

# ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: August 20, 2024  
 SUBJECT: Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival: 2024 Arts & Seafood Festival  
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to support the 2024 Arts & Seafood Festival event.

**Total Budget:** \$220,950

**Requested Amount:** \$80,000

**Percentage of Request^:** 36%

^Includes up to 100% for Advertising & Promotion plus up to 50% of remaining expenses

Eligible Tourism-Related Expense Categories (per SC Code of Laws)	Total Budget for Category		Recommended ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$74,000		\$70,000
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events			
Public Facilities	30,000	*	10,000
Municipality and County Services	8,000	*	
Tourist Transportation	5,000	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	103,950		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$220,950</b>		<b>\$80,000</b>

\*Reimbursement will be based on the estimated percentage of tourists provided for

#### Budgeted Expenses:

##### Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$74,000

- Print and digital advertising, radio, television, HHI-Bluffton Chamber Vacation Planner and newsletter, web site, e-blasts, direct mailings, signage and banners

##### Public Facilities\*:

Total Budget: \$30,000

- Rental of tents, stages, tables, chairs, portable toilets and dumpsters and barges for fireworks

##### Municipality and County Services\*:

Total Budget \$8,000

- Security

##### Tourist Transportation\*:

Total Budget \$5,000

- LRTA Shuttles

##### Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$103,950

- Insurance, administrative fees, photography, entertainment, donations, 5K walk/run, kids fishing tournament, supplies, printing, soiree dinner, and merchandise

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

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Festival / Event (5)	Bluffton Event (5)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$80,000	12	5	5	3	5	4	34	

**Advertising:** Of the requested funds, 92.5% is anticipated to be spent on marketing the event. Southern Living Magazine, The HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner and newsletter e-blasts, digital advertising targeting the Atlanta, Ashville, Augusta, Charleston, Charlotte, Columbia and Jacksonville markets and various other magazines and local media are intended for the marketing campaign.

**Festival/Event:** Twenty (20) day event held October 1 - 20, 2024.

**Bluffton Event:** Events held throughout Old Town Bluffton.

**Tourism Draw %:** 2023 event reported 42% of attendees were tourists.

**Benefit to Tourism:** The almost three-week festival is designed to increase tourism to Bluffton and has been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the top 20 events in the southeast.

**Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need):** Requesting approximately 36% of the total budget. With a projected total of \$121,775 to be collected this year from sponsorships, vendor fees, event admissions, merchandise sales, and race registrations. An estimated \$25,000 will be used from the Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival Reserve Balance to cover the 2024 anticipated expenses.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2024	\$80,000	39%	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	Final Report Submitted
2023	\$80,000	48%	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	
2022	\$70,000	49%	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$69,733	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

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The Committee recommends funding \$80,000 for eligible expenses for the festival.