



ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

11:00am, Wednesday, November 8, 2023

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Chas Akers, Doug Truslow, Ray Burns, Barb Bergwerf, Rebecca Kovalich, Chrissy Lorenz, Gloria Clarke

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Treasurer Hamilton

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes – October 5, 2023

Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2023 meeting, and Mr. Burns seconded the motion.

Mr. Akers asked the word "not" be added to a sentence at the top of the third page regarding the consideration of Chamber of Commerce's funding application.

A vote was taken with all in favor of the minutes as amended.

3. Financial Statements

Treasurer Hamilton reported that the fund balance as of 9/30/23 is \$4 million, which is a \$1.3 million increase over last year. A \$12,000 grant for body armor and \$53,000 in interest income have been received into FY24. She reviewed the expenditures to date.

She also reported that she has received all the required information from the CVB she needs to complete the TERC report this week.

Treasurer Hamilton confirmed that the balance of sponsorship funds is \$35,000.

4. Old Business -- none

5. New Business

A. Approval of FY23 over budget expenditures

MOTION: Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the \$338 overage for the irrigation at Breach Inlet message board and the \$3,439 overage for the Public Works F-150 replacement truck. Ms. Lorenz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Presentations of new applications for second round funding for accommodations tax funds in FY24

i. Author's Event by Mary Alice Monroe

Mary Alice Monroe came before the Committee to request \$20,000 to help fund further advertising and messaging to expand the author's event and literacy fundraiser she will host in Wild Dunes in January 2024. She shared a video showcasing the 2023 event.

Ms. Monroe explained how the event is promoted online and through social media as well as the offerings for the 2024 event. She and her staff will provide City staff with further information about their room night breakdown provided with their application.

Mr. Truslow would like to see Ms. Monroe have her 501(C)(3) application in place before awarding any funding. Administrator Fragoso said the funding could be approved contingent upon confirmation of their 501(C)(3) status. She also noted that having a 501(C)(3) is not a requirement of the State ATAX law but only a guideline set up by the ATAX Committee.

ii. Dave Landeo and Ben Bounds – Songwriters' Festival

Dave Landeo and Ben Bounds explained their vision to create a songwriters' festival on the Isle of Palms. Mr. Landeo held a small version of the event at The Dinghy earlier this year and would like to expand it beyond their parking lot. Mr. Bounds shared his extensive experience in organizing and promoting events on Folly Beach and more recently in Columbia. They would like to begin promoting a February 2024 event.

Committee members expressed concern about funding an event that has no historical data to show its impact on the Isle of Palms. Administrator Fragoso stated there would not be enough time before February to prepare City resources for a sizable February event. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Landeo and Mr. Bounds will reapply for funding for FY25.

iii. LaVanda Brown – YWCA of Greater Charleston MLK Event

LaVanda Brown of the YWCA of Greater Charleston came before the Committee requesting \$10,000 for a sponsor/donor event to be held in Wild Dunes as part of a larger celebration honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. in January 2024. Administrator Fragoso stated that Ms. Brown had brought this event before City Council a few months ago. She said City Council embraced the idea of the event and suggested Ms. Brown come before ATAX to request funding.

Committee members expressed concern about this event also not having historical data to show that the attendees stay on the Isle of Palms and that they come from outside of the 50-mile tourism radius. Ms. Brown shared some names of those companies whose representatives would be invited and added that speakers are coming from all over the state. The current estimate for the event is 180 people.

Committee members expressed concern about putting ATAX funds towards an invitation-only event.

Administrator Fragoso explained to the Committee that the “heads in beds” is not in the State ATAX law and only a guideline created by the ATAX Committee to consider when discussing an application for funding.

iv. IOP VFW Post Request – Window replacement

George Page of the IOP VFW thanked the Committee for the support of previous projects. He explained the request of \$2500 that will go towards the \$5200 cost of replacing the windows that overlook the beach. He provided many details on the volume of visitors the VFW hosts each year.

Ms. Bergwerf said she believes the cost of maintaining the building should be a concern of the post. Mr. Page explained that their golf tournament fundraiser does not generate as much income as it has in the past.

Mr. Burns later added that using ATAX funds to help repair the walkway and elevator at the VFW Post made sense, but he believes the window replacement should be at their expense.

MOTION: Mr. Truslow made a motion to recommend to City Council an award of \$20,000 to Mary Alice Monroe’s writer’s workshop contingent upon her organization securing its 501(C)(3) status. Ms. Bergwerf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Clarke made a motion to recommend to City Council an award of \$10,000 to the YWCA Sponsor/Donor Dinner at Wild Dunes. Mr. Akers seconded the motion.

MOTION: Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to amend the award amount to \$5,000. Mr. Akers seconded the motion.

Committee members continued to discuss their concerns about the lack of historical success data for this event as well as its exclusivity. Ms. Clarke noted that the event will bring people to the island in January and may result in less than 30 rooms being rented. Ms. Lorenz said she would like to offer a lower amount towards a new event that brings people to the island.

MOTION: Ms. Lorenz made a motion to amend the award amount to \$2,500. Ms. Bergwerf seconded the motion. The motion to amend was passed unanimously.

VOTE: The vote on the motion as amended was as follows:

Ayes: Lorenz, Akers, Bergwerf, Clarke

Nays: Kovalich, Truslow, Burns

The motion passed 4-3.

6. Miscellaneous Business

The next meeting of the ATAX Committee will be Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 11am to review the applications for FY25 funding.

Ms. Kovalich asked for the State ATAX law and the ATAX Committee guidelines to be sent to her for review.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Truslow made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Bergwerf seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk