

**CITY OF RINGOLD
STATE OF GEORGIA**

ORDINANCE NO. 2016 - 1114

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF RINGGOLD, GEORGIA BY AMENDING CHAPTER 62 CAPTIONED “TAXATION” BY STRIKING, DELETING AND REPEALING ARTICLE VII CAPTIONED “LODGING TAX” IN ITS ENTIRETY AND SUBSTITUTING IN LIEU THEREOF A NEW ARTICLE VII CAPTIONED “HOTEL – MOTEL EXCISE TAX”; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; TO REPEAL ALL ORDINANCES AND PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Ringgold, Georgia is authorized under Article IX, Section II, Paragraph III of the Constitution of the State of Georgia to adopt reasonable ordinances to protect and improve the public health, safety, welfare, and aesthetics of the citizens of the City of Ringgold, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Ringgold, Georgia is the Mayor and Council thereof;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF RINGGOLD, GEORGIA AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1.

The Code of Ordinances of the City of Ringgold, Georgia is hereby amended by amending Chapter 62 captioned “Taxation” by striking, deleting and repealing Article VII captioned “Lodging Tax” in its entirety and substituting in lieu thereof a new Article VII captioned “Hotel – Motel Excise Tax” which shall read as follows:

ARTICLE VII - HOTEL – MOTEL EXCISE TAX

Sec. 62-306. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases shall, for the purposes of this ordinance and except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning, be defined as follows:

City. The City of Ringgold and, variously, the incorporated territory of Ringgold, wherein the city government is empowered to impose this tax by OCGA §48-13-50, et seq.

City Manager. The duly appointed City Manager of the city or his designee.

Due date. The twentieth (20th) day after the close of the monthly period for which the tax is to be computed.

Estimated tax liability. The lodging provider's prospective tax liability based upon the average monthly tax remittance in the prior fiscal year, as adjusted for change in tax rate or substantial change in circumstances due to damage to the hotel.

Folio. Primary documentation produced by a hotel that demonstrates interaction between the lodging provider and the occupant, and which, at a minimum, reflects the name and address given by the occupant, the date(s) of occupancy, the amount of rent charged for each date together with the amounts of applicable excise tax, and the method(s) of payment.

Guest room. Accommodations occupied, or intended, arranged, or designed for transient occupancy, by one (1) or more occupants for the purpose of living quarters or residential use.

Hotel. Any facility or any portion of a facility, including any lodging house, rooming house, dormitory, Turkish bath, bachelor hotel, studio hotel, motel, motor hotel, auto or trailer court, truckstop, tourist cabin, campground, lodge, inn, time-share or other condominium, apartment community, public club, or private club, containing guest accommodations and which is occupied, or is intended or designed for occupancy, by paying guests, whether rent is paid in money, goods, labor, or otherwise. It does not include any hospital, asylum, sanitarium, orphanage, jail, prison, or other facility in which human beings are housed and detained under legal restraint.

Lodging Provider. Any person operating a hotel in the city including, but not limited to, the owner or proprietor of such premises, lessee, sub-lessee, lender in possession, licensee or any other person operating such hotel; and who is subject to the taxation imposed for furnishing for value to the public any rooms, lodgings, or accommodations.

Monthly period. The calendar months of any year.

Occupancy. The use or possession, or the right to the use or possession of any guest room in a hotel or the right to the use or possession of the furnishings or to the services and accommodations accompanying the use and possession of the guest room.

Occupant. Any person who, for a consideration, uses, possesses, or has the right to use or possess any guest room in a hotel under any lease, concession, permit, right of access, license to use or other agreement, or otherwise.

Permanent resident. Any occupant who, as of a given date, has or shall have occupied or has or shall have the right of occupancy of any guest room in a hotel for not less than thirty (30) continuous days next preceding such date.

Person. Any individual, firm, partnership, joint adventure, association, social club, fraternal organization, joint stock company, corporation, cooperative, estate, trust, receiver, trustee, syndicate, or any other group or combination acting as a unit, the plural as well as the

singular number; excepting the United States, the State of Georgia and any instrumentality of either thereof upon which the city is without power to impose the tax.

Rent. The consideration received for occupancy valued in money, whether received in money or otherwise, including all receipts, cash, credits, and property or services of any kind or nature, and also the amount for which credit is allowed by the lodging provider to the occupant, without any deduction therefrom whatsoever.

Tax. The tax on occupants imposed by this ordinance, as provided for by OCGA §48-13-50, *et seq.*, specifically 48-13-51 (a) (3.4).

Sec. 62-307. Tax rate.

There shall be paid for every occupancy of a guest room in a hotel in the city a tax at the rate of six percent (6%) of the amount of rent unless an exemption is provided under Sec. 62-309.

Sec. 62-308. Collection of tax by lodging provider.

Every lodging provider furnishing guest rooms in a hotel in the city shall collect a tax of six percent (6%) on the amount of rent from the occupant unless an exception is provided under Sec. 62-309. The lodging provider shall provide a receipt to each occupant, which receipt shall reflect both the amount of rent and the amounts of this and other tax applicable. This tax shall be due from the occupant, and shall be collected by the lodging provider at the same time that the rent is collected. The lodging provider shall be liable to the city for the full amount received or collected as tax, whether collected appropriately or inappropriately; and for any amount of tax that should have been collected, but was not.

(a) Any person who receives or collects the tax or any consideration represented to be the tax from another person holds the amount so collected in trust for the benefit of the city and is liable to the city for the full amount collected, plus penalty and interest.

(b) An individual who controls or supervises the collection of the tax from another person, or an individual who controls the accounting for or remittance of the tax, and who willfully fails to remit or cause to be remitted the tax is liable as a responsible individual for an amount equal to the tax not remitted or caused to be remitted, plus penalty and interest. The dissolution of a corporation, partnership or other business or fraternal association does not affect a responsible individual's liability under this sub-section. Furthermore, the liability imposed by this sub-section shall be in addition to any other penalty provided by law.

Sec. 62-309. Exceptions.

No tax shall be collected from an occupant after becoming a permanent resident; or from an occupant who certifies in writing that he is staying in such accommodations as a result of his residence having been rendered uninhabitable by fire or other casualty; or from the United States and the State of Georgia or any instrumentality of either thereof; or from any official or employee

of the State, its units of local government or any other instrumentality of the State, when traveling on official business and presenting written substantiation thereof or paying by State or local government credit or debit card; or from a foreign sovereign enjoying exemption by treaty or consular convention, when presenting substantiation issued by the United States Department of State. Occupancy provided without charge in money or otherwise is not subject to this tax.

Sec. 62-310. Registration of lodging provider; form and contents; execution; certificate of authority.

Every person engaging or about to engage in business as a lodging provider in the city shall immediately register with the city manager on a form provided by said official. Persons engaged in such business must so register not later than thirty (30) days after the date that this ordinance becomes effective. Such registration shall set forth the name under which such person transacts business or intends to transact business, the location of his place(s) of business and such other information which would facilitate the administration of the tax as prescribed by the city manager. The registration shall be signed by the owner if a natural person; in case of ownership by an association or partnership, by a member or partner; in case of ownership by a corporation, by an officer. The city manager shall, after such registration, issue without charge a certificate of authority to each lodging provider to collect the tax from the occupant. A separate registration shall be required for each place of business of a lodging provider. Each certificate shall state the name and location of the business to which it is applicable.

Sec. 62-311. Determination generally; returns; payments.

(a) Due date of taxes. All amounts of such tax shall be due and payable to the city manager monthly on or before the twentieth (20th) day of the month next succeeding the respective monthly period. The tax shall become delinquent for any monthly period after the twentieth (20th) day of each succeeding month during which it remains unpaid.

(b) Penalty and interest for failure to pay tax by due date. A lodging provider who fails to make any return or to pay the amount of tax as prescribed, shall be assessed a specific penalty to be added to the tax in the amount of five percent (5%) or five dollars (\$5.00), whichever is greater, if the failure is for one (1) month or less; and an additional five percent (5%) or five dollars (\$5.00), whichever is greater, for each additional month or fraction thereof in which such failure shall continue; provided, however, that the aggregate penalty for any single violation shall not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) or twenty-five dollars (\$25.00), whichever is greater. Delinquent amounts shall bear interest monthly, or fraction thereof, until paid at the rate set forth in OCGA §48-2-40.

(c) Acceptance of delinquent return and remittance without imposing penalty and interest; authority; requirements. If the failure to make any return or to pay the amount of tax by the due date results from providential cause shown to the satisfaction of the governing authority of the city by affidavit attached to the return, and remittance is made within ten (10) days of the due date, such return may be accepted exclusive of penalty and interest.

(d) Waiving of penalty and interest; authority. OCGA §48-2-41, relating to the authority to waive interest, and §48-2-43, relating to the authority to waive penalty, shall apply; provided, however, that the governing authority shall stand in lieu of the Georgia Commissioner of Revenue, and the city shall stand in lieu of the State.

(e) Penalty for fraud. In the case of a false or fraudulent return, or of failure to file a return where willful intent exists to defraud the city of any tax due, a penalty of fifty percent (50%) shall be assessed.

(f) Return; remittance; time of filing; lodging providers required to file; contents. On or before the twentieth (20th) day of the month succeeding each monthly period, a return for the preceding monthly period together with appropriate remittance shall be filed with the city manager. The return shall report the gross rent, taxable rent, exempt rent, amount of tax collected or otherwise due for the period, and such other information as may be required by the city manager. However, if the estimated tax liability for any monthly period shall exceed Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for a lodging provider who, in the prior fiscal year remitted tax greater than Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) in any three (3) consecutive months, such lodging provider shall file an estimated return and remit not less than fifty percent (50%) of the estimated tax liability for the monthly period by the twentieth (20th) day of that same monthly period. The amount of tax so remitted shall be credited against the amount to be due with the regular return for the monthly period to be filed on the twentieth (20th) day of the succeeding month.

(g) Extension of time of filing; authority; requirements; remittance; penalty and interest. The governing authority of the city may, for good cause, extend the time for making returns for not longer than thirty (30) days. No extension shall be valid unless granted in writing upon written application of the lodging provider. Such grant may not be applicable for longer period than twelve (12) consecutive months. A lodging provider granted an extension shall remit tax equaling not less than one hundred percent (100%) of the tax paid for the corresponding period of the prior fiscal year; such remittance to be made on or before the date the tax would otherwise come due without the grant of extension. No penalty or interest shall be charged during the first ten (10) days of the extension period. Thereafter, interest shall be collected on the unpaid balance at the rate set forth in OCGA §48-2-40.

(h) Collection fee allowed lodging providers. Lodging providers collecting the tax shall be allowed a percentage of the tax due and accounted for and shall be reimbursed in the form of a deduction in submitting, reporting and paying the amount due, if the amount is not delinquent at the time of payment. The rate of the deduction shall be three percent (3%) of the amount due, but only if the amount due was not delinquent at the time of payment.

Sec. 62-312. Deficiency determinations.

(a) Recomputation of tax; authority to make; basis of recomputation. If the city manager is not satisfied with the return or returns of the tax or the amount of the tax required to be paid to the city by any lodging provider, he may compute and determine the amount required to be paid upon the basis of any information within his possession or that may come into his possession. One (1) or more deficiency determinations may be made of the amount due for one (1) or more monthly periods.

(b) Penalty and interest for failure to pay tax. Penalty and interest shall be assessed upon the amount of any determination, as provided by Sec. 62-310.

(c) Notice of determination; service of. The city manager shall give to the lodging provider written notice of his determination. The notice may be served personally or by mail; if by mail, such service shall be addressed to the lodging provider at his address as it appears in the records of the city. Service by mail is complete when delivered by certified mail with a receipt signed by the addressee, or when made by statutory overnight delivery.

(d) Time within which notice of deficiency determination to be mailed. Except in cases of failure to make a return or of fraud, every notice of deficiency determination shall be mailed within three (3) years after the twentieth (20th) day of the calendar month following the monthly period for which the amount is proposed to be determined, or within three (3) years after the return is filed, whichever period should last expire.

(e) Appeal or protest of deficiency determination. The procedure for contesting a deficiency determination shall be as provided by OCGA §48-5-380.

Sec. 62-313. Determination if no return made.

(a) Estimate of gross receipts. If any lodging provider fails to make a return, the city manager shall make an estimate of the amount of the gross receipts of the lodging provider, or as the case may be, of the amount of total rentals in the city which are subject to the tax. The estimate shall be made for the period or periods in respect to which the lodging provider failed to make the return and shall be based upon any information which is or may come into the possession of the city manager. Written notice shall be given in the manner prescribed in Sec. 62-311(c).

(b) Penalty and interest for failure to pay tax. Penalty and interest shall be assessed upon the amount of any determination, as provided by Sec. 62-310.

Sec. 62-314. Collection of tax by city.

(a) Action for delinquent tax; time for. At any time within three (3) years after any tax or any amount of tax required to be collected becomes due and payable, and at any time within three (3) years after the delinquency of any tax or any amount of tax

required to be collected, the city manager may bring an action in a court of competent jurisdiction in the name of the city to collect the amount delinquent together with penalty, interest, court fees, filing fees, attorney's fees and other legal fees incident thereto.

(b) Lodging provider selling or quitting business. If any lodging provider liable for any amount under this ordinance sells out his business or quits his business, he shall make a final return and remittance within fifteen (15) days after the date of selling or quitting the business.

(c) Duty of successors or assignees of lodging provider to withhold tax from purchase money. If any lodging provider liable for any amount of tax, interest or penalty under this ordinance sells out his business or quits the business, his successors or assigns shall withhold sufficiently from the purchase price to cover such amount until the former owner produces from the city manager either a receipt reflecting full payment or a certificate stating that no amount is due.

(d) Liability for failure to withhold. If the purchaser of a business fails to withhold from the purchase price as required, he shall be personally liable for the payment of the amount required to be withheld by him to the extent of the purchase price.

(e) Credit for tax, penalty or interest paid more than once or erroneously or illegally collected. Whenever the amount of any tax, penalty or interest has been paid more than once, or has been erroneously or illegally collected or received by the city, it may be refunded by the governing authority. If the lodging provider or person determines that he has overpaid or paid more than once, which fact has not been determined by the city manager, such person shall have three (3) years from the date of payment to file a claim in writing stating the specific ground upon which the claim is founded. The claimant may request a hearing before the governing authority at which the claim and any other information available will be considered. The governing authority shall approve or disapprove the claim, and notify the claimant of its action.

Sec. 62-315. Administration of ordinance; record keeping.

(a) Authority of city manager. The city manager shall administer and enforce the provisions of this ordinance for the collection of the tax.

(b) Records required from lodging providers, etc.; form. Every lodging provider renting guest rooms in the city shall preserve, for a minimum of three (3) years, all folios, receipts, certificates of exemption and such other documents as the city manager may prescribe, and in such form as he may require. Said records shall at all times be available for examination within the city.

(c) Examination of records; audits. The city manager or any person authorized in writing by him may examine the books, papers, records, financial reports, equipment and other facilities of any lodging provider renting guest rooms and any lodging provider liable for the tax, in order to verify the accuracy of any return made, or if no return is made by the lodging provider, to ascertain and determine the amount required

to be paid. Such examination shall be conducted at the place of lodging provision, unless the city manager shall stipulate another place within the city.

(d) Authority to require reports; contents. In administration of the provisions of this ordinance, the city manager may require the filing of reports by any person or class of persons having in their possession or custody information relating to the rental of guest rooms which are subject to the tax. The reports shall be filed with the city manager when required by said official, and shall set forth the rental charged for each occupancy, the date(s) of occupancy, the basis for exemption, or such other information as the city manager may prescribe.

Sec. 62-316. Violations.

Any lodging provider who fails, neglects or refuses to collect the tax as provided by Sec. 62-308 shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), or confinement for a term not to exceed three (3) months, or both fine and confinement. Any lodging provider who fails or refuses to make any return as provided by Sec. 62-311, to keep adequate records or to open them for inspection by the city, or to furnish other data reasonably requested by the governing authority shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), or confinement for a term not to exceed three (3) months, or both. Any lodging provider who makes a false or fraudulent return with intent to evade the tax shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not less than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00), nor more than Three Hundred Dollars (\$300.00), or confinement for a term not to exceed three (3) months, or both. Each and every day during any portion of which any violation is committed, continued or permitted, shall constitute a separate offense and shall be punished accordingly.

Sec. 62-317. - Sec. 62-349. Reserved.

Section 2.

All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are repealed.

Section 3.

It is hereby declared to be the intention of the Mayor and Council of the City of Ringgold that the section, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases of this Ordinance are severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or section of this Ordinance shall be declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect any of the remaining phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs or sections of this Ordinance.

Section 4.

The adoption date of this Ordinance shall be November 14, 2016. The effective date of this Ordinance shall be its adoption date.

[Signatures on the following page.]

SO ORDAINED, this _____ day of _____, 2016.

CITY OF RINGGOLD, GEORGIA

NICK MILLWOOD, MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK