

## Lodging tax to go to voters in Glenwood Springs this fall

August 4, 2022 | Cassandra Ballard

Glenwood Springs City Council voted Thursday to put a 2.5% lodging tax proposal on the ballot in November.

The vote was 6-1 to put a 2.5% lodging tax proposal to a general vote, with Council Member Tony Hershey casting the lone “no” vote.

Almost every seat was filled with supporters during the City Council meeting, including Mountain Voices Project, a group that rallied local supporters to advocate for affordable workforce housing and to ask the council to vote unanimously.

“Today we celebrate one of the most diverse citizens and businesses who worked tirelessly to answer the call to begin finding a solution for equitable workforce housing,” said Norma Guzmán Durán, member of the ad hoc committee. “As a point of celebration, this coalition unanimously derived a solution unprecedented.”

The work was accomplished by a diverse group called the Glenwood Community Housing Coalition (formerly the Ad Hoc Housing Committee), with Mountain Voices Project filling multiple seats on the committee, along with many other members of the community.

Some opponents at Thursday’s meeting said they were concerned the lodging tax would increase in the future and questioned if further growth would be bad for Glenwood Springs.

“Not everyone can live in Glenwood, just like not everyone can live in Aspen,” said Monica Wolny via Zoom. “There’s many of us that work in Aspen, and we don’t live in Aspen. We live down valley, just like people work in Glenwood, and they live in Rifle. People commute on a daily basis, and it’s not only in our city.”

Other concerns included uncertainty how the money will be spent, council stipulated that ballot language should require that the tax revenues spent on workforce housing for Glenwood Springs.

Although there were a few people opposed with concerns of how the money will be spent or whether the tax will hurt the lodging or overall business of Glenwood Springs, the majority present Thursday was in full support.

“Whether that’s our hotels, or whether that’s our restaurants, people should be able to live in the community where they’re working,” said Mark Gould during open discussion.

Mayor Jonathan Godes said the lodging tax, if approved by voters, would only be a start to the revenue needed to develop affordable housing in Glenwood Springs.

“It’s the bare minimum,” he said. “My agenda is to get as much revenue from as many sources for as long as we can to get as much affordable housing as we can in this community. I’m going to look to expand this tax in the future if possible.”

In the conclusion proposed by the committee, Clark Anderson said that 60% of the 22 comparable communities elsewhere in Colorado had a lodging tax between 4% and 6%. Some examples include Summit County and Castle Rock.

Glenwood Springs does have additional taxes that add up with a state tax of 2.9%, a Garfield County tax of 1%, a Rural Transit Authority tax of 1%, a city of Glenwood tax of 3.7% and an accommodations tax on lodging of 2.5% that goes toward tourism promotion.

To clarify, the 2.5% accommodations tax has also been referred to as a lodging tax since it is only charged to lodgers as well. The majority of the tax, 85%, is used for the Tourism Promotion Budget. If the proposed new 2.5% lodging tax passes, there would be a collective 13.6% tax rate on lodging in Glenwood Springs.

If the tax passes on the ballot then it would bring an estimated additional \$1.35 million per year and \$6.75 million in five years, along with \$10 million to \$12 million in bonding capacity. The tax will have its own fund to support workforce housing and will not be added to the general fund, city officials clarified.