

TOWN COUNCIL



STAFF REPORT Finance & Administration Department

MEETING DATE:	March 10, 2026
PROJECT:	Consideration of Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending December 31, 2025
PROJECT MANAGER:	Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

REQUEST:

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

Requesting Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended
The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2026 Mayfest Weekend	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Beaufort Water Search and Rescue: Replacement of Boat	20,000	0
Total for Quarter Ending September 30, 2025	\$ 45,000	\$ 25,000

BACKGROUND:

In accordance with the grant process, the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee (ATAC) held a meeting on February 17, 2026 to review the quarterly applications. There were two (2) applications to review and make recommendations of funding to Town Council.

Funds Currently Available for Distribution:

When comparing the State Accommodations Tax collections for the quarter ending December 2025 to the same quarter of last year, the revenues decreased \$23,534 or approximately 8.1%.

Total estimated State Accommodations Tax funds currently available for distribution are \$346,809 as outlined in the following chart:

State ATAX	
Remaining from Previous Quarters	\$ 213,831
2 nd Quarter Revenue	265,955
First \$25k to General Fund*	-
5% to General Fund	(13,298)
30% to DMO	(79,786)
15% to Town of Bluffton – Housing	(39,893)
Lapsed Grants	-
Total State ATAX Funds Remaining for Distribution	\$ 346,809

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

Funds Requested for Distribution:

□ **The Rotary Club of Bluffton requests \$25,000 to support advertising and promotion, facilities, security and transportation for the 2026 Mayfest event.**

- This will be the 47th annual Mayfest event
- Mayfest is a one-day festival held the Saturday of Mother’s Day weekend each year from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. This year, the event will be held on May 9 in Old Town.
- Tourists comprised 35% of the 2025 Mayfest attendees
- This request is approximately 40% of the event’s \$61,800 budget
 - Additional revenue is anticipated from merchandise and alcohol sales, vendor fees, sponsorships and the value of in-kind contributions
- Eligible “tourism-related expenditures” include:
 - “Advertising and Promotion of Tourism” budgeted at \$15,2000 for newspaper, magazine, radio and television ads as well as posters/banners/signage, HHI/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner and graphic design of ads.
 - Rental of venue, tables, chairs, stages, tents, and portable/temporary restrooms budgeted at \$11,000 under the “Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events” and “Public Facilities” categories.
 - Security budgeted at \$4,000.
 - “Tourist Transportation” to provide shuttles for attendees budgeted at \$6,000.

The committee voted unanimously to recommend a total award of \$25,000 presented in the chart below:

2026 Mayfest Event	Total Budget		Recommended ATAX Grant (approx. 40% of project budget)
Advertising and Promotion of Tourism:	\$ 15,200		\$ 15,000
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:	6,000		5,000
Public Facilities:	5,000	*	2,500
Municipality and County Services:	4,000	*	1,500
Tourist Transportation:	6,000	*	1,000
Project Expenses:	25,599.88		N/A
Total	\$ 61,799.88		\$ 25,000

* Based on percentage directly related to tourist attendance N/A – Not Applicable

□ Beaufort Water Search and Rescue requests \$20,000 for the purchase of a replacement boat used for water rescue services and water related event patrols.

- The boat would be stored at the Bluffton Township Fire District Station 30 located at 199 Burnt Church Road and dedicated to the Bluffton area to be used to conduct search and recovery in waterways under the direction of Beaufort County Emergency Management.
- The request is for 50% of the estimated \$40,000 cost for the replacement boat
 - Fundraising events, grants, individual donations and their county stipend will be utilized for the ongoing maintenance

The committee voted unanimously to not recommend an award to Town Council.

Purchase of Replacement Boat	Total Budget		Recommended ATAX Grant
Advertising and Promotion of Tourism:	\$ -		\$ -
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:	40,000		0
Public Facilities:	-	*	-
Municipality and County Services:	-	*	-
Tourist Transportation:	-	*	-
Project Expenses:	-		N/A
Total	\$ 40,000		\$ 0

* Based on percentage directly related to tourist attendance N/A – Not Applicable

NEXT STEPS:

Town Staff will notify organizations of award amount and requirements.

SUMMARY:

Below are the applications received for quarter ending December 31, 2025 and ATAC’s recommendation for each:

Requesting Organization	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended
The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2026 Mayfest Weekend	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Beaufort Water Search and Rescue: Replacement of Boat	20,000	0
Total for Quarter Ending September 30, 2025	\$ 45,000	\$ 25,000

ATTACHMENTS:

1. ATAC draft meeting minutes from February 17, 2026
2. The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2026 Mayfest Weekend Grant Application
3. The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2026 Mayfest Weekend ATAC Staff Report and Scoring Sheet
4. Beaufort Water Search and Rescue: Replacement of Boat Grant Application
5. Beaufort Water Search and Rescue: Replacement of Boat ATAC Staff Report and Scoring Sheet
6. Previously Funded Grant Listing
7. Recommended Motions