

TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
ACCOMMODATIONS TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 1, 2012, 12:00 p.m.

Municipal Complex
Building A - Public Meeting Room 1
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC

MINUTES

Members Present: Edward Riggs, Chairman; Cheryl Craven, Kenda Sweet, Monique Semper-Flynn, Tracy Mitchell, Jennifer Bagwell, Su McManus-Frost

Also Present: Elton Carrier, Council Liaison

Staff Present: Ashley Richardson, Community Dev. & Tourism Office

Call to Order: Chairman Riggs called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from September 6, 2012 meeting

Ms. Semper-Flynn moved to approve the minutes; motion seconded by Ms. Sweet. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Financial Statement for period ending October 31, 2012

Ms. Richardson stated they had not yet received the first quarterly payment. Mr. Riggs noted it should be a significant increase, maybe as much as 10%. Ms. Richardson reminded the committee that there is a total of \$68,491.00 in reserve for projects. The committee would hear presentations today only. The voting on the funding will be done at the next meeting.

3. FY 12/13 Funding Presentations

a. Charles Pinckney National Historic Site – 2013 Gullah Heritage Programs

Ms. Carlin Timmons presented. She said she is again asking the ATAC Committee to partner with them in advertising and funding to promote the 2013 Gullah Heritage Programs. She indicated they were under a new administration now and that there have been some big organizational changes. They will only have five event days on Saturdays in March next year. Staff is prioritizing projects and she expected that overall, attendance will go down, but that attendance at each event will go up. She said most of the funding will go to pay the performers and most come from quite a distance. The events bring the community into the park and she expressed appreciation to the committee and the visitor's centers for getting the word out about the events since the national parks cannot advertise.

b. Wando High School – Raising Cane's Carolina Soccer Classic

Shilo Tisdale presented. This is their 14th year for the soccer events. Last year they had ten teams participate with five from out of town. This year, there are eleven teams coming from out of town and they are excited that this number

doubled from last year. He said they are requesting \$3,000 to cover having more security for the teams that are required at Patriots Point. He said the entry fees that the teams pay cover the costs for the referees. He said they like to give the coaches nice gifts for coming into Town from all over the state for the soccer games to encourage them to come here instead of Columbia.

c. Family Circle Tennis Center – 2013 Dunlop Junior Tennis Championships

Dewey Caulder presented. He said this is their tenth year for the championships and the committee has helped them since 2004 and they really appreciate that. He said they are stepping up their marketing and are going outside the southern states as well. He said they will be using other courts, but most courts and games will be here in Mount Pleasant and the participants and attendees will be staying mainly in Mount Pleasant. He said they will be bringing in more officials this year for the two-day event. He thanked the committee for the support they had given in the past.

Ms. Richardson added that there was a clerical error in the report and they will correct that in the staff recommendations letter before the next meeting.

d. Southeastern Wildlife Exposition – 2013 Southeastern Wildlife Exposition

John Powell presented. He thanked the committee for their support over the years. He said not having the Gaillard Auditorium available as their main site, due to extensive renovations; they have had to shift the events to pre-existing sites. He said they are expecting a good show and things are going well. He said they are above average on room nights and the majority of attendees stay three nights and they spend a lot of money while they are here. A lot of them stay here in Mount Pleasant. S. C. Waterfowl will have their events Friday and Saturday nights again here in Mount Pleasant. Even though the core events are not here in Mount Pleasant, the events have a big impact on the hotels, etc.

e. Charleston Restaurant Foundation, Inc. – 30th Annual Lowcountry Oyster Festival

Kathy Britzius and Steve Carroll presented. Ms. Britzius said the event would be on Sunday, January 27th at Boone Hall Plantation.

Mr. Carroll stated said that they market Boone Hall and Mount Pleasant extensively with this event. He thanked the committee for the financial help and they count on these funds to help grow the area. Bob Fresh with the College of Charleston who sits on the board compiled survey statistics that indicate that the percentage of out of town visitors has gone up from 23% to 30% in 2011 and 2012. The percentage of visitors who stayed overnight went up from 80% to 86%. The festival has grown and they have taken an important step with the traffic and parking situation with the last couple of events that has been great. Mr. Carroll said he felt that the \$10,000 requested is a sponsorship for Mount Pleasant too and they are promoting Mount Pleasant in everything that they do with their advertising, which is a bonus for the town.

Mr. Carroll said they are increasing their help with local charities and have added Omar Shrine Temple, which does a lot of things for kids. He said they are trying to grow awareness of the Charleston Restaurant Association and they try to raise money and give back to their industry. Last year, they gave Wando High School Culinary five thousand dollars to travel to the nationals. He said they pulled out of the State Restaurant Association so they are independent and are making a statement this year by doing more advertising and giving proceeds back to charities. They had been giving five scholarships and have raised it to fifteen this year. Also, they are trying to make a difference in their own backyard and they are proud of making this area the top culinary destination in the country.

In answer to a question from Ms. Semper-Flynn about how much business goes up during this weekend event, Al Simmons replied that the increase in business is up by an average of 43%. Mr. Carroll said his restaurants double that during that January weekend.

f. Cooper River Bridge Run – 2013 Cooper River Bridge Run

Julian Smith presented. He said they are capping the race this year at 40,000 entrants. Last year, 45,000 people were way too many and the streets of Charleston cannot handle that many people. He said they are moving from the Gaillard Auditorium to the North Charleston Convention Center and they have the entire facility. They will have close to 200 exhibitors in there which will make them the largest running expo in the country. This year they will host a national race directors' conference in the Cooper River Room in Mount Pleasant that will be two days before the bridge run. This year they may have as many as 125 race directors coming in. Mr. Smith said that this next year they will combine the Kid's Run and the WonderFest. The Kid's Run next year may be the largest kids' event in the entire country. He said on Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the day before the race, they will have a big petting zoo coming in from California with camel rides, etc. He said they will have three Taste of the Bridge Runs next year. He said they will get restaurants in Mount Pleasant to set up a sampling to taste their favorite dish. The second Taste of the Bridge Run will be at the Maritime Center and the third one will be at the North Charleston Convention Center inside one of the exhibit areas. He said the downtown restaurants will be at the Maritime Center, the North Charleston restaurants will be at the Convention Center, etc. Mr. Smith said they are the third largest 10K race in the USA and the seventh largest U. S. Track & Field event in the entire country. He said they are the sixth largest 10K in the world. He said the bridge run has a \$30M economic impact on the community. The hotels and restaurants say it is their busiest weekend of the year.

g. South Carolina United FC – Piggly Wiggly Shootout

Matt Job, executive director for the club presented. He said this will be the 22nd annual soccer event. Last year they had 173 teams with approximately 850 room-nights sold. Over 60% of those teams are from out of town. He said their recent select event increased just below 35% from the prior year. He said they are

aiming for that rate of growth for the Piggly Wiggly Shootout. They are planning a new event, MLS, that will be held the third week in February.

Mr. Job said they currently offer \$22,000 in scholarships for those who cannot afford to play. Any funds help additional kids who want to play and any funds from the committee are greatly appreciated.

4. Tourism Activity Report

Walter McCants was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Richardson provided some statistics from the Visitor's Center. The road construction is still hindering visits to the center and even though the numbers are down, the occupancy report over the last few months in East Cooper is pretty strong. Mount Pleasant continues to drive the market.

Ms. Craven said hotel occupancy for the past three months of August, September and October has been good. The number one ranking for Charleston has definitely helped.

Ms. Mitchell added that Charleston Harbor Resort & Marina has been hosting six or seven weddings per weekend; weddings are a strong market.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Submitted by:

Patty Wallis

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