



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF  
ULSTER COUNTY COMPTROLLER  
**ELLIOTT AUERBACH**

**ELLIOTT AUERBACH**  
COUNTY COMPTROLLER  
244 FAIR STREET  
KINGSTON, NEW YORK 12401

**PHONE: (845) 340-3529**  
[countycomptroller@co.ulster.ny.us](mailto:countycomptroller@co.ulster.ny.us)  
[www.youreyesonulster.com](http://www.youreyesonulster.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LODGING LOCALS LAUD LEGISLATION**  
**Sentiment Suggests that Time is Right to Amend Occupancy Tax Law**

Kingston, NY (November 23, 2015) – Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach recently held a roundtable discussion with area representatives from traditional inns and bed and breakfasts, private Airbnb hosts, the Ulster County Lodging Coalition, and the Ulster County Legislature’s staff. The meeting focused on the application of the County’s hotel and motel room occupancy tax to short-term room and home rental operations exemplified by online platforms like Airbnb, FlipKey, and HomeAway.

“Based on the research performed by my office and conversations we’ve had with both local business leaders and those homeowners who rent out their property for a little extra income, we’ve come to the understanding that the County is primed to act in this domain as it relates to our occupancy tax,” said Auerbach. “While supporters and opponents alike call for a ‘level playing field’ surrounding the economics and social impacts related to home sharing, equalizing the occupancy tax structure is a critical and positive first step, which will presumably lead to an even greater degree of discourse and potential action.”

“I thank Comptroller Auerbach for being proactive in bringing parties to the table in pursuit of safeguarding the County’s finances,” said Guy Kempe, one of the round table participants and co-owner/operator (with husband Erik Forster) of BontecouView Airbnb in New Paltz.

Auerbach previously stated that local legislation would likely be required to effect meaningful change as far as updating the scope of the County’s hotel tax to capture these types of vacation and short-term rentals that have been popularized by the new “sharing economy.” Given the trend across both the state and country regarding the modernization of local transient tax frameworks, the Comptroller’s opinion remains unchanged. Further, his goal is to place the onus on the corporate entity facilitating the room booking to collect and remit the tax to the county rather than making individual hosts solely responsible.

“From Delaware County, NY to Philadelphia, PA to Portland, OR, places are actively seeking ways through the legislative process to harness this revenue stream for the betterment of both tourism promotion and local finances,” said Auerbach. “We are finding that certain states and localities are proceeding with the tax issue independent of the insurance, zoning, safety, and other concerns circling over the heads of hosts, guests, and their respective communities. While expanding the occupancy tax to capture short-term rentals makes sense as a matter of fairness for our established commercial lodging businesses, it will also shine a bit of necessary light on this new industry and will likely lead to greater regulation on either a state or local level.”

“We will continue to maintain an active dialogue with the Legislature, Ulster County Lodging Coalition, business owners, and home sharing services,” continued Auerbach. “Look out for a legislative proposal that will soon be forthcoming from my office.”

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*The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller’s Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.*