

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

STAFF REPORT

Department of Finance & Administration



MEETING DATE: November 19, 2024
 SUBJECT: Farmers Market of Bluffton: 2025 Expenses
 PROJECT MANAGER: Shannon Milroy, Budget, Grants & Procurement Administrator

Summarized below is the application from the Farmers Market of Bluffton, Inc. for Accommodations Tax grant dollars in support of advertising and facility support for the weekly Bluffton Farmer's Market.

Total Budget: \$147,600

Requested Amount: \$55,300

Percentage of Request^: 37.5%

^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 ATAX Funds
Advertising & Promotion of Tourism or Arts and Cultural Events	\$43,200		\$43,200
Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events	20,000		12,100
Public Facilities	-		
Municipality and County Services	-	*	
Tourist Transportation	-	*	
Other/Ineligible Project Expenses	84,400		
Total	\$147,600		\$55,300

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

Budgeted Expenses Summary:

Advertising & Promotion:

Total Budget: \$43,200

- Monthly advertising in Local Life, CH2/CB2, The Bluffton/Hilton Head/Sun City Sun, and HHI-Bluffton Chamber or Commerce Vacation Planner as well as weekly newsletters and text alerts and across social media platforms
- Rack cards at Interstate Welcome Centers and airports
- Included in the Discovery Map of the Carolinas

Facilities for Civic and Cultural Events:

Total Budget: \$20,000

- Heyward House/Martin Family Park rental for market overflow is \$15,000 annually but half that total is donated in-kind for a net expense of \$7,500 per year
- The remaining \$5,000 is for support with rental of tents, tables, chairs, cones, etc.

Other/Ineligible Project Expenses:

Total Budget: \$84,400

- Entertainment, administrative costs, insurance, supplies, salaries, and merchandise as well as equipment storage/office expense, which is donated in-kind.

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
\$55,300	9	5	5	4	4	4	31	

Advertising: 78% of requested funds will be spent on advertising, which will mostly run in local and regional publications as well as digitally.

Festival/Event: Weekly event held every Thursday to attract and provide for tourists; in 2025, will be held from January 9th to December 18th.

Bluffton Event: Held in Old Town Bluffton at Martin Family Park with overflow space provided at the Hayward House Common Grounds.

Tourism Draw %: Approximately 75%; data is collected informally by taking sample verbal zip code surveys at different times and different seasons when volunteers are available.

Benefit to Tourism: Many visitors are from Beaufort, Savannah, and Hilton Head Island, as well as vacationers visiting from other states and countries.

Self-Sufficiency % (Financial Need): Requesting approximately 38% of the total budget. Additional revenue streams include in-kind services and donations, contracted and daily sponsorships, vendor fees, table/tent rentals and merchandise sales.

Previous Funding Amounts						
Fiscal Year	Requested Amount	% of Budget	Advisory Committee Recommendation	Town Council Approved	Expended	Comments
2024	\$55,300	38%	\$55,300	\$55,300	\$19,059.20	Through July 2024
2023	\$50,500	40%	\$50,500	\$50,500	\$34,360.16	
2022	\$37,900	38%	\$37,900	\$37,900	\$34,923.65	
2021	\$33,800	35%	\$33,800	\$33,800	\$30,050.04	

Accommodations Tax Committee Recommendations and Comments:

The Committee recommends funding \$55,300 for eligible expenses.