

ASSESSORS: SAN FRANCISCO ASSESSOR SAYS AIRBNB HOSTS MUST PAY BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX ON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

San Francisco County Assessor-Recorder Carmen Chu is notifying San Franciscans who use Airbnb, HomeAway and other services to rent out their homes that they will be liable for business personal property taxes on items in the homes.

Approximately 2,000 property owners are being told to submit itemized lists of all “furniture, appliances, supplies, equipment and fixtures” used in their rentals, and to specify the cost and acquisition date of each item, so the assessor can estimate depreciation.

“We have heard loud and clear from (hosts) that they want to be treated like everybody else and are willing to pay taxes like everybody else,” Assessor Chu told the San Francisco Chronicle. “There are operating their homes as a business and so we are treating them as we would any other business.”

“For rental hosts, the items to report could range from the furniture and linens in a single bedroom to the entire contents of their house, depending on whether they rent just a room or the whole house,” the Chronicle reported.

The assessor noted that “personal property taxes are not prorated,” so the tax will be the same whether the property owner rented his or her home for one day or several months of the year.

While some hosts told the Chronicle they don’t mind submitting the information to the assessor and paying personal property tax, Airbnb issued a statement opposing the assessor’s opinion that hosts’ personal property is taxable. “Middle-class families shouldn’t have to pay extra taxes on their sheets,” the company said. “This invasion of privacy mandates that San Franciscans inventory and pay taxes on every picture frame, towel and spoon in their home.” (Source: San Francisco Chronicle, March 17.