

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

**Approved**

**Date:** June 24, 2015 **Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Members Present:** Mike Alsko, *Chairman*; Rob Bender, *Vice-Chairman*; Trish Heichel, Stewart Brown, Charles Miner, Brad Marra

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Susan Simmons, *Director of Finance*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; Marcy Benson; *Senior Grants Administrator*; Rene Phillips, *Website Administrator*; Erica Madhere, *Finance Administrator*

**Council Present:** John McCann

**Others Present:** Carolyn Vanagel, Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance; Kathi Bateson and Jeffrey Reeves, Arts Center of Coastal Carolina; Frank Soule, Island Recreation Association; Lindsay Fruchtl, Brenda Ciapanna, and more representatives from the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/VCB, Eleanor O'Key, Lowcountry Inside Track; Willis Shay; and members of the public

**Media:** None

---

**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. Approval of Minutes:**

Mr. Brown moved to approve the Minutes of March 25, 2015. Mr. Miner seconded the motion. The Motion passed unanimously. (6-0)

**4. Chairman's Report:**

None

**6. Unfinished Business:**

None

**7. New Business:**

**a. Discuss improvements to the Accommodations Tax grant process**

Chairman Mike Alsko explained to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee that the Finance and Administrative Committee and Town Council have expressed an interest in an enhanced framework for the State Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Grant process, to possibly include a prioritized ranking of applicants, specifically for applicants requesting over \$100,000. Mr. Alsko explained his personal concern that the evaluation of the ATAX Grant applications is a subjective process, and he fears the ATAX Committee may not be able to deliver a prioritized / point-based ranking system. He asked the Committee Members for

opinions and feedback, and Charlie Miner stated his belief that improvements to the process are needed. He believes that repeat applicants should be required to report the results of the previous grant, and that applicants requesting over \$100,000 should be held to a higher standard. On the other hand, Mr. Miner also expressed his opinion that a point-based ranking system would be convenient; however, it would not be achievable. Brad Marra asked what other types of systems exist throughout the State, and Mr. Alsko spoke about the procedures used in Charleston and Greenville, which he found particularly interesting, and encouraged the Committee Members to familiarize themselves with these procedures, and continue researching other areas, as well.

The Committee Members continued to discuss the potential for a point-based ranking system, and Mr. Bender pointed out that each Member of the Committee was selected based on specific experience within a particular sector of the community, and if the recommendation process were to turn to a structure based on a formula, it would not be as effective as utilizing the experience of the Committee Members. Stewart Brown and Trish Heichel agreed with Mr. Bender and each stated the Committee can improve by requiring more defined results from the applicants, and feedback on how the grant money was spent, which would assist in the evaluation of the applications. Mr. Miner also agreed, and suggested creating an "Executive Summary" form to be completed and submitted with the application. The Committee discussed the Executive Summary idea more, and Mr. Brown shared his vision of an outline which would ask the applicant for information on each topic, plan, budget, actual spend, and result. The consensus among the Committee was that an Executive Summary could help to clearly define the applicant's goals, objectives, and prior results. It could help hold the applicants accountable for the money that was spent, without being too cold about the process, as if they were relying solely on a formula. The Executive Summary could also benefit the organizations in evaluating their own success, in addition to assisting with the Committee's evaluation process.

The Committee members were in agreement that the process is evolving for the better and with the recent creation of a Liaison between Town Council and the ATAX Committee, a conduit is now in place for better communication and further enhancement of the ATAX grant process.

The Committee asked for public comment, and Mr. Willis Shay, former Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Member, shared his enthusiasm that the ATAX Committee is committed to the tasks at hand, that Town Council is so involved, and that this proposed evaluation process will also be an asset to the applicant's organization. Ms. Kathi Bateson, President and CEO of the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, spoke next and requested clear communication from the ATAX Committee regarding the Executive Summary criteria. Ms. Carolyn Vanagel, President of the Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance, agreed with the Committee that accountability is important, but asked that they allow time for the applicants to become accustomed to gathering data in a manner that will translate to the new format. Finally, Mr. John McCann, Town Council Member, Chairman of the Finance and Administrative Committee, and newly appointed Liaison between Town Council and the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee, stated that he is comfortable with the ATAX Committee's thoughts on accountability and was pleased with what he observed during this meeting.

Mr. Alsko asked the Committee to start brainstorming about the criteria for the Executive Summary before the next ATAX Committee meeting on July 14, and to be ready for further discussion on the topic at that time.

**8. Adjournment:**

Mr. Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Heichel seconded the Motion. The Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

**Approved:** July 14, 2015

**Respectfully submitted:**

---

**Mike Alsko, Chairman**

---

**Erica Madhere, Secretary**