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GOVERNMENT

Lemondes seeks feedback on proposed Auburn hotel tax

Robert Harding

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The Hilton Garden Inn in Auburn. The city may pursue a hotel tax, similar the one approved for the village of Weedsport, that would be in addition to other taxes, including the county's occupancy tax.

Kevin Rivoli

Robert Harding

Assemblyman John Lemondes is **asking for the public's feedback** on the **city of Auburn's proposal** to implement a 5% tax on hotel stay term rentals.



In a letter to The Citizen, Lemondes, R-LaFayette, invited constituents to attend a public meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 21, in the Auburn City Council chamber. There will be a presentation on the proposed hotel tax and an opportunity for comments and questions.

Anyone who can't attend the meeting may submit comments to Lemondes' district office at 69 South St. in Auburn or by emailing lemondesj@nyassembly.gov.

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Lemondes will play a key role in the **process**. He is expected to introduce legislation in the state Assembly that would allow the city of Auburn to charge a 5% tax on hotel stays and short-term rentals. State Sen. Rachel May, who also represents the city, has already introduced the bill in the Senate.

City leaders **sent letters** to Lemondes and May, D-Syracuse, in December requesting the legislation.

Several New York counties, including Cayuga, charge occupancy taxes. But there has been an increasing number of cities, towns and villages seeking state approval to implement hotel taxes.

In 2023, Gov. Kathy Hochul **signed legislation** approved by state lawmakers authorizing the village of Weedsport in Cayuga County and the town and village of Skaneateles in Onondaga County to implement hotel taxes. The bills were sponsored by Lemondes and May, both of whom represent Cayuga and Onondaga c



After Hochul acted on the bills for Skaneateles and Weedsport, Auburn officials **began exploring** a hotel tax.

Auburn City Clerk Chuck Mason **gave a presentation** at a council meeting in December and estimated the tax could generate \$500,000 in annual revenue. The revenue projection could be higher, but Mason had limited data on short-term rentals, such as Airbnbs, in the city.

There has been **opposition to local occupancy taxes** from the hotel industry. The New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association unsuccessfully lobbied Hochul to veto the bills allowing Skaneateles and Weedsport to implement hotel taxes.

Eric Ridley, who works in the hotel industry and serves as Throop town supervisor, is a past chair of the association's board of directors. He previously told The Citizen that if Auburn imposes a hotel tax, it could drive tourism out of the area.

If the state Legislature passes the hotel tax legislation before the end of session in June, it will head to Hochul's desk for review. Based on her handling of similar bills last year, she will likely sign the legislation.

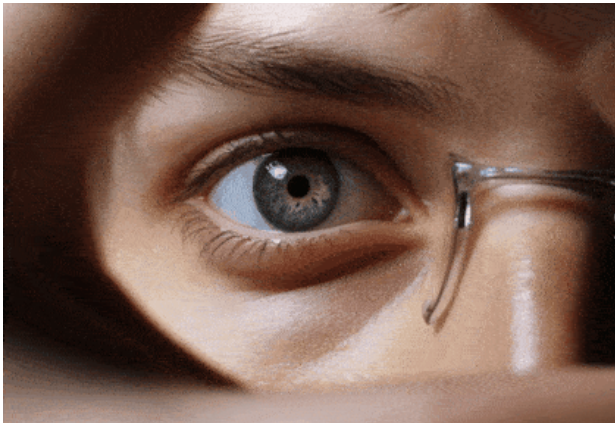
After Hochul signs the bill, the city council will need to pass a local law establishing the hotel tax. The tax, which would take effect on Jan. 1, 2025, could be set below 5%, but could not exceed that threshold.

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