Memo

Town of Bluffton
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To: **Mayor and Council**

From: Shirley A. Freeman, Director of Finance/Administration

Date: December 8, 2015

Subject: Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Recommendations

Recommendation: In accordance with the grant process, the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee met on November 16, 2015, to review the quarterly grant applications and have made the following grant award recommendations for Council's consideration:

Requesting Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended
Farmers Market of Bluffton, Inc	14,142	14,142
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society	50,000	50,000
Old Town Bluffton Merchants	12,000	12,000
The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce-Taste of Bluffton	20,000	10,000
Total	**$ 96,142**	**$ 86,142**

Background: Total State and Local Accommodations Tax funds currently available for distribution are $130,916 as outlined below.

State ATAX			**Local ATAX**	
Remaining from Previous Quarters	$ 19,232		Remaining from Previous Quarters	$ 46,778
1st Quarter Revenue	52,274		1st Quarter Revenue	83,618
General Fund	(25,000)		8% to Visitor's Convention Bureau	(6,689)
5% to General Fund	(1,364)		Disaster Recovery Designation	(836)
30% to Visitor's Convention Bureau	(8,182)		38% to Town's CIP	(28,915)
Total State ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	**$ 36,960**		**Total Local ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution**	**$ 93,956**

Note: Revenue collections for quarter ending September 2015 are down $2,109 or 1.5% when compared to the same quarter last year.

Documents attached for your review:

- ATAC meeting minutes from November 16, 2015
- Previously funded grant listing

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 16, 2015

Chairman Bret Anthony called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Other committee members present were Sam Britt, Charlene Gardner, Courtney Hampson, Maria Kramer, Erin Reichert, and Dan Wood. Staff in attendance was as follows: Director of Finance Shirley Freeman, Assistant Director of Finance Trisha Greathouse, and Town Clerk Sandra Lunceford.

The total funds available for distribution are $130,916.

Introduction of New Committee Member:
Chairman Anthony introduced new Committee members Maria Kramer and Courtney Hampson.

Adoption of 2016 ATAX Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule:
Reichert moved to adopt the 2016 Meeting Schedule as presented. Britt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee Approval and Recommendation to Town Council on Applicant's Requests as follows:

1. **Farmers Market of Bluffton, Inc. – Annual Request Balance – $14,142.45:**
   Market Manager Kim Viljac, stated their original request of $19,851 has been reduced to $14,142.45. The Market is requesting $6,142.45 for the third quarter and $8,000 for the fourth quarter, totally $14,142.45. They received $7,149 on the first quarter and $7,000 on the second quarter. The requested funds will be used for advertising and traffic control. The Market relies on rack cards and posters that are placed in hotels, welcome centers, stores and businesses throughout the area and on advertising in visitor publications, magazines, newspapers, radio, WHHI, web site, etc. to inform the public. Besides the requested funding from the Accommodations Tax funds, the Market continues to explore additional support through grant writing, sponsorships, merchandise sales, vendor fees and tent rental fees.

   Wood moved to grant the Market $14,142.45 Gardener seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. **Bluffton Historical Preservation Society (Heyward House Historic Center) – Annual Request Balance – $50,000:**
   Katie Epps, Director of the Heyward House Center gave an overview. The Heyward House serves as the Welcome Center for the Town of Bluffton. Through their marketing and social media efforts plus a partnership with other local organizations, the Heyward House has become known as the "the place to start" when exploring the Town. The requested funds are used for operations of the Heyward House including capital improvements. The Heyward House has seen significant growth since the beginning of this fiscal year due to social media, visibility, activity, and connectedness. The gift shop has been revamped as part of their efforts to increase self-sustainability. Daily statistics are collected from a guest sign-in book. The Heyward House are seeking grants to be more self-sufficient and also predicting an increase in membership.
   Reichert moved to grant Heyward House the balance of the annual request of $50,000. Kramer seconded. The vote was six in favor. Wood recused himself due to being a Board Member of the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society.

3. **Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce – "Taste of Bluffton" – $20,000:**
   Erin Black, Executive Administrator and Joe Nahman, Board Member, of the Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce gave an overview. The Taste of Bluffton is a festival to celebrate all of the local restaurants and eateries we have in Bluffton and the Lowcountry area. It is a way to showcase their culinary delights. The fourth annual event will be held on April 9, 2016. Their sources of funds are sponsors, vendors and ATAX assistance. The requested funds are used for out of marketing advertising such as Southern Living Magazine and SC Living Magazine as well as their website. They survey the folks attending the event by asking for zip codes or where they came from. They also did a license plate survey. On last year's event, over 30% of polled visitors were from out of state and/or outside a 50 mile radius. They are anticipating 10,000 visitors.

   It was questioned on why on the 2015 "Taste of Bluffton" received $7,126 for an estimated 9,000 visitors,4 hour event and made a small profit and are currently requesting $20,000 for the 2016 "Taste of Bluffton" for 10,000 visitors.

   Gardner moved to grant the Chamber $10,000 for the "Taste of Bluffton". Anthony seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. **Old Town Bluffton Merchants – Quarterly Annual ($48,000) Request – $12,000:**
   Mary O'Neal, Past President, OTBM, gave an overview. The request of $12,000 is for this quarter submission to continue their marketing and advertising campaign. The request is for their general advertising and marketing campaign promoting Old Town Bluffton as a great destination for visitors including the promotion of Old Town Bluffton events and for necessary police support. Tracking of tourists stats are done by the Chamber survey, zip codes collection, and Merchant and Heyward House guest log books.
   Other sources of funding are membership dues and fundraisers.

   Reichert moved to grant to grant the Merchants their quarterly request of $12,000. Gardner seconded. The vote was six in favor. Wood recused himself due to Mary O'Neil being his election chair.

Total amount of grants funded was $86,142.45.

Meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Sandra Lunceford
Town Clerk

FY 2016 ATAX Grant Report
11/19/2015

FY 2016 Grant Requests	Amount Requested	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Source of Funding	Paid FY 2016	Paid FY 2017	Remaining
Applications Received March 31, 2015							
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society - Annual Amount $100,000	100,000	25,000	25,000	State ATAX	$ 25,000		$ -
Total Grants for 1st Quarter Payments	**$ 100,000**	**$ 25,000**	**$ 25,000**		**$ 25,000**	**$ -**	**$ -**
Applications Received June 30, 2015							
Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce	$ 20,000	$ 3,250	$ 7,500	State ATAX			$ 7,500
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society - Annual Amount $100,000 (2nd Req)	$ 75,000	$ 25,000	$ 25,000	State ATAX	$ 8,296		$ 16,704
Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	Local ATAX			$ 20,000
LowCountry Golf Course Owners Assoc	$ 7,500	$ 7,500	$ -	Local ATAX			$ -
The May River Theatre Company	$ 15,000	$ 7,500	$ 7,500	Local ATAX			$ 7,500
Old Town Merchants Society - Annual Request $48,000	$ 12,000	$ 12,000	$ 12,000	Local ATAX	$ 11,519		$ 481
Society of Bluffton Artists - Visual Arts as a Destination	$ 10,700	$ 6,000	$ 10,000	Local ATAX			$ 10,000
Total Grants for 1st Quarter Payments	**$ 160,200**	**$ 81,250**	**$ 82,000**		**$ 19,815**	**$ -**	**$ 62,185**
Applications Received September 30, 2015							
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society - Annual Amount $100,000 (3rd Req)	$ 50,000	$ 50,000		State ATAX			$ -
Old Town Merchants Society - Annual Request $48,000 (2nd Req)	$ 12,000	$ 12,000		Local ATAX			$ -
Farmer's Market of Bluffton - Annual Request $34,000 (3rd Req)	$ 14,142	$ 14,142		Local ATAX			$ -
The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - The Taste of Bluffton	$ 20,000	$ 10,000		Local ATAX			$ -
Total Grants for 2nd Quarter Payments	**$ 96,142**	**$ 86,142**	**$ -**		**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**
Total FY2016 Grants	**$ 356,342**	**$ 192,392**	**$ 107,000**		**$ 44,815**	**$ -**	**$ 62,185**

APPLICATIONS ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR FY2016:							
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society - $100,000 Annual Request (2nd sub)	$ 100,000	$ 100,000	$ 50,000	State ATAX	$ 33,296	$ -	$ 16,704
Old Town Merchants Society - Annual Request $48,000	$ 24,000	$ 24,000	$ 12,000	Local ATAX	$ 11,519	$ -	$ 481
The May River Theatre Company	$ 15,000	$ 7,500	$ 7,500	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ 7,500
Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ 20,000
Farmers Market of Bluffton - Annual Request $34,000 (FY15 $14,149)	$ 14,142	$ 14,142	$ -	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ -
Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce	$ 20,000	$ 3,250	$ 7,500	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ 7,500
Society of Bluffton Artists - Annual Request $15,000 (FY15) (2nd submission)	$ 10,700	$ 6,000	$ 10,000	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ 10,000
LowCountry Golf Course Owners Assoc	$ 7,500	$ 7,500	$ -	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ -
Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - Taste of Bluffton	$ 20,000	$ 10,000	$ -	Local ATAX	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total FY2016 Gramts	**$ 231,342**	**$ 192,392**	**$ 107,000**		**$ 44,815**	**$ -**	**$ 62,185**