

# ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: February 21, 2023  
 SUBJECT: Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society  
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Analyst

Summarized below is the application from The Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society for "Bluffton as a Destination" for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to promote the ambiance of Old Town Bluffton to tourists through event advertising in various medias.

**Requested Amount: \$14,000**

Bluffton as a Destination	Total Budget	Recommended ATAX Grant (approx. 51% of event budget)
Advertising & Promotion	\$22,600	\$ 14,000
Project Expenses	4,900	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,500</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>

N/A - Not Applicable

#### Eligible "Tourism-Related Expenditures" per South Carolina Code of Laws:

##### Advertising & Promotion of Tourism:

**Total budget: \$22,600**

- General advertising and marketing, promoting Old Town Bluffton as a historic, riverfront community offering an eclectic blend of arts, culture, and natural beauty along with four, tentatively planned art-centric events: Holiday Art Walk, Christmas Parade Weekend, Winter Art Walk, and Spring Fling Art Weekend.
- General and event marketing for 4 major events: \$16,000
- Tourist maps with graphic design: \$6,600

Tourism Draw %: Special Events and Art Weekends consistently show 40-45% higher of attendees from outside the Bluffton/Hilton Head area. Surveys, zip code collection and guest registry logs of many shops and galleries show attendees from more than 30 different states and Canada.

Benefit to Tourism: The project is designed to focus on Bluffton as a separate entity from Hilton Head Island. Merchants show a marked increase in tourist traffic throughout their stores, restaurants, and galleries.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Eligible amount requested is 51% of total budget. Anticipated revenue of \$12,500 from membership dues and \$2,000 from website ad space.

#### Table Rating (Scores 0-5 with 5 satisfying the qualifications best, exception Advertising 0-15)

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$14,000	14	4	5	4	9	36	

## Previous Funding Amounts - Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society

Fiscal Year	Amount Requested	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2022	\$ 16,000	49%	\$ 16,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 7,322	
2021	22,600	49%	22,600	22,600	6,956	
2020	25,000	55%	25,000	25,000	23,432	

## Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

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The Committee recommends funding \$14,000 for advertising and promotion of tourism.