



Town of Hilton Head Island
Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee
Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.
MEETING MINUTES

Present from the Committee: Dru Brown, *Chairman*; Jim Fluker, *Vice-Chairman*; Richard Thomas, Stephen Arnold and Julie Martin

Present from Town Council: None

Present from Town Staff: Josh Gruber, *Deputy Town Manager*; John Troyer, *Director of Finance*; Cindaia Ervin, *Finance Assistant*

Present from the 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. Roll Call- See as noted above.

4. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Brown asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Fluker moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Mr. Thomas seconded. By way of roll call, the motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Meeting July 9, 2020

Chairman Brown asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from July 9, 2020. Mr. Fluker moved to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. Mr. Thomas seconded. By way of roll call, the motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

6. New Business

a. Calendar Year 2021 Accommodations Tax Grant Application Workshop to discuss the Application procedure, expectations and to address Applicant questions and concerns.

Andrew Brown, Chairman, invited Rene Phillips, Website Administrator for the Town, to walk workshop attendees through the 2021 Accommodations Tax Grant online application process. As this meeting was virtual, Mr. Brown asked all that were participating to hold all questions and comments until the end of Ms. Phillips presentation. Ms. Phillips explained the application in detail and highlighted common questions she has received from past years. She informed the applicants of helpful hints including not to “cut and paste” responses from Microsoft Word since doing so will add background data that can affect the over-all word count when answering questions. She also mentioned that when logging in with the organization’s username and password, the application will pre-populate the 2021 application with information submitted for the 2020 application, including the budgets and financial statements, so that only the current years budgetary information will be need to be uploaded. Ms. Phillips emphasized that if an applicant finds they have uploaded a document in error, or if technical assistance is needed, they should contact her for help via phone

or email. Finally, she reminded the group that September 4th at 4:00 pm is the absolute deadline for the 2021 Accommodations Tax Grant application submittals.

Following Ms. Phillips presentation, Chairman Brown opened the floor to those that had questions regarding the application or process for 2021. Many virtual attendees questioned if their organization would not need funding for 2021, would they be required to apply for funding to use approved carry-over funds. Mr. Brown stated that no, if the organization would be utilizing funds previously approved by Town Council for carry-over and they were confident they would not need any additional funds for the new year, there would be no need to do anything further, however, Town Staff may require additional follow up data. Cindaia Ervin, Committee Secretary, informed the Committee that she would provide a year-to-date budget report at the October 1st Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Meeting so they could see where each 2020 applicant stands during the review and hearings. Additional questions arose regarding the use of tourist and visitor numbers if the organization had to cancel its event due to COVID-19 restrictions. After discussion by the Committee, they agreed that those applying for 2021 funding, should use the most recent data available and asked that the applicants disclose that within the 2021 application if the data used was from the previous or current year. The Committee also felt that the executive summary portion of the application is the ideal area (for those applying for 2021 funds) to explain their organizations affects due to COVID-19. While the Committee understands that this has been a challenging year for everyone, they would like for those applying to be purposeful with their ask. There was clarification needed regarding those that do have carry-over funds and applying for the difference remaining to assist in the funding of its organizational needs. John Troyer, Director of Finance, stated that it is acceptable to lessen their request to account for the use of approved carry-over funds in addition to the 2021 requested funds if awarded. The Town's expectation is Accommodations Tax Funding will be down from pervious years due to COVID-19 so the amount of funds to be awarded may be limited. Mr. Brown thanked Ms. Phillips, Ms. Ervin and Mr. Troyer for their guidance on the application and process and invited the workshop attendees to please contact Town Staff with additional questions or concerns should they have any during the process.

7. Citizen Comments

Public comments concerning today's agenda items were to be submitted electronically via the Town's Open Town Hall portal. The public comment period closed the day prior to the meeting at Noon. At the conclusion of the Open Town Hall, there was no public comment nor did any citizen sign up to speak at today's meeting.

8. Adjournment

At 9:37 a.m., Mr. Fluker moved to adjourn. Mr. Freedman seconded. The motion to adjourn was approved by vote of 5-0.

Submitted by: Cindaia Ervin, Secretary

Approved: _____