

Good Afternoon,

I am sending this email to businesses and individuals connected to our local tourism industry.  The intent is to make you aware of substantial changes being proposed by the City of Superior Mayor's office, which has been approved by the finance committee and will be going in front of our City Council for approval next week. We anticipate that the September 7th City Council meeting agenda, one week from today, will contain a proposal requesting that our City Council approve a revision to Superior's hotel/motel tax ordinance.  The proposal will change the ordinance from a Tourism Entity structure to a Tourism Commission structure.

Currently, under the Tourism Entity structure, the City of Superior distributes 70% of the hotel/motel tax collected to be used for tourism promotion and development as designated by [**state statute**](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.legis.wisconsin.gov%2Fstatutes%2Fstatutes%2F66%2Fvi%2F0615%2F1m%2Fb&data=04%7C01%7Cdhanger%40kqdsfox21.tv%7Cd74186999f4042232d9908d96cae6ace%7C8fb1bdab91734b1597b9f52cec9472f5%7C0%7C1%7C637660318647122830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=aPqKH7Wev5XNm7g0PDqMFtaWgefkT3XHwW7eua2W41Q%3D&reserved=0).  Travel Superior in the past has contracted through the City of Superior to administer those funds and carry out that mission. Travel Superior retains 66.8% of these funds annually which we use for tourism promotion and development.

Until recently we were aware that plans were in place to put Superior tourism services, currently done by Travel Superior, out to a Request for Proposal (RFP), similar to what recently happened in Duluth. As part of this RFP process, bids would then be taken by the Superior Finance Committee to review and they would then award those funds to a tourism entity. Travel Superior was planning to provide the Finance Committee with a proposal under this structure.

The newly proposed ordinance change would create a Tourism Commission structure instead of the Tourism Entity Structure.  Although the look of this ordinance change is seemingly minimal, this change has the potential to have profound impacts on how tourism is promoted in the City of Superior. The proposed changes would enable the City of Superior to direct 100% of the hotel/motel tax collected to a six-person committee appointed by the Mayor and Council President, for whatever the committee chooses to use the funds for.  This change in how hotel/motel tax is distributed would annually put funding at risk for organizations that directly receive this tax.  Funding would no longer be guaranteed for organizations such as the Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center, Superior Public Museums, The Development Association, The Tourism Development Fund Event Grant Program. The ordinance change would also no longer guarantee dollars for our organization, Travel Superior, which uses those funds to promote the attractions of our community and drive overnight stays.

Travel Superior stands strongly against this change due to its potentially profound negative impact on our organization, the Superior Douglas County Welcome Center, on local tourism, the tourism-related business community, and any organization that benefits from tourism or directly receives hotel/motel tax.

Our organization has been steadfastly accountable for the hotel/motel tax dollars we have received. We have provided the City with quarterly reports and presented to the full City Council on what we do and how we do it. I have personally sat in at Finance Committee meetings, answering questions about our organization and myself.  Our Mayor also sits on the Travel Superior and The Chamber's shared 21 person Board of Directors.

Tourism has continued to rise each year, except for 2020, due to the pandemic.  Our organization year over year has proven results. We have and will continue to work closely with the local government.  However, we believe that the proposed ordinance is setting up tourism to become a needless political process. We do not agree with the idea to change a process that isn't broken, just to see what happens.

If you agree, I ask that you to reach out to all of our [**city councilors**](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ci.superior.wi.us%2F552%2FCouncilor-Contact-Information&data=04%7C01%7Cdhanger%40kqdsfox21.tv%7Cd74186999f4042232d9908d96cae6ace%7C8fb1bdab91734b1597b9f52cec9472f5%7C0%7C1%7C637660318647122830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=XX2v%2B9R11TLnroOHu4%2Fq9XMmL9BcTsC5TVmiNdwIj1Y%3D&reserved=0) (click for a list of contact information), [**the Mayor's Office**](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ci.superior.wi.us%2F171%2FMayor&data=04%7C01%7Cdhanger%40kqdsfox21.tv%7Cd74186999f4042232d9908d96cae6ace%7C8fb1bdab91734b1597b9f52cec9472f5%7C0%7C1%7C637660318647132790%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=wtFmVjLSHwFIyNbtKcMxbIj9valNqlj1VusZpxE8bFI%3D&reserved=0) (click for contact information), and attend the City Council meeting on September 7th at 6:30 pm to be present or even voice your support towards Travel Superior. We ask that you support the hotel/motel tax ordinance as it currently stands, suggest a more transparent process, and that you advise them that this ordinance change could jeopardize the health of our local tourism.

I realize this ask may be perceived as self-serving, but I believe it needs to be asked to uphold the process of local government as a transparent process, and to keep Tourism from becoming a political tool.

Please reach out should you have any questions or comments. It is my hope this process is fair and transparent moving forward.

Best Regards,
 
Taylor L. Pedersen
President/CEO