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Oconee shares in Clemson Accommodations tax funds

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CLEMSON — The city of Clemson's Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee has recommended approval of $76,000 in grant requests for 2009-10, with nine organizations set to receive either full or partial funding.

Some are in Oconee County.

However, Foothills Conservatory for the Performing Arts, which had sought $8,850, and Bob Campbell Geology Museum, $6,000, were rejected in their grant requests, the committee citing its desire to fund efforts that will increase tourism to the area.

The nine organizations receiving funding marks a decrease from 11 a year ago. Committee Chairman Glenn Hare said his committee members worked closely to deliberate each grant request.

The committee viewed each grant on its ability to attract tourists to Clemson, or "Tourism Factor," and on the "Quality of Life" that the organization contributes to the community.

Only two organizations — The South Carolina Botanical Garden, $4,650, and the Pendleton Historic Foundation, $4,000 — received their full request.

Committee members described The Botanical Garden as "a campus and community treasure that attracts garden lovers from across the state, the Southeast and Eastern seaboard" and commended the garden's use of past ATAX funding to market itself as a wedding destination — adding that the funds would extend that effort. The committee praised the Pendleton Historic Foundation for its continued goal "to increase its visibility as a wedding facility" and expressed encouragement "by how the foundation has consistently used ATAX funding towards that goal," with additional funds recommended to further that effort.

Hare said the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce received the largest grant recommendation from the committee, with $49,550 of the $55,000 requested.

Other agencies recommended for funding, the amount they will receive and comments issued by the committee are as follows:

- Brooks Center for the Performing Arts, $8,000 of $10,000 requested
- Blue Ridge Arts Council, $3,000 of $5,000 requested
- Carolina Chaos Baseball, LLC, $1,050 of $5,000 requested
- The Arts Center, $2,000 of $7,500 requested
- Clemson Area-Fellowship of Christian Athletes, $250 of $500 requested
- Pendleton District Commission, $2,500 of $30,000 requested

While Hare said his committee typically receives double the amount of funding requests, he added that some organizations no longer apply because they realize their requests do not meet established criteria.

Council is expected to discuss the committee's recommendations and issue final approval in August.