

**From:** [Sandy Metzger](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Raising TOT & Business License Tax?  
**Date:** Monday, July 8, 2024 9:44:26 AM

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Dear Councilpeople,

You are all so creative in thinking up ways to squeeze more money out of small business owners. Now you want to raise the TOT to 11% and on top of that add what you call a “Business License Tax” at \$3.50 for every \$1000 of income?

We have a small cottage that we have offered as a short term vacation rental for ten years. We have religiously paid the TOT and BIA quarterly. **Two years ago, we were hit with a Business Permit Fee of \$1185 plus \$500 for being late and \$266 renewal fee for 2024.** On top of that, we were forced to add a landline to the cottage, costing us **\$100 a month**. Every single guest of ours has at least one cell phone or two with a couple. Not only that, but ATT had to “bundle” it with internet service despite that we already had internet in the cottage. That’s an extra \$1200/year expense.

Besides raising the TOT, you want to add a so-called Business License Tax of \$3.50 for every \$1000 of income? That is a tax on a fee we are already paying. **That is double taxation, whether you call it a fee or a tax.** AND, remember, we already pay state and federal taxes on our income. Enough is enough.

Are you trying to drive Airbnbs out of business? You consider Airbnbs a “hotel” which is a ridiculous designation. We are mostly mom & pop businesses offering what is sorely needed in this county: lovely, friendly, personal, smaller, and less expensive places for travelers. Not everyone enjoys the sterile, unfriendly, expensive environments of a hotel. They prefer us! You would lose hundreds of thousands of tourist dollars each year if you put us out of business due to your various fees and demands.

What will be next? Taxes on the number of rooms? Tax on the number of guests? Fee on our Airbnb guest page? Raising the BIA?  
To be creative, what would you name it? Duty? Surcharge? Tarriff? Value-added tax? Assessment?

**We object to your raising the TOT and certainly to the proposed new tax on our income.**

Respectfully,  
Sandy and Bud Metzger  
Wine Country Historic Town Cottage  
Santa Rosa

**From:** [Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Cc:** [Brown, Steve](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for Item 4.2 - July 9, 2024  
**Date:** Monday, July 8, 2024 11:15:53 AM

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Greetings,

The Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts and Friends submitted the below email below in time for the June 26, 2024 Community Advisory Committee meeting, and we would like to submit it for public comment at tomorrow's July 9, 2024, City Council meeting.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Sonoma County Coalition of Hosts** <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Tue, Jun 25, 2024 at 11:25 AM  
**Subject:** Public Comment 24-025CAB Item 6.1 Advisory Board June 26, 2024  
**To:** <[communityengagement@srcity.org](mailto:communityengagement@srcity.org)>, <[svbrown@srcity.org](mailto:svbrown@srcity.org)>



Dear Community Advisory Board, The [Sonoma County of Coalition of Hosts and Friends](#) is writing to oppose the proposed 2% increase in TOT for the city of Santa Rosa. We believe it to be an extremely unwise way to solve the city's budget deficits that you describe. During this time of strong inflation, the notion that we can raise prices on visiting our city without causing a decrease in people's desire to visit is unstudied and not recommended. Restaurants, cafés, book stores, wineries, and other small businesses in our city are still working to recover from the harsh business realities of the pandemic. The list of businesses that have closed in our city is far too numerous to mention here. With a request for revenue increase, we fail to understand our cities vision to welcome an increasing number of visitors over the next 5 years. What is the plan? Instead, we continue to take measures to signal to visitors that they are not welcome here. Caps on Short Term Rentals, messaging from some city council members, and organizations like Save Our Santa Rosa have made tourists and other visitors feel unwelcome. By limiting the number of affordable places to stay, we have driven people to surrounding cities and parts of the county that are welcoming them with open arms. Several other cities have TOT that is on par with Santa Rosa. We are not Healdsburg. Caps and tax increases on Short Term Rentals, are a cap and tax on every small business in our city. When you make it harder to visit, everyone suffers. We propose, instead, that the way to help our city's deficit is to have a plan that attracts people to visit in a way that is safe, affordable, environmentally friendly, interesting and fun. Part of that plan is to lift the ban on Short Term Rentals, and instead create legislation for this segment that focuses on noise, nuisance and safety. We wish to create spaces for families to visit and gather, in a safe and affordable way. This will increase sales revenue in all the businesses that benefit. We would welcome the opportunity to help create a plan that increases the revenue that we need to operate.

Regards,

Carl R Jaeger - President

Lindsay Darrimon - Vice President

Alex Cvetkov - Secretary

David Wabel - Treasure

Charles Metz - Board Member

Donna Martinez - Board Member

Dan Gudino - Board Member

Mark Watson - Board Member

**From:** [Scott Barbour](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Proposed Tax Increase (TOT and BLT)  
**Date:** Monday, July 8, 2024 11:43:17 AM

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Hi there,

While I'm generally in favor of anything called a BLT, I'm very much opposed to the business license tax and increase in TOT within Santa Rosa.

I'm an AirBnB operator in my 2nd year with a 4.98/5 rating and am a superhost on AirBnB. I follow all the rules and have never had a filed complaint. I happily pay all my registration fees and taxes quarterly.

After reviewing my finances for 2023 I discovered that I only actually made a profit on 3 months out of the whole year after taking into account all the expenses and taxes. The proposed increases/new taxes will absolutely put me in the red for the whole year, meaning the 4 bedroom home that traveling families rent from me will go off the market as it will need to be a long term rental instead.

Please don't do this and find the answer to the budget issues elsewhere. It feels like last year was all about trying to make AirBnB operators go away, and this year it's about extracting as much money from us as possible...which will make many go away. I hope that's not the case because we too are community members and drive more economic activity for Santa Rosa than most other residents.

Thank you for considering my feedback,

Scott  


**From:** [David Long](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 7/9/24 City Council meeting, Agenda Item, Proposed Revenue Measures Study Session  
**Date:** Monday, July 8, 2024 3:36:46 PM

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Dear Council Members,

Thank you for examining ways to raise the City's General Fund Revenue. This is a prudent thing to do in the face of budget deficits that are forecasted to grow by an average of \$8 million annually for the next 5 years.

Eliminating the relatively small cap of \$3,000 for the Business License Tax is a good idea that will have all businesses pay their fair share. Some larger companies may grumble at the annual dollar amount increase, but it is just, at most, 0.35% of their annual revenues and an adjustment, at least conceptually, that is long overdue. Even some small businesses, like Short-Term Rental owners, will likely grumble, but the truth is that those who own 1, 2 or 3 STR have been exempt from even getting a Business License and it's way past time for all commercial enterprises in the City to be treated equally from a Business License and Tax standpoint.

As for the 2% increase in TOT, this will just bring Santa Rosa into more of a parity situation with other North Bay municipalities. Short-Term Rental owners will also grumble about this tax increase, but the truth is that they will simply be passing along all of their additional tax burdens to their renters and no one will avoid visiting Santa Rosa just because they need to pay 2.35% more for lodging.

Please do not be swayed by any arguments that if the City just would have let an unlimited number of Short-Term Rentals operate in the City, the budget deficit problem would be smaller or not exist at all. The truth is that Short-Term Rentals cost the City more than the revenue they bring in. Additionally, there are already far more lodging rooms in Santa Rosa than needed to meet demand. Just start treating all existing STR like the commercial enterprises that they are.

Thank you,  
David Long

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Thanks!  
**David Long**



**From:** [Kit Barron](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Frustrated STR owners  
**Date:** Friday, July 5, 2024 7:25:54 PM

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Hello,

As a long time Sonoma resident and recent STR permit recipient, my wife and I are so frustrated at the repeated attempts to make this source of income for our family illegal or taxed to death. We lost our home in the Glass fire and decided to buy a home in a more fire safe place rather than rebuild. To help cover our costs, we bought a place that we believed we could rent out. Soon after, the permit moratorium was imposed and we spend hours over two years advocating for our rights as homeowners and challenging the bad faith arguments the county was making about the impact of STRs on homelessness and the county's self imposed housing crisis.

We finally managed to get through the process (after a ton of permit hoop jumping and following poorly communicated and executed policies with multiple agencies), and have generated about \$3000 of rental income.

I'm learning now that the county realizes it needs more revenue and is coming after this sector of the economy which they attempted to demonize as driving the housing crisis (which wasn't supported by the economic analysis the county commissioned and later swept under the rug).

Now you're trying to raise our taxes .

I'm starting to regret choosing to rebuild our family's lives in Sonoma - you make things so hard on the middle class.

Kit and Emily Barron

**From:** [Jim Newport](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] additional tax for vacation rentals?  
**Date:** Friday, July 5, 2024 8:55:05 PM

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This proposed increase in tax is quite ironic considering how the city of Santa Rosa has restricted and been hostile to short term rental operators. The homeless have more rights! So you want to "have your cake and eat it too" so to speak. Sabotage property rights to do as one pleases with their property yet sad because you now don't get as much occupancy tax. This is totally shameful.

Jim