



June 5, 2020

Greenville County Council Finance Committee
Greenville County Council
301 University Ridge
Greenville, SC 29601

Re: FY2020/2021 Accommodations Tax Recommendations

Honorable Members of Council:

This is quite a different year from those we've experienced since I've been serving on this committee! At our first meeting in March, the Accommodations Tax Committee voted to reduce our estimated gross budget to \$1 million. At that time, the COVID-19 crisis had just begun to be felt here. As the situation worsened and we watched as occupancy in our area hotels plummeted, we realized we needed to further reduce our budget and delay our applicant interviews until the first of June. We subsequently met via Zoom and reduced our gross projected budget to \$400,000. After all the mandatory deductions, we were left with only \$28,500 for distribution.

The breakdown is as follows:

Projected Budget	\$ 400,000
County	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
	\$ 375,000
County 5%	\$ 18,750
VGSC 30%	<u>\$ 112,500</u>
	\$ 243,750
County Council Approved:	
Community Foundation	\$ 146,320
Recreation	<u>\$ 50,000</u>
	\$ 47,430
VGSC 40%	<u>\$ 18,972</u>
Remaining for Grants	\$ 28,458 (rounded up to \$28,500)

Applicants were contacted and asked to review their situation with regard to COVID-19. Some withdrew, and we were left with 20 applicants. With so little to disburse, we felt strongly that our task was to identify those applicants whose projects would result in a greater impact on hotel occupancy throughout Greenville County. Consequently, we voted unanimously to allocate the funds as follows:

Discover Upcountry Carolina: \$15,000. As you are aware, they are a 36 year old tourism marketing organization for the Upstate, working closely with VGSC to maximize marketing dollars and avoid duplication of effort. This money will allow them to purchase ads in Southern Living and assist in other marketing efforts to draw overnight visitors to Greenville County.

Upcountry History Museum: \$6,750 for their upcoming winter exhibit *White Christmas*. This is an exhibit featuring costumes and props from the iconic holiday film *White Christmas*. Greenville is only the second location to host this exhibit, which is being produced in cooperation with the Rosemary Clooney estate and a private collector. Based on the wildly successful *Downton Abbey* exhibits at Biltmore Estate, we would anticipate this exhibit to draw visitors from well beyond the Upstate.

Ville to Ville: \$6,750 to support their two planned relays in fall 2020 and spring 2021. This is a proven success story for Greenville hotels, because each race attracts runners from all over the country and generates no less than 500 room nights for each event.

All of the applicants would have been worthy of some A-Tax funding under normal circumstances, but we felt that it would be more prudent to allocate enough money to these three organizations and their projects in order for them to be most effective.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, I wish to thank Council for the opportunity to serve on this important committee. We appreciate the work of each applicant and consider each of them to be of value to Greenville County and its citizens. We understand that Council may have questions regarding these recommendations and welcome the opportunity to address them.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BJ Koonce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

BJ Koonce, Chair

cc: Nicole B. Wood, Assistant County Administrator, Greenville County

Committee:

Dave Edwards, GSP; Victoria Fernandez, Marriott; Penny Cooper and Joyce McCarrell