

TOWN OF JAMES ISLAND
ACCOMMODATIONS TAX COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025 MEETING

Town Hall Council Chambers | 1122 Dills Bluff Road | 5:00 p.m.

Committee: Chair John Peters; Nick Skover; Chase Barton; Joan Dromey, Charlie McManus; Paul Cantrell; Lachlan McIntosh (participated by telephone). Members were present during all or part of the meeting; Mr. McManus departed before the final action.

Town officials/staff: Mayor Brook Lyon, Finance Director Becky Heath, Town Clerk Frances Simmons.

Guest presenter: Karen Thompson, Executive Director, Sea Islands Chamber of Commerce.

Welcome and Call to Order

Chair John Peters called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. and noted that notice of the meeting had been provided in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Approval of November 13, 2024 Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the November 13, 2024 meeting. A motion was made by Joan Dromey and seconded to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjustment to the Order of Business

Because the Sea Islands Chamber of Commerce presenter had not yet arrived, a motion was made by Nick Skover and seconded to defer that presentation and proceed to the accommodations-tax grant request. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of ATAX Grant Request

Finance Director Becky Heath reported that the Town had received one grant application. The application deadline had been extended until noon on the meeting date, and the opportunity had been advertised through the Town's email list, website, and social-media channels.

Mayor Brook Lyon presented the Town of James Island's request for \$84,000 toward preliminary and start-up costs for a proposed arts and cultural center on Town-owned property adjacent to Town Hall. The preliminary concept contemplated a steel-frame modular facility connected by covered walkways, with preservation of existing trees and on-site parking. Potential uses discussed included artist and pottery studios, performing-arts space, classrooms, workshops, exhibits, and community programming. The concept was intended to serve residents while also attracting visitors from elsewhere in the region and state.

The proposed project was described as preliminary, with an estimated total cost of approximately \$3 million and possible bond financing. The \$84,000 request represented 75 percent of an estimated \$105,000 eligible initial scope, with the Town providing the required 25 percent match of \$21,000. Committee members discussed project design, site planning, programming, revenue opportunities, tourism benefits, and the statutory deadline for allocating grant funds.

A motion was made by Paul Cantrell and seconded by Charlie McManus to approve the Town of James Island's \$84,000 accommodations-tax grant application. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Sea Islands Chamber of Commerce

Karen Thompson described the Sea Islands Chamber of Commerce's mission and her background in marketing, advertising, and public relations. She stated that any work performed with the Town's funds would focus specifically on James Island and would be designed to attract visitors and support overnight stays. Potential channels included visitor-oriented websites, hotel-room advertising, airports, digital media, and other targeted placements. The work could include branding and graphic design, professional video and aerial footage, ad production, and development of a distinct identity or tagline for James Island.

The Committee discussed promoting James Island's parks, businesses, history, short-term rentals, community character, and proximity to downtown Charleston, beaches, and regional attractions. Members emphasized that the campaign should distinguish James Island from the broader Charleston market and comply with the tourism-marketing purpose of the 30 percent accommodations-tax allocation. Ms. Thompson agreed to prepare an itemized proposal identifying recommended media, production costs, placements, and time periods for review. The Committee also discussed serving as a steering group to refine the campaign before material was released.

A motion was made by John Peters and seconded by Paul Cantrell to recommend that Town Council authorize the \$43,366.67 in state-allocated tourism-marketing funds for work with the Sea Islands Chamber of Commerce. The motion carried unanimously.

Other Business

No additional business was presented.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn by Paul Cantrell and seconded. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted – via video recording,

Mike Hemmer, James Island Finance Director