

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

August 15, 2023

Chair Christy Parker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Other committee members present were Sam Britt, Allyne Mitchell, Ellen Shumaker and Timothy Wood. Absent committee member was Scott Thrasher. Staff in attendance was as follows: Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance, and Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Analyst.

Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum

Six committee members present, one absent, quorum met.

Adoption of Agenda:

Britt moved to adopt the agenda. Shumaker seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of New Members:

Chair Parker introduced new committee members Scott Thrasher, who was absent, and Allyne Mitchell. Thrasher fills a vacant Lodging seat while Mitchell serves as an at-large member.

Election of Officers:

Britt nominated Christy Parker to remain committee Chair with Mitchell seconding the motion. The nomination carried unanimously.

Wood nominated himself to the Vice-Chair position, which Mitchell seconded. The nomination carried unanimously.

Adoption Minutes of May 16, 2023 Meeting and July 27, 2023 Workshop:

Britt moved to adopt the minutes. Mitchell seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

Financial Report: Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance

The total funds available for distributions are **\$1,166,022**. Fourth quarter revenue was \$484,835 from State ATAX and \$689,026 from Local collections. We have 7 applicants this quarter totaling \$678,486 in requests.

Campbell Chapel Community Development: Restoration of the Historic Campbell Chapel - \$200,000

Pastor John Black from Campbell Chapel AME Church presented a history of the church and discussed the restoration project. The requested funds will go towards Phase I – Selective Demo and Phase II – Stabilization of the five-phase project. Additional funding will be requested for later phases of the project. Currently, no tours are being conducted due to the condition of the building, but once complete, tourism activities will include tours, weddings and other events that augment local festivals.

Parker motioned to award \$130,873.65, which is half of the project's Phase I and Phase II budget. Wood seconded. The motion carried unanimously with Mitchell recusing.

Boys & Girls Club of the Lowcountry: 2023 Bike Bluffton - \$21,650

Mollie Sandman and Doug Pace were present to answer questions of the committee. In 2022, the Bike Bluffton event had 288 registered riders and netted a profit of \$63,000. Marketing will target Charlotte, Atlanta, Jacksonville and Greenville. The budget includes funds to target the marketing efforts properly, including what vehicle and where to run advertisements as well as t-shirts and bike jerseys. The event will take place rain or shine.

Britt motioned to grant \$21,650. Shumaker seconded the motion. Discussion was had that the jerseys purchased and then sold at the event should not be included in any reimbursement request. The motion carried unanimously.

Historic Arts & Seafood: 2023 Arts & Seafood Festival - \$80,000

Mary O'Neill presented the Arts & Seafood application and indicated that advertising for the event has already begun, including advertisements in Southern Living Magazine. This is the 19th year of the event; save the dates were sent out in January and again in May. Both The Rotary and Bluffton Historic Foundation have sponsored the event at \$5,000 each.

Wood motioned to grant \$80,000. Britt seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Coastal Conservation Association: Celebrating Conservation Weekend in Bluffton - \$10,000

Mary O'Neill also represented the Coastal Conservation Association's application. The annual banquet and auction fund initiatives of conservation in the community. Funds will be used to market the event as a weekend getaway in Bluffton to boost tourism. The Bluffton Inn will offer packages to guests that include two (2) tickets to the banquet. So far, a banner ad has been sent out to 32,000 people with an email blast to 40,000. The event sells out every year and is expanding this year with Martin Family Park set as the venue. In previous years, mostly locals have attended, but the event was never marketed in the past. This year, the event will be marketed and has been moved to attract more tourists.

Wood motioned to grant \$10,000. Shumaker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with Parker and Britt recusing.

Bluffton Gullah Cultural Heritage Center: Exterior/Deconstruction/Stabilization of Deer Tongue Building - \$350,000

The Bluffton Gullah Cultural Heritage Center expects an approximate 12-month timeline for construction, which includes 4-8 weeks for deconstruction, five months for stabilization, 2-3 months for exterior construction and two months for interior construction; a Certificate of Appropriateness has been received from the Town's Historic Preservation Committee. Construction will include repairing and replacing the roof, adding an ADA accessible front entrance, new foundations and repair and replacement of existing support posts. Artifacts and pieces of the existing building will also be categorized and put back in place at the end of construction. Construction of restrooms, which received funding from a prior ATAX award, will be done after the building is completed. A capital campaign will be released in the fall and additional grants will be applied for to supplement the project's budget. This will be the only request made to ATAC for the building's construction. An additional grant may be applied for to obtain marketing funds to draw tourism to the completed facility.

Britt motioned to grant \$350,000. Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Congregation Beth Yam: Town of Bluffton Hanukkah Celebration - \$6,000

Rachel Pepin, Director of Programming, was present to discuss the application and answer questions of the committee. The 2023 Town-supported event will be held at Martin Family Park and is intended to become a permanent fixture on the holiday schedule. In 2022, a Hanukkah event was held on Hilton Head Island that drew around 300 people with approximately 75% of those being tourists. Local business pledges have been secured for the event. To date, Pepin has not spoken with BPD about providing security for the event. Chair Parker suggested that this cost could be added to their budget as it is an allowable expense under rules of ATAX. Discussion was had about certain expenses being eligible for reimbursement under State law. The rental of tables and chairs as well as marketing are also allowable expenses in the presented budget.

Britt motioned to award funds to the extent that expenses are eligible under the stipulations of accommodations tax up to \$6,000. Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

BlacQuity SC: Roots & River Festival – \$10,836

Gwen Chambers, Executive Director, provided an update to the September event. Shoreline Construction has been secured as a sponsor. Regional markets of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida are being targeted with advertisements in black focused vehicles, specifically daily and lifestyle publications. Local publications Bluffton & HHI Monthly, Bluffton & HHI Sun as well as the CB2 & HH2 magazines will be used. Display ads will run on the Savannah Magazine web site, calendar and newsletter. South Magazine is writing a web feature article that will reach 239,000. Pandora, Spotify and Hulu radio ads with a 250,000 to 1.5 million reach will be purchased. To date, ticket sales are just under 100 with many purchasing closer to the event date. Oyster Factory Park is the location with an expected attendance of 350-400 people.

Mitchell motioned to grant \$10,836. Wood seconded the motion. During discussion, the committee reiterated the requirement of all merchandise having the Heart of the Lowcountry logo included. The motion carried unanimously.

Britt motioned to adjourn the meeting. Parker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.