

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: May 20, 2025
 SUBJECT: Town of Bluffton: Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage Restoration
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Town of Bluffton for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of the renovation of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage.

Total Budget, per application: \$857,680

Requested Amount: \$257,304

Percentage of Request^: 30%

^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, <u>per</u> <u>budget form</u>		ATAC Recommends ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events			
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	\$857,680		\$257,304
Public Facilities		*	
Municipality and County Services		*	
Tourist Transportation		*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses			
Total	\$857,680		\$257,304

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$857,680

- Restoration includes salvaging as much historical building materials as possible, demolishing the remaining structure and new construction of the cottage as it was originally built with historic additions.

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

Amount Recommended	Tourist Facilities (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self- Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$257,304	10	3	5	3	7	28	

Tourist Facilities: The Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage Restoration Project was identified as a priority action item within the Town of Bluffton's FY2024-2025 Strategic Plan. Construction is ready to begin in June 2026 with an estimated completion in April 2026. The building was purchased in 2029 with the intent to rehabilitate the historic contributing structure to provide usable public space to promote the arts community. Included as part of the project is interpretive signage telling the unique story of the history, culture and environmental significance of the property.

Tourism Draw %: Because the project is not yet complete, a tourism percentage has not yet been tracked.

Benefit to Tourism: Once complete, the cottage and site will be added to the tours of the Historic District that are provided through the Squire Pope Welcome Center. The planned art gallery space will display local and regional work, attracting tourists to the area and enhancing their experience when visiting Bluffton. This will support an increase in retail, dining and lodging.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is 30% of the total construction budget of \$857,680. The remainder will be covered by Town of Bluffton funds.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2023	\$457,026	24%	\$457,026	\$457,026	\$457,026	
2022	\$215,000	14%	\$215,000	\$215,000	\$215,000	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$257,304 for the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage Restoration.