

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: February 17, 2026
 SUBJECT: The Rotary Club of Bluffton: 2026 Mayfest Weekend in Bluffton
 PROJECT MANAGER: Jeremy Bullock, Grants Administrator

Summarized below is the application from The Rotary Club of Bluffton for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and expenses related to providing for tourists for the 2026 Mayfest Weekend in Bluffton.

Total Budget, per application: \$59,000
Requested Amount: \$25,000
Percentage of Request^: 42%

^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, per budget form		Budget per Category (based on Budget Form), corrected as needed
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$15,200		\$15,200
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	6,000		6,000
Public Facilities	5,000	*	5,000
Municipality and County Services	4,000	*	4,000
Tourist Transportation	6,000	*	6,000
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	15,609.88		25,599.88
Total	\$51,809.88		\$61,799.88

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

Budgeted Eligible Expenses Summary, based on submitted Line-Item Budget Form:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$15,200

- Local Newspaper, Regional Newspaper, Magazine Radio & Television ads, posters/banners/signage, HHI/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner and graphic design of advertisements

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$6,000

- Rentals of tables, chairs, stages, tents

Public Facilities:

Total budget \$5,000

- Rental of portable/temporary restrooms for attendees (\$4,000) and park rental (\$1,000)

Municipality and County Services:

Total budget \$4,000

- Dumpster Rental, Security provided by BPD (\$1,000), Security not provided by BPD (\$3,000)

Tourist Transportation:

Total budget \$6,000

- Old Town Trolley shuttles for attendees

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$25,599.88

- Vendor licenses, entertainment, merchandise, drinks and banners.

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

Amount Requested	Advertising (15)	Festival/Event (5)	Bluffton Event (5)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$25,000	11	5	5	3	4	3	32	

Advertising: Comprises about 61% of the funds requested. Advertising will be placed in local and regional marketing vehicles.

Festival/Event: Mayfest is a one-day festival held the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend each year from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Food, music, craft and artisan vendors line the streets to celebrate the quirky, eclectic, different and unique people and identity of Bluffton.

Bluffton Event: Mayfest is held in Old Town Bluffton.

Tourism Draw %: Tourists comprised 35% of the 2025 Mayfest Event attendees; zip codes were collected as attendees boarded the shuttles.

Benefit to Tourism: Additional advertising dollars would allow for the event to be marketed in out-of-town markets as a Mother's Day weekend destination, thus increasing Bluffton tourism numbers and revenue.

Self-Sufficiency %: Amount requested is 40% of total expenses budget. Revenues of \$77,272 (not including an ATAX award) are anticipated from merchandise and alcohol sales, vendor fees and sponsorships and include the value of in-kind contributions. Based on the budget submitted, a profit of approximately \$15,473 is anticipated.

Previous Funding Amounts							
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Lapsed	Comments
2025	\$24,000	26%	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$16,737.05*	\$7,262.95*	*Pending; final report/reimbursement under review
2024	\$15,000	29%	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$18,198.05	\$6,801.95	Final Report submitted; Reimbursement disbursed

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$25,000 for the 2026 Mayfest event.

TOWN OF BLUFFTON ATAX GRANT APPLICATION SCORING SHEET

Entity: **The Rotary Club of Bluffton**

Project: **2026 MayFest**

Project Type: **Event/Festival**

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 SUFFICIENCY	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		