From:	City Council Public Comments
To:	City Council Public Comments
Subject:	FW: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Restructuring of Business License Tax
Date:	Tuesday, August 6, 2024 8:35:31 AM
Attachments:	City SR budget 2024-25 comments.pdf

From: David Long <

Sent: Monday, July 22, 2024 4:55 PM

To: _CityCouncilListPublic <<u>citycouncil@srcity.org</u>>; Smith, Maraskeshia <<u>msmith@srcity.org</u>>; Finance Department <<u>finance@srcity.org</u>>

>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Restructuring of Business License Tax

Dear Council Members, City Manager and Chief Financial Officer,

Please review the attached memo that provides some thoughts on the current proposal to restructure the Business License Tax. I hope it spurs some additional creative thinking so that a proposal can be placed on this year's ballot.

Thank you, David Long To: Santa Rosa City Council, City Manager, Chief Financial Officer

From: David Long

Date July 22, 2024

Subject Proposed Restructuring of Business License Tax

I have observed the recent presentations to City Council regarding the City's 2024/25 Budget and the proposed restructuring of the Business License Tax. I have also examined the proposed Business License Tax structure with an eye towards making it more equitable for all businesses. Here are some observations and suggestions that you should consider as you grapple with what to do.

- 1. It appears that nearly every staff member in the City will receive a 8% to 9% increase in both their salaries and benefits for 2024/25. No one should be surprised at the magnitude of the budget deficit this has created.
- 2. It would be fiscally irresponsible to pin the hopes of generating sufficient revenue to significantly lessen the near-term budget deficit on increased revenues from economic development. Rather, you need to create more certain sources of revenue and more certain means of reducing expenditures.
- 3. Proposing to revise the Business License Tax structure is a sound idea, especially in terms of eliminating the \$3,000 annual cap that is outdated by more than 30 years. I applaud your effort, but there is no getting around the pain that will be experienced from the lengthy lapse in judgement by your predecessors.
- 4. Unfortunately, the current proposal appears to overcompensate for the prior inequity, going from a structure that unfairly favored high-revenue businesses to one that favors existing low-revenue businesses, while also unfairly seeking to balance the budget on the backs of high-revenue businesses.
- 5. Given the varying tax rate for the business type groupings, it appears that you have, with one exception. thoughtfully placed businesses in one group or another according roughly to their average profit margin to create tax equity from a cash flow standpoint. That exception is Group 1a, which includes business types with widely disparate profit margins. Some rework is in order here.
- 6. Every business, irrespective of its annual revenue, should pay the Business License Tax according to the new structure. The City is missing out on significant, equitable and fairly generated tax revenue by allowing low revenue business to continue paying according to the current structure. Even at the proposed rates, the average small business would be paying just a few thousand dollars more per year. As alluded to in #5 above, this should be done in conjunction with lowering the per \$1,000 revenue rate for low margin business types.
- 7. The proposed structure should also be modified to include a sliding scale that has the rate per \$1,000 decreasing as annual revenues increase. The reasons that this is fair and equitable are rooted in the concept that the benefits derived from City-provided services do not have a straight-line relationship with a business's annual revenue. It also somewhat incentivizes businesses to become more successful because they won't feel like the City just keeps taking more and more as they grow.
- 8. Every City staff member should be going out of their way to make businesses feel like they are getting good value for the additional Business License Tax they will soon pay. After all, the increased tax is essentially paying for your raise.

From:	Eric Fraser
То:	<u>CityCouncilListPublic; Stapp, Mark; Rogers, Chris; MacDonald, Dianna; Alvarez, Eddie; Okrepkie, Jeff; Rogers,</u> Natalie; Fleming, Victoria; Finance Department
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] 8/6 Agenda Item: 15.2 Business License
Date:	Monday, August 5, 2024 7:23:19 AM
Attachments:	City Council - Business License Worksheet.pdf
	August 6 City Council Agenda Item 15.2.pdf
	City Contractors - Business License Worksheet.pdf
	CAB - Business License Worksheet.pdf
	Metro Chamber Board - Business License Worksheet.pdf
	STR Managers - Business License Worksheet.pdf

Please find our letter and attached reports and attach all to the City council agenda for this item.

Thank you.

Eric Fraser

August 5, 2024

Dear Santa Rosa City Council, Concerned Residents and Businesses;

We have performed research and analysis on the current Business License Program and we were astounded to find the number of businesses associated with council members, board members, City contractors, and board members of leading business advocacy groups NOT Licensed. (Reports attached.)

In summary, we recommend that the City pull back both proposed tax measures (TOT and Business License) and instead use that money for education and accountability. There are serious problems with the administration of the current program and raising rates or changing the Business License program at this time will not cure these problems, in fact it will make them much worse. Financially, it makes more sense because of the huge potential for increased revenues from accountability within the existing program if properly administrated, with no ballot question needed and the expense (and potential failure) avoided.

Refer to Nextrequest 24-775 to review the contracts for administration of the City's business license programs. Because the City's response to 24-775 was incomplete, additional responsive (and more enlightening) documents were produced by 24-819 (as of 8/5/24, still unpublished).

There seems to be A LOT OF CONFUSION over the current Business License requirements, with a discussion about this at the 6/26/24 Community Advisory Board enlightening. Who pays? Independent contractors? Non-profits? Work-at-home? Selective enforcement? Is the program equitable?

One enforcement emphasis the business program administrator, HdL, included in their contract with the City is on residents pulling permits, to demand business licenses for the named businesses performing services like roofing, electrical, concrete work, etc. In all ways and then some, expenses for businesses are passed on to consumers who are property owners and tenants, regardless of the business type.

We were SHOCKED to find many businesses with contracts with the City unlicensed (!) including those with direct financial benefit from the Business License Program, and the November ballot tax questions. If our correlation between the business description found on the City's Business License search and the Groups as identified in page 3 of the report Mr. Alton prepared for this agenda item are correct, the program administer (HdL) is being improperly charged at the lowest possible tax rate (when they should be at the highest), potentially saving them tens of thousands of dollars over the life of their contract (since 2018). Who is providing oversight on how businesses are classified or included? How is fraud and corruption detected and prosecuted?

Despite staff and media accounts, according to City records, many of the short-term rental (STR) managers with 4 or more units DO have business licenses already. The City's STR

ordinance was recently enacted, and within it made provisions for taxation, and limited owners to one property. The continued attack on STRs to muster public support, due to anti-STR hysteria, for tax measure campaigning shows the City's continued bad faith dealing with its residents. The positive impacts caused by STRs are very important during this time of a stressed City budget and to offset the outrageous increases in costs to residents caused by government (historic building alteration permits, building permits, code enforcement fraud, layers of half-baked regulations, corruption, and much more).

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Fraser truthintourism@gmail.com

Attachments: City Council – Business License Worksheet Community Advisory Board – Business License Worksheet City Contractors – Business License Worksheet STR Managers – Business License Worksheet Metro Chamber Board – Business License Worksheet

Community Advisory Board

8/3/24 - According to https://www.srcity.org/1270/Community-Advisory-Board Date of Search 8/3/24: https://santarosa.hdlgov.com/Search/Search By DOES NOT INCLUDE REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS

	<u>First</u>		Paid to		HdL Business					
Last Name	<u>Name</u>	Appointed By	Attend CAB?	Business Name	<u>Type</u>	Registered	<u>Group?</u>	<u>Comments</u>	Further Research	Source Materials
Weeks	Calum	Tom Schwedhelm	Highly Likely	Generation Housing		NO	TBD, Group 4	Policy Director	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/calu m-weeks-mpa- 209b0b70/
Inocencio	Jorge	Victoria Fleming	Not Likely	Keysight Technologies, Inc.	Wholesale	YES	Group 1	Electrical Engineer		https://www.link edin.com/in/jorg e-inocencio- 4a3602152/
Barnett	Cherie	Chris Rogers	Highly Likely	Sonoma County Bike Coalition		NO	TBD, Group 4	Outreach and Events Coordinator	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/cher iebarnett/
Rahmn	Steve	Tom Schwedhelm	Not Likely	Firebrand Safety Systems	Contractors	YES	Group 3	Business Owner		https://www.link edin.com/in/stev e-rahmn-jr- 2789b71b0/
Rodriguez- Jereb	Andrea	Dianna MacDonald	Highly Likely	Sonoma County Water Agency		NO	TBD	Communicati ons Manager	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/arod riguezjereb/
Lange	Kirstyne	John Sawyer	Highly Likely	KL Consulting, KAL Consulting		NO	TBD, Group 4	Business Owner	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/kirst yne-l-001/
Diaz de Leon	Ariana	Mark Stapp	Highly Likely	Santa Rosa Community Health	Property Rental - Commercial	YES	Group 2	Community Engagement Manager	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/aria na-d%C3%ADaz- de-le%C3%B3n- 006746176/
Chen	David X.	Dianna MacDonald	Not Likely	Caitelion		NO	TBD, Group 4	President		https://www.link edin.com/in/dxch en/

Holter	Amy	Chris Rogers	Highly Likely	Community Foundation Sonoma County		NO	TBD, Group 4	Vice President for Community Impact	Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/amy holter94928/
Vasquez	Angelina	Natalie Rogers	TBD	Angelina Vasquez, Healthcare Engagement and Advocacy		NO	TBD, Group 2		Registration as a lobbyist?	https://www.link edin.com/in/ang elinavas/
Diaz	Ana	Eddie Alvarez	TBD	Community Action Partnership	Misc Services	YES	Group 2	Teacher		https://www.link edin.com/in/ana- diaz-a6a4a111b/
Knowles	Derek	Victoria Fleming	Not Likely	Red Dwarf Creative, Derek Knowles		NO	TBD, Group 2	Business Owner	Business Activity may be outside of the City	https://reddwarf productions.com/ about-1

Methodology: Organization names identified by LinkedIn profiles and biographies, then compared to the City's HdL database of Business License holders. There are many reasons an organization might not be recognized as a registered Santa Rosa business including spelling errors, subsidiary name being used for the search, errors in the database, categorically by industry type, jurisdictional nexus and more. The "HdL Business Type" found in the search results is correlated with the Groups found on the chart published on page 3 of the 24-0574 Staff Report. There is a question why board members, having been appointed by people not currently on the Council, are still serving. Further research also required concerning the City's lobbyist registration ordinance, and residency requirements.

City Contractors

Date of Search 8/3/24: https://santarosa.hdlgov.com/Search/Search By DOES NOT INCLUDE CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST SEARCH

Role in City	Business Name	HdL Business Type	Registered	Group ?	Comments	Further Research	<u>Source</u> <u>Materials</u>
Business Tax Admin & Consultants	HdL Software	Retail - Misc	YES	Group 1	Should be classified in the highest Group 4?		City Records
Tax Campaign Strategists & Consultants	Teamcivx		NO	TBD, Group 4			City Records
Survey and Polling Consultants	Godbe Research		NO	TBD, Group 4			City Records
Technology Providers, Consultants	Granicus		NO	TBD, Group 4			City Records
Program Administrators, Consultants, Advisors, Political Operatives	Santa Rosa Metro Chamber		NO	TBD, Group 4	Influential lobbying group, PAC, and taxpayer- funded program administrator. Should they be registered as lobbyists too?	(See tab on Metro Chamber Board)	City Records
Program Administrators, Consultants, Advisors, Political Operatives	Generation Housing		NO	TBD, Group 4	Influential lobbying group, PAC, and taxpayer- funded program administrator. Should they be registered as lobbyists too?		City Records
as a registered Santa Rosa business includ	ing spelling errors, subsid	iary name being	used for the	search, errors in	ss License holders. There are many reasons an org the database, categorically by industry type, juriso f the 24-0574 Staff Report. This list is a sampling,	dictional nexus and mo	ore. The "HdL

Santa Rosa City Council

Date of Search 8/3/24: https://santarosa.hdlgov.com/Search/Search By DOES NOT INCLUDE REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS.

	First								
Last Name	<u>Name</u>	Role in City	Business or Organization Name	HdL Business Type	Registered	Group ?	<u>Comments</u>	Further Research	Source Materials
MacDonald	Dianna	Council Member, District 3	North Bay Commercial Services Inc.		NO	TBD, Group 3	Business Owner		https://www.linkedi n.com/in/dianna- macdonald- 2465bb134/
Fleming	Victoria	Council Member, District 4	Victoria Fleming Consulting		NO	TBD, Group 4	Business Owner	Does she still reside in Santa Rosa?	https://www.linkedi n.com/in/victoria- fleming- 940aa58/details/exp erience/
Fleming	Victoria	Council Member, District 4	Victoria Fleming Psychotherapy		NO	TBD, Group 2	Business Owner		https://www.linkedi n.com/in/victoria- fleming- 940aa58/details/exp erience/
Fleming	Victoria	Council Member, District 4	Emerge California		NO	TBD, Group 2	Regional Manager		https://www.linkedi n.com/in/victoria- fleming- 940aa58/details/exp erience/
Rogers	Chris	Council Member, District 5	Sonoma County Conservation Action		NO	TBD, Group 4	Executive Director	Lobbying and political action organization	https://www.linkedi n.com/in/chrisrogers forassembly/
Okrepke	Jeff	Council Member, District 6	George Petersen Insurance Agency	Insurance Adjustors & Brokers		Group 4	Commercial Lines Agent		https://www.linkedi n.com/in/jeffokrepki e/
Rogers	Natalie		Natalie Rogers, LMFT	Counseling	YES	Group 2	Business Owner		https://www.linkedi n.com/in/natalie- rogers-2294a9186/
0 k	ت ما ما نه	Council Manshar, District (The Hash	Datail Mice	VEC	Crown 1	During Quant	As a cannabis Business, they may be exempt from the Business License requirement, according to	
Alvarez	Eddie	Council Member, District 1	The Hook	Retail - Misc	YES	Group 1	Business Owner	Alton*	
stapp	Mark	Council Member, District 2	(none found)						

Methodology: Organization names identified by LinkedIn profiles and biographies, then compared to the City's HdL database of Business License holders. There are many reasons an organization might not be recognized as a registered Santa Rosa business including spelling errors, subsidiary name being used for the search, errors in the database, categorically by industry type, jurisdictional nexus and more. The "HdL Business Type" found in the search results is correlated with the Groups found on the chart published on page 3 of the 24-0574 Staff Report. *Mr. Alton comments at the 6-26-24 Community Advisory Board.

Metro Chamber Board

Date of Search 8/3/24: https://www.santarosametrochamber.com/about-us/board-and-committees/board-of-directors/ Date of Search 8/3/24: https://santarosa.hdlgov.com/Search/Search By DOES NOT INCLUDE REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS

<u>Last Name</u> Wittke	First Name	Business Name	HdL Business Type	Registered	Group ?	Comments	Further Research	Source Materials https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisa-wittke-
	Lisa	North Coast Builders Exchange	Property Rental - Commercial	YES	Group 2			schaffner-606b29b/
Wittke Schaffner	Lisa	Sonoma County Fairgrounds and Exposition, Inc.		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisa-wittke- schaffner-606b29b/
Wittke Schaffner	Lisa	Redwood Credit Union		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisa-wittke- schaffner-606b29b/
Edwards Herry	Michelle	Boys & Girls Club of Sonoma-Marin		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/michelleheery/
Benson	Alicia	Keysight Technologies	Wholesale	YES	Group 1			https://www.linkedin.com/in/alicia-benson- 0aa97720/
Carrillo	Blythe	TIV Branding	Graphic Art & Design	YES	Group 2			https://www.linkedin.com/in/blythehoekengac arrillo/
Chieffo	Elisa	Redi Construction		NO	Group 3			https://www.linkedin.com/in/elisa-chieffo- 08744615/
Davis	Brad	Santa Rosa Junior College		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/brad-davis- 6405888/
Evans	Laniakea	365 Recreational Cannabis	Retail - Misc	YES	Group 1		As a cannabis Business, they may be exempt from the Business License requirement, according to Alton*	https://www.linkedin.com/in/laniakea-evans- 7940a0148/
Furber	Celia	Recology Sonoma Marin	Misc Service	YES	Group 2			https://www.linkedin.com/in/celia-furber- 92906743/
Futrell	Hugh	Hugh Futrell Corporation	(See separate tab)	YES \$ NO				https://www.linkedin.com/in/hugh-futrell- 78b06a182/
Gilbert	Kellin	Pisenti & Brinker LLP		NO	TBD	From Linkedin: "Partner - Assurance Services"	Do they perform "independent audits" for government?	https://www.linkedin.com/in/kellin-gilbert-cpa- bb3b6943/
Kalia	Akash	Palms Inn		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/akash-kalia- 8b18a14a/
Kalia	Akash	Functional Zero Partners		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/akash-kalia- 8b18a14a/
Martin	Jim	BPM LLP	Accountants	YES	Group 4			https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-a-martin- cpa-414a7829/
Mendoza	Todd	Coldwell Banker (8/4/24 Linkedin says W Real Estate - searched)	Real Estate	YES	?	Regional Manager at W Real Estate		https://www.linkedin.com/in/toddmendoza/
Michaud	Collette	Children's Museum of Sonoma County	Non-Profit Organization	YES	?			https://www.linkedin.com/in/collettemichaud/
Nazario	Xavier	C4C, Inc. (Case4Cannabis)	Consultant	YES	Group 4			https://www.linkedin.com/in/xavier-nazario/
Nazario	Xavier	Workforce Innovation Labs	Consultant	YES	Group 4			https://www.linkedin.com/in/xavier-nazario/
Niday	Troy	The Press Democrat	(See separate tab for Sonoma Media Investments)	NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/troyniday/
Pungprakearti	Samantha	Carie, Mackie, Power & Ross LLP		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/samantha- pungprakearti-6565a6b/
Sedgwick	Tyffani	Suited Hospitality (8/4/24 LinkedIn says Redwood Credit Union - searched)		NO	TBD			https://www.linkedin.com/in/tyffani- sedgwick/

Sedgwick	Tyffani	Tyffani Sedgwick Communications			May not be applicable	https://www.linkedin.com/in/tyffani- sedgwick/
Smith	Jessica	Redwood Credit Union	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessica-smith- b4460371/
Spitzer	Allison	Exchange Bank	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/allison-s- 8942b77/
Velazquez	Hector	Nexo Media LLC	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/hectorjvelazquez /
Velazquez	Hector	Red LatinX The Hub	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/hectorjvelazquez /
Velazquez	Hector	LatinX Radio	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/hectorjvelazquez /
Velazquez	Hector	Nexo Radio	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/hectorjvelazquez /
Wiglesworth	Anita	Luther Burbank Center for the Arts	NO	TBD		https://www.linkedin.com/in/anitawigleswort h/

Methodology: Organization names identified by LinkedIn profiles and biographies, then compared to the City's HdL database of Business License holders. There are many reasons an organization might not be recognized as a registered Santa Rosa business including spelling errors, subsidiary name being used for the search, errors in the database, categorically by industry type, jurisdictional nexus and more. The "HdL Business Type" found in the search results is correlated with the Groups found on the chart published on page 3 of the 24-0574 Staff Report. *Mr. Alton comments at the 6-26-24 Community Advisory Board.

STR Managers of 4 units or more

Date of Search 8/3/24: https://santarosa.hdlgov.com/Search/Search By STR Managers of 4 units or more

					<u>Further</u>	<u>Source</u>		
Business Name	<u>HdL Business Type</u>	Registered	Group?	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Materials</u>		
AvantStay		NO	Group 2					
Vacasa LLC	Property Rental - Residential	YES	Group 2					
Vacasa Seasonals Inc	Property Management	YES	Group 2					
Happy Hermosillo Homes	Consultant	YES	Group 4	Should be classified as Group 2?				
Methodology: Organization names identified by google search. There are many reasons an organization might not be recognized as a registered Santa Rosa business including spelling errors, subsidiary name being used for the search, errors in the database, categorically by industry type,								
jurisdictional nexus and m	ore. The "HdL Business Type" fo	ound in the se	arch results i	s correlated with the Groups found c	on the chart pu	ublished on		

page 3 of the 24-0574 Staff Report.

From:	Peter Rumble
То:	Alvarez, Eddie; Stapp, Mark; MacDonald, Dianna; Fleming, Victoria; Rogers, Chris; Okrepkie, Jeff; Rogers, Natalie
Cc:	<u>_CityCouncilListPublic; Smith, Maraskeshia; Ananda Sweet</u>
Subject:	[EXTERNAL] Item 15.2 - Business Tax
Date:	Monday, August 5, 2024 10:12:27 AM
Attachments:	image001.png
	image002.png
	image003.png
	image004.png
Attachments:	image002.png image003.png

Council,

While the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber is unable to take a formal position due to the lack of time to take this proposal through our process, I want to share some of our observations of the proposal coming to you this Tuesday. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the City Manager for her dedication to meeting with stakeholders on this issue.

It is certain, the health of our local economy requires a financially sound and stable local government, and the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber supports your efforts in finding ways to grow revenue while cutting expenditures. We look forward to working with you on both of these things. Reviewing and updating the business license/tax, that has remained unchanged for approximately 30 years, makes sense. It also makes sense for larger, high revenue, businesses to pay more compared to a small business.

Increasing the cap from \$3,000 to \$10,000 is a meaningful increase for our local businesses. This increase is also approximate to the growth of the original fee had a CPI been applied to it over the last 30 years. Approaching the cap in this way has a sound logic supporting it, and provides the cost certainty our businesses need.

Establishing a higher minimum fee and several tiers of smaller business minimums also makes sense. These increases are not significant enough, in our opinion, to prevent a business from opening or operating.

The Santa Rosa Metro Chamber may still take a formal position should you place it on the ballot. Until then, thank you for seeking and incorporating our input.

Respectfully,

PETER RUMBLE | CEO
SANTA ROSA METRO CHAMBER
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