

**TOWN OF EDISTO BEACH
ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

May 4, 2023

10:00 A.M.

MINUTES

Town of Edisto Beach
Town Hall
2414 Murray Street
Edisto Beach, SC 29438

Present: Chair Leslie Varner Hurley, Judith Blancett, Mike Hobson, Rick Moore, Robert Pratt, Tyler Von Neida (*Quorum of Committee Present*)

Absent: Matthew Kizer (excused)

Staff Present: Town Administrator Mark Aakhus, Assistant Town Administrator Dee Stalvey

Call to Order

Chair Hurley called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Moore moved to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2023, ATAX Board Meeting. Mr. Hobson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

New Business

ATAX Fund Balance Report

There were no questions or corrections noted for the ATAX Fund Balance Report. Mr. Pratt moved to accept the ATAX Fund Balance Report as presented at this meeting. Ms. Blancett seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

ATAX Project Balance Report

There were no questions or corrections noted for the ATAX Project Balance Report. Mr. Hobson moved to accept the ATAX Project Balance Report as presented at this meeting. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

ATAX Applications

The following applications were received and discussed by the ATAX Board:

SC Lowcountry Tourism Commission (\$36,000)

- Peach Morrison presented an ATAX application in the amount of \$36,000 for the marketing of Edisto Beach, one of the primary destinations of the Lowcountry region. The Commission would use the requested amount for 100% Destination Advertising and Promotion for the period July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023.
- The SC Lowcountry Tourism Commission works with the Edisto Chamber of Commerce, and they attempt to complement each organization's marketing efforts.

- Town Administrator Aakhus asked about dollars specifically spent toward Edisto Beach marketing, and Ms. Morrison noted if we want a certain amount of dollars spent specifically from the Edisto Beach ATAX funds, the organization can do so; Chair Hurley agreed with this and noted Edisto Beach should be featured.
- Mr. Moore asked about the dates of July 2022 to June 2023 for the project period since the period ends in two months. Ms. Morrison noted she can spend the money funded in the next two months.
- Following further discussion from the Board on the amount of time left in the fiscal year and the amount of funds requested, Mr. Von Neida made a motion to approve half of the amount requested, which would be \$18,000, for this fiscal year. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Edisto Art Guild Summer Series 2023, Arts in the Park

- Ms. Kathy Kuntz presented the request from the Edisto Art Guild in the amount of \$3,600 for advertising and marketing of the Summer Series 2023 Arts in the Park.
- Ms. Kuntz noted the Summer Series grows each year, and they will also do additional advertising in the Charleston newspaper for this year's series.
- Following discussion, Chair Hurley made a motion to approve the request from the Edisto Art Guild in the amount of \$3,600 for the Summer Series 2023 Arts in the Park event. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hobson and approved unanimously.

Town of Edisto Beach, Cookin' on the Creek BBQ Festival

- Ms. Phyllis McElveen, Special Projects Coordinator for the Town of Edisto Beach, was present to request \$15,000 for the Town of Edisto Beach Cookin' on the Creek BBQ Festival to be held on October 13-14, 2023, at Bay Creek Park.
- Ms. McElveen noted plans are underway for this annual event, and the ATAX funds would be used for additional promotion and advertising and acquiring more sponsors than last year's festival.
- Chair Hurley asked when the information packets with the list of accommodations are shared with the public. Ms. McElveen noted the BBQ Association links this information to their website which lists all the realty companies. Mr. Von Neida noted we can tap into the resources of the realty companies for the advertisement of the BBQ event.
- Mr. Hobson asked if the money remaining from prior years can be used this year and deducted from the \$15,000 request. Ms. McElveen noted the additional funds will be useful, and Mr. Aakhus noted the \$3600 remaining from the prior year will be used for other preparation needs for this event.
- Mr. Hobson advised this event request to be presented earlier in the year to the ATAX Board, perhaps at the February meeting, in order for the event to be advertised and marketed earlier in the year.
- Following discussion, Mr. Hobson moved to approve the \$15,000 request for the Cookin' on the Creek BBQ Festival. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Town of Edisto Beach Police Department, Police Officer

- Chief Daniel Seyle was present at this meeting to discuss the Edisto Beach Police Department's request of \$152,510 over a two-year period for one police officer, which is necessary for tourism-related public services. This request is to allow the Police Department to continue to employ a full-time police officer through ATAX funds during peak tourist seasons. Additional public service is needed during the tourist season, and this officer will assist in patrolling and protecting residents and visitors. The request includes salary (\$67,230 yearly, includes benefits), vehicle fuel, training, equipment, in-body and in-car camera costs, and radio airtime. All officers and beach patrol wear body camera, so this request is included.
- Board members noted the two-year request, which the Board has not received previously. Mr. Aakhus noted there is no rule prohibiting approval of a two-year request.
- Mr. Hobson noted his opposition to ATAX funding for a police officer, which he believes does not fit the intent of the ATAX funding, and does not generate additional ATAX funds as events, marketing, etc. generates. Chief Seyle noted the Town needs this additional officer due to the visitors to this community, the number of visitors grows every year. Chair Hurley noted these visitors are mainly day-trippers, not "heads and beds."
- Chief Seyle noted this request is not for an additional officer; it keeps us at the same number we have had over the past few years and is a continuation of this ATAX officer position.
- Mr. Pratt noted we cannot be too safe, and any steps we can take to prevent harm to our residents and visitors is certainly important.
- Mr. Moore noted the growth of the West Ashley and Ravenel areas, and how this growth will just continue. He noted tourists are drawn to our beach because of the police presence, and the police here are visible. Chief Seyle noted tourism does put a strain on the department's resources.
- Mr. Hobson asked if ATAX officers are funded across the state. Mr. Aakhus will look into this.
- Chief Seyle noted the additional assistance the Town gets from Colleton County; we always have two deputies assigned to the beach, and the county tries to work with our needs. We are tapping all resources we can.
- Mr. Von Neida asked if tourism didn't exist, would we need this ATAX officer? Chief Seyle replied we would not.
- A motion was made by Mr. Von Neida to approve the two-year request in the amount of \$152,510. Mr. Pratt seconded this motion.
 - Yeas: Ms. Hurley, Mr. Von Neida, Mr. Pratt, Mr. Moore, Ms. Blancett
 - Nays: Mr. Hobson
 - Motion approved.

Town of Edisto Beach Police Department, Beach Patrol

- Chief Seyle presented to the ATAX Board a request in the amount of \$43,800 over a two-year period for the Beach Patrol, which is 100% tourism-related public service. This request is for \$22,100 for the first year, and \$21,700 for the second year, for salary,

uniforms, two body cameras, cups which are distributed to beach-goers as necessary, shelving for storage, and fuel.

- Chief Seyle noted the Beach Patrol sees 90-95% of the visitors to our beach. Beach Patrol ensures ordinances are met; performs other duties such as picking up trash; assists visitors; and calls police as needed.
- Ms. Hurley moved to approve the request for Beach Patrol for a two-year period in the total amount of \$43,800. Ms. Blancett seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Town of Edisto Beach, Bell Bond Debt (\$50,000)

- Mr. Aakhus presented this request for ATAX funds in the amount of \$50,000 for the Bell Bond Debt. He noted \$50,000 has been approved annually since 2008; the bond is set to expire in 2037.
- Mr. Von Neida asked if we should expedite this to pay it sooner rather than later, depending on the interest paid. Mr. Aakhus noted the Town's bond attorneys periodically review the debt and restructure it as necessary.
- Chair Hurley moved to approve the \$50,000 request for ATAX funds for the Bell Bond Debt. Mr. Pratt seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Pickleball Court

- Mr. Aakhus presented this request for \$25,000 for Tourism-Related Facilities to resurface, repair, and restripe the current tennis/pickleball court. The restriping will keep the existing tennis court in place and will increase the pickleball courts from two to four. This project will also include removing trees and vegetation to allow for more parking.
- Pickleball is widely popular. We have a local contingent of players weekly, but tourists also use the pickleball court. Anecdotally, it appears the split for use is 50/50 residents and tourists. The Town provides the pickleball net for check-out to players free of charge.
- Mr. Hobson asked if we have signage at the court. Mr. Aakhus noted we do not have signage, and we also need to do more to advertise the courts as well.
- Mr. Aakhus noted there is no lighting there and no plans for lighting because the courts are located in a residential area.
- Ms. Blancett moved to approve this request in the amount of \$25,000. Ms. Hurley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss Mr. Von Neida made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chair Hurley seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

APPROVED BY THE ATAX BOARD



Donna Iskra, Municipal Clerk
November 2, 2023