



ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10:00am, Wednesday, May 13, 2026

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Rebecca Kovalich, Park Williams, Barb Bergwerf, Margaret Miller, Mike Boykin (via Zoom), Rod Turnage, Chrissy Lorenz

Staff Present: Administrator Kerr, Deputy Administrator Kuester, Director Hamilton, Council Member Cohen

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes – April 15, 2026

Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2026 meeting, and Ms. Lorenz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentation – FY27 Budget for CVB

Laurie Smith, Chris Campbell, Cat Dority, and other CVB staff attended the meeting to present the FY27 CVB budget related to the Isle of Palms 30% tourism and promotion funds. The budget will be on the CVB's board for consideration later this month.

The budget anticipates revenues of \$1,134,000 in ATAX funds from the Isle of Palms. Ms. Smith detailed the TERC-approved areas of the budget. Specific initiatives related to the Isle of Palms include the rebranding effort, the walkability study, IOPThrives, and the shared staff position with PIO Joshua Uys.

Ms. Dority reviewed the success of the VRBO campaign for FY26 which resulted in \$7.7 million in revenues. That success led VRBO to create an IOP-specific landing page on their website. She reviewed the statistics for other marketing campaigns and spoke about a new IOP-specific ad placement on Expedia.

Staff shared statistics related to social media and Google campaigns, the importance and success of group sales as it related to IOP.

Chris Campbell shared earned media placements for the Isle of Palms and spoke about visitor services.

Mr. Williams asked about the difference between budgeted expenses and projected income. Mr. Campbell said those costs are associated with regional marketing efforts.

4. Financial Statements

Director Hamilton noted the fund balance has grown 5.87% over prior year. \$2.2 million in revenues have been collected year to date, and interest is growing 13% higher than budgeted. Expenses are tracking according to the budget. She will share a forecast at next month's meeting.

She reviewed the changes made to the proposed FY27 ATAX Budget following input from City Council. The fund balance for State ATAX funds is anticipated to be \$5.8 million at the end of FY27.

Administrator Kerr stated that the Ways & Means Committee reduced the amount of the ATAX grant to the Greater Charleston YWCA from \$10,000 to \$3,000 to cover their marketing and communications expenses outlined in their budget. The Ways & Means Committee approved the amounts for the Lutheran Retreat Center and the Island School Literacy Events as recommended by the ATAX Committee.

Ms. Kovalich asked about the requests of the Recreation Department as indicated in the budget. Director Hamilton said any request made by a department head in the budget is considered essential. While usage cannot be tracked, tourists do use the facilities at the Recreation Department including the playground equipment and tennis courts in the budget.

Mr. Williams said the ATAX Committee would like to be involved in the budgeting process earlier in the year so they can better understand the requests being made.

5. Old Business

Discussion and consideration of FY27 Budget for State Accommodations Tax Funds

Further discussion ensued about ways in which the Committee can be involved in the budgeting process. Ms. Bergwerf and Ms. Lorenz said the Committee's scope is the grant funds. Mr. Williams believes the Committee to have a broader sphere of input on the ATAX budget.

MOTION: Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the FY27 Budget for State Accommodations Tax Funds. Ms. Lorenz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. New Business

Discussion and consideration of rebranding RFPs candidates

Administrator Kerr said the City received an overwhelming response to the rebranding RFP. To that end, staff created a grading sheet that scored the submittals. Staff proposes bringing the top 6 candidates to the June meeting to give a brief presentation to the Committee. From there, the Committee can make a recommendation to City Council.

Administrator Kerr asked the Committee to review all the RFPs and to contact him if there is another candidate they would like to present.

6. Miscellaneous Business

The next meeting of the ATAX Committee will be Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 10am. The agenda will include a consideration for the CVB's proposed FY27 budget.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:56am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk