

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 26, 2024

Rescheduled from February 20, 2024

1. Call to Order & Welcoming Remarks:

Chair Christy Parker called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Other committee members present were Sam Britt, Nate Pringle, and Ellen Shumaker. Absent committee members were Allyne Mitchell and Scott Thrasher. Staff in attendance was as follows: Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance and Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

2. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum:

Four committee members present, two absent, quorum met.

3. Adoption of Agenda:

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

4. Adoption Minutes of November 15, 2023 Meeting:

Pringle moved to adopt the minutes from both meetings. Britt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Financial Report: *Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance*

The total funds available for distributions are **\$297,681**. Second quarter revenue was \$247,149 from State ATAX collections, which is up approximately 8.2% over the same quarter last year. We have four (4) applicants this quarter totaling \$115,341 in requests. Lapsed grants total \$5,338.

6. Old Business:

a. Discussion Regarding Updates to Application Policies & Procedures:

7. New Business:

a. Review of Proposed FY2025 Local Accommodations Tax Allocations

This is the second year Local ATAX has been included in the Town's fiscal year budget. \$204,203 proposed to support the Town's new Welcome Center and Police costs for ATAX supported events and festivals. Six CIP projects have Local ATAX funds proposed in the FY2025 budget. With the new State law regarding affordable housing, \$149,641, or 15% of revenue, is proposed to be budgeted from State ATAX to CIP for this project. From Local ATAX, \$235,209 or 15%, is proposed to support the Neighborhood Assistance Program and RHTF.

b. Grant Applicants' Presentations and Q&A:

1. HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce: 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner - \$45,000

Ariana Pernice presented on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. A total of 30,000 books were produced and distributed at SC Welcome Centers, the Savannah and HHI airports, AAA Offices, Chamber offices, trade shows and is available digitally. On demand requests are also fulfilled. The requested funds support the production of the book itself. Ray Deal, Controller for the Chamber of Commerce, was present to answer questions about financials. Full cost of book plus fulfillment was \$138,000. This application requests a portion of the cost back after the FY24 Town budget did not include the traditional 8% distribution to the Chamber.

Britt motioned to award \$45,000. Shumaker seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc.: Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton - \$26,841

Denise Mason-Bullitt presented on behalf of the Gullah Traveling Theater (GTTI). Anita Singleton-Prather, who is the performer and founder of Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc., was also in attendance. The Storybook Shoppe asked the group to come and do a performance on January 31, the day before Black History Month began, which was open to the public. It wasn't a full performance but 15 cast members attended. Partnered with the bookstore and The Farmer's Market because the topic was about farming. There will be three shows in July at the May River Theatre. Might partner with Christmas Eve Under the Stars to do a performance at the holidays.

Britt motioned to award eligible expenses in the application of \$9,750. Shumaker seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society: 2024 Bluffton as a Destination - \$28,500

Mary O'Neill was present to answer questions regarding this annual request. No access to new web site so budget only included six months of costs. More members have joined so revenue has increased. Therefore, the request for funding has increased to support more advertising.

Shumaker motioned to grant \$28,500. Britt seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2024 MayFest - \$15,000

Mary O'Neill also presented on behalf of The Rotary Club's application. The goal again this year is to bring more tourists in. The 2023 event showed approximately 24% tourism which collected by asking shuttle riders for zip codes.

Pringle motioned to grant \$15,000. Shumaker seconded the motion. Britt and Parker opposed. Britt motioned that an additional \$10,000 be granted for facilities and transportation costs included in the application budget for a total award of \$25,000. Shumaker seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

8. **Comments, Announcements and Other Business:**

None

9. **Adjournment:**

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

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.