

# TDA Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

November 17, 2005  
Issue No. 1

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Polk County, Florida



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## Tax Office Takes Action

### ***Felony Charges Filed In Tourist Tax Case...***

The owner of Crossroads Motor Lodge is facing tax evasion allegations.

The Polk County Tax Collector's Office filed a complaint with the State Attorney's Office. Their investigation determined that the motel owes more than \$100,000 in back taxes and was ordered to stop operating in April, an order which they apparently ignored.

According to the State Attorney's Office, two arrest warrants for Amir H. Khimani, the motel's president and manager, were issued for two counts of willful intent to evade paying tax and one count of using tax money declared as state funds.

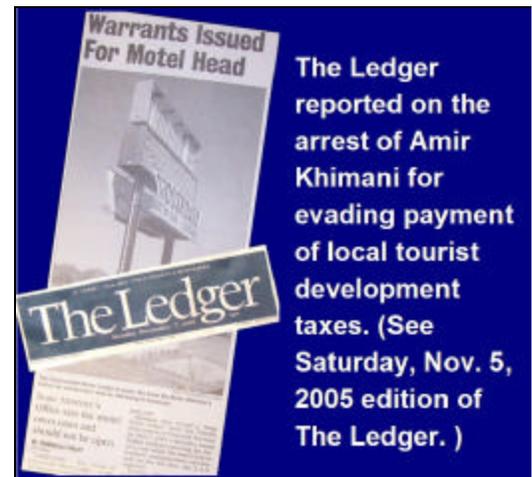
As far back as April 1998, Khimani took over a hotel near Interstate 4 operating as Lakeland Hospitality Inc., now Crossroads Motor Lodge. In 2003, The Florida Secretary of State's Office "administratively dissolved" Lakeland Hospitality Inc. for failing to file a required annual report. In the report that was filed, Khimani then switched the name of the motel to Crossroads Motor

Lodge and continued doing business illegally.

The State Attorney alleges that more than \$100,000 in unpaid tourist development taxes, referred to as a 'bed tax' which are imposed on the price of motel rooms, have accumulated since 1998.

Khimani had contacted the Polk County Tax Collector's Office to resolve the delinquent taxes, but failed to make payment, according to the report.

*(Continued on page 2)*



## A Message from Joe Tedder

### ***It's just the beginning...***

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide specialized information to accommodation providers here in Polk County. From time to time, we will issue such a bulletin, to inform and advise you of activities within our offices that may be of interest.

Our office takes the issue of delinquent tourist development taxes very seriously. I am proud of the work our office is doing to level the playing field among accommodation providers. Everyone is required to collect and remit taxes monthly. These dollars

provide the funding source for the Tourist Development efforts here in Polk, attracting quality businesses and increasing tourism and traffic into our county.

My staff is actively involved in bringing every account current. If you know of anyone who is either not registered with an Occupational License, or is failing to comply with state and local statutes, please contact our office. To report unlicensed activity, you may call our toll free number:

1-866-OUR-TURN  
1-866-687-8876

***“Our office takes the issue of delinquent tourist development taxes very seriously.”***

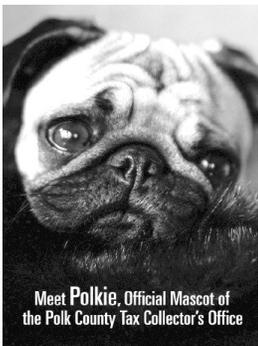
***Joe G. Tedder***

### Sea of Orange Stickers



You may have seen a rash of orange stickers on a number of rental properties recently. Our Field Deputies are working hard to post delinquent tangible personal property taxes notices and other tax due notices.

***Meet POLKIE,  
The Official Mascot of  
the Polk County Tax  
Collector's Office***



Meet Polkie, Official Mascot of the Polk County Tax Collector's Office

## Spring Seminar Highlights

The Tax Collector's Office, Economic Development Department, announces plans for its Spring Seminar, which will be held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006 at the Regal Palms Resort in Davenport, Florida. This year's theme, *The Four Corners of the Globe*, will feature guest speakers from area attractions and businesses, as well as representatives from the four counties regulatory agencies.

Last fall, industry leaders were asked what kind of program would best assist them in tax compliance.

Polk County Tax Collector Joe Tedder will host the all day event, which will feature a special luncheon speaker,

followed by break out sessions and trade exhibits. Agency representatives will cover such topics involving the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Polk County Code Enforcement, Polk County Tourist Development & Occupational License Tax Administration, Polk County Utilities and Public Works, etc.

“We have worked to build an educational program with the industry in mind,” states Tedder, “We hope to create an event that people won't want to miss.”

Stay tuned for more information by visiting:

[www.PolkTaxes.com](http://www.PolkTaxes.com)

## Seal of Compliance Update

A meeting was held on October 28, 2005, to review ideas and suggestions that came from the Tourist Development Academy's previously held Fall Forum 'Seal of Compliance' workshop.

Industry volunteers reviewed over 75 suggestions for guidelines and came up with a list of requirements, which are

designed to reward vacation rental firms who maintain 'good standing' with the Tax Collector's Office throughout the year. Benefits to the program may include recognition on the Tax Collector's Office website and the use of the Tax Collector's Seal of Compliance for qualifying members, just to name a few.

## Tax Office Takes Action *(Continued from page 1)*

The tax, interest and penalties had accumulated to in excess of \$100,000 from October 1998 to date.

Polk County Tax Collector Joe Tedder's Office referred a complaint to the State Attorney's Office regarding Khimani's failure to report and to pay the Polk County Tourist Development Tax as required by Florida law.

In the affidavit that was filed, Mr. Khimani is facing two felony counts of tax evasion and worker's compensation fraud.

Normally, Tourist Tax records are confidential. However, the public can be assured the Tax Collector's Office is working to pursue other accounts with outstanding tax amounts.

## 2006 Occupational License Media Campaign... And More

### ***Polkie the Tax Dog is Back!***

Polkie is a business owner's best friend, right? That is, unless he eats your Occupational License too! But, once again, that's not an excuse, according to the Tax Collector. “All businesses in Polk County must have an Occupational License. It's the law.”

The public will see this Occupational License billboard campaign in January.

Meanwhile, Polkie, the memorable pug dog who was first featured last year, is busy reminding property taxpayers that

their tax bills are 'in the mail'. “With over 389,000 tax bills sent out this year, we want to remind taxpayers of their responsibilities,” stated Joe Tedder. According to state statutes, property owners are ultimately responsible for seeing that taxes are paid on their parcel.

This year, taxpayers will see Polkie on PGTV and other cable news channels during the month of December. If you have not received your property tax bill, you should visit the website [www.PolkTaxes.com](http://www.PolkTaxes.com) or call (863) 534-4739.