

**TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND  
ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Date:** July 15, 2014 **Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Members Present:** Mike Alsko, *Chairman*; Rob Bender, *Vice-Chairman*; Trish Heichel, Bob Spear, Brad Marra

**Members Absent:** Stewart Brown, Charles Miner

**Staff Present:** Steve Riley, *Town Manager*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Susan Simmons, *Director of Finance*; Rene Phillips, *Website Administrator*; Erica Madhere, *Finance Assistant*

**Council Present:** Kim Likins

**Others Present:** Frank Soule, Members of the Public

**Media:** None

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**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

**2. FOIA Compliance:**

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

**3. Swearing in of Reappointed and New Members:**

Town Manager Steve Riley swore in reappointed committee member Trish Heichel and newly appointed committee member Brad Marra. Mr. Riley congratulated them and thanked them for their willingness to serve on the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee.

**4. Crystal Award Presentation:**

Town Manager Steve Riley presented Frank Soule with a Crystal Award and thanked him on behalf of the Town of Hilton Head Island for his service on the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee from July, 2008 through June, 2014.

Mr. Soule stated his appreciation for serving on the Committee, for being able to learn so much about the community in general, and his gratification for the improvements the Committee has accomplished over the last six years. He welcomed the new members and wished them luck.

**5. Reception:**

A short reception was held in recognition of the newly appointed, reappointed, and out-going members of the Committee.

**6. Special Orders:**

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman:

- a. Trish Heichel nominated Mike Alsko as Chairman. Rob Bender seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Mr. Alsko was elected unanimously. (5-0)
- b. Trish Heichel nominated Rob Bender as Vice Chairman. Bob Spear seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Mr. Bender was elected unanimously. (5-0)

**7. Approval of Minutes:**

Ms. Heichel moved to approve the Minutes of April 3, 2014. Mr. Bender seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

**8. Chairman's Report:**

None

**9. Unfinished Business**

None

**10. New Business:**

**a. Review and discuss revisions for the 2015 Accommodations Tax Grant Application**

Formatting modifications have been made to the 2015 Accommodations Tax Grant Application in an effort to make it more clear and concise so that the Applicant can easily understand and provide the information the Committee needs in order to fully evaluate the request. Some of the major changes include consolidating information into a Summary Page, rearranging questions and adding word limits to the answer fields, and requesting two years of financial statements instead of three years. Rene Phillips, Website Administrator for the Town, suggested adding a specific option to include a USCB visitor survey as part of the upload process, and the Committee agreed this was a good idea since many organizations use this survey tool and it provides excellent data for analyzing the grant requests.

Another revision that has been discussed both prior to and at this meeting is a new process for applying for the Non-Recurring funds that remain from the previous grant cycle. One idea that had been debated was to offer two applications during the standard application period in the fall, one for the recurring funds and one for the non-recurring funds. On the other hand, it has recently been determined there is an immediate need within the community for the non-recurring funding. The Committee discussed various ways to accomplish expediting the process for awarding Non-Recurring grants so that applicants, the Committee and Town Staff are not overburdened. They decided it would be best to utilize a separate streamlined application for Non-Recurring funds, to request a budget for the specific project but only request financial statements if it is a new or joint organization, to request Board approval of the application, and to hold a short question and answer period instead of a formal hearing before the Committee. Susan Simmons, Finance Director for the Town, recommended stressing that strong preference for Non-Recurring grants will be given to unique one-time projects. She suggested making the streamlined Non-Recurring application available on July 28 and due on August 15, expanding the meeting and applicant workshop on September 4 to include the review of the Non-Recurring applications, along with brief applicant Q & A sessions, and possible recommendations for the Non-Recurring grants the same day. The Committee discussed this timeline and agreed with it. Discussion regarding the separate Non-Recurring

application process was opened up for public comment, and Mary Briggs, President of the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra voiced a concern that many organizations operate with a reduced staff during the summer and the Board does not meet until the fall, which could make it difficult to get an official Board approval of the application. Kathi Bateson with the Arts Center echoed Ms. Briggs' concern and pointed out the method of an organization's approval should be based on the organization's rules. She stated the application for public funds could also be approved by an authorized delegate instead of a full Board, and the Committee agreed with this statement. Carolyn Vanagel with the Hilton Head Motoring Festival approached the Dias and asked for a guideline on who can apply for a Non-Recurring fund grant and for what sort of projects. Mr. Alsko explained that no qualifying organization will be prohibited from applying and the type of project cannot be mandated, however, the Committee suggests that the application should be for a one-time project that will positively impact tourism on the Island. The Non-Recurring grant is not meant for traditional operating expenses, but something more unique. He reminded the audience that every application the Committee reviews, whether for Recurring or Non-Recurring funds, will be analyzed for how well tourism will be driven or enhanced.

Ms. Heichel made a Motion to expedite the Non-Recurring funding by having a modified application available to the public on July 28 at 8:00 am and with a deadline for submission by 4:00 pm on August 15, to reconvene on September 4 for the standard applicant workshop at 9:00 am and the Non-Recurring application review, Q & A sessions, and recommendations beginning at 10:00 am on the same day. Mr. Bender seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5-0. Ms. Heichel and Mr. Bender agreed to work on the modified application with Mr. Alsko and submit it to the Town as soon as possible. Erica Madhere, Finance Assistant for the Town, will revise the schedule and send an email explaining the changes to all known ATAX applicants. Rene Phillips will also send out a notice of the changes via the Town's e-subscription service.

Next, Mr. Bender made a motion to approve the revised standard 2015 Accommodations Tax Grant Application. Mr. Spear seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote (5-0).

**11. Adjournment:**

Ms. Heichel made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Bender seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

**Approved:**

**Respectfully submitted:**

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**Mike Alsko, Chairman**

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**Erica Madhère, Secretary**