

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: November 19, 2024
 SUBJECT: The New Bluffton Worship: 2024 Christmas Eve Under the Stars
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from The New Bluffton Worship for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and promotion, security and facilities costs for the Christmas Eve Under the Stars event.

Total Budget: \$46,410

Requested Amount: \$28,810

Percentage of Request^: 61.8%

^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	\$11,000		\$11,000
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	14,100		14,100
Public Facilities			
Municipality and County Services	960	*	
Tourist Transportation	-	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	20,350		
Total	\$46,410		\$25,100

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total Budget: \$11,000

- Print ads in The Jasper Sun, The Bluffton Sun, Bluffton Today and CB2 Magazine, which also include online ads with these publications
- Digital Ads on Google and Social Media (Facebook and Instagram)
- Spots on WHHI and WSAV
- Banners hung around the community and postcards sent to Beaufort, Jasper County and parts of Chatham County as well as to friends and family that live in Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$14,100

- Rental of venue, stage and sound, tent over stage, and chairs

Municipality & County Services*:

Total Budget \$960

- Security provided by Bluffton Police Department, which will be covered by Local ATAX if a grant is awarded

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$20,350

- Candles and holders for “Silent Night”, Volunteer uniforms, refreshments, paper products, gift bags and administrative costs (office supplies, click counters)

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
\$28,810	7	4	5	2	3	3	24	

Advertising: Approximately 38% of requested funds will be spent on local newspaper and magazine advertising, as well as local banners and signage, regional postcard mailers, social media posts, and local and regional radio advertising.

Festival/Event: To be held on the evening of December 24, 2024.

Bluffton Event: The event will be held at Oyster Factory Park.

Tourism Draw %: An estimated 37% of attendees were tourists at the 2023 event.

Benefit to Tourism: Folks from more than 10 South Carolina zip codes outside of Bluffton and HHI attended in 2023; zip codes from 22 states other than South Carolina as well as Washington, D.C. and Canada were also recorded. Additionally, the event is livestreamed to promote Bluffton and generate interest in and travel to the community.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): The request is around 62% of the total budget. Cash donations, vendor fees and donated items also contribute to the event.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2024	\$23,110	77.5%	\$15,280	\$15,280	\$9,070.05	Final Report Submitted

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$25,100 for eligible expenses.