

Northern Oconto County Room Tax Commission & Tourism Zone Agreement
Public Meeting
Saturday, September 9, 2023 @ 10am
Townsend Town Hall

Townsend chairperson Monica Zeller introduced Jayme Sellen, Executive Director of the Oconto County Economic Development Corporation to 16 citizens.

Zeller explained that 5 towns have been discussing the short-term rental situation in the north part of the county for several months. The OCEDC is involved to help draft a cohesive plan that all towns can follow. State Statutes give us the option to have a tourism zone which would be 2 or more municipalities to identify as one location. OCEDC is proposed that all of Oconto County be that one location. This way we can use the one pot of money to promote tourism throughout the county utilizing posters, magazines (Discovery Guide), television, radio, internet, ect. In the northern part of the county, we would promote more outdoor activities; kayaking, bike trails, snowmobile, UTV/ATV, fishing, as well as develop new amenities to draw people to the area.

The document will do three phases: 1st, create an ordinance to require permitting process for short-term rentals to help the town know where these rentals are and contact information if something happens at the location. Per State Statute, all short-term rentals must be licensed to the state, also. 2nd creates a room tax of up to 8% to the user to pay for tourism promotion. State Statutes require that 70% of this fee would be on tourism promotion or development and 30% for town administration. The town can decide if they want their own commission to manage this or hire a group and pay them. If it is outsourced, the non-profit company must use 51% of its revenue on tourism. Currently, OCEDC is the only legitimate company in the county. 3rd, the document provides templates of permits that the town would provide to the owner

Towns that have acted on this process: Oconto – room tax 8%; Brazeau-Short term & Room tax 8%; Doty and Mountain at 5% for ST&RT; Townsend and Lakewood – public meetings; Breed and Bagley meet Tuesday 9/12; Riverview has implements for a few years at 4%

All lodging fits under this room tax, including resorts and hotels. The town is responsible for the implementation of the ordinance. Campgrounds are not included unless there are permanent cabins.

Short term rentals are defined as any rental over 10 days per year: between 11 and 29 days. 30 consecutive days equates to long term rental. Charitable rooms are exempt from room tax. An example is church camps, Ronald McDonald homes, etc. An initial town license would be around \$25.00, and the renewal could be \$15.00 per year. These are to be determined by the

town. A license would be generated to display at the rental property. The Town can amend the draft ordinance to include lake/atv/ etc. ordinances to be posted in the residence.

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection administrative code require an annual state license (\$110) and annual property inspection (\$300). The local ordinance would require an annual permit, however, per State Statute, towns are prohibited from requiring town fire inspections since these are residential properties. If, however, a safety complaint comes to the attention of the town, they may request an inspection

Sellen explained that occupancy of the property is determined by what the current septic system was designed. A public system is based on cubic feet; 400 cu. Ft per person. A private septic needs 750gal for 2 bed and 1000gal for 3 beds. Information can be found on <https://oc17maps.co.oconto.wi.us/SOLO/default.aspx>

The intent of this ordinance and procedures is to make sure visitors are safe and continue to come back to the area. Visitors are the ones who will maintain our community and grow it. Enforcement of this will be an issue, but education is a big component.

The town will collect and distribute owner information to help form a group to discuss the various situations and challenges that owners face.