

Memo



To: Mayor and Council
From: Shirley A. Freeman, Director of Finance/Administration
Date: May 6, 2015
Subject: Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Recommendations

Town of Bluffton
 20 Bridge Street
 PO Box 386
 Bluffton, SC 29910
 843.706.4500
 843.757.6720 (fax)

Recommendation: In accordance with the grant process, the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee met on February 3, 2015, to review the quarterly grant applications and have made the following recommendations for Council's consideration of grant awards:

Requesting Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended
USGA Jr Amateur Championship	\$ 20,000	\$ 13,000
Society of Bluffton Artists	\$ 15,000	\$ 6,000
Farmer's Market of Bluffton	\$ 26,851	\$ 6,000
Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - Boiled Peanut Festival	\$ 12,500	\$ 6,000
Lowcountry Tourism Commission & Lowcountry Visitors Ctr & Museum	\$ 13,900	\$ 6,000
Total for the Quarter	\$ 88,251	\$ 37,000
BHPS - Heyward House Historic Center - FY2016	\$ 100,000	\$ 25,000

Background: When comparing the State and Local Accommodations Taxes collections for the quarter ending March 2015 to the same quarter last year, the revenues are down \$5,965 or 8.6%.

The total funds currently for distribution are \$37,486 as outlined below. Deductions were taken for the December 31, 2014 approved grants.

State ATAX		Local ATAX	
Remaining from Previous Quarters	\$ 8,093	Remaining from Previous Quarters	\$ (8,053)
1st Quarter Revenue	18,098	1st Quarter Revenue	45,518
General Fund		8% to Visitor's Convention Bureau	(3,641)
5% to General Fund	(905)	Disaster Recovery Designation	(455)
30% to HHI-Bluffton Chamber	(5,430)	38% to Town's CIP	(15,740)
Pending State Correction	-		

Total State ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	\$ 19,857
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Total Local ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	\$ 17,629
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The committee meeting minutes are attached for your review. A listing of previously funded grants is attached for your convenience as well.

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MAY 5, 2015

Chairman Anthony called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Other committee members present were Gardner, Hughes, Reichert, and Wood. Staff in attendance was as follows: Director of Finance Freeman, Assistant Director of Finance Greathouse, Budget Administrator Vickie Isaacs, and Town Clerk Lunceford.

The total funds available for distribution are \$37,486.

Approval of Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Bluffton's Marketing Plan and FY 2015-16 Budget as the Town's Designated Marketing Organization (DMO): Lindsay Fruchtl, Senior Marketing Manager, Leta Salazar, Bluffton Marketing Manager, and Kelly Smith, Social Media & PR Manager gave an overview of their Marketing Campaign and Strategy Plan for the Town of Bluffton. The Chamber is estimating receiving \$95,000 from State and Local ATAX monies as the Town of Bluffton's Designated Marketing Organization (DMO).

Hughes moved to approve the Bluffton's Marketing Plan and FY 2016 Budget of \$95,000. Wood seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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

1. **Farmers Market of Bluffton, Inc. – \$26,851 – Balance of Annual Request of \$34,000:**

Market Manager Kim Viljac, stated their request of \$26,851 is the balance of their annual request of \$34,000. They received \$7,149 on their first quarter due to the limited ATAX funds. The requested funds will be used for advertising (\$18,000), traffic control (\$12,800), public restrooms (\$1,800) and trash removal (\$1,225). She stated that they will no longer need funding for the extra police officer. 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.

2. **Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce – \$12,500:**

Erin Black and Allen Butts gave an overview of the Fourth Annual Bluffton Boiled Peanut Festival to be held from September 16th through September 19th at Bluffton Village. The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce is managing and planning the event and is assuming all liability. All costs and expenses for the event are budgeted to be covered by sponsorship monies as well as vendor booth fees. The Boiled Peanut Festival is a community event for local vendors and draws approximately 3,500 in attendance. All of the received ATAX funds will go specifically to the marketing campaign for the event to bring in visitors from outside the Greater Bluffton Area.

3. **Bluffton Historical Preservation Society/Heyward House Historic Center – Annual Request of \$100,000:**

Director of the Heyward House Katie Epps and Director of the Heyward House Historic Center Jeff Fulgham 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. Fulgham stated they are seeking grants to be more self-sufficient and also predicting an increase in membership. Director of Finance stated they will not receive any of the 2015-2016 funding requests until this August because of the FY 2016 Budget year.

4. **Lowcountry Tourism Commission & Lowcountry Visitors Center & Museum – \$13,900:**

Executive Director Peach Morrison gave an overview. The Lowcountry Tourism Commission promotes cultural events in Bluffton through their *Lowcountry Visitors Guidebook*, on their website, via social media outlets and at our Lowcountry Visitors Center & Museum. All ATAX funds will be used in conjunction with other regional and states funding in promotional efforts to ensure increased awareness of the Town of Bluffton. For every \$1 that the Town of Bluffton provides, they are matching it with \$39.63 from other sources. 100% of the Bluffton funds requested are used for tourism promotion.

5. Society of Bluffton Artists – \$15,000:

Treasurer Larry Hughes stated the Society was sponsoring "Promoting the Arts as a Destination". Their request will go toward the execution of a professionally produced marketing/advertising plan designed to enhance our position as a leading destination visual arts gallery and learning center. Tourism statics are captured by guest registers sales receipts and surveys & analytics used. The initial goal is to increase tourist-related art class and gallery attendance through generation of targeted advertising and promotion of the arts. Sources of funding are ATAX Funds, SOBA members and sponsors.

6. 2015 USGA Junior Amateur Championship – \$20,000:

Fundraising Chairman Paul Zaffaroni gave an overview. The United States Golf Association (USGA) has selected Colleton River Plantation Club to host the 2015 Junior Amateur Championship to be held from July 18th through July 25nd. The Championship will be a major event for Bluffton, the Lowcountry and the State of South Carolina, 1,890 hotel days reserved between Bluffton's Comfort Suites and greater Bluffton's Hilton Garden Inn and Hilton Express. Their efforts to promote local attendance will include flyers and banners and also working with the Chamber of Commerce to bring more visitors from the island. They will host a media day on May 12th and invitations will be extended to journalists beyond the immediate area across South Carolina and Georgia. Fox Sports will televise the Championship live on national TV. Other sources of funding are the local businesses and government, United States Golf Association, and Colleton River Club Members.

Hughes moved to grant the following funds:

- **Farmers Market – \$6,000**
- **Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce – \$6,000**
- **Lowcountry Tourism Commission – \$6,000**
- **Society of Bluffton Artists – \$6,000**
- **USGA Junior Amateur Championship – \$13,000**

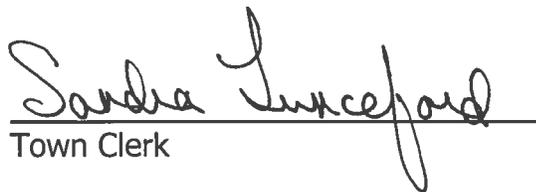
Total amount of funding granted is \$37,000.

Anthony seconded. The vote was four in favor. Gardner opposed.

Anthony moved not to fund the Heyward House Historic Center because of needing more information and will consider funding on next quarter. Hughes seconded. Motion dies.

Reichert moved to fund the Heyward House Historic Center \$25,000 on the next quarter. Hughes seconded. The motion carried unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.


Town Clerk

FY 2015 ATAX Grant Report
5/11/2015

FY 2015 Grant Requests	Amount Requested	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Source of Funding	Paid FY2014	Paid FY 2015	Remaining
Applications Received March 31, 2014							
Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce	\$ 32,500	\$ -	\$ 2,800	Local ATAX	\$ 2,800		\$ -
HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce (Southern Living Campaign)	\$ 36,000	\$ 36,000	\$ 36,000	Local ATAX		\$ 36,000	\$ -
Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	Local ATAX	\$ 9,000		\$ -
Society of Bluffton Artists	\$ 15,000	\$ 9,800	\$ 9,800	Local ATAX		\$ 9,428	\$ 372
Total Grants for 4th Quarter FY2014 Payments	\$ 92,500	\$ 54,800	\$ 57,600		\$ 11,800	\$ 45,428	\$ 372
Applications Received June 30, 2014							
Celebrate Bluffton, Inc - extension granted	\$ 2,660	\$ 2,660	\$ 2,660	Local ATAX	\$ 1,885		\$ 776
Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival, Inc	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,000	Local ATAX		\$ 23,000	\$ -
Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - Boiled Peanut Festival	\$ 15,730	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	Local ATAX	\$ 6,000		\$ -
NIBCCA	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ -				
Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society	\$ 48,000	\$ 10,883	\$ 10,883	Local ATAX	\$ 3,589	\$ 7,294	\$ -
Total Grants for 1st Quarter Payments	\$ 114,390	\$ 42,543	\$ 42,543		\$ 11,474	\$ 30,294	\$ 776
Applications Received September 30, 2014							
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	State ATAX		\$ 73,456	\$ 26,544
Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society	\$ 37,117	\$ 37,117	\$ 37,117	Local ATAX		\$ 30,048	\$ 7,069
Total Grants for 2nd Quarter Payments	\$ 137,117	\$ 137,117	\$ 137,117		\$ -	\$ 103,504	\$ 33,613
Applications Received December 31, 2014							
Farmer's Market of Bluffton - Annual Request	\$ 46,800	\$ 7,149	\$ 7,149	Local ATAX		\$ 6,418	\$ 731
The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - The Taste of Bluffton	\$ 28,787	\$ 7,149	\$ 7,149	Local ATAX		\$ 5,328	\$ 1,821
Total Grants for 3rd Quarter Payments	\$ 75,587	\$ 14,298	\$ 14,298		\$ -	\$ 11,746	\$ 2,552
Total FY2015 Grants	\$ 327,094	\$ 193,958	\$ 193,958		\$ 11,474	\$ 145,545	\$ 36,940

Memo



To: Town Council
From: Shirley A. Freeman, Director of Finance/Administration
Date: May 10, 2015
Subject: Accommodations Tax Funding for DMO

Town of Bluffton
20 Bridge Street
PO Box 386
Bluffton, SC 29910
843.706.4500
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Recommendation: The Accommodations Tax Committee voted to approve and recommend the FY2016 Budget Proposed by the Visitor and Convention Bureau of the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. The recommended Budget is attached and was a part of their marketing plan booklet. A representative will be here to make a presentation or answer questions. The Chamber estimates that it will receive approximately \$95,000 in Atax funds from the Town of Bluffton.

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce
Bluffton and Beaufort County Schedule of Functional Revenues and Expenditures
FY 2015-2016 Budget

Revenues	VCB TOTALS (Bluffton & BC)	Paid by Bluffton DMO	Paid by Beaufort Co DMO (Bluffton & Southern BC)	Paid by Beaufort Co DMO (Daufuskie Isl. Programs)	Total Bluffton Budget (DMO and Beaufort Co.)
Travel of Bluffton DMO	95,000	95,000			95,000
Southern Beaufort County DMO	260,000		220,000	40,000	220,000
Total Revenues	355,000	95,000	220,000	40,000	315,000
Expenses					
Research & Planning	10,000	3,000	7,000		10,000
Sub-total	10,000	3,000	7,000	0	10,000
Social Media					
Blog/Writers	5,500	1,650	3,850		5,500
Sub-total	5,500	1,650	3,850	0	5,500
Digital Marketing					
SEM Marketing	38,751	13,051	25,700		38,751
Website SEO	7,400	2,220	5,180		7,400
SCPRT Digital Coops	1,200	360	840		1,200
Website Refresh	6,900	0	0	6,900	0
Sub-total	54,251	15,631	31,720	6,900	47,351
Broadcast & Print					
SCPRT TV Co-ops	5,925	1,778	4,148		5,925
Garden and Gun	20,000	6,000	14,000		20,000
Ad Production	5,000	1,500	3,500		5,000
Southern Living	35,000	10,500	24,500		35,000
Sub-total	65,925	19,778	46,148	0	65,925
Photo Shoot					
Destination Photo Shoot	16,925	3,000	7,000	6,925	10,000
Sub-total	16,925	3,000	7,000	6,925	10,000
Packaging Programs					
Experiences Packaging program	22,750	3,412	7,963	11,375	11,375
Sub-total	22,750	3,412	7,963	11,375	11,375
Insiders/Collateral/Fulfillment					
Bluffton Quarterly newsletter	10,000	3,000	7,000		10,000
Bluffton Collateral (Vacation Planner)	16,000	4,800	11,200		16,000
Bluffton Fulfillment (shipping and mail)	12,000	3,600	8,400		12,000
Bluffton Insider Program	1,100	330	770		1,100
Sub-total	39,100	11,730	27,370	0	39,100
Group Sales & Marketing					
Group Tour	4,800	1,440	3,360		4,800
Military	700	210	490		700
Sub-total	5,500	1,650	3,850	0	5,500
TOTAL MARKETING EXPENSES	219,951	59,850	134,901	25,200	194,751
Destination Marketing Operations & Management	135,050	35,150	85,100	14,800	120,250
TOTAL EXPENSES	355,000	95,000	220,000	40,000	315,000
TOTAL REVENUE MINUS EXPENSES	0	0	0	0	0