

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 21, 2023

Chair Christy Parker called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. Other committee members present were Mike Tripka, Ellen Shumaker and Sam Britt. Committee members absent were Nathaniel Pringle and Timothy Wood. Staff in attendance was as follows: Natalie Majorkiewicz, Assistant Director of Finance, Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Analyst, and Felicia Roth, Director of Compliance & Contracts.

Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum

Four (4) committee members present, two (2) absent, quorum met.

Adoption of Agenda:

Chair moved and agenda adopted unanimously.

Adoption of Minutes:

Britt moved to adopt the minutes from the November 15, 2022 meeting. Tripka seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report: Natalie Majorkiewicz, Assistant Director of Finance

The total funds available for distributions are **\$2,695,011**. Revenue is estimated to be down **\$87,199.86 or approximately 12%** compared to same quarter in the previous year. There are three (3) applicants this quarter requesting \$64,000.

Palmetto Bluff Conservancy - \$35,000

Christine Wrobel, Director of Marketing and Public Relations for Montage Palmetto Bluff and Jay Walea, Director of the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy were present to present their ATAX request and answer questions related to their application. The request of \$35,000 is half the cost of an electric powered Duffy Boat, which will be used to provide inland waterway tours, which are often requested in the summer. The Naturalist, employed and paid by Montage Palmetto Bluff (MPB), will captain the boat and has been training for about a year to speak to the local freshwater ecosystem. Unlike the current Duffy boat owned by MPB, this one will be owned by the Conservancy and be kept at the dock and educate tourists about the ecosystem; the existing boat is kept at the marina and provides leisure tours. The current plan is to only open the tours to guests of MPB, which does not include short term rentals. Members Shumaker and Tripka suggested that a partnership could be made with other Bluffton festivals or events to offer tours to others during the limited periods of those festivals/events. The Duffy boat's capacity is approximately seven (7) people and tours can be run up to five (5) times per day.

Britt motioned to grant \$35,000. Tripka seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-1 with Sam Britt opposed.

The Rotary Club of Bluffton - \$15,000

Mary O'Neill presented the Rotary's first request for marketing and transportation funding for Mayfest. This event started 43 years ago and the intent of the funding is to attract more regional visitors. The advertising funds would be used to place advertisements in the Bluffton Vacation Planner. Mary indicated that she has already committed to those advertisements but no dollars have been spent to date. Chair Christy Parker reminded Mary of the Bluffton logo requirements with ATAX money paying for marketing. Due to poor performance, USCB will no longer be conducting the surveys capturing tourism statistics.

Tripka motioned to grant \$15,000. Shumaker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society - \$14,000

Mary O'Neill also presented Old Town Bluffton Merchant Society's annual funding request. All funds will be spent on advertising. The maps created by OTBMS are available to anyone that requests them; businesses can reach out to Mary for replenishment. The HHI Airport goes through the maps in high volumes and is restocked continuously. In 2023, there will be three (3) Art Walks. An event was added on November 30 as a supplement to the Christmas kick-off weekend of "Light Up the Night" and the Bluffton Christmas Parade.

Due to the recusal of member Tripka, a quorum was lost.

Before adjournment, Parker asked if the Conservancy would need to incorporate the Bluffton logo on the boat somehow due to ATAX funds paying for half of the cost. Other members indicated that it was not necessary as the logo is only required when funds are used for advertising specifically.

Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Parker motioned to adjourn the meeting and the motion carried unanimously.