



Town of Hilton Head Island
**ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MEETING**
Thursday, November 6, 2025, 9:00 AM
Minutes

Call to Order

Vice Chair Lesch called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present from the Committee: Martin Lesch, Vice Chair; Thomas Dowling; Cecile Eck; John Farrell, Dave Ferguson; Adriaan Radder

Absent from the Committee: Keith Schlegel

Present from Town Council: Alan Perry, Mayor; Patsy Brison, and Alex Brown

Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Eck made a motion to adopt. Mr. Farrell seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2025

Mr. Radder made a motion to adopt. Mr. Dowling seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Regular Meeting Minutes of October 16, 2025

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to adopt. Mr. Dowling seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Regular Meeting Minutes of October 23, 2025

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to adopt. Mr. Dowling seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

New Business

Review & Recommendation for the 2026 Accommodations Tax Grants - Dave Byrd, Finance Director

Michele Bunce, Senior Grant Administrator, opened the floor for the Committee to begin their review and recommendation process for the 2026 Accommodations Tax Grants.

She outlined an overview of the program and recommended that the Committee evaluate all submissions, summarize scoring results, and finalize funding recommendations for consideration by the Finance and Administrative Committee and subsequently Town Council. The Committee was also informed of the updated ATAX Policy adopted in July 2025, which revised the review process and funding approval structure.

During the meeting, staff outlined the background and financial context for the program, noting projected 2026 State Accommodations Tax revenues of \$12,354,522, with approximately \$4,076,992 (33%) allocated for grant awards. The Committee reviewed the structured evaluation process, which included initial application screening for completeness, detailed scoring of proposals based on feasibility, tourism impact, and alignment with program goals, and applicant presentations. Applications were evaluated using established criteria, including potential impact on local tourism, community benefits, and consistency with the Town's strategic objectives, in accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws and oversight by the Tourism Expenditure Review Committee (TERC).

Following discussion, the Committee began its final review of applications to determine funding recommendations. Emphasis was placed on selecting projects that enhance the visitor experience, promote tourism, and contribute to the long-term economic vitality of Hilton Head Island.

The committee reviewed and discussed each grant application, allocating funds over three rounds, with the total amounts allocated in each round as follows:

- **Round 1:** \$4,287,059 allocated
- **Round 2:** \$4,133,136 allocated
- **Round 3:** \$4,076,992 allocated
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The Committee finalized its recommendation to forward to the Finance and Administrative Committee and Town Council for approval.

Town of Hilton Head Island
Accommodations Tax Grants 2026

Grantee Agency	2026 GRANTS					
	2026 Applicant Request	ATAC 1st Round	ATAC 2nd Round	ATAC Recommendation	Finance & Admin Rec.	Town Council Award
Art League of Hilton Head	100,000	100,000	80,000	79,000		
Arts Center of Coastal Carolina	447,000	447,000	440,000	440,000		
Beach Cat Sailors (Previously Paul Miller Fund)	100,000	50,000	50,000	40,000		
Community Foundation of the Lowcountry	16,500	5,000	5,000	App Withdrawn		
David M. Carmines Memorial Foundation	201,095	190,000	185,000	182,000		
Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc.	25,000	20,000	160,000	15,000		
Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island	180,000	160,000	15,000	150,000		
Harbour Town Merchants Association	50,000	50,000	40,000	40,000		
HHI Audubon Society	27,955	22,000	20,000	20,000		
HHI Choral Society	20,000	20,000	18,000	18,000		
HHI Concours d'Elegance	350,000	343,000	340,000	340,000		
HHI Dance Theater	20,000	20,000	20,000	18,000		
Hilton Head Island Airport	175,000	175,000	160,000	160,000		
Hilton Head Island Bridge Association	20,000	17,000	15,000	15,000		
Hilton Head Island Land Trust	50,000	47,000	40,000	40,000		
HHI Rec Assoc. (Wingfest & Other Festivals)	75,000	75,000	75,000	70,000		
HHI St. Patrick's Day Parade	100,000	79,439	79,439	79,095		
HHI Wine and Food Fest	130,000	130,000	130,000	125,000		
HHI Wine & Food, Inc (Rhythm and Brews)	40,000	30,000	28,000	25,000		
HHI Symphony Orchestra	360,000	360,000	350,000	350,000		
Lean Ensemble Theatre	55,000	55,000	50,000	50,000		
Long Cove Club (Darius Rucker Intercollegiate)	67,250	63,320	61,897	61,897		
Lowcountry Golf Course Owners Assoc.	150,000	100,000	100,000	100,000		
Lowcountry Gullah	100,000	95,000	90,000	90,000		
Mitchelville Preservation Project	205,000	205,000	195,000	190,000		
Native Island Business & Community	320,000	246,000	240,000	240,000		
Palmetto Quilt Guild	8,000	8,000	8,000	7,000		
Rotary Club of Hilton Head (Quenchbuggy)	5,000	-	-	-		
Sea Pines Forest Preserve	48,000	48,000	40,000	40,000		
Sea Turtle Patrol HHI	70,000	70,000	70,000	65,000		
Shelter Cove Harbour Company	336,500	300,000	293,800	290,000		
The Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head	45,000	44,300	40,000	40,000		
The Coastal Discovery Museum	400,000	400,000	390,000	395,000		
The First Tee of the Lowcountry	63,593	50,000	50,000	50,000		
The Heritage Library	140,000	125,000	125,000	125,000		
The Outside Foundation	72,000	72,000	65,000	65,000		
The Sandbox	82,200	65,000	64,000	62,000		
Subtotal	4,655,093	4,287,059	4,133,136	4,076,992		
Total Grants	4,655,093	(210,067)	(56,144)	4,076,992	-	-

**Awards will be based on the maximum reimbursable amount allowed under the submitted budget or TERC requirements.

*Any grant funds awarded but not expended by recipient organizations by the end of the 2026 grant year cycle will be carried forward in full (100%) and applied to the 2027 ATAX Grant Fund allocation.

Ms. Eck made a motion to approve \$4,076,992 for the calendar year 2026 Accommodation Tax Grants, Mr. Radder seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Recusals (previous meetings):

October 16: Mr. Dowling recused himself from discussion and voting on The First Tee of the Lowcountry presentation and discussion due to his relationship with the Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head Island. Ms. Eck recused herself from the presentation and discussion on the Beach Cat Sailors of Hilton Head due to a personal long-time association. Mr. Farrell recused himself from discussion and presentation on The First Tee of the Lowcountry grant application as he currently serves on the Board of Directors. The required disclosure and recusal forms are on file.

October 23: Mr. Dowling recused himself from presentation and discussion on the Boys & Girls Club of the Lowcountry – Pedal HHI grant application as he serves as a member of the Board of Directors. Mr. Farrell recused himself from presentation and discussion on the Lowcountry Golf Course Owners Association grant application as he serves as a member of the Board of Directors. The required disclosure and recusal forms are on file.

Consideration of the Proposed Calendar Year 2026 Meeting Dates - Michele Bunce, Senior Grants Administrator

Michele Bunce, provided the Committee with the 2026 Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee meeting dates. There was a discussion regarding the April meeting to change the date from April 9 to April 23.

Ms. Eck made a motion to approve the 2026 meeting schedule as revised. Mr. Fluker seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Vice Chair Lesch asked for public comment.

Heather Rath addressed the Committee regarding the usage of Accommodations Tax Funds, the committee's duty, SC State Law grant categories, Beaufort County application process and the Robin Hood Clause.

James Fluker addressed the Committee regarding their role, Accommodations Tax Grant applicants and the processes.

Adjournment

At 1:02 p.m. Mr. Farrell made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Eck second. Motion carried 6-0.

Approved: April 23, 2026

The full recording and a transcript of this meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov