

Memo



To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Shirley A. Freeman, Director of Finance/Administration
Date: September 13, 2016
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 August 16, 2016 to review the quarterly grant applications and have made the following grant award recommendations for Town Council's consideration:

Requesting Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended
Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce	25,000	3,980
Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society - Annual Request	48,000	48,000
Historic Bluffton Arts and Seafood Festival	25,000	25,000
Total	\$ 98,000	\$ 76,980

Background: Total State and Local Accommodations Tax funds currently available for distribution are \$168,682 as outlined below.

State ATAX		Local ATAX	
Remaining from Previous Quarter	\$ (59,723)	Remaining from Previous Quarter	\$ 85,586
2nd Quarter Revenue	100,226	2nd Quarter Revenue	137,668
General Fund	-	8% to DMO	(11,013)
5% to General Fund	(5,011)	Disaster Recovery Designation	(1,377)
30% to DMO	(30,068)	38% to Town's CIP	(47,605)
Total State ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	\$ 5,424	Total Local ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	\$ 163,258

When comparing the State and Local Accommodations and Local Accommodations Taxes collections for the quarter ending June 2016 to the same quarter of the previous year, the revenues are up \$32,300 or 16%

Attached for your review:

- ATAC meeting minutes from August 16, 2016
- Previously funded grant listing

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 16, 2016

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

Chairman Anthony introduced new Committee Member Jean Wilson.

Financial Report – Shirley Freeman, Director of Finance/Administration:

Freeman stated when comparing the State and Local Accommodations Taxes collected for the quarter ending June 30, 2016 to the same quarter of last year, the revenues are up \$32,300 or 16%. The total funds available for distribution are \$168,682 that includes total State ATX Funds remaining for distribution of \$5,424 and total Local ATAX Funds remaining for distribution of \$163,258.

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

Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce – Requested \$25,000:

Larry Holman, President/CEO and Liz Mitchell, Marketing Consultant, gave an overview. This is a marketing project of \$80,000 that includes print magazine and internet advertising, chamber website, social media and the Beaufort County Guide to Gullah Geechee Heritage. Bluffton is featured in separate pages on the chamber's website with a selection of original photos of its historic places.

The printed guides will be produced in quantities of a minimum of 50,000 and distributed in SC welcome centers, local and neighboring visitor centers and airports. It will fulfill inquiries generated by other advertising and during events including the CIAA Tournament and NCAA Tournament. The guide will also be published in digital format and available for download from the chamber's website. The guide and blog posts reviewing features included in the guide will be marketed via social media. The starting date for project will begin upon funding approval with the completion date no later than March 30, 2017. Other sources of funding are Beaufort County's ATAX, ad sales, and sponsoring organizations.

Committee had concerns on the request of \$25,000 for the number of Bluffton's pages. **Gardner moved to grant \$10,000. Kramer seconded. Vote was five opposed. Kramer abstained.**

Britt moved to grant \$3,980 for the Town of Bluffton portion of the four page advertisement as presented. Wilson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival, Inc. – Requested \$25,000:

Mary O'Neill, President, stated that the whole project of \$108,700.90 is designed to increase tourism to Bluffton through the week-long festival which is promoted to out of towners, through various venues including printed advertisement, radio, TV spots, chamber vacation planner, web site, chamber newsletter and other specific out of town targeted market pieces such as direct mailing, SC Living, Southern Living, Garden & Gun, and Essential Guide. This festival was recognized as a great destination venue by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the top 20 events in the southeast as well as a must see for 2015 by National Geographic Traveler.

They conduct surveys every year at the Festival to measure the effectiveness of the promotions with using the USCB's Hospitality Management Department and have also joined with the Chamber to conduct iPad surveys again using USCB students.

Other sources of funding are vendor fees, sponsors, merchandise sales, event admissions, and Beaufort County ATAX funding.

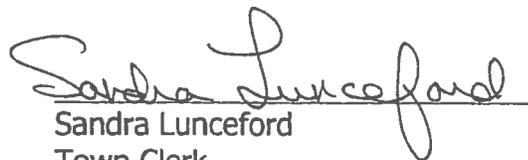
Anthony moved to grant the requested \$25,000. Britt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Town Bluffton Merchants – Annual Request of \$48,000:

Mary O'Neil, Past President, stated the annual 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. The whole project is designed to increase tourism to Bluffton through the generation of regional publicity including but not limited to print advertising, radio, WHHI-TV spots, digital, Chamber vacation planner, HHI vacation directory hotel book, maps, and for special events. Tracking of tourists stats are done by the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Virtual Guest Book Visitor Survey and Merchants and Heyward House guest log books. Other sources of funding are membership dues and fundraisers.

Britt moved to grant the annual request of \$48,000. Gardner seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.


Sandra Lunceford
Town Clerk

FY 2016 ATAX Grant Report
8/18/2016

FY 2016 Grant Requests	Amount Requested	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Source of Funding	Paid FY 2016	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	\$ 25,000	\$ -
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	\$ 12,000	\$ -
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		\$ 82,000	\$ -
Applications Received September 30, 2015						
Bluffton Historical Preservation Society - Annual Amount \$100,000 (3rd Req)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	State ATAX	\$ 50,000	\$ 0
Old Town Merchants Society - Annual Request \$48,000 (2nd Req)	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	Local ATAX	\$ 12,000	\$ -
Farmer's Market of Bluffton - Annual Request \$34,000 (3rd Req)	\$ 14,142	\$ 14,142	\$ 14,142	Local ATAX	\$ 11,786	\$ 2,356
The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce - The Taste of Bluffton	\$ 20,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	Local ATAX	\$ 7,975	\$ 2,025
Total Grants for 2nd Quarter Payments	\$ 96,142	\$ 86,142	\$ 86,142		\$ 81,761	\$ 4,381
Applications Received December 31, 2015						
Old Town Merchants Society - Annual Request \$48,000 (3rd Req)	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 24,000	Local ATAX	\$ 24,000	\$ -
Farmer's Market of Bluffton - Annual Request \$53,585	\$ 53,585	\$ 24,068	\$ 29,436	Local ATAX	\$ 12,002	\$ 17,434
Total Grants for 3rd Quarter Payments	\$ 77,585	\$ 48,068	\$ 53,436		\$ 36,002	\$ 17,434
Total FY2016 Grants	\$ 433,927	\$ 240,460	\$ 246,578		\$224,764	\$ 21,814