

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: November 19, 2024
 SUBJECT: Historic Bluffton Foundation: Heyward House Museum Operations
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Historic Bluffton Foundation for Accommodations Tax grant dollars to operate and maintain the Heyward House. During the past two application periods, HBF has received awards totaling \$80,000 towards this annual budget to support the operation of the Heyward House as the Town's official Welcome Center. This application, and those received going forward, are for the Heyward House as a museum. This request covers the period January 1 - March 31, 2025.

Total Budget: \$599,600

Requested Amount: \$40,000

Percentage of Request^: 46.74%

^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		ATAC Recommended
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$12,000		\$12,000
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	452,900		28,000
Public Facilities			
Municipality and County Services	2,800	*	
Tourist Transportation		*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	131,900		
Total	\$599,600		\$40,000

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total budget \$12,000

- Includes ads in local newspapers and magazines, regional magazines, social media posts, printing and walking maps

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total budget \$452,900

- Of the total, \$248,600 is for structural drawings, bid ready plans and construction of structural repairs; HBF has secured a SC Parks Grant covering this full amount
- \$20,300 is budgeted towards repairs of the facility
- \$184,000 towards salaries and benefits.

Municipality and County Services

Total budget \$2,800

- Trash and security services not provided by the Bluffton Police Department

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total budget \$131,900

- Operating expenses including insurance, utilities, bank fees, gift shop items, postage, dues and subscriptions, office supplies, equipment upgrades, web site expenses, and contracted services such as accounting, cleaning, landscaping and pest control.

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

Amount Recommended	Advertising (15)	Tourism Draw % (5)	Benefit to Tourism (5)	Self-Sufficiency % (5)	Misc. (10)	Total of 40 possible	Comments
\$40,000	7	4	4	4	8	27	

Advertising: Of the total projected annual budget of \$599,600, \$12,000 (or 2%) is anticipated to be spent on advertising; this encompasses social media engagement, email marketing, an ad in the HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Vacation Planner, local publications such as City Sun, Bluffton Today, Lowcountry Weekly and the Island Packet, Tourism and Travel websites (Visit Hilton Head and TripAdvisor), distribution of brochures and flyers locally, local event partnerships and distribution of promotional materials at local community events.

Tourism Draw %: In 2023, the Heyward House Museum and Welcome Center served approximately 20,000 visitors with 83%, or 16,600, of those being non-locals.

Benefit to Tourism: Visitors to The Heyward House Museum and Garvin Garvey House contribute to the local economy by spending on dining, shopping and other attractions. These sites serve as key cultural destinations that encourage longer stays and repeat visits.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Combined with the \$80,000 previously awarded, this request would increase the Town's support of HBF to 20% for Fiscal Year 2025. Other revenue sources include a SC Parks Grant covering 100% of planned Capital Improvements, Beaufort County ATAX funds, donations, rental income, merchandise sales, venue rentals, memberships, house tours and special events.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2025	\$40,000	47%	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0	October - December 2024 expenses; report not yet due
2025	\$40,000	47%	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0	July - September 2024 expenses; report not yet submitted
2024	\$150,000	53%	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	Expenses through June 2024; Final Report submitted
2023	\$175,000	82%	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$158,298	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$40,000 for eligible expenses.