

County, cities get settlement in hotel suit

As reported in LaGrange Daily News January 3, 2013

Troup County has received a lump-sum payment contemplated in the Class Partial Settlement Agreement. The settlement is a result of a class-action lawsuit involving travel websites Orbitz, Priceline, Travelocity and Expedia (HotWire and Travelscape).

Georgia cities Rome and Cartersville, and Hart County Georgia filed the suit in 2005, contending companies such as Hotels.com and Expedia should be paying hotel-motel tax on the retail rate they charge their customers rather than the wholesale rate they pay for the rooms.

U.S. District Court Judge Harold L. Murphy granted class action status in 2011 to all local governments in the state that levy the excise tax. In March 2012, he ruled the companies were liable for the difference, from May 16, 2011 onward. Other local governments were invited to join the suit.

This settlement payment covers the period from May 2011 to October 2012. Troup County's share is **\$365.04** for the 14 month period. The hotels located in the unincorporated County covered under the settlement include the Days Inn and Great Value Lodge on Whitesville Road and Motel West Point on West Point Road. The lawsuit was against the travel websites, not against the local lodging facilities. Facilities subject to the tax include hotels, motels, inns, camps, vacation homes.

The lawsuit will continue with quarterly remittances to the county and cities, requiring Troup County to notify the Rome, Georgia attorneys of any changes in available lodging and rate changes. Municipalities in Troup County also received settlements: Hogansville - **\$40.83**, LaGrange - **\$5,151.62**, West Point - **\$2.57**. Prorated amounts will be distributed to the Troup-LaGrange Chamber of Commerce for tourism development.