

## TOWN COUNCIL

### STAFF REPORT

#### Finance & Administration Department



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	December 12, 2023
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Consideration of Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending September 30, 2023
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Natalie Majorkiewicz, CGFO, Director of Finance & Administration

#### REQUEST:

Town Staff requests Town Council to consider the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee's (ATAC) recommendations for grant awards as presented below:

Requesting Organizations	Requested Amount	Recommended Amount
<b>The New Bluffton Worship:</b> Christmas Eve Under the Stars	\$23,110	\$15,280
<b>Gullah Travelling Theater, Inc.:</b> Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton	18,791	None
<b>May River Theatre, Inc.:</b> Advertising & Royalty Funding for 2024 Season	39,801	39,801
<b>Farmers Market of Bluffton:</b> 2024 Expenses	55,300	55,300
<b>Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce:</b> 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner	45,000	Deferred to Next Quarter
<b>Total for the Quarter</b>	<b>\$182,002</b>	<b>\$110,381</b>

#### BACKGROUND:

In accordance with the grant process, the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) held a meeting on November 15, 2023 to review the quarterly applications. There were five (5) applications to review and make recommendations of funding to Town Council.

ATAC voted and unanimously approved Sam Britt to Vicechair and approved the 2024 calendar.

Additionally, staff provided an overview of the legal opinion pertaining to Local ATax and has incorporated ATAC into the Town budget calendar. Staff will present a draft of the FY2025 budget to ATAC at the February 20, 2024 meeting.

### Funds Currently Available for Distribution:

When comparing the State Accommodations Tax collections for the quarter ending September 2023 to the same quarter of last year, the revenues are down \$19,894.73 or approximately 7.8%.

Total estimated State Accommodations Tax funds currently available for distribution are \$152,166 as outlined in the following chart:

State ATAX	
Remaining from Previous Qtr.	\$ 9,913
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter Revenue	235,638
First \$25k to General Fund*	(25,000)
5% to General Fund	(10,532)
30% to DMO	(63,191)
Lapsed Grants	5,338
<b>Total State ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution</b>	<b>\$ 152,166</b>

\* First \$25k taken in 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of Fiscal Year and Not Applicable (N/A) to the remaining quarters.

### Funds Requested for Distribution:

❑ **The New Bluffton Worship is requesting \$23,110 in support of the Christmas Under the Stars Project with ATAC recommending \$15,280.**

- The total budget for the project is \$29,830 with approximately 51% or \$15,280 being requested.
- Project costs requesting support or for advertising, rentals for stage, tent, and chairs, and for security services through the Bluffton Police Department.
- Advertising include banners, postcard mailers, social media posts, and signage.
- The event will be held at Oyster Factory Park the evening of December 24, 2023.

**The committee voted 5-0 to recommend a total award of \$15,280 presented in the chart below:**

Christmas Eve Under the Stars	Total Budget		Recommended ATAX Grant (51.2% of project budget)
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts & Cultural Events:	\$16,390		\$10,000
Facilities for Civic & Cultural Event:	11,700		5,280
Municipality & County Services:	1,440	*	-
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:	300		-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29,830</b>		<b>\$15,280</b>

\* Based on percentage directly related to tourist attendance

❑ **Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc. is requesting \$18,791 to support advertising and promotion of tourism and facilities for cultural events for Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton.**

- There currently is not a schedule of events in Bluffton.
- ATAC recommends the organization come back and reapply when a schedule is finalized with dates, times, and locations.

**The committee voted unanimously to not recommend any funding at this time and for the organization to reapply when a schedule is complete.**

<b>Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Recommended ATAX Grant (0% of project budget)</b>
Advertising and Promotion of Tourism:	\$ 15,000	\$ -
Facilities for Civic & Cultural Event:	6,000	-
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:	45,041	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 66,041</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

N/A – Not Applicable

❑ **May River Theatre, Inc. requests \$39,801 to support advertising and promotion expenses for the 2024 season.**

- The total budget for the project is \$98,726 with approximately 40% or \$39,801 being requested.
- There are six (6) performances scheduled for the 2024 season. Calendar Girls (February/March), Jesus Christ Superstar (April), Lend Me a Tenor (June), Series of One Acts (August), Carrie (October/November), and Holiday Show (December).
- Average attendees for the 2023 season show approximately 40% are from out of town.
- Eligible “tourism-related expenditures” include:
  - “Advertising and promotion of tourism” requesting \$27,022 for newspapers, magazines, social media, billboards, and creation of posters and rack cards.
  - “Facilities for Civic & Cultural Events” requesting \$12,779 for royalties for each show.

**The committee voted unanimously to recommend a total award of \$39,801 presented in the chart below:**

<b>2024 Season</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Recommended ATAX Grant (approx. 40.3% of project budget)</b>
Advertising and Promotion of Tourism:	\$ 28,423	\$ 27,022
Facilities for Civic & Cultural Events:	12,779	12,779
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:	57,524	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 98,726</b>	<b>\$ 39,801</b>

N/A – Not Applicable

❑ **Farmers Market of Bluffton requests \$55,300 to support advertising and promotion of tourism and facility support for the weekly Farmers Markets.**

- The total budget for the project is \$138,850 with approximately 40% or \$55,300 being requested.
- The Markets are held every Thursday from January 11, 2024 through December 19, 2024 at Martin Family Park.
- Eligible “tourism-related expenditures” include:
  - “Advertising and promotion of tourism” requesting \$42,800 for newspaper, magazines, social media, newsletter, and text alerts expenses.
  - “Facilities for Civic & Cultural Events” requesting \$12,500 in support for market overflow rental fees at the Heyward House, tents, chairs, safety signage, and other expenses to facilitate the markets for visitors to safely enjoy.

**The committee voted unanimously to recommend a total award of \$55,300 as presented in the chart below:**

<b>2024 Expenses</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Recommended ATAX Grant (approx. 39.8% of project budget)</b>
Advertising and Promotion of Tourism:	\$ 42,800	\$ 42,800
Facilities for Civic & Cultural Events:	12,500	12,500
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:	81,550	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 138,850</b>	<b>\$ 55,300</b>

N/A – Not Applicable

❑ **Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce requests \$45,000 to support the 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner.**

- Due to a conflict, a representative for the HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce was unable to attend the ATAC meeting.
- At the request of the applicant, the committee voted to defer the application to the next quarter.

**The committee voted unanimously to defer the application to the next quarter.**

<b>2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Recommended ATAX Grant (deferred to next qtr.)</b>
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism:	\$ 138,000	\$ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 138,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

**NEXT STEPS:**

Town Staff will notify organizations of award amount and requirements.

**SUMMARY:**

Below are the applications received for quarter ending September 30, 2023 and ATAC's recommendation for each:

<b>Requesting Organizations</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Recommended Amount</b>
<b>The New Bluffton Worship:</b> Christmas Eve Under the Stars	\$23,110	\$15,280
<b>Gullah Travelling Theater, Inc.:</b> Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton	18,791	None
<b>May River Theatre, Inc.:</b> Advertising & Royalty Funding for 2024 Season	39,801	39,801
<b>Farmers Market of Bluffton:</b> 2024 Expenses	55,300	55,300
<b>Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce:</b> 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner	45,000	Deferred to Next Quarter
<b>Total for the Quarter</b>	<b>\$182,002</b>	<b>\$110,381</b>

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. ATAC draft meeting minutes from November 15, 2023
2. The New Bluffton Worship: Christmas Eve Under the Stars Grant Application
3. The New Bluffton Worship: Christmas Eve Under the Stars ATAC Staff Report
4. Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc.: Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton Grant Application
5. Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc.: Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton ATAC Staff Report
6. May River Theatre, Inc.: Advertising & Royalty for 2024 Season Grant Application
7. May River Theatre, Inc.: Advertising & Royalty for 2024 Season ATAC Staff Report
8. Farmers Market of Bluffton: 2024 Expenses Grant Application
9. Farmers Market of Bluffton: 2024 Expenses ATAC Staff Report
10. Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce: 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner Grant Application
11. Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce: 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner ATAC Staff Report
12. ATAC Scoring Table Rating Matrix
13. Previously Funded Grant Listing
14. Recommended Motions