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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CITY COMMENCES HOT ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES**

On July 1, 2015 the City of South Padre Island local Ordinance requiring the registration of short term rental and reporting of HOT tax payments went into effect. At Wednesday's City Council meeting, Councilor Dennis Stahl announced that City staff would be preparing to begin compliance activities. Today the first Notices of Violations were mailed to property owners not in compliance with the law.

City employees locate properties being advertised on the internet that are not in compliance with the law. At the end of the first week, property owners are informed that they are out of compliance by email. The property owners who subsequently do not respond to the e-mail will receive a Notice of Violation the following day.

City Manager Bill DiLibero said, "Care is taken in each case to build a record that will hold up in Court." Each day, a screen shot is taken of the advertisement and placed in the file. At the end of the week follow-up emails are sent and documented. If the property owner or manager does not contact the City and take the steps needed to comply with the Ordinance, a Certified Notice of Violation is mailed to him or her. The letter provides documentation of the failure to comply with the law along with the potential penalty amount that can be ordered by the Municipal Court Judge. Standard penalties range from five to six thousand dollars. The Municipal Court Clerk will subsequently issue a summons for the property owner to appear in Court.

Many property owners have taken the necessary steps to comply with the Ordinance. To date, over 1,700 properties have been registered, more than half of the projected rental units on South Padre Island.

The City is making a long-term commitment to gain compliance with the Ordinance. Councilman Stahl states, "It is important to level the playing field for all people involved in the property rental business. With the required 14.5% hotel occupancy tax, persons not filing taxes have a competitive advantage to persons who pay their hotel taxes."

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