

**MAYOR:**  
Bradley D. Belt

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:**  
Stephanie Tillerson

**TOWN ATTORNEY:**  
Stafford J. McQuillin III



**MAYOR PRO TEMPORE:**  
Russell A. Berner

**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**  
Dr. Michael Heidingsfelder  
E. Luke Farrell  
Madeleine Kaye

**TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND**  
**State Accommodation Tax Committee Meeting**  
Kiawah Island Municipal Center  
Council Chambers  
June 17, 2024; 3:30 PM

**AGENDA**

- I. **Call to Order:**
- II. **Roll Call:**
- III. **Approval of Minutes:**
  - A. SATAX Meeting Minutes of April 25, 2024
- IV. **Old Business:**
  - A. Charleston Visitors Bureau Budget
- V. **New Business:**

None
- VI. **Citizens Comments:**
- VII. **Adjournment:**

**STATE ACCOMODATION TAX COMMEETEE MEETING**  
**Municipal Center Council Chambers**  
**April 25, 2024, 1:00 PM**

**Minutes**

I. **Call to Order:** *Chairman Heidingsfelder called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.*

II. **Roll Call:**

**Present at Meeting:** Michael Heidingsfelder, *Chairman*  
Amy Anderson  
David Wohl  
Don Semmler  
Jodi Rush  
Kelly Sach  
Roger Warren  
Steven Ellis

**Also Present:** Stephanie Tillerson  
Dorota Szubert  
Laurie Smith, CVB  
Tripp Hays, CVB  
Chris Campbell, CVB

III. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. State Accommodation Tax Committee minutes of April 12, 2024.

*Chairman Heidingsfelder made a motion to approve the minutes of the State Accommodation Tax Committee meeting of April 12, 2024. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

IV. **Presentation:**

A. Charleston Visitors Bureau Budget

Laurie Smith, Tripp Hays and Chris Cambell, representatives from Explore Charleston, also known as the Charleston Visitors Bureau, presented their marketing and advertising strategies for Kiawah Island and the budget for the fiscal year 2024-2025. During the discussion following the presentation, members raised some concerns regarding the lack of detailed breakdown in certain areas of the budget and the effectiveness of traditional advertising methods versus digital marketing strategies. It was agreed to provide more detailed budget allocations before committee recommendation for Town Council approval.

V. **Old Business:**

None

VI. **New Business:**

A. Review of Applications for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

The following applications were presented by their representatives:

Project	Applicant Sponsor	2024/2025 Application Request
Destination Marketing & Advertising	Andell Inn	\$ 484,000.00
Rentals Advertising and Marketing	Akers Ellis	\$ 148,000.00
Events Promotion	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 35,000.00
Tourism Marketing & Advertising	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 65,000.00
Garden & Gun + Freshfields Village / Kiawah Partnership	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 160,000.00
Kiawah Island Map & Guest Guide	Kiawah Island Community Association	\$ 5,500.00
Marketing of KI Events and Holiday Programing	Kiawah Island Golf Resort	\$ 475,000.00
Advanced Medical Support	St. Johns Fire District	\$ 170,000.00
Eastern Bird Banding Association 2025 Annual Meeting	Town of Kiawah Island - Wildlife	\$ 16,700.00
Beach Patrol Services	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 408,000.00
Charleston County Sheriff Deputies	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 509,000.00
Charleston County Emergency Medical Services	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 509,282.00
		\$ 2,985,482.00

Committee members engaged in an in-depth discussion of each application and provided their individual recommendations that were averaged to arrive at funding as follow:

Project	Applicant Sponsor	2024/2025 Application Request	SATAX Committee Funding Recommendation
Destination Marketing & Advertising	Andell Inn	\$ 484,000.00	212,500
Rentals Advertising and Marketing	Akers Ellis	\$ 148,000.00	\$ 123,000
Events Promotion	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 35,000
Tourism Marketing & Advertising	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 65,000.00	\$ 65,000
Garden & Gun + Freshfields Village / Kiawah Partnership	Freshfields Village / Freshfileds (EDENS) LLC	\$ 160,000.00	\$ 145,000
Kiawah Island Map & Guest Guide	Kiawah Island Community Association	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 5,000
Marketing of KI Events and Holiday Programing	Kiawah Island Golf Resort	\$ 475,000.00	\$ 471,000
Advanced Medical Support	St. Johns Fire District	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 146,000
Eastern Bird Banding Association 2025 Annual Meeting	Town of Kiawah Island - Wildlife	\$ 16,700.00	\$ 16,000
Beach Patrol Services	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 408,000.00	\$ 392,000
Charleston County Sheriff Deputies	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 509,000.00	\$ 489,000
Charleston County Emergency Medical Services	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 509,282.00	\$ -
	Totals for Year Ending	\$ 2,985,482.00	\$ 2,099,500.00

The committee members agreed with the \$2,099,500 in funding recommendations and plan a meeting in the fall to allocate leftover available funds for 2024-2025 fiscal year.

***Chairman Heidingsfelder motioned to approve the above recommendations to the Ways and Means Committee. Steven Ellis second the motion and it was unanimously approved.***

VII. **Citizens' Comments:**  
None

VIII. **Committee Member's Comments:**  
None

IX. **Adjournment:**

*Chairman Heidingsfelder made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

**Submitted by,**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dorota Szubert**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau / Explore Charleston		
FY 2024/25 Program of Work BUDGET		
	<u>Atax Eligible CVB Expenditures</u>	<u>Attributable to Kiawah Island</u>
Total Atax Budgeted from Municipality (Estimated Revenue to CVB)	\$11,503,802	\$843,000
Percent of Atax Revenue Received by CVB		7.33%
Total Atax Eligible Expenditures Applied to Municipality (Expense)	\$11,504,701	\$843,066
<b><i>DESTINATION MARKETING: (ADVERTISING, PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, MARKETING SUPPORT and RESEARCH)</i></b>		
Destination Marketing has one goal: promote our community as the country's premier overnight destination. In developing and implementing Explore Charleston programs we ask ourselves "How will this expenditure generate an overnight visitor?" All significant tourism economic activity flows from creating overnight visitation.	\$5,991,509	\$439,059
<b><i>The CVB does not pay an outside advertising agency; instead, we invest in an in-house marketing team that negotiates all ad buys at agency rates with significant economies of scale.</i></b>		
All creative is developed in-house to protect "the brand" of our community. Ongoing investments in photography, videography, and written content keep the message fresh, and ensure complementary voice and aesthetic.		
<b><i>Our marketing strategy has layered advertising mediums that are constantly evolving and are intended to work together for maximum exposure and reach. Innovative electronic promotions are integral, yet print remains relevant.</i></b>		
Depending on the campaign, online digital, print, radio, television, OTT streaming and billboard advertising may be utilized and direct mail may be utilized.		
<b><i>Titles in our media plan for FY 24/25 include AAA World (various locations), AAA Living (various locations), Bon Appetit, Conde'Nast Traveler, SC Vacation Guide. Wedding specific advertising placements are planned with The Knot, Wedding Wire, Bridal Guide, Southern Bride, David's Bridal, and Heart of North Carolina Weddings. Additional projects include the Tennis Channel, initiatives through Sinclair Broadcast Group, AFAR, Better Homes &amp; Gardens, Essence Magazine, Food Network, Food &amp; Wine, Galerie, Garden &amp; Gun, Town &amp; Country, Veranda, Kingdom Magazine, Real Simple, Smithsonian Magazine, Southern Living, The New Yorker, Travel &amp; Leisure, and Western NC Magazine. Additionally, we leverage advertising in all our non stop fly markets.</i></b>		
Marketing plans support our important group sales initiatives through placements with CONNECT and Northstar Meetings Magazine. Active involvement through Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network are also important pieces of our promotional strategy in getting these exclusive and highly-sought-after travel advisors to recommend our area to avid travelers.		
<b><i>Annual publications created in-house for promotion through response pieces include: Charleston Area Visitors Guide, Charleston Area Golf Guide, Charleston Area Wedding Guide and the Charleston Area Destination Planning Guide for group business. We also now produce a guide intended to lift up Black-owned visitor-facing businesses, called Explore Black Charleston.</i></b>		
We employ a full-service mail team to distribute these guides at bulk rate, producing a savings that makes the mail center self-sufficient.		
<b><i>Explorecharleston.com, CharlestonAreaBeaches.com, CharlestonWeddingGuide.com, MeetCharleston.com and AfricanAmericanCharleston.com are cornerstones in Explore Charleston's promotional efforts. Our sites correspond to the printed publications mentioned above, and sites are updated for content and creative daily.</i></b>		
Constant investment in Google ad words is essential to keeping our websites at the top of potential traveler online searches. Contracts with Book Direct (formerly JackRabbit Systems) provide the booking referral engine behind our websites that lead to direct business.		

<i>A robust social media presence and social media campaign spend is critical to support promotional campaigns and reach a diverse online audience. Our team creates inspiring, customized editorial content for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Pinterest, LinkedIn, TikTok, as well as our charlestonly.com/blog. Explore Charleston has garnered hundreds of thousands of followers from across the world and consistently outperforms industry averages for audience engagement.</i>		
All of our advertising is based on solid, current tourism research. Research is expensive and necessary in making sound advertising decisions. Various sources are utilized, to include Destinations International, the US Travel Association, Key Data, TravelClick, Datafy, Knowland, and CoStar (formerly <b>Smith Travel Research</b> ).		
<i>Locally, our paid partnership with the Office of Tourism Analysis in the Business Department at the College of Charleston proves invaluable in ensuring our ability to compile and analyze our key performance metrics. The College plays an integral role in capturing and collecting data as well.</i>		
<b>MEDIA EFFORTS:</b>		
Media Relations and communications about the Charleston area are critical components in the promotion of our community. While Destination Marketing efforts are paid placements, our Media team seeks what is known as "earned" media, meaning unpaid. Marketing and Media efforts work hand in hand for maximum program benefit.	\$1,128,331	\$82,684
<i>Relationship development is key in these efforts as we work with travel writers, editorial boards and other journalists to promote the Charleston area experience through earned media.</i>		
Creating unique and engaging itineraries for media visiting the region is essential in telling our area's story. Writers want new ideas and opportunities to continue producing fresh material for their readers.		
<i>Robust photo and video libraries are updated regularly to ensure content is current and relevant. This is essential as we work to assist journalists and broadcasters in telling their stories about our community. A picture is worth a thousand words, and a video even more.</i>		
Paid advertorial opportunities through D Weddings and Out Magazine are planned. Taking an advertorial approach complements our efforts because it appears editorial in nature, yet we are able to control the content.		
<i>Business development through media relations powerhouse Lou Hammond Group continues to prove beneficial in attracting new journalists to our community. Engagements with other media outlets, specifically those in the New York market, continue to be essential to our efforts.</i>		
Other development channels for our media team include activity through the Society of American Travel Writers, the Public Relations Society of America, National Association of Black Journalists, the US Travel Association, Travel South, and the British Guild of Travel Writers. These groups provide in-person opportunities to interact with media that we might not otherwise engage.		
<i>A blogger tour is planned to offer insight into Charleston area travel through the eyes of some of the top travel bloggers in the country.</i>		
Film projects are being researched that will provide exposure for our community, such as an opportunity with celebrity Chef Vivian Howard.		
<i>Clipping service contracts through Burrelles Luce, Meltwater News, and News Exposure allow our team to track media mentions and perform ROI to determine our most engaging writers and journalists.</i>		
<b>GROUP SALES, TRADESHOW and INDUSTRY EFFORTS</b>		
Mutliple sales initiatives are intended to bring group business to our community.	\$1,948,848	\$142,812

<p><b>Over 30 vetted tradeshows, solely focused on lodging "fits" for our area such as corporate sales, association, government and incentive business, national and international tour operators, weddings, and SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, fraternal) markets.</b></p>		
<p>These tradeshows and events are scheduled to generate group business for our industry: American Bus Association, International PowWow, National Tour Association, Regional Motorcoach Association, Travel South, Travel South International, Association Executives of NC, GA Society of Association Executives, Meeting Professionals International - Carolinas, Meeting Professionals International - Tennessee, SC Society of Association Executives, TN Society of Association Executives, VA Society of Association Executives, Military Reunion Network, Society of Government Meeting Planners, Professional Conference Managers Association, American Society of Association Executives, CONNECT, Holiday Showcase Chicago, IMEX America, Meeting Planners International, Destination Celebration, Luxury Meetings Summit, Luxury Travel Industry, Northstar Meetings, Society of Incentive and Travel Executives, Superbowl of Knowledge, and various regional bridal shows.</p>		
<p><b>Keeping our community top-of-mind with top travel advisors, who develop and sell travel itineraries for time-starved travelers is essential business. These opportunities are planned through shows such as International Luxury Travel Market, Signature Travel, Virtuoso, and the Travel &amp; Leisure Advisory Board.</b></p>		
<p>Business development through globally-connected HelmsBriscoe (meeting procurement and site selection) continues to have a role in attracting group business into our community.</p>		
<p><b>Sports initiatives - both participant and spectator - are also crucial to group business, filling competition venues and hotel rooms countywide. Whether it's a large event like Credit One Open, or traveling team sports such as soccer clubs, gymnastics competitions, volleyball tournaments, etc. the cumulative effect is significant. Shows in our line up include the Sports Events &amp; Tourism Association, SC Sports Alliance, SPORTS Relationship Conference, TEAMS Tradeshow, and US Sports Congress to seek sports group business for our community.</b></p>		
<p>Promotion of area businesses that can service our convention / group business is an important piece of group promotion. Once a group has booked its accommodations, they then look for meeting venue, dining and tour options.</p>		
<p><b>Improved and increased air service into Charleston International (CHS) continues to be a major focus for Explore Charleston. Working with Southwest, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines, Breeze Airways, Spirit, and our legacy carriers expands access to and from the region. New service, as of Spring 2024 with Air Canada, opens up many doors internationally. Carriers expect Explore Charleston to generate demand for these flights (both inbound and outbound) through advertising. Over 6 million people traveled through our airport in 2023. Passenger volume is expected to continue to grow, as driving visitor demand in non-stop cities is important to our mission. This effort is essential to keep ticket prices affordable through CHS so that we can continue to expand direct fly markets, strengthen tourism, and support regional economic development opportunities.</b></p>		
<p>Workforce recruitment initiatives include in-market and out-of-market job placement events and college career fairs. Industry placements continue with programming through partners such as the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, SC Vocational Rehab, and SC Works.</p>		
<p><b>Workforce retention for the tourism industry is an essential function of our team, addressed through a variety of educational programs geared toward owner / operators and leadership / management, as well as sales training and customer service tracts.</b></p>		
<p>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is addressed through our Heart for Hospitality steering committee. The Intern Cultural Enrichment Program (ICEP) aims to grow minority leadership in the tourism industry through placement of students into paid summer internships through area hotels and restaurants. Lodging is provided to these students through a partnership with the College of Charleston.</p>		

<b>Industry best practices and best interests are pursued through involvement with the SC Association of Tourism Regions, SC Restaurant &amp; Lodging Association, Southeast Tourism Society, Destinations International, and US Travel Association.</b>		
<b>VISITOR SERVICES: CENTERS, CALL / CHAT CENTERS</b>		
Explore Charleston operates four area visitor centers - downtown Charleston, Kiawah Island, Mount Pleasant, North Charleston.	\$2,436,013	\$178,511
<b>Daily responsibilities include information distribution, providing directions, assistance in visit planning, access to public facilities and general promotion of our community.</b>		
Area tours are booked through our centers, spreading economic benefit to regional businesses.		
<b>Last minute, same-day hotel rooms are also booked through the centers as our lodging partners look to book the day's remaining inventory.</b>		
Visitor Services also serve large groups that come to the Charleston area by setting up mini visitor centers to help distribute the same information that can be found in our "official" facilities.		
<b>Serving visitors and callers via our 1-800 phone lines and digital chat platforms are integral to our marketing efforts. Ads are placed, articles are published, and our phone lines ring in response.</b>		
Our Visitor Inquiry Service (VIS) operators also serve a pivotal role during times of crisis, be it a weather event such as a hurricane, or more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic. VIS operators play a critically important role by gathering and disseminating the most current information to potential travelers to our community.		
<b>TOTAL ATAX ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES APPLIED TO MUNICIPALITY</b>	<b>\$11,504,701</b>	<b>\$843,066</b>