

# ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: May 21, 2024  
 SUBJECT: The Bluffton MLK Observance Committee: 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluffton Juneteenth Festival Weekend  
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Bluffton MLK Observance Committee for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising, facilities, security and tourist transportation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Bluffton Juneteenth Festival Weekend.

**Total Budget: \$58,500**

**Requested Amount: \$20,000**

**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		Recommended ATAF Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$15,500		\$15,500
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	18,000		2,190
Public Facilities	2,500	*	1,050
Municipality and County Services	5,000	*	
Tourist Transportation	3,000	*	1,260
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	14,500		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,500</b>		<b>\$20,000</b>

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

#### Budgeted Expenses:

##### Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$15,500

- Includes design of ads, banners, signs, posters and fliers, cost of print, radio and digital ads and event photography/videography.

##### Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$18,000

- Includes venue, tent, stage, chairs and production rentals; cost of venue rental (\$10,000) will be donated as an in-kind service.

##### Public Facilities:

Total budget \$2,500

- Sanitation expense

##### Municipality and County Services:

Total budget \$5,000

- For Police/Security

##### Tourist Transportation:

Total budget \$3,000

- For Shuttles/Trolleys

##### Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$14,500

- Expenses related to catering, entertainment and miscellaneous fees (insurance, permits, printing, etc.)

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

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Festival / Event (5)	Bluffton Event (5)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$20,000	10	4	5	4	4	3	30	

Advertising: Of the requested funds, approximately 78% is related to advertising and promotion. Specifics regarding where print advertising would run or be broadcast were not included in the application.

Festival/Event: The annual Bluffton Juneteenth Festival Weekend spans three days; Black Food Truck Friday on June 14, the Bluffton Juneteenth Festival on June 15 and the Jazz Brunch on June 16.

Bluffton Event: The Black Food Truck Friday event will be held at Buckwalter Commerce Park and the Juneteenth Festival and Jazz Brunch will be hosted at Burnt Church Distillery.

Tourism Draw %: In 2023, both the Black Food Truck Friday and Juneteenth Festival events averaged a 70% tourist rate. The Sunday Brunch, which was capped at 150 tickets, saw a tourist rate at over 50%. Attendees came from Savannah, Beaufort, Jacksonville, Charleston, Charlotte, Atlanta, Panama City, Baltimore, Tulsa, Los Angeles, and New York, amongst others.

Benefit to Tourism: Because this festival spans a weekend, local hotels are booked while Bluffton shops and restaurants are patroned resulting in increased revenues across the town.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is approximately 42% of the total projected festival budget of \$58,500. Other sources of income include in-kind donations, private support, cash sponsorships and Jazz Brunch ticket sales.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2023	\$20,000	40%	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$13,71.26	Final Report Submitted; Final Reimbursement Request Received/Paid
2022	\$28,400	60%	\$21,774	\$21,774	\$16,881.30	
2021	\$27,500	50%	\$27,500	\$27,500	\$20,396	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

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The Committee recommends funding \$20,000 for advertising and promotion, facilities for civic and cultural events, public facilities, and tourist transportation expenses.