

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: August 18, 2026
 SUBJECT: Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society: Bluffton as a Destination
 PROJECT MANAGER: Jeremy Bullock, Grants Administrator

Summarized below is the application from The Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and promotion for the “Bluffton as a Destination” initiative.

Budget numbers provided herein are based on information conveyed on the required Line-Item Budget Form within the applicant’s submission.

Total Budget: \$35,800

Requested Amount: \$15,000

Percentage of Request^: 41.9%

^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	
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$25,900	
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	-	
Public Facilities	-	
Municipality and County Services	-	*
Tourist Transportation	-	*
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	9,900	
Total	\$35,800	

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

Budgeted Eligible Expenses:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$25,900

- Print and Digital Advertising, Tourist Maps, Radio, Posters, Signs and Social Media

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$9,900

- Insurance costs, professional fees, web hosting and updating, and miscellaneous event expenses

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

Amount Requested	Advertising (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$15,000	11	4	4	3	6	28	

Advertising: Comprises 100% of the requested funds. Specific markets, publications or other vehicles of promotion were not indicated in the application.

Tourism Draw %: Special Events attract a 52/48 ratio of visitors to residents and Art Walks consistently show 48-56% 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 41.9% of total budget. Anticipated revenue of \$21,000 from membership dues and \$600 from sponsorships.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2024	\$28,500	61%	\$28,500	\$28,500	\$16,594.48	Final Report submitted
2023	\$14,000	51%	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000.00	Final Report Submitted
2022	\$16,000	49%	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$10,837.65	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$15,000 for advertising expenses related to marketing Bluffton as a Destination.

Bullock, Jeremy

From: noreply@civicplus.com
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2026 3:52 PM
To: ATax Communications
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Accommodations Tax Grant Application

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Accommodations Tax Grant Application

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions [Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions](#)

Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions I have read and acknowledged the Town of Bluffton, SC Accommodations Tax Grant Application Instructions.

(Section Break)

Application Date 6/24/2026

Project Name BLUFFTON AS A DESTINATION

Project/Event Location BLUFFTON

Is this a new project or event? No

Project/Event Start Date: 7/1/2026

Project/Event End Date 6/30/2027

Multi-Year Project/Event?	Yes
Total Project Costs	\$35,8000
Total ATAX Funds Requested	\$15,000
Percent of Total Budget	42%
Date the funds are needed:	8/31/2026
Full Legal Organization Name	OLD TOWN BLUFFTON MERCHANTS
Address	32 Spartina Crescent
Street Address Line 2	<i>Field not completed.</i>
City	BLUFFTON
State	South Carolina
Zip Code	29910
Applicant must be designated as a non-profit entity to receive ATAX funds. Is your entity a non-profit organization?	Yes

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

Organization Primary Point of Contact	
First Name	MARY
Last Name	O'Neill
Title	SECRETARY/TREASURER
Phone Number	8438152472
E-mail Address	maryaoneill6@aol.com

(Section Break)

Organization Secondary Point of Contact	
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First Name	MICHAEL
Last Name	GONZALEZ
Title	PRESIDENT
Phone Number	843-298-4097
E-mail Address	michael@eraevergreen.com

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

Project Description:	THIS REQUEST IS FOR THE PARTIAL FUNDING OF OUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN PROMOTING OLD TOWN BLUFFTON AS A GREAT DESTINATION FOR VISITORS TOUTING IT AS A HISTORIC RIVERFRONT COMMUNITY OFFERING AN ECLECTIC BLEND OF ARTS, HISTORY, CULTURE AND NATURAL BEAUTY. THE PROMOTION INCLUDES ART-CENTRIC EVENTS, SUCH AS THE ART WALKS, SPRING FLING ART WEEKEND, ETC. THE WHOLE PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO INCREASE TOURISM TO BLUFFTON THROUGH THE GENERATION OF REGIONAL PUBLICITY INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO PRINT ADVERTISING, RADIO, DIGITAL, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBSITE AND MAPS.
List any required permits, if applicable. If none, type "N/A":	N/A
Describe all planned advertising and marketing for this project/event:	OTBM MARKETING PLAN 2026 - 2027 ADVERTISING/ MARKETING BUDGET 2026 EVENT MARKETING (4 MAJOR ART CENTRIC EVENTS) BUDGET All 4 events will be advertised in local newspapers and magazines, in the Carolina Arts publication, as well as digitally to out of town visitors and through social media, direct email communications, on the Visitors Center Events webpage, and on radio announcements. SOCIAL MEDIA \$5400 EVENT & GENERAL PRINT/DIGITAL MEDIA \$20,000 Chamber Vacation Planner and Web FY26 \$4040 Newspaper Promotional Ads FY26 \$9760 Magazine Promotional Ads FY26 \$6200 RADIO ADVERTISING \$1500 TOURIST MAPS \$4400

2 PRINTINGS @\$2000 EACH \$4000
 Map Graphic Design Update @\$200 (x2) \$400

Please list all media outlets you intend to utilize for your project/event (i.e. names of magazines, TV and radio stations, etc.):	PRINT AND DIGITAL ADVERTISING IN CITY SUN, BLUFFTON TODAY, SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS, POST & COURIER, CAROLINA ARTS, CH2CB2, LOCAL LIFE. PRINT, DIGITAL AND E-BLAST - HH/BLUFFTON CHAMBER VACATION PLANNER RADIO - LOWCOUNTRY RADIO GROUP
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All advertising/marketing paid for with Town of Bluffton Accommodations Tax dollars must incorporate the branding shown here: **Town of Bluffton Brand Standards. The use of the Town's logo must meet the design standards outlined at the aforementioned link and be approved by the Town. Designs may be submitted electronically using this **link**. Please allow five (5) business days for approval.**

Impact on or Benefit to Tourism:	OUR ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF ART AND CULTURAL EVENTS HAVE GONE A LONG WAY TO HELP PUT OLD TOWN BLUFFTON ON THE MAP AS A SEPARATE ENTITY FROM HHI AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. EVERYTHING WE DO IS DESIGNED TO BRAND OLD TOWN AS A FIRST CLASS, SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE, WORTHY OF EVERY LOWCOUNTRY TOURIST'S PLANS, TRULY THE HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY. THE UNBELIEVABLE GROWTH WE ARE WITNESSING IS A TRUE TESTIMONY TO OUR SUCCESS.
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***“Tourist”* means a person who does not reside within the corporate limits of the Town or within a Town zip code that takes a trip into the corporate limits of the Town for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work.**

***“Travel”* and *“Tourism”* mean the action and activities of people taking trips outside their home communities for any purpose, except daily commuting to and from work.**

Additional Comments:	OUR ADVERTISING PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN BRINGING NEW VISITORS TO OUR AREA. IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CHAMBER WE STRIVE TO BRING TOURISTS TO BLUFFTON. WE BELIEVE THAT BROADENING OUR MARKET WITH ADVERTISING WILL ENCOURAGE THE CONCEPT OF “MAKING BLUFFTON A DESTINATION PLACE” AND THAT LOCAL SHOPS,
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GALLERIES, HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS WILL PROFIT. AS THE SUCCESS OF THE OLD TOWN DISTRICT CONTINUES TO ATTRACT TOURISTS AND THEIR CONSIDERABLE EXPENDITURES, IT ALSO ATTRACTS POTENTIAL NEW BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS TO THE AREA. THE QUAINTESS OF THE OLD TOWN DISTRICT HOOKS THE TOURIST TO POTENTIALLY BECOME A RESIDENT AND/OR NEW BUSINESS OWNER. OUR ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF ART AND CULTURAL EVENTS HAVE GONE A LONG WAY TO HELP PUT OLD TOWN BLUFFTON ON THE MAP AS A SEPARATE ENTITY FROM HHI AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. EVERYTHING WE DO IS DESIGNED TO BRAND OLD TOWN AS A FIRST CLASS, SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE, WORTHY OF EVERY LOWCOUNTRY TOURIST'S PLANS, TRULY THE HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY. THE UNBELIEVABLE GROWTH WE ARE WITNESSING IS A TRUE TESTIMONY TO OUR SUCCESS.

- Our maps are now distributed at most state welcome centers (2100 per printing), regional hotels and at the Savannah-Hilton Head Airport (1000 per month).
- Our Special Events have attracted over 1000 - 2000 people each time, many of whom are visitors to our area. Results show more than 30 different states and Canada represented. The Art Walks alone are a huge success and have attracted 500 to 1000 visitors per gallery walk. Of these over 48% - 56% are from outside of Bluffton/Hilton Head area (All shops and galleries keep records).
- The previously held Spring Fling Weekend proved to be very successful and the zip code collection in all shops and galleries throughout the weekend gave stats of 55% visitors. We hope to continue to increase the number as the event grows.
- The Heyward House stats collected from their guest registry also substantiates tourist increases.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

To download the Town's required Line-Item Budget Form, click here:

<https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4295/ATAX-Grant-Application-Line-Item-Budget-Form>

Download and save the form and hit "Back" in your web browser to return to the application. Once the form is completed, attach it on the following line.

Town's required Line-Item Budget Form:	2026.02.24 - ATAX Grant Application Line-Item Budget Form 202603101247168067.pdf OTBM.pdf
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Most Recent Fiscal Year Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Accounting Statement	OTBM PROFIT AND LOSS 2025.pdf
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Financial Guarantee	minutes OTBM 2026.pdf
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Applicant must provide a copy of official minutes wherein the sponsoring organization approves the project and commits the organization to financial responsibility for carrying it out to the stage of completion.

Please attach Budget vs. Actual statements for prior two years events.	OTBM budget and actuals 2024.pdf
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Please attach Budget vs. Actual statements for prior two years events.	OTBM Budget and Actuals 2025.pdf
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(Section Break)

Have you requested, received, or been awarded ATAX funding from other state or local entities for this project/event?	No
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Have you received or been awarded ATAX funding from other state or local entities for any other project/event?	No
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TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

PRIOR RECIPIENT'S REPORT

If your organization has received ATAX funding from the Town of Bluffton in previous years, you must complete the below information.

If you have not received ATAX funding from the Town of Bluffton, please answer "No" and skip this section, and sign and submit your application.

Has your organization previously received ATAX funds from the Town of Bluffton?

Yes

Project/Event Name

BLUFFTON AS A DESTINATION

Year Awarded

2024

Amount Awarded

28500

Was a final report submitted?

Yes

What was the total number of tourists?

5600

What was the percentage of tourists?

52%

(Section Break)

Please attach a copy of your organization's IRS Designation Letter showing your non-profit status .

[OTBM NON PROFIT.pdf](#)

Please upload a copy of your current Town of Bluffton Business License, which is required of all applicants.

[OTBM business license.pdf](#)

Additional Application Documents

Field not completed.

Additional Application Documents

Field not completed.

Additional Application Documents *Field not completed.*

Additional Application Documents *Field not completed.*

Additional Comments *Field not completed.*

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ACCOMMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION

All applicants will be required to come before the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) and answer any and all questions when scheduled to do so.

Any organization awarded funds for advertising/marketing must incorporate the Bluffton Heart of the Lowcountry brand logo in all promotional materials and advertising.

The South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) defines a “public body” as any organization or corporation supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds. If awarded, your organization's acceptance of public funds from the Town of Bluffton may cause your organization to come within the meaning of “public body” as defined by the Freedom of Information Act. S.C. Code Ann. §30-4-10, et seq. (Supp. 2002). Accordingly, this is to advise that by accepting public funds, your organization may be subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

By submitting this application, the organization certifies that it has read and understands the paragraphs above. The organization additionally certifies that it does not discriminate in any manner on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, religion, or language and that all funds that may be received by the applicant organization from the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina will be solely used for the purposes set forth in this application and will comply with all laws and statutes, including the South Carolina Code of Laws regarding Allocations of Accommodations Tax Revenues.

By typing your name below, you are signing this application electronically. You agree that your electronic signature is the legal equivalent of your manual signature on this application.

Signature MARY A O'NEILL

Signatory's Title or
Position

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)



Business Entities Online

File, Search, and Retrieve Documents Electronically

BLUFFTON OLDE TOWN MERCHANTS SOCIETY

Corporate Information

Entity Type: Nonprofit**Status:** Good Standing**Domestic/Foreign:** Domestic**Incorporated State:** South Carolina

Important Dates

Effective Date: 11/21/2003**Expiration Date:** N/A**Term End Date:** N/A**Dissolved Date:** N/A

Registered Agent

Agent: ROBERTS VAUX**Address:** 1251 MAY RIVER RD
BLUFFTON, South Carolina 29910

Official Documents On File

Filing Type	Filing Date
Incorporation	11/21/2003

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2808
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **MAY 20 2006**

BLUFFTON OLD TOWNE MERCHANTS
SOCIETY
PO BOX 3436
BLUFFTON, SC 29910

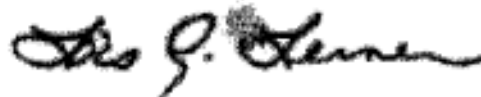
Employer Identification Number:
01 0860544
EIN
1705101041026
Contact Person:
GARY MYNERT 100 31512
Contact Telephone Number
1877 839-5500
Accounting Period Ending
December 31
Form 990 Required:
Yes
Effective Date of Exemption:
November 21, 2003
Contribution Deductibility:
Yes

Dear Applicant:

We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax-exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

Please see enclosed information for Organizations Exempt Under Sections Other Than 501(c)(3) for some helpful information about your responsibilities as an exempt organization.

Sincerely,



Lois G. Lerner
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

Enclosure Information for Organizations Exempt Under Sections Other Than 501(c)(3)

Letter 940 (03/03)

TOWN OF BLUFFTON**TOWN OF BLUFFTON -
Expires:04/30/2027****License No.** 26-06-7862**Business Name:** Old Town Bluffton
Merchants Society**Date Issued:** 06/24/2026**NAICS Title:** Business Associations**Business DBA
Name:** OTBMS**Business Type:**

Non Profit

Physical Address:PO Box 354
Bluffton, SC
29910**NON-TRANSFERABLE | TO BE PLACED IN A CONSPICUOUS PLACE****Section 6-21 Purpose and Duration of Business License**

ALL BUSINESSES LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON MUST POST THE BUSINESS LICENSE IN A VISIBLE LOCATION WITHIN THE BUSINESS LOCATION AS REFERENCED ABOVE AND IS VALID FOR THIS LOCATION ONLY. ALL BUSINESSES LOCATED OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON MUST KEEP A CURRENT COPY WHILE CONDUCTING BUSINESS INSIDE THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON. CHANGE IN LOCATION OR OWNERSHIP REQUIRES A NEW LICENSE. IF THE BUSINESS IS CLOSED, CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT 843-706-4501 TO UPDATE ACCOUNT.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON
ACCOMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION BUDGET FORM

Round all numbers to the nearest whole dollar; do not use commas between numbers or ".00" at the end of a figure

REVENUES

Revenues - Cash

Sponsorships \$ _____ 600

Donations \$ _____

ATAX Grants/Funding from Other Entities* \$ _____

** Do **NOT** include anticipated award funds requested in this application*

Other Grants (please name): \$ _____

Other Grants (please name): \$ _____

Other Grants (please name): \$ _____

Vendor Fees \$ _____

Registration Fees \$ _____

Other Fees (please name): MEMBER DUES 70@ \$300 \$ _____ 21,000

Other Fees (please name): \$ _____

Merchandise Sales \$ _____

Other Sales (please name): \$ _____

Other Sales (please name): \$ _____

Other Revenue (please name): \$ _____

Other Revenue (please name): \$ _____

Revenues - In-Kind Contributions

Volunteer Hours \$ _____ 180

Donated Items \$ _____

Donated Services \$ _____

Other (please name): \$ _____

Other (please name): \$ _____

Other (please name): \$ _____

Total All Revenue Sources: \$ _____ 21,780

TOWN OF BLUFFTON
ACCOMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION BUDGET FORM

EXPENSES

Round all numbers to the nearest whole dollar; do not use commas between numbers or ".00" at the end of a figure

Eligible Tourism-Related Expense Categories (per SC Code of Laws)

	Amount
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	
Local Newspaper/Digital Advertising	\$ 4,000
Regional Newspaper/Digital Advertising	\$ 5,560
National Newspaper/Digital Advertising	\$
Local Magazine/Digital Advertising	\$ 5,200
Regional Magazine/Digital Advertising	\$ 1,000
National Magazine/Digital Advertising	\$
Local Radio Advertising	\$
Regional Radio Advertising	\$ 1,500
National Radio Advertising	\$
Local Television Advertising	\$
Regional Television Advertising	\$
National Television Advertising	\$
Billboards	\$
Social Media Advertising	\$
E-mail and/or Text Blasts	\$ 1,000
Postcards/Mailers	\$
Posters/Banners/Signage	\$ 200
Graphic Design of Marketing/Writing or Press Releases	\$ 400
Web Hosting for Event (not organization)	\$
Other (please name): MAPS - 2 PRINTINGS 2000 EACH	\$ 4,000
Other (please name): HH/BLUFFTON CHAMBER VACATION PLANNER	\$ 3,040
Other (please name):	\$
Other (please name):	\$
Other (please name):	\$
Total Advertising/Promotion Budget:	\$ 25,900
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	
Rentals: Venue(s)	\$
Rentals: Parking Lots	\$
Rentals: Tables, Chairs, Stages, Tents	\$
Rental: Sound, Audio Equipment	\$
Construction/Renovations/Repairs of Buildings/Facilities	\$
Other (please name):	\$
Other (please name):	\$
Other (please name):	\$
Total Facilities Budget:	\$ 0

TOWN OF BLUFFTON
ACCOMODATIONS TAX GRANT APPLICATION BUDGET FORM

EXPENSES

Round all numbers to the nearest whole dollar; do not use commas between numbers or ".00" at the end of a figure

Eligible Tourism-Related Expense Categories (per SC Code of Laws)

	Amount
Tourist Transportation	
Company Name: _____	\$ _____
Company Name: _____	\$ _____
Total Transportation Budget:	\$ <u>0</u>
Public Facilities	
Temporary/Portable Restrooms	\$ _____
Dumpster Rental/Trash Hauling	\$ _____
Construction of Permanent Restrooms	\$ _____
Construction of Parks	\$ _____
Construction of Parking Lots	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Total Public Facilities Budget:	\$ <u>0</u>
Municipality and County Services	
Security Provided by Bluffton Police Department	\$ _____
Security NOT Provided by Bluffton Police Department	\$ _____
Total Municipality/County Services Budget:	\$ <u>0</u>
Operations <i>(only applicable to Visitor Centers and/or Cultural Centers/Museums)</i>	
Marketing/Advertising	\$ _____
Utilities <i>(electric, gas, water, phone service, internet, etc.)</i>	\$ _____
Subscriptions <i>(not related to marketing/advertising services)</i>	\$ _____
Supplies <i>(office, janitorial, etc.)</i>	\$ _____
Facility Maintenance <i>(i.e. cleaning, pest control, landscaping, etc.)</i>	\$ _____
Minor Repairs	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Other (please name): _____	\$ _____
Total Operations Budget:	\$ <u>0</u>
Total ALL ATAX Eligible Expenses:	\$ <u>25,900</u>

Round all numbers to the nearest whole dollar; do not use commas between numbers or ".00" at the end of a figure

Applicants should list all other project/event expenses that are not eligible for ATAX funds and not listed above.

Total of Other/Ineligible Expenses:	\$	9,900
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Total Project/Event Profit or Loss (Total Revenue minus Total Project/Event Budget): \$ (14,020)

OLD TOWN BLUFFTON MERCHANTS 2025 P & L**Income****GRANT MONIES**

ATAX GRANT

\$0.00

REVENUE

MEMBERSHIP DUES

\$21,600.00

INTEREST

\$6.98

Total INCOME

\$21,606.98

Expenses**ADVERTISING (PRINT & DIGITAL)****MAJOR EVENTS**

Artwalks and Spring Fling Weekend and

VACATION PLANNER

\$17,263.91

TOURIST MAPS

\$3007.60

Total ADVERTISING

\$21,771.51

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRACTOR

\$5400.00

MISCELLANEOUS FOR EVENTS

\$680.21

PROFESSIONAL FEES (ACCOUNTING – TAX RETURN)

\$895.78

INSURANCE

\$359.00

WEB HOSTING & UPDATING

\$950.00

SPRING FLING CONCERT

\$4124.49

PORTA POTTIES \$1574.49

BANDS & STAGE \$2550.00

Total EXPENSES

\$34,180.99

DEFICIT**-\$12,574.01**

Minutes from the Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society Board of Directors Meeting

May 5, 2026

Present: Michael Gonzales, Mary O'Neill, Lauren Terret, Kimberly Seaglund

Absent: Nick Healy, Anna Pepper Hewett

Call to Order

President Michael called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Treasurer's Report

Mary gave financial report. She presented a revised 2026 - 2027 Budget and ATAX submission.

Board approved budget and ATAX.

Revised event schedule discussed.

Saturday, September 19 Shop around town on foot or golf cart – name TBD

Thursday, October 29 Trick or Treat

Friday, November 13 Holiday Artwalk

Thursday, December 3 Jingle Stroll (kick off Holiday Weekend in Old Town)

Winter Artwalk 2027 TBD

Spring Fling Artwalk 2027 TBD

No June general meeting will be held due to many members being at the Atlanta Gift Show.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm.

OLD TOWN BLUFFTON MERCHANTS – 2024 BUDGET AND ACTUALS

		ACTUAL
Income		
GRANT MONIES		
ATAX GRANT -	\$28,500.00	\$18,252.74
REVENUE		
MEMBERSHIP DUES REVENUE 70 MEMBERS @\$300.00	\$21,000.00	\$21,600.00
WEB ADS (8 PER MONTH @\$200.00 EACH FOR 6 MONTHS)	\$9,600.00	0
Total INCOME	\$59,100.00	\$39,852.74
Expenses		
ADVERTISING (PRINT & DIGITAL)		
4 MAJOR EVENTS (SEE EVENT SCHEDULE)	\$16,000.00	\$14,844.00
GENERAL	\$6,350.00	\$2850.00
TOURIST MAPS (3 PRINTINGS @\$2000 EACH)	\$6000.00	\$4257.00
GRAPHIC DESIGN FOR MAP 3 @\$200	\$900.00	\$800.00
RADIO	\$1500.00	\$1500.00
SOCIAL MEDIA	\$6000.00	\$4450.00
Total ADVERTISING	\$36,750.00	\$28,701.00
MISCELLANEOUS FOR EVENTS	\$3000.00	\$1500.00
INSURANCE	\$2000.00	\$200.00
PROFESSIONAL FEES (ACCOUNTING – TAX RETURN)	\$1600.00	\$900.00
WEB HOSTING & UPDATING	\$3000.00	\$1600.00
Total EXPENSES	\$ 46,350.00	\$34,701.00

OLD TOWN BLUFFTON MERCHANTS – 2025 BUDGET AND ACTUALS**ACTUAL****Income****GRANT MONIES**

ATAX GRANT -

\$21,000.00

0

REVENUEMEMBERSHIP DUES REVENUE
77 MEMBERS @\$300.00

\$23,100.00

\$21,600

Total INCOME

\$44,100.00

Expenses

ADVERTISING (PRINT & DIGITAL)

22,457.20

\$17,263.91

TOURIST MAPS (3 PRINTINGS @\$2000 EACH)
GRAPHIC DESIGN FOR MAP 3 @\$200

\$6000.00

\$2607.60

\$900.00

\$400

RADIO

\$1500.00

\$1500

Total ADVERTISING

\$36,857.20

\$21,771.51

SOCIAL MEDIA

\$6000.00

\$5400

MISCELLANEOUS FOR EVENTS

\$1000.00

\$680.21

INSURANCE

\$2000.00

\$359

PROFESSIONAL FEES (ACCOUNTING – TAX RETURN)

\$1000.00

\$895.78

WEB HOSTING & UPDATING

\$3000.00

950

SPRING FLING CONCERT

0

\$4124.49

Total EXPENSES

\$ 43,857.20

\$34, 180.99

DEFICIT

-\$12, 580.99

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET

Entity: Old Town Bluffton Merchants

Project: FY Marketing Expenses

Project Type: Advertising

Scoring Category	Points Possible	Points Awarded
ADVERTISING	15	
Part 1: Five (5) points possible. Based on how much of the requested funds go toward advertising.		
0% of funds go toward advertising	0 points	
1% - 20% of funds go toward advertising	1 point	
21% - 40% of funds go toward advertising	2 points	
41% - 60% of funds go toward advertising	3 points	
61% - 80% of funds go toward advertising	4 points	
81% - 100% of funds go toward advertising	5 points	
Part 2: Ten (10) points possible. Based on where the advertising is placed.		
None of the funds go toward advertising	0 points	
Local newspapers/periodicals and electronic advertising (ex. Island Packet, The Bluffton Sun)	2 points	
Local guides/periodicals specifically geared toward tourists with a shelf life of more than 30 days	4 points	
Larger regional publications and electronic marketing within 100 miles (ex. Charleston or Savannah news outlets)	6 points	
Newspapers/periodicals/electronic marketing to large, metropolitan areas outside of 100 miles away (ex. Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington, D.C., Chicago)	8 points	
Nationally distributed newspapers/periodicals/electronic marketing (ex. USA Today, NY Times, Southern Living Magazine)	10 points	
TOURIST FACILITIES	15	
Higher point value given based on anticipated ratio of tourists to locals		
FESTIVAL/EVENT	5	
Higher point value given to requests for festivals or events		
Length of event/festival should be considered. Is it an all-day event versus a two-hour event? Multi-day event?		
BLUFFTON EVENT	5	
Higher point value given to events held within the town limits of Bluffton and/or spanning multiple locations		
TOURISM DRAW	5	
0% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected information	0 points	
1% - 20% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	1 point	
21% - 40% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	2 points	
41% - 60% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	3 points	
61% - 80% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	4 points	
81% - 100% of attendees are tourists based on historical or projected info	5 points	
BENEFIT TO TOURISM (LOCAL ECONOMY)	5	
Higher point value given to events that encourage overnight stays and/or have local business participation		
SELF SUFFIECIENCY	5	
100% of budget from ATAX request	0 points	
80% - 99% of budget from ATAX request	1 point	
60% - 79% of budget from ATAX request	2 points	
40% - 59% of budget from ATAX request	3 points	
20% - 39% of budget from ATAX request	4 points	
1% - 19% of budget from ATAX request	5 points	
MISCELLANEOUS	10	
Only use if applicant does not qualify as a festival/event		
Group Average Point Total (out of a possible 40 points)		0
Group Average Percentage		