



May 3, 2024

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

Re: FY2024/2025 Accommodations Tax Recommendations

Honorable Members of Council:

I'm happy to report that, not only have recent Accommodations Tax revenues exceeded our expectations, but this year, we have an excess of \$476,133 available for disbursement to applicants. To help explain, let me provide you with a reminder of recent A-Tax history.

In FY19/20, our gross projected budget was \$1,116,000 with a net distribution of \$307,698. Sadly, thanks to COVID, we had to send a letter to recipients regarding a shortfall that year in the amount of \$121,000. The following fiscal year, we conservatively budgeted a gross amount of \$400,000, which left us with only \$28,500 to distribute. Of course, the recovery since then has been astounding. In spite of the growth of downtown hotels, we have seen consistent increases in County hotel occupancy, and our budget for the current fiscal year (23/24) was set at \$1,200,000.

To avoid any shortfall situations as happened in FY19/20, we continue to try to be realistic with our projections, and at the same time, budget on the side of caution. Also, as was the case this year, at the time of our planning meetings, we usually only have income reports from half the fiscal year. Therefore, we have, in a very short while, accumulated a surfeit of \$476,133.13 which, by state rules, must be used within 2 years. The committee voted unanimously to allocate that full amount for the coming fiscal year, in case we have a further excess next year. Of this amount, we are recommending that \$200,000 go to Visit Greenville SC for a special project, with the balance added to the net distribution to go to applicants for the coming year, 2024/2025. The budget is as follows:

Projected Budget	\$ 1,500,000
County	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
	\$ 1,475,000
County 5%	\$ 73,750
VGSC 30%	<u>\$ 442,500</u>
	\$ 958,750
VGSC 40%	<u>\$ 383,500</u>
Remaining for Grants	\$ 575,250
Funds Carried Forward	<u>\$ 476,133</u>
Total for Tourism Related Projects:	\$ 1,051,383

Applications were reviewed based on State and County rules and guidelines for funding, and interviews were held on April 23. As mandated, applicants are graded with an A, B, C or D. Those applicants who receive a Grade A are seen to have the most *direct* and significant impact on occupancy in County hotels outside the city limits. Those who receive a Grade B demonstrate strong occupancy potential or provide a permanent and ongoing attraction for tourists who visit Greenville. It follows that Grade C applicants have lesser direct hotel impact but serve as important mainstays in Greenville's cultural and entertainment offerings to tourists, often providing visitors with an incentive to extend their stays, *or* the applicant is a new one with no prior history. Those with a Grade D are not recommended for funding.

Of the 35 total applicants, 9 received a Grade A, 13 received a Grade B, 11 received a Grade of C, and only 2 received a D. Juneteenth GVL, Inc. applied for funding for their Juneteenth GVL Megafest to be held in June 2024. Because that falls in the current fiscal year, that project is ineligible. Also, Mill Village Ministries applied for Grateful GVL, a Thanksgiving meal that is a strictly local, community event, and is therefore ineligible, as well.

Once again, we chose not to select a signature event, because both the BMW ProAm (South Carolina Charities) and the Greenville Scottish Games...both County events...continue to rise to the top of County tourism impact and revenue. BMW ProAm had requested \$110,000 in support of their promotion on the Golf Channel, and we are recommending funding at \$100,000. We are recommending that the Greenville Scottish Games receive the full of amount of their request in the amount of \$85,000.

Other applicants graded with an A are Discover Upcountry Carolina Association, Fall for Greenville, Artisphere, Euphoria (2 events), Notus Sports Gran Fondo Hincapie Event, Notus Sports Greenville Cycling Classic, and Ville to Ville Sprint Relay (new) and Ville to Ville Relay. Attached is a detail showing each applicant, their funding request, the Grade assigned by the committee and our recommendations for funding.

As mandated, Grade C applicants as a group are to receive no more than 10% of the total net budget. Those with Grades A and B receive the balance.

As previously noted, we are recommending that \$200,000 of the total funds carried forward go to Visit Greenville SC (VGSC) for a special project. As you are aware, GSP now offers non stop flights to six new markets (Los Angeles, Rochester, Hartford, Providence, Manchester, and Nashville), plus expanded service to five markets (Denver, Orlando, Tampa, New York City, and Newark). VGSC plans to use this additional funding to market directly to these destinations.

A recent State rule requires that Accommodations Tax Committees review and approve the budgets for local tourism offices that are recipients of the 30% and 40% automatic funding allocation. In a separate vote, our committee voted to approve the budget submitted by Visit Greenville SC.

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. 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: Lyndsey C. Sloan, Director of Grants and Special Projects, Greenville County;  
Nicole B. Wood, Assistant County Administrator, General Services, Greenville County

Committee Members:

David Edwards - GSP (Vice Chair)

Christina Zolli – VGSC and Mid-size Hotels

Joyce McCarrell – Restaurants

Penny Cooper – At Large