

Regular August Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, August 28, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lenny Schaub at 4:00pm.

Members present, Lenny Schaub, Dennis Fry, Karen Tepley, Christy Adsit. Candace Fagerlind was absent.

Dennis Fry made the motion to approve the minutes from the July Richland Center Tourism Commission, member Christy Adsit seconded that motion. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Tourism Grant Applications:

The Wheels of Time-Hill Country Classic Power Show submitted a grant application for \$1,500 to support its October 2023 show at the Richland County Fairgrounds. Their application indicated they attract an audience from a Midwestern multi-state area and have been long-time recipients of a Tourism Grant. Member Christy Adsit made the motion to approve this grant, Member Dennis Fry seconded that motion. A roll call vote was held: Chair Schaub-yes, Dennis Fry-yes, Karen Tepley-yes, Christy Adsit-yes.

La Fritanga Latin America Restaurant applied for a grant of \$1,500 to support their 09/30 Nicaraguan Concert at the White House/Ramada Inn Hotel. Their application stated the event would attract visitors from a 3-state area for this cultural event. Director Richards pointed out the organizers of the event, and the purpose of the event, are concerning a for-profit business. Several members of the Commission expressed concern with approving a grant request for a for-profit entity and their wish that the grant program remain committed to non-profit organizations. After much discussion, this request was tabled for lack of a motion.

Gray Media Streaming Advertising Discussion and Possible Action:

Gray Media Representative Brady Nordenstrom attended the meeting and reviewed the results of our streaming advertising campaign so far. The streaming advertising campaign has focused primarily on the Riverwest and Walker's Point areas of Milwaukee. The completion rate of those ads by viewers has been extremely high and the saturation point of potential viewers is still low, meaning there is still more room to continue targeting these areas as people who do see the advertising are reacting positively but there are more potential visitors to yet get this messaging.

Brady then moved on to show our website traffic history since we have switched to our new website. The website traffic for Greater Richland Tourism has taken drastic upswings since the inception of streaming advertising and since the rollout of our new website. After some explanation, it was pointed out that our current year-to-date increase in traffic from 2022 is over 122%. This relates directly to the inception of our streaming advertising.

Commission member Tepley had previously had the question, "Should the streaming advertising target be broadened, or should new locations be added to the effort?" Brady was able to explain that we have not hit a point of saturation in our target area. More people have not heard the message often enough to expand the target area at this time.

With all of this discussion in place Director Richards asked the Commission to commit another \$5,000 towards streaming advertising with Gray Media. Our summer and fall occupancy rates are very strong

for our lodging businesses. However, there is more room for improved lodging occupancy rates in the winter and a move to a 4-seasons destination brand.

Member Tepley made the motion to approve the additional \$5,000 investment in digital billboard advertising with Lamar Advertising, and member Fry 2nd that motion. A roll call vote was taken, Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes. The motion unanimously passed.

2024 Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide Ad Placement

Director Richards brought forward the opportunity to be included in the Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide that is sent to anyone who contacts Wisconsin Tourism directly for travel information. It is a standard bearer for everything Wisconsin tourism related. Richards presented two options, #1. ¼ Page placement at \$2,145 for the year or #2. A ½ page placement at \$3,185 for the year. There was significant discussion regarding the second option. Member Christy Adsit mentioned the break between ½ page to ¼ page was not as significant as expected and suggested that would be the best investment.

Adsit made a motion to approve the ½ page placement in the Wisconsin Tourism Travel Guide at \$3,185 for the year, Member Tepley seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held: Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes.

Director Richards offered updates and reports on several efforts:

1. Richards discussed there has been an ongoing, intensive, effort to get Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and other third-party rental platforms to confirm they are aware of Eagle, Ithaca, and Forest Township's Room Tax Ordinances, and their responsibility to collect room tax in those municipalities. After an 8-month effort it has been confirmed by these STR platforms and their contractors that retro-active to the date of the ordinance's adoption in the respective townships they indeed are to collect and remit the room tax.
2. Richards also provided a very quick update that Center Colorfest planning and parade registration was well underway. Also, there was a brief update regarding a new event for late October, Pumpkifest. Director Richards mentioned that he will be helping with marketing and planning of the new event.

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Tepley, 2nd by Fry. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:08pm.

Regular July Richland Center Tourism Commission Meeting, July 10, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lenny Schaub at 4:05pm.

Members present, Lenny Schaub, Dennis Fry, Karen Tepley, Christy Adsit, and Candace Fagerlind.

The minutes from the March and May Richland Center Tourism Commission were approved with one addition to the May meeting minutes.

Tourism Grant Applications:

There were no Tourism Grant Applications to consider at this meeting.

Semi-Annual Budget Report: Director Richards reviewed the mid-year budget for 2023. This report showed there were no expenditures over the budgeted items and no expectation to exceed any category for the 2023 Annual Budget

Lamar Advertising Digital Billboard Discussion and Possible Action: Director Richards explained that over the past two years, Greater Richland Tourism had allocated over \$22,000 each year towards digital billboard marketing in the Milwaukee, Rockford, and Rochester/Winona MN interstate areas. This year there will be more effort put towards streaming advertising and that advertising has proven to pay dividends. However, the Digital Billboard advertising partners well with the online streaming advertising we have committed to as we also know from past experience these digital billboards are effective as well. Director Richards recommended that we allocate an additional \$4,400 to Digital Billboard Advertising in the Rockford and Milwaukee areas with Lamar Advertising in the amount of \$4,400 for an additional 8-week period that would take us to the end of September.

There was an additional question from member Tepley, "Should the streaming advertising target be broadened, or should new locations be added to the effort? Richards referenced guidance received from the Gray Marketing consultants that the Greater Richland target audience should continue to remain as it is to achieve appropriate value and build the name.

Member Tepley made the motion to approve the additional \$4,400 investment in digital billboard advertising with Lamar Advertising, and member Adsit 2nd that motion. A roll call vote was taken, Schaub-yes, Fry-yes, Tepley-yes, Adsit-yes Fagerlind-yes. The motion unanimously passed.

Director Richards offered updates and reports on several efforts:

1. Director Richards explained we have received the 2022 Economic Impact Report from Wisconsin Tourism and this report showed another strong increase in tourism-related spending in Richland County with an increase over 2021 of 14.5% to \$25.4 Million. This is another new record level of tourism-related spending in Richland County.
2. Director Richards reported the June Dairy Days and Rodeo Parade, as well as the Wisconsin High School Rodeo were held with very positive results. The WSHSR at the Richland County Fairgrounds experienced growth in participants and had the most horses in the parade as anyone in recent memory could recall. The parade went off without incident and had strong participation.

3. Director Richards mentioned that summer staffing for the Visitor's Center has been strong. We recently received a 5-Star review on our Google page which is the first review received in several years.
4. Director Richards presented the website traffic report since we have transitioned to the new website, time period April to July 2023. This report showed an increase of 130% in website visits during that time frame over the same period in 2022. This coupled with the understanding that 2022 was a record year in tourism-related spending in Richland County indicates positive results can be expected when we receive the Economic Impact Report from Wisconsin Tourism in 2024.
5. Director Richards also explained two Richland Center institutional lodging options have been sold to new owners, one will most likely become long-term visiting employee lodging. The city and area business leaders are aware there is a need for new, fresh, short-term lodging in the City.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Adsit, 2nd by Fry. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:09pm.



Cover Page
Richland Center Tourism Commission
Tourism Event Sponsorship Grant Program Application

Project Title: Wheels of Time

Full Legal Name of Applicant/Organization: Hill Country Classic Power

Applicant's Address: 22522 County Hwy D. Richland Center Wi 53581

Name of Primary Contact: Diane M Brown

Telephone: 608-549-3591

Email: dmhardin55@hotmail.com

Website: none at this time

Location of Project: Richland County Fair Grounds Richland Center WI

Event Date(s): October 6, 7, 8th, 2023

Intended Ad Placement (List Publication and Location with Sample wording/ad Layout):

Shopping news, posters sto attendees in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Ad in the Farm Collectors show directory and posters in the tri-state area business WRCO radio spots. Tractor rides

Description of event and how it relates to tourism: farming community, and industry tractors and trucks on display old and new. Cowboy Church on Sunday. Display of items inside main building.

Projection of the project's ability to generate overnight stays: approx. 80 – 100 rooms will be booked by the SW Wisconsin Antique truck Club – members from Wis., Iowa, Minn and IL People coming to town will eat, sleep, shop and explore are area.

Target Audience: the young and the old, farmers, truckers, and want to be farmer/truckers, family event

Total Event Budget: \$4,000.00

Amount for Advertising: \$600 – 700

In-Kind Value:

Grant Request: \$1,500.00

.....
to be completed by the Richland Center Tourism Commission:

~~Award~~ _____ NO Explanation: _____

YES Amount of Award: _____

Tourism Meeting Agenda Date: _____

Date of Approval: _____

Signature of Commission Chair _____

[Type here]



Tourism Event Sponsorship Grant Program Application

Project Title: Zafarrancho con los Mesia

Full Legal Name of Applicant/Organization: La Fritanga LLC

Applicant's Address: 1450 veterans Dr. Richland Center WI 53581

Name of Primary Contact: Marlon Lacayo

Telephone: 608-475-0536

Email: la.fritangaw@gmail.com

Website:

Location of Project: Ramada "The white house"

Event Date(s): September 30th 2023

Intended Ad Placement (List Publication and Location with Sample wording/ad Layout):

Social Media, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, Newspaper, Radio

Description of event or activity and how it relates to tourism: Laten Concert, bring people from another cities and towns

Projection of the project's ability to generate overnight stays:

Target Audience: Laten Community

Total Event Budget: \$20,000=

Amount for Advertising: \$3,000=

In-Kind Value: \$5,000-

Grant Request: \$1,500=

To be completed by the Richland Center Tourism



Award _____ NO Explanation: _____

_____ YES Amount of Award: _____

Tourism Meeting Agenda Date: _____

Date of Approval: _____

Signature of Commission Chair _____

Application Narrative Richland Center Tourism Commission Tourism Event Sponsorship Grant Program Application

Please answer the following questions.

1. What is the name and location of the event?
Zafarrando con los Mejia Ramada Hotel 1450 Veterans Drive.
Richland Center WI 53581.
2. Describe the event in as much detail as possible. Include a proposed timeline that you will follow to plan and run your event. (We recommend that your timeline begin at least six months prior to the start date of your event and end no sooner than two months after the end date of your event.)
3. Provide a brief history of your organization or business. Include how long your organization or business has been in existence. List any partner businesses or organizations that will help you to coordinate or run this event. La Fiestanga open April 5th 2023, our team has 20 years in the
Restaurant business, we are partner with Restaurant Los Amigos, we are growing little
by little. Thanks to the Richland Center Community and with a lot of work
4. Describe how you will market the event to participants from outside 60 miles and describe any media coverage (if applicable) you anticipate the event will receive. We have a community
from Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee, we have a extensive word of mouth
communication.

TRAVEL WISCONSIN

2024 OFFICIAL TRAVEL GUIDE PRINT



2022 ESTO Mercury Award for
Printed Collateral Materials

FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:



DAN CARTER
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST
602-432-7119
dcarter@maddenmedia.com

FOR MATERIALS SPECIFICATIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Kristin Fletcher, Campaign Manager
kfletcher@maddenmedia.com

TRAVEL
WISCONSIN



Inspire Travelers to Visit WISCONSIN

Travel Wisconsin's Official Travel Guide delivers the best of Wisconsin to visitors. They depend on the guide as their source for selecting where to go, where to stay, and what to do while visiting Wisconsin. The guide is the official fulfillment piece for next year. Showcase your destination or attraction to interested travelers in 2024.

IMPORTANT DATES



AD CLOSE
OCTOBER 6, 2023



MATERIALS DUE
OCTOBER 12, 2023



PUBLICATION/BILLING
MARCH 2024

AD RATES*

Item 5.

| STANDARD POSITION | RATE |
|-------------------|---------|
| Full Page | \$6,215 |
| 1/2 Page | \$3,185 |
| 1/4 Page | \$2,145 |

| PREMIUM POSITION** | RATE |
|--|----------|
| NEW* Events Fold-Out Back Cover** | \$13,500 |
| Inside Front Cover** | \$7,460 |
| Facing Inside Front Cover** | \$7,145 |
| Inside Back Cover** | \$7,145 |
| Table of Contents (Left) | \$6,905 |
| Table of Contents (Right) | \$6,905 |
| Facing Welcome Full Page** | \$6,905 |
| Facing Masthead Full Page** | \$6,905 |
| Masthead (1/2 Page) | \$4,765 |

Pre-billing available. Details subject to change.

Travel Wisconsin has final decision on ad placements.

All rates are net.

Previous and new advertisers have first right of refusal.

**Premium Position for advertorial ad will include a QR Code.

DIGITAL VALUE ADDED

Each sponsored content in-guide ad includes an added-value digital placement within one of Travel Wisconsin's social channels, earning a minimum of 5K impressions and driving traffic to your site.

ENGAGE READERS WITH SPONSORED CONTENT ADS

All ads in the Wisconsin Travel Guide will be in a "Sponsored Content" format. Available in full-page, half-page and quarter-page sizes, Sponsored Content Ads combine your imagery with inspirational copy about your destination, attraction, or lodgings. You provide images and copy, and our team will edit and lay out the ad to ensure it looks fantastic. Sponsored Content Ads look like editorial, so readers are more likely to interact with your ad.



TRAVEL WISCONSIN

2024 OFFICIAL TRAVEL GUIDE



Produced in partnership between
Travel Wisconsin and Madden

FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:



DAN CARTER
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST
602-432-7119
dcarter@maddenmedia.com

FOR MATERIALS SPECIFICATIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Kristin Fletcher, Campaign Manager
kfletcher@maddenmedia.com

EXCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY: SPONSORED SIDEBAR

Become a part of the story with a Sponsored Sidebar. As a DMO partner of Travel Wisconsin, you can tell your destination's story within the feature editorial of the 2024 Wisconsin Travel Guide. You provide content and a QR code pointing to your website, and our creative team will design it as part of a feature spread within the guide. Sponsored Sidebar spaces are extremely limited, so reserve your spot today!

AD RATES*

| STANDARD POSITION | RATE |
|---|---------|
| 1/3 Page Editorial Sidebar 150 words | \$2,875 |

**All Sponsored Sidebar Content will be subject to review and approval by Travel Wisconsin.*

NEW OPPORTUNITY*

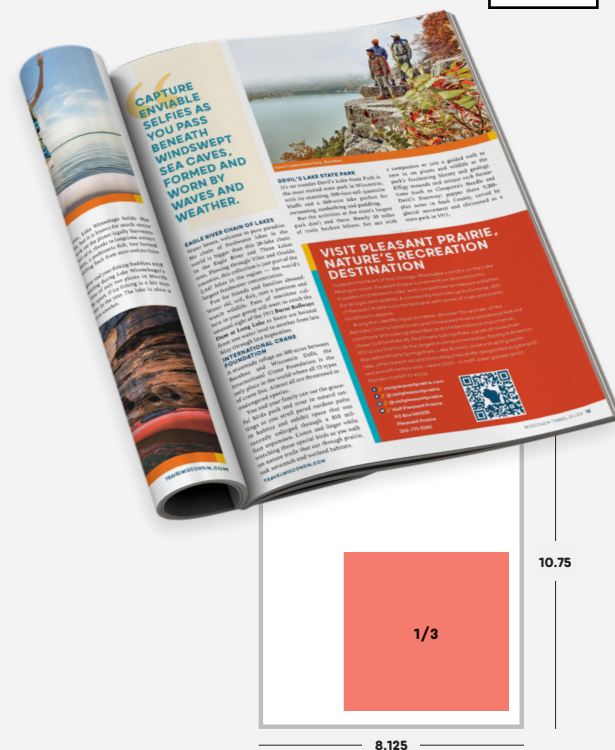
Promote your destination on 10,000 protective Polybags covering the Annual Travel Wisconsin Travel Guide! 5 Partners will be allowed 10,000 Polybags each, of the total 50,000 annually distributed.

| STANDARD POSITION | RATE |
|-------------------|---------|
| 10,000 Polybags | \$5,000 |

**Design included*

***Limited to 5 total partners*

Item 5.



Thanks Marty! Please see below in blue for responses to your questions.

Nick Aleksovski

Manager, Indirect Tax

T: +1 512 983 0516

E: naleksovski@homeaway.com

vrbo.com

From: Marty Richards <marty.richards@richlandcenterwi.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2023 12:37 PM

To: Nick Aleksovski <naleksovski@homeaway.com>; DITax_OTC Sales-Occ Team <DITax_OTCSales-OccTeam@expedia.com>

Cc: Aaron Joyce <aaron.joyce@richlandcenterwi.gov>; Brian McGraw (mcgraw1855@gmail.com) <mcgraw1855@gmail.com>; Sharon Storms <treaseagle@gmail.com>; clerklynetteowens@foresttownrcwi.gov; Jackie Carley <jackie.carley@schmittwoodlandhills.com>; Ashley Oliphant <ashley.oliphant@richlandcenterwi.gov>

Subject: [External] RE: Attn Dana Malburg: City of Richland Center, Townships of Eagle, Ithaca, and Forrest, Richland County, Wisconsin

Good Afternoon Nick,

Thank you very much for your reply, it is greatly appreciated. We are pleased to hear your explanation of the issue and look forward to corrections. Your response brings up two more thoughts:

#1. We have another township actively going through the process of adoption of the room tax with more likely to follow. When they finalize the adoption of the room tax in their respective townships, is there a contact at Vertex that we should be notifying of the change so we avoid situations like this in the future? We were led to believe that they were checking the State of Wisconsin, Department of Revenue Website periodically for such changes but that obviously isn't happening. We are happy to notify the party responsible in the future as new townships adopt the room tax. If you are able to share that contact we are happy to share the information. – [yep! Vertex has an email alias that can be reached at gis@vertexinc.com](mailto:gis@vertexinc.com).

#2. In the case of Eagle and Ithaca Townships, the room tax was adopted effective 01/01/2022 and 07/01/2022. Additionally for Richland Center, the room tax was increased effective 07/01/22. It is all of the involved municipalities' understanding remittances will be backdated to include all short-term rentals after those dates to current. Can you please confirm? – [confirming that once the tax is added to our system, we will be remitting the tax for future stays even if the tax was not collected at booking. Additionally, once the new taxes are added on our end, we can also look into previous months with past stays where the tax was not collected to determine if an amended return or \(or potentially a catch-up payment with a future filing\) is needed.](#)

Thank you again for your help with this situation. If any other questions come to your attention, please feel free to reach out.

Have a great day,

Marty

Marty Richards

Greater Richland Tourism

397 W Seminary Street

Richland Center, WI 53581

From: Nick Aleksovski <naleksovski@homeaway.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 15, 2023 9:11 AM

To: Marty Richards <marty.richards@richlandcenterwi.gov>; DITax_OTC Sales-Occ Team
<DITax_OTCSales-OccTeam@expedia.com>

Cc: Aaron Joyce <aaron.joyce@richlandcenterwi.gov>

Subject: RE: Attn Dana Malburg: City of Richland Center, Townships of Eagle, Ithaca, and Forrest, Richland County, Wisconsin

Hi Marty,

Thanks for reaching out, and providing this information! We have looked into each of these below, and the issue appears to be that Vertex, our third party tax rate content provider was unaware of the Eagle Township, Ithaca Township, and Forrest Township taxes, so they are currently missing from their tax rate content. We have passed along the ordinances provided and have requested that they prioritize adding these additional taxes in their next content release at the end of the month so that we can begin collecting & remitting accordingly for both Expedia and HomeAway (dba Vrbo.) Vertex has also confirmed that they have updated their rate for Richland Township to the 7% that is now affected.

If anything additional is needed in the interim, please let us know!

Nick

Nick Aleksovski

Manager, Indirect Tax

T: +1 512 983 0516

E: naleksovski@homeaway.com

vrbo.com

From: Marty Richards <marty.richards@richlandcenterwi.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2023 2:24 PM

To: DITax_OTC Sales-Occ Team <DITax_OTCSales-OccTeam@expedia.com>

Cc: Aaron Joyce <aaron.joyce@richlandcenterwi.gov>

Subject: [External] Attn Dana Malburg: City of Richland Center, Townships of Eagle, Ithaca, and Forrest, Richland County, Wisconsin

Attn Dana Malburg

Expedia Inc.

Good Afternoon Dana,

I am writing today regarding the recent Room Tax Return form we (the City of Richland Center, Wisconsin) received from Expedia and an ongoing issue in which Expedia has not remitted any room tax for several municipalities in our county. FYI, this is the 5th time over 6-7 months I have tried to reach Expedia for this discussion, the phone number listed on your Room Tax Reporting Form only goes to a fast busy signal which tells me it is a decoy number. For at least that last year, Expedia has been remitting incorrect amounts or has not been remitting any room tax to municipalities in our area, in non-compliance with 2019 State of Wisconsin Act 10 and the local municipality ordinances. I will approach these by jurisdiction. I am also copying this email to the City Clerk of Richland Center-Aaron Joyce, the City Administrator of Richland Center-Ashley Oliphant, the Town Chairman and Treasurer of Eagle Township-Brian McGraw and Sharon Storms, Town Treasurer of Ithaca Township-Jackie Carley, and Town Treasurer of Forest Township-Lynette Owens.

Additionally, I understand VRBO is an owned entity of Expedia. This same discussion applies to all VRBO properties in the municipalities listed below as we have not received the correct room tax rate, nor have the other townships received any room tax from VRBO since adoption of the room tax.

For the first step, I will direct you to the following link to the current Wisconsin Department of Revenue Room Tax Report by clicking on this link. This is the official resource for current room tax rates at any given time for every municipality in Wisconsin. Any Wisconsin municipality that has adopted a room tax is required to report their room tax rate and collections each year to the State of Wisconsin, Department of Revenue. You can see the current room tax rates are correctly indicated for each of the municipalities mentioned above.

City of Richland Center:

Expedia has been remitting collected room tax, to the City of Richland Center since 2019 Wisconsin Act 10 was signed into law requiring 3rd Party Marketplaces to collect and remit room tax to the corresponding municipalities. However, on 04/05/2022 the City of Richland Center, by City Council action, increased the room tax from 5% to 7%. I have attached the City Council Minutes from that 04/05/22 Richland Center City Council meeting increasing the room tax to 7% effective 07/01/22. You can also see verification of the correct room tax rate in the Wisconsin Department of Revenue Report listed above. Expedia has been under-reporting and remitting room taxes collected during that time frame.

Eagle Township, Richland County, Wisconsin. On September 8, 2021, Eagle Township adopted an 8% room tax, effective 01/01/2022, ordinance attached. Eagle Township has yet to receive any room tax remittances even though this ordinance was effective more than a year and a half ago and there is public knowledge of VRBO and potentially Expedia properties located in the township.

Ithaca Township, Richland County, Wisconsin, adopted an 8% room tax rate on 06/13/22, effective 07/01/2022, please see that ordinance attached. As of 08/07/23, the township has yet to receive any room tax remittances even though this ordinance was adopted over a year ago and there is first-hand knowledge of VRBO properties located in the township.

Forrest Township, Richland County, Wisconsin, adopted an 8% room tax rate on 04/18/23, effective 07/01/23, the ordinance is attached. Understandably, Forrest Township has not received any room tax remittance as we are currently in the first quarter of the ordinance's effective date. However, with the experience of the other townships listed above this is to serve notice to Expedia and VRBO of this ordinance and future collections and remittances.

From our experience with the City of Richland Center, we know you are responsible for room tax remittances for VRBO. However, as VRBO is a part of Expedia Group, I ask that you share this information with those entities or you could share with us the correct contacts with those entities. A very easy answer to this situation would appear to be for Expedia to, self-audit the 3rd Party Marketplace (Expedia and VRBO) stays in each jurisdiction during the effective timeframes and make a timely remittance with the correct amount of room tax. However, due to the lack of correspondence regarding this situation over the past several months, a couple of the jurisdictions have begun discussions with Wisconsin State Senator Howard Marklein's office and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue regarding a potential state-requested audit. I believe I can speak for everyone included in this correspondence, the goal here is to receive the correct room tax remittance due from the beginning of each ordinance attached and going forward, and nothing else, at this time. I look forward to your reply and corrective action to the issues listed above, if this raises additional questions for you please feel free to share.

Regards,

Marty Richards

Greater Richland Tourism

397 W Seminary Street

Richland Center, WI 53581

