



ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10:00am, Wednesday, April 9, 2025

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Rebecca Kovalich, Park Williams, Barb Bergwerf, Rod Turnage, Mike Boykin (via Zoom)

Absent: Chrissy Lorenz, Margaret Miller

Staff Present: Administrator Kerr, Director Hamilton

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes – March 12, 2025

Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2025 meeting, and Mr. Turnage seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentation of ATAX application

Mary Alice Monroe Author's Event

Ms. Monroe shared that 50% of attendees who answered their survey stayed on the Isle of Palms during 2025's event. People from all over the country attended the event. The Committee thanked Ms. Monroe for her very thorough application.

5. Financial Statements

Director Hamilton said the City has received \$2.1 million in ATAX funds as of March 31, 2025. ATAX revenues are pacing higher than last year. Expenses for the first 9 months of FY25 are just over \$1 million of a budget of \$4 million.

6. Old Business -- none

7. New Business

A. Consideration of FY26 Budget for State Accommodations Tax Funds

Director Hamilton shared changes made to the FY26 ATAX budget which include an increase in the sponsorship funds from \$50,000 to \$75,000 and the deferral of funds for the Waterway Boulevard project to FY26.

Discussion ensued about beautification projects around the island. Administrator Kerr said that sidewalk improvements are funded by CTC funds and recent beach access path improvements were funded by Greenbelt funds and State budget allocations. Administrator Kerr said the

Committee could identify specific needs, investigate costs, and present such projects for the FY27 budget. Ms. Bergwerf suggested allocating more funds to the City's landscape contractor to do additional work. Administrator Kerr suggested engaging a landscape designer to create designs. Ms. Kovalich suggested speaking with Robert Chestnut who lives on Palm Boulevard and is known for his beautification efforts.

B. Consideration of the FY26 budget from the Charleston Visitor's Bureau

Catherine Dority, Lori Smith, Chris Campbell, and Ami Calhoun of the Charleston Visitor's Bureau shared the myriad plans they have to promote the Isle of Palms in FY26. They will incorporate a year-round approach with a focus on the off-season, promoting the Isle of Palms as a family-friendly place to visit.

They detailed how they have and will continue to highlight the Isle of Palms in their holiday campaigns, digital streaming campaigns, and through VRBO. They will be able to share a more detailed look at the success of FY25's campaigns later this year. They will continue to work on the walkability study, the IOP Thrives initiative (the Community Enrichment Task Force recommendations), and with an outside agency on building an IOP brand.

Ms. Calhoun discussed details about the group sales business and the IOP-specific efforts they have made to attract groups to the island. Mr. Campbell spoke about the CVB's continued collaboration with the City on the shared staff person as well as examples of earned media.

Their FY26 budget covers 5 TERC-approved categories: advertising and marketing, marketing support, group sales, media efforts, and visitor services. Ms. Smith explained that the CVB is still early in its budget process. There was a brief conversation about the CVB's efforts to promote the island for the off-season.

Ms. Kovalich asked what could be done to make the island more of a draw in the off season. Ms. Smith said "If you create it, we will sell it."

Mr. Campbell said the effects of recent changes to Federal policy have not made an impact on travel as of yet. They are tracking it weekly. Occupancy rates are on par with this same time last year.

C. FY25 Budget overages

MOTION: Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the budget overage of \$1 for the debt service on the Fire Department ladder truck and the \$682 overage for the Police Department drone. Mr. Turnage seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Miscellaneous Business

The next meeting of the ATAX Committee will be Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 10am. The Committee will need to vote on the City proposed FY26 ATAX budget and the CVB's proposed FY26 ATAX budget.

9. Adjournment

Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Turnage seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:21am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk