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Client Alert: Sarasota Vacation Rental Ordinance 25-5560

On July 21, 2025, the Sarasota City Commission unanimously adopted **Ordinance 25-5560**, amending Chapter 34.5 of the City Code governing vacation rentals (the Vacation Rental Ordinance). The new ordinance builds on the City of Sarasota's 2024 expansion of vacation rental regulations and is designed to clarify requirements, streamline compliance, and strengthen safety standards for both property owners and guests. The changes address issues ranging from owner-occupancy exemptions and tax remittance to inspection deadlines and pool safety. Below is a summary of the most significant updates:

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1. Owner-Occupancy Proof

The Vacation Rental Ordinance does not apply to *owner-occupied* rentals. In other words, the owner of a vacation rental is exempt from the Vacation Rental Ordinance if said owner resides on the property and is present during a guest stay. Now, under the Vacation Rental Ordinance, owners claiming the owner-occupancy exemption must provide proof that they occupy the property. Proof of eligibility may be established through receiving the Florida Homestead Exemption.

2. Removal of Local Business Tax Requirement

Until recently, owners who registered and renewed their properties under the Vacation Rental Ordinance were required to submit proof of payment for the Sarasota County Local Business Tax, along with other supporting documents. That requirement has now been eliminated. Owners no longer need to provide a tax receipt when applying for either an initial registration or a renewal.

This update makes the process more straightforward and less burdensome for property owners. Furthermore, the change reflects the fact that Sarasota County repealed its local business tax requirement in July of 2024.

3. Nonrefundable Fees

All fees due under the Vacation Rental Ordinance are **non-refundable**. This includes, but is not limited to, an application fee for the initial certificate of registration in the amount of $500.00, the first re-inspection fee in the amount of $100.00, and the late fee for an untimely submitted application in the amount of $200.00.

4. Evacuation Route Posting

Under the Vacation Rental Ordinance, owners must provide essential safety and evacuation information to their tenants. This includes, but is not limited to, providing the location of the nearest hospital, the dates and times of trash and recycling pick up, and emergency evacuation instructions. Now, in addition to the required safety and evacuation information, owners of vacation rentals must display a map showing an evacuation route to the nearest shelters in case of a hurricane.

5. Inspection Scheduling Deadline

Upon approval of an application, the vacation rental owner (or the owner's designated representative) must contact the City within **30 days** to schedule any required inspection. The inspection itself does not need to occur within the 30-day period, but the scheduling must be completed within that timeframe. Failure to schedule the inspection within the 30-day period will result in a late fee.

6. Pool Safety Compliance

Swimming pools, spas, or hot tubs must comply with the current standards of Florida's Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act (Chapter 515, Florida Statutes).

7. Tourist Tax Clarification

In the past, vacation rental owners were required to show proof that the property had an active account with the Sarasota County Tax Collector for the purpose of remitting tourist development taxes and any other applicable taxes. The Vacation Rental Ordinance has now been clarified: instead of proving an account exists, owners must provide evidence that they have made proper arrangements to pay tourist development taxes and any other taxes required by the Sarasota County Tax Collector.

If you have any questions about Ordinance 25-5560, please feel free to contact the author or another member of Shumaker's Real Estate, Construction & Development Service Line.

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