



**Accommodations Advisory Tax Committee Meeting  
Town Council Chambers  
February 16, 2017 ♦ 4:00 p.m.**

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**1. CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Harrison called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Chairman Harrison, and members Harbin, Lane-Laveglia, Livesay, Martin, Servant and Truett were in attendance. A quorum was present. Others present: Administrator Fellner, Town Clerk Herrmann, Finance Director King, Police Chief Keziah, and Recreation Supervisor Ellis.

**2. OATH OF OFFICE.** Ms. Herrmann administered the oath of office to which all members swore to uphold. Each member signed the oath, which is on file in the clerk's office.

**3. MINUTES APPROVAL.** Mr. Truett moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2016 meeting as presented. Ms. Harbin second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**AGENDA AMENDMENT.** Chairman Harrison called for a motion to amend the agenda to add election of officers after the business is completed and before public comments. Mr. Servant moved to add officer election as stated by the chairman. Mr. Truett second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**4. BUSINESS.**

**A. Bylaws Amendments to Establish Annual Meeting Date, etc.** Ms. Herrmann presented the bylaws and the decision paper, copies of which are on file. Ms. Martin moved to approve. Mr. Truett second. Chairman Harrison suggested a friendly amendment to change the meeting start time to 4:00 p.m., to which no members objected. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**B. Town of Surfside Beach Funding Requests.** Ms. Fellner presented a PowerPoint, a copy of which is attached.

**FY2016-2017.** Mr. Servant moved to recommend to Town Council to transfer \$75,000 (page 3) from the accommodations tax fund for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 to the capital projects fund for beach renourishment. Ms. Harbin second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**FY2017-2018.** Mr. Servant moved to recommend that beginning in Fiscal Year 2017-2018 that each year the accommodations tax fund send \$75,000 to the capital projects fund for beach renourishment (page 4.) Ms. Lane-Laveglia second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Mr. Truett moved to recommend the police department funding requests totaling \$224,200 (page 12). Ms. Lane-Laveglia second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Ms. Martin moved to recommend the public works funding requests totaling \$50,300 (page 13.) Mr. Livesay second. Ms. Martin asked if the public works director would devise a savings plan during the next year to upgrade the pier area bathrooms to include year-round use. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Ms. Martin moved to approve recommending the special events funding requests totaling \$75,200 (page 14). Mr. Truett second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**C. Town Marketing, Ms. Becky Large, and D. Grant Request for Historical Signage.** Ms. Fellner explained that Dr. Ben Burroughs continues to work towards having these historical signs approved. The signs will be placed throughout town, including at the Ark Plantation property on 3<sup>rd</sup>

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54 Avenue South and Willow. This particular expenditure has been carried forward for a few years, as it is a  
55 very involved process to have this type signage approved.  
56

57 Ms. Large said the initial goals in the original marketing presentation were to leverage the  
58 Internet and social media; gain more traffic to the website; engage with potential visitors, and  
59 differentiate Surfside Beach from other local areas. During the last six months, we began reviewing the  
60 town's online listings and simplifying them; improving consistency; increasing our organic reach to  
61 improve the search engine optimization; cleaned and updated social media websites, and implemented  
62 Google Analytics on the site to monitor traffic. We also started really engaging on Facebook with posting  
63 town events. We post videos that get 8,000 to 12,000 views every time one is posted; pier updates,  
64 swash updates, and local library events. We created online business listings on the website to support  
65 Surfside Beach businesses, which also provides the businesses with another inbound lane. We  
66 implemented with license offices as a standard operating procedure where businesses open we get the  
67 listing information to post the website. Since this was started last August, Facebook likes have almost  
68 doubled. You can see, Facebooks has become the largest referral to the town's website in the past year,  
69 from 619 to 7,050. That has been a success. Google Analytics year-over-year show a marked increase in  
70 sessions and activities between November and December 2015 and November and December 2016. Ms.  
71 Large continued with the PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is attached, and explained how the  
72 marketing campaign has brought more business to the town. We can continue to work with the Chamber  
73 of Commerce to develop content for the site [www.visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://www.visitSurfsideBeach.com) site. That provides two  
74 opportunities to market to tourists and to promote in-town businesses. The town's website has  
75 significantly more traffic than [visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://visitSurfsideBeach.com); having both sites working for our town and  
76 businesses is really important, because that would not only increase tourism, but would also affirm the  
77 town's commitment to being business friendly. If the grant is approved, they want to continue to improve  
78 the website navigation; update the business listings; work with the Chamber to develop content for the  
79 [visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://visitSurfsideBeach.com), and to promote more referrals to them for the new businesses in town. Working  
80 on both sites will ensure that neither site is impacted negatively. We would like to begin collecting email  
81 addresses for an email newsletter and to create a YouTube channel, which would help direct traffic to the  
82 site, etc.  
83

84 Ms. Martin said I have one question, does the \$12,000 grant cover the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year?  
85 Ms. Fellner said it is Fiscal Year 2017-2018.  
86

87 Mr. Truett said I think the numbers speak for themselves. It's very positive. I know from the  
88 business committee's perspective (*Mr. Truett chairs the business committee*), we're very excited about  
89 being able to connect all our businesses together, advertise and do some pretty neat things that we've  
90 never done before. So from the business committee were excited about potentially moving forward with  
91 helping Ms. Large and the businesses in Surfside Beach.  
92

93 Mr. Servant said I do think there's a lot of potential between these two websites  
94 [visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://visitSurfsideBeach.com) is a site that that the Chamber has put together for us at no cost to the town. The  
95 [SurfsideBeach.org](http://SurfsideBeach.org) site is important for our residents to use. I think it's more important for people who  
96 might want to purchase property in the Town of Surfside Beach. But don't lose sight of the fact that even  
97 though that [visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://visitSurfsideBeach.com) website may not be as well-traveled as the [SurfsideBeach.org](http://SurfsideBeach.org) site,  
98 [visitMyrtleBeach.com](http://visitMyrtleBeach.com) is a site that all the accommodations businesses rely on for the majority of our new  
99 leads to get tourists in this town. So that link out of the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce is vital to  
100 us. I do think it really does give us something to build on, and anything we can do to make  
101 [visitMyrtleBeach.com](http://visitMyrtleBeach.com), [visitSurfsideBeach.com](http://visitSurfsideBeach.com) and that [SurfsideBeach.org](http://SurfsideBeach.org) site work better is good.  
102 There's also a new site at the Chamber called [thinkMyrtleBeach.com](http://thinkMyrtleBeach.com), and that is more tied real estate  
103 sales and development, which will help us track real estate sales in the area. I think that's something  
104 may come in the future. It could be [thinkSurfsideBeach.com](http://thinkSurfsideBeach.com), also. I agree, I think this is an excellent  
105 effort. I keep seeing us spend \$10,000 on brochures. I didn't bring it up, but want to see that disappear,

106 because brochures are a thing of the past. I hope in the next two years my company brochures go away.  
107 I think will always have maps to hand out, but brochures are thing of the past. I didn't bring it up bring  
108 up, but I'm doing it now. We need to be doing more for what this entails.

109  
110 Mr. Servant moved to approve \$10,000 for historical signage and \$12,000 for the social media  
111 consultant. Mr. Truett second.

112  
113 Mr. Livesay said a YouTube channel was suggested, and asked Ms. Large to extrapolate. Ms.  
114 Large said right now we take videos and post them on Facebook. Since YouTube is a Google-owned  
115 property, Google really likes it when you are driving traffic to their properties. To give us more and better  
116 organic rankings, if we have a YouTube channel and we're driving people there and directing them from  
117 YouTube to Facebook, "Google really likes that." It's fairly easy to do, and is one of the plans. Mr.  
118 Livesay said okay, I don't know as much about the real estate and development issues, but I can tell you  
119 that just from a being around kids, that YouTube channels have a lot of value. Especially on an individual  
120 basis. I'm not talking about from the business community. But from an individual tourist bases. I've seen  
121 some great channels about some of the tourist destinations in Colorado that were all done through  
122 YouTube. I think it's a great idea.

123  
124 All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

125  
126 **D. Other Grants.** Ms. Fellner explained that \$6,500 was set aside for other grant requests.  
127 Those applying are asked to submit applications by the end of December for the next fiscal year;  
128 however grant requests are accepted at any time. Two grants were submitted as this meeting was being  
129 planned. The committee may choose to review these two applications or to hold those funds for future  
130 use. Ms. Joyce Suliman submitted an application on behalf of the Surfside Beach Historical Society in the  
131 amount of \$5,000 for a Living History Day event that qualifies as arts and culture. Mr. Phillip Jackson  
132 submitted an application on behalf of Surf Dreams Foundation in the amount of \$4,500 for four 'Take a  
133 Kid Surfing Days' throughout the summer.

134  
135 **i. Take a Kid Surfing Days.**

136  
137 Ms. Large said on behalf of Surf Dreams Foundation that this organization had held Take a Kid  
138 Surfing days for locals for several years. The goal is to expand the event to create a tourist initiative that  
139 would promote the Town of Surfside Beach as a surfing destination. I was asked to speak because one  
140 of the events is designed for children with autism and special needs. My Champion Autism Network and  
141 Autism Friendly Travel Destination initiative, we partnered with Surf Dreams Foundation to promote the  
142 events.

143  
144 Ms. Martin asked if the requests should be tabled until representatives were present. Chairman  
145 Harrison believed the requests should be considered. The requests were included on the agenda, even  
146 though they were 'last minute.'

147  
148 Ms. Martin said I'd like to start with the Take a Kid Surfing proposal. My experience has been  
149 with kids who are surfers that they learn to surf either from their parents, or from their peers, from their  
150 friends. I don't feel that there is a significant need to have classes available to teach kids to surf for free.  
151 I've also in my experience with kids who surf is they tend to be children from pretty affluent families. If  
152 they need to take surfing lessons, I think the families can probably handle paying for them on their own.  
153 If you look at the cost of surfing equipment, it's not cheap. I don't think we're talking about  
154 underprivileged kids learning how to play basketball. This is an expensive hobby. I think this is not  
155 appropriate for us to be getting into this business, and frankly, there is an organization I think this would  
156 be a perfect fit for and that's called the Surfuff Foundation. This organization is generating hundreds of  
157 thousands of dollars every year in revenues from their sponsors, from their fees, from advertising on

158 their website, and we, our town, has given them money consistently year after year after year. If  
159 anybody ought to be offering surfing lessons, it should be the Surfuff Foundation. If this particular  
160 organization, and I don't doubt that you have the best of intentions in mind, but if they need money, I  
161 think they should go to the Surfuff Foundation, because they've got plenty of money, and they love  
162 giving money away. That's the place to look. I think it's not appropriate for our town to be taking on yet  
163 another project to help provide funds for programs for affluent kids who can pay for them themselves. I  
164 think, in fact, that if we're going to, if we're going to be setting money aside for anything, it should be for  
165 the future repairs to our beach and our pier. I know a lot of people think that we're going to be able to  
166 ask [the Federal Government in] Washington to send us money to repair our pier. I think the climate in  
167 Washington right now it's not Santa Claus anymore. I think there's a very good chance we're going to be  
168 stuck for a large portion of that ourselves. I don't think we should be wasting money on things that really  
169 we ought not to have any business being involved in.

170  
171 Ms. Large said Take a Kid Surfing Day is designed for children who would not otherwise  
172 experience surfing, whether from a family that's not affluent or a family that has a child on the autism  
173 spectrum or has a special need or just to promote the outdoors and the experience. It is a lesson, but it  
174 gives the children the opportunity in a supported environment to learn water safety. This all is  
175 encapsulated in just a short period of time. The events have over hundred children come to participate  
176 with a couple of hundred volunteers to help support it. When they're in the water, they have a guy that  
177 goes in with them to make sure that it's safe. It's not designed for to breed surfers, necessarily. It's  
178 designed to provide children who would not have the opportunity otherwise to experience the ocean, the  
179 beach and surfing in a safe, supported environment. I understand what you're saying about Surfuff.  
180 Knowing Mr. Jackson and the organization, he's pretty good at getting sponsors and this new tourist  
181 initiative, I think that's why he came to a-tax, because it is a tourist initiative in trying to promote people  
182 to come into Surfside Beach. They're going to come here, and they're going to be hungry after they're  
183 done surfing on the beach. They might get a room at Surfside Beach Resort or one of the hotels, or  
184 maybe rent from one of the great realty companies, and then go to a restaurant for dinner. We're trying  
185 to promote each other; it's just another way to promote the town.

186  
187 Mr. Truett moved to approve the funding request. Ms. Lane-Laveglia second.

188  
189 Chairman Harrison said the paperwork indicates that the total attendance is about 500. Another  
190 place mentions a hundred per event, so that makes it 400. The application shows total tourist 350. Are  
191 folks coming here because of this event, or is this just an event to cater to the tourists that are here in  
192 hopes of getting them back. Is this is generating return on the investment? Ms. Large said I believe that  
193 with promoting the event beforehand, we are working with the Chamber to have these promoted through  
194 the Chamber, as well, using their reach and PR. I'm also going to be helping with PR and promotion.  
195 Champion Autism Network alone is probably at least a hundred, if not more tourists this season coming.  
196 With the promotion in advance of the other families coming, it's definitely geared towards tourist. Locals  
197 are welcomed, but it's all being geared on out-of-market tourists. Some people will be here and hear  
198 about it and go. Some people might actually plan to come from another area outside of the hundred mile  
199 radius for the day.

200  
201 Ms. Lane-Laveglia said I personally have nephews who have participated in one of these events,  
202 and they loved it. They were excited about it. They are tourist; they're not from this area. They didn't  
203 come here for that, because they didn't know about before they got here. But, they are absolutely not  
204 from an affluent family. I think that it is potentially a good event, especially if we can advertise it ahead  
205 of time in ways that tourists would have the information ahead of time, and know that it's available that  
206 week while they will be here.

207  
208 Ms. Harbin asked if dates were available other the months. Ms. Large said no, I think that he  
209 has target dates, but I believe that some of that is predicated on this particular request.

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Mr. Livesay said I read the request prior to coming here today. I think Ms. Martin had some good points, but there's a local surf shop on Surfside Drive that pays taxes. Ms. Large said Eternal Wave. Mr. Livesay said yes. Mr. Livesay said they do a great job. I just wondered if you reached out and try to get them involved? Some money is going for equipment. Will this benefit our local business? Ms. Large said absolutely.

Mr. Servant said I agree with Ms. Martin. I have a hard time voting on request when the person responsible for the request is not here. I really do. Ms. Large said Mr. Jackson is doing an event out of town this week. Mr. Servant said I understand. It's difficult for me to support when the dates are not scheduled. There could even be tentative dates. I also have a problem with the leap to tourism related to this request. Those are just my concerns.

Mr. Truett asked if these events would be held in the designated surfing zones. Ms. Large said 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Mr. Truett asked if that could be a problem during July or August when surfers already there. Ms. Large said I don't think so. Mr. Truett said that's an unfair question for you. If they're going to be were 20 or 30 other surfers are, to me it could be an issue and could be a problem. When you get inexperienced surfers, as we all know, that's not a good combination. I don't have a problem teaching kids water skills; safety skills, and about marine life. The location just concerns me more than anything.

Chairman Harrison said Ms. Large's points were well made and well taken.

Mr. Servant said I really think it's an excellent idea to go to the Guy Daniels Surfuff Foundation to request funds from then. This is something that they should be involved with. They have funds to do it. I don't think it's appropriate for this committee representing tax funds to be involved in it.

All voted against. **MOTION FAILED.**

**ii. Living History Day.** No representative was present from the Historical Society.

Ms. Martin said I have a question about that proposal, also. I think we need to get someone to respond to that before we consider it. In the proposal, the grant request called for \$1,500 worth of staffing expense. In my understanding was when this event was put on last year it was done 100-percent with volunteers. I'm wondering why suddenly there is a \$1,500 staffing financial request. What are they going to do? Are they going to hire a permanent person to run this? That was not my understanding of what this project was going to be. My understanding all along was that it was going to be done by volunteers. If there were expenses involved in putting on a festival, then fine. We reimbursement or we pay for those expenses. I was not under the impression that it was going to turn into a full-time position for somebody. Ms. Fellner said I cannot answer that question. The person who was supposed to be here was supposed to present this. I was not asked to even look at the details or prepare. So I'm really not here to answer questions on that. I wish I had that information. She's a great resident; very involved person in the community. But something must've come up at the last minute, obviously, but I can't speak to that. I'm sorry.

Chairman Harrison said personally, I feel like this is for 17-18. We can revisit this. I'm not sure this is textbook by the definition good use of accommodation tax funds. I don't know of anybody that would be traveling here and spending money because of this event in November. That's my personal thoughts, but I would suggest we consider tabling until another meeting, unless you want to vote on it today.

Mr. Servant said I would just try to make comment. The signs and so on that have been discussed, I think really have some tourism benefit. They indicate some history. I think it's something

262 that we can we can promote to tourists. I think that's something that is unique, and ultimately may lead  
263 to this site at some point in time becoming a tourist destination. But I think this is a project that was  
264 taken on by council. Right now it's just not a tourism destination. It does not have anything to do with a  
265 tourism related expenditure, nor is it going to add to tourism coffers. I think it needs to come from the  
266 general fund like much of the other things we do in this town for promotions. It does not have anything  
267 to do with this committee.  
268

269 Mr. Servant moved to decline the Living History Day grant application. Ms. Lane-Laveglia second.  
270 All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

271  
272 **ELECTION OF OFFICERS.** *(Added by approved motion, see page 1.)*  
273

274 **Chairman:** Ms. Martin moved to elect Mr. Truett to serve as chairman. Mr. Livesay second. All  
275 voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**  
276

277 **Vice Chairman:** Mr. Servant moved to elect Mr. Harrison to serve as vice chairman. Ms. Harbin  
278 second. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**  
279

## 280 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

281  
282 Mr. Harry Kohlmann, South Ocean Boulevard: I'm not sure what was covered in the public works  
283 thing, but I don't remember hearing anything about adding new showers or paving beach accesses. I  
284 know he said we couldn't fix up the bathrooms. I'm just curious what's going on in this town. When I  
285 first came we were doing this on a yearly basis. That's a real draw to our tourists here. I know you can't  
286 bring up items; you can just approve them or disapprove them. I think that's what we should be  
287 spending our money. We do a lot of beach rakes; we do a back hoe, paying for our police officers. That's  
288 all well and good. Where's the showers? Why aren't we getting any more showers? (\*\*\*) saying it to you;  
289 I'm saying it to maybe some other people. That's what's important, because the tourists like showers. A  
290 hundred thousand dollars for a bathroom? Geeze, I think I could buy a house for \$120,000 over in  
291 Caropines. We're talking about a cinderblock building, two commodes, and not even hot water. A  
292 hundred thousand dollars! It doesn't make sense to me. The thing with the surfing, my son's a surfer. He  
293 loves surfing. He makes money off of surfing because it teaches kids. I think it is a great thing, and it's  
294 for all kids, rich, poor, in between. But, I think you made the right decision. We've got a great store over  
295 here. He does a lot with the kids who are surfers and at the skate park. Maybe he should promote or  
296 Village Surf Shop should promote. People come in on Saturdays, Monday, free lesson Surfside Beach and  
297 that will bring business to him. That will bring surfers here. It makes the market bigger. Everyone makes  
298 a lot of money. Thank you for that decision. Thank you.  
299

## 300 6. COMMITTEE COMMENTS.

301  
302 Mr. Servant: You know I've always got to speak. I haven't had a public forum to be able to do  
303 this. I just want compliment town staff and the recovery was made after the recent hurricane. This town  
304 is amazing and what they accomplished in a short period of time. It doesn't take long for me driving  
305 home after work to realize I left Surfside. I realize that anyway, because I've lived here 50 years.  
306 Geographically, it's amazing the way the town staff and the cleanup efforts and the way they went. Not  
307 just the fact that they're completed, but the efficiency and the time frame they were done in. We've got  
308 areas down in Georgetown County that looks like the storm hit just yesterday. The public boat landing in  
309 Murrells Inlet still has dead trees laying all over, so is just amazing. I just want you know for me  
310 personally and the staff at both of the companies I'm associated with, we really appreciate it. You got us  
311 back up and running and it just looks great for tourists. You just did a great job. I know you don't hear  
312 compliments all the time, but it was a great, great job.  
313

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314 Chairman Harrison: I'd like to second just what he said, and commend the town as well,  
315 especially Mr. Adair. A lot of it fell in your department, but all staff working together, and of course our  
316 leader, Ms. Fellner calling the shots and helping organize things. You did a great job. Thank you very  
317 much.  
318

319 Ms. Harbin: One more comment to all of y'all. He's right on everything, but if you're not a part of  
320 this town of Surfside being an employee, for heaven's sake, please tell them how much you appreciate  
321 what they do. Stop the police on the side of the street. They love to hear it. Y'all do, too, because I make  
322 a point, I may be in my pajamas when I go out in the morning, but I say thank when you pick up my  
323 trash. *(Laughter.)* Thank you all.  
324

325 Mr. Truett: I want to thank Chief Keziah for his service to the town. He is going to be sorely  
326 missed. I appreciate everything you've done for the Town of Surfside Beach. Several members concurred.  
327 *(Applause.)*  
328

329 **7. ADJOURNMENT.** Chairman Harrison declared the meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.  
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331 Prepared and submitted by  
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334 Approved: March 30, 2017  
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Debra Eaddy Herrmann, CMC, Town Clerk  
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Randy Harrison, Chairman – Lodging Member  
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E. J. "Mil" Servant, Vice Chair, Lodging Member Kathryn Martin, Culture/Arts Member  
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Carolyn Harbin, Committee Member Melodye Lane-Laveglia, Committee Member  
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Gary Livesay, Committee Member James S. Truett, Committee Member  
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349 Clerk's Note: This document constitutes action minutes of the meeting that was digitally recorded.  
350 Contact the town clerk for appointments to hear audio; bring a flash drive to obtain a recording copy. In  
351 accordance with FOIA, meeting notice and the agenda were distributed to local media and interested  
352 parties via the town's email subscription list. The agenda was posted on the entry door at Town Council  
353 Chambers. Meeting notice was also posted on the Town marquee.