouse, roominghouse, apartment house, dormitory, public or private club, mobile home or house trailer at a fixed location, or other similar structure or portion thereof.

B. "Occupancy" means the use or possession or the right to the use or possession of any room or rooms or portion thereof in any hotel for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes.

C. "Operator" means the person who is the proprietor of the hotel, whether in the capacity of owner, lessee, sublessee, mortgagee in possession, licensee or any other capacity. Where the operator performs his functions through a managing agent of any type or character other than an employee, the managing agent is also an operator for the purposes of this chapter and shall have the same duties and liabilities as his principal. Compliance with the provisions of this chapter by either the principal or the managing agent shall, however, be considered to be compliance by both.

D. "Persons" means any individual, firm, partnership, joint venture, association, social club, fraternal organization, joint stock company, corporation, estate, trust, business trust, receiver, trustee, syndicate or any other group or combination acting as a unit.

E. "Rent" means the consideration charged, whether or not received, for the occupancy of space in a hotel, valued in money, whether to be received in money, goods, labor or other wise, including all receipts, cash, credits and property and services of any kind or nature, without any deduction therefrom whatsoever.

F. "Tax administrator" means the county treasurer-tax collector.

G. "Transient" means any person who exercises occupancy by reason of concession, permit, right of access, license or other agreement for a period of thirty consecutive calendar days or less, counting portions of calendar days as full days. Any such person so occupying space in a hotel is deemed to be a transient until the period of thirty days has expired, unless there is an agreement in writing between the operator and the occupant providing for a longer period of occupancy. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.030 Tax imposed--Payment.

For the privilege of occupancy in any hotel, each transient is subject to and shall pay a tax in the amount of ten percent of the rent charged by the operator. Said tax constitutes a debt owed by the transient to the county which is extinguished only by payment to the operator or to the county. The transient shall pay the tax to the operator of the hotel at the time the rent is paid. If the rent is paid in installments, a proportionate share of the tax shall be paid with each installment. The unpaid tax shall be due upon the transient's ceasing to occupy space in the hotel. If for any reason the tax due is not paid to the operator of the hotel, the tax administrator may require that such tax be paid directly to the tax administrator. (Ord. 1723 §2, 2012; Ord. 1181 §2, 1988).

3.16.040 Exemptions.

No tax shall be imposed upon:

- A. Any person as to whom or any occupancy as to which it is beyond the power of the county to impose the tax provided for in this chapter;
- B. Any officer or employee of a foreign government who is exempt by reason of express provision of federal law or international treaty;
- C. Any federal, state, or county officer or employee when on official business.

No exemption shall be granted except upon a claim therefor, made at the time rent is collected and under penalty of perjury, upon a form prescribed by the tax administrator. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.050 Operator's duties.

Each operator shall collect the tax imposed by this chapter to the same extent and at the same time as the rent is collected from every transient. The amount of tax shall be separately stated from the amount of the rent charged and each transient shall receive a receipt for payment from the operator. No operator of a hotel shall advertise or state in any manner, whether directly or indirectly, that the tax or any part thereof will be assumed or absorbed by the operator, or that it will not be added to the rent, or that, if added, any part will be refunded except in the manner provided in this chapter. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.060 Hotel registration--Certificate.

- A. Prior to commencing business, each operator renting occupancy to transients shall register with the tax administrator before a building, use or change of occupancy permit will be issued by the county.
- B. Annually thereafter during the month of January of each year, each operator shall obtain from the tax administrator an annual registration certificate, to be at all times posted in a conspicuous place on the premises. Said certificate shall, among other things, state the following:
1. Name and address of the establishment;
 2. Name of operator;
 3. Name and address of the owners;
 4. Registration certificate number and date issued.
- C. Failure to register prior to commencement of business, or failure to re-register in the month of January in any year of continued operation, as provided in this section, shall be a misdemeanor.
- D. The registration certificate shall not be transferable, and shall be returned to the tax administrator upon sale of property or cessation of business along with the final remittance of transient taxes due.
- E. The operator named on the face of the registration certificate shall be responsible to collect from transients the transient occupancy tax and remitting such tax to the tax administrator. This certificate does not authorize any person to conduct any unlawful business or to conduct any lawful business in an unlawful manner, nor to operate an establishment without strictly complying with all local applicable laws, including but not limited to those requiring a permit from any board, commission, department or office in this county. The certificate does not constitute a permit. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.070 Reporting and remitting.

Each operator shall, on or before the last day of the month following the close of each calendar quarter, or at the close of any shorter reporting period which may be established by the tax administrator, make a return to the tax administrator, on forms provided by him, of the total rents

charged and received and the amount of tax collected for transient occupancies. At the time the return is filed, the full amount of the tax collected shall be remitted to the tax administrator. The tax administrator may establish shorter reporting periods for any certificate holder if he deems it necessary in order to ensure collection of the tax and he may require further information in the return. A report must be filed each quarter even if no taxes have been collected. Returns and payments are due immediately upon cessation of business for any reason. All taxes collected by operators pursuant to this chapter shall be held in trust for the account of the county until payment thereof is made to the tax administrator. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.080 Original delinquency.

Any operator who fails to remit any tax imposed by this chapter within the time required shall pay a penalty of ten percent of the amount of the tax in addition to the amount of the tax. (Ord. 1179 §2 (part), 1988).

3.16.090 Continued delinquency.

Any operator who fails to remit any delinquency remittance on or before a period of thirty days following the date on which the remittance first became delinquent shall pay a second delinquency penalty of ten percent of the amount of the tax in addition to the amount of the tax and the ten percent penalty first imposed. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.100 Fraud.

If the tax administrator determines that the nonpayment of any remittance due under this chapter is due to fraud, a penalty of twenty-five percent of the amount of the tax shall be added thereto in addition to the penalties stated in Sections 3.16.080 and 3.16.090 of this chapter. (Ord. 1179 §2 (part), 1988).

3.16.110 Interest.

In addition to the penalties imposed, any operator who fails to remit any tax imposed by this chapter shall pay interest at the rate of one and one-half percent per month or fraction thereof until paid. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.120 Penalties merged with tax.

Every penalty imposed and such interest as accrues under the provisions of Sections 3.16.080 through 3.16.110 shall become a part of the tax required by this chapter to be paid. (Ord. 1179 §2 (part), 1988).

3.16.130 Failure to collect and report tax--Determination by tax administrator.

If any operator shall fail or refuse to collect said tax and to make, within the time provided in this chapter, any report and remittance of said tax or any portion thereof required by this chapter, the tax administrator shall proceed in such manner as he may deem best to obtain facts and information on which to base his estimate of the tax due. As soon as the tax administrator procures such facts and information as he is able to obtain upon which to base the assessment of any tax imposed by this chapter and payable by any operator who has failed or refused to collect the same and to make such report and remittance, he shall proceed to determine and assess against such operator the tax,

interest and penalties provided for by this chapter. In case such determination is made, the tax administrator shall give a notice of the amount so assessed by serving it personally or by depositing it in the United States mail, postage prepaid, addressed to the operator so assessed at his last known place of address. Such operator may, within ten days after the serving or mailing of such notice, make application in writing to the tax administrator for a hearing on the amount assessed. If application by the operator for a hearing is not made within the time prescribed, the tax, interest and penalties, if any, determined by the tax administrator, shall become final and conclusive and immediately due and payable. If such application is made, the tax administrator shall give not less than five days' written notice in the manner prescribed in this section to the operator to show cause at a time and place fixed in said notice why said amount specified therein should not be fixed for such tax, interest and penalties. At such hearing, the operator may appear and offer evidence why such specified tax, interest and penalties should not be so fixed. After such hearing, the tax administrator shall determine the proper tax to be remitted and shall thereafter give written notice to the person in the manner prescribed in this section of such determination and the amount of such tax, interest and penalties. The amount determined to be due shall be payable after fifteen days unless an appeal is taken as provided in Section 3.16.140. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.140 Appeal.

Any operator aggrieved by any decision of the tax administrator with respect to the amount of such tax, interest and penalties, if any, may appeal to the board clerk within fifteen days of the serving or mailing of the determination of tax due. The board shall fix a time and place for hearing such appeal, and the board clerk shall give notice in writing to such operator at his last known place of address. The findings of the board shall be final and conclusive and shall be served upon the appellant in the manner prescribed in section 3.16.130 for service of notice of hearing. Any amount found to be due shall be immediately due and payable upon the service of notice. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.150 Recordkeeping.

It shall be the duty of every operator liable for the collection and payment to the county of any tax imposed by this chapter to keep and preserve, for a period of three years, all records as may be necessary to determine the amount of such tax as he may have been liable for the collection of and payment to the county, which records the tax administrator shall have the right to inspect at all reasonable times. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.160 Refunds--Claims.

Whenever the amount of any tax, interest or penalty has been overpaid or paid more than once or has been erroneously or illegally collected or received by the county under this chapter, it may be refunded as provided in Sections 3.16.170 and 3.16.180; provided, a claim in writing therefor, stating under penalty of perjury the specific grounds upon which the claim is founded, is filed with the tax administrator within three years of the date of payment. The claim shall be on forms furnished by the tax administrator. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.170 Refunds--Person not a transient.

An operator may claim a refund or take as credit against taxes collected and remitted the amount overpaid, paid more than once or erroneously or illegally collected or received when it is established

in a manner prescribed by the tax administrator that the person from whom the tax has been collected was not a transient; provided, however, that neither a refund nor a credit shall be allowed unless the amount of the tax so collected has either been refunded to the transient or credited to rent subsequently payable by the transient to the operator. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.180 Refunds--To transient.

A transient may obtain a refund of taxes overpaid or paid more than once or erroneously or illegally collected or received by the county by filing a claim in the manner provided in Section 3.16.160, but only when the tax was paid by the transient directly to the tax administrator, or when the transient having paid the tax to the operator establishes to the satisfaction of the tax administrator that the transient has been unable to obtain a refund from the operator who collected the tax. (Ord. 1179 §2 (part), 1988).

3.16.190 Refunds--Written record.

No refund shall be paid under the provisions of this section and Sections 3.16.160 through 3.16.180 unless the claimant establishes his right thereto by written records showing entitlement thereto. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.200 Actions to collect.

Any tax required to be paid by any transient under the provisions of this chapter is deemed a debt owed by the transient to the county. Any such tax collected by an operator which has not been paid to the county is deemed a debt owed by the operator to the county. Any person owing money to the county under the provisions of this chapter is liable to an action brought in the name of the county for the recovery of such amount. (Ord. 1179 §2(part), 1988).

3.16.210 Violation--Penalty.

A. Any person violating any of the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and is punishable therefor by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment in the county jail for a period of not more than six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

B. Any operator or other person who fails or refuses to furnish a supplemental return or other data required by the tax administrator, or who renders a false or fraudulent return or claim, is guilty of a misdemeanor, and is punishable as set out in subsection A of this section. Any person required to make, render, sign or verify any report or claim who makes any false or fraudulent report or claim with intent to defeat or evade the determination of any amount due required by this chapter to be made, is guilty of a misdemeanor and is punishable as set out in subsection A of this section. (Ord. 1179 §2 (part), 1988).

¹ For statutory provisions authorizing counties to impose a tax on transients who occupy room space in unincorporated areas of the county, see Rev. & Tax. Code §7280 et seq.

