



Legislation Text

File #: 0234-2026, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: This ordinance authorizes the Finance and Management Director to enter into contract with the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, dba Experience Columbus, for destination marketing services to increase tourism and convention business in Columbus. Furthermore, the disbursement of the Hotel/Motel excise tax proceeds in accordance with Section 371.02(c) of the Columbus City Codes which, in part, designates a portion of funds for the purpose of promoting and publicizing the City of Columbus as a desirable location for conventions, trade shows, and similar events. In fulfilling this public purpose, Experience Columbus often hosts potential clients, industry representatives, meeting planners and the media. This ordinance permits Experience Columbus to utilize a portion of their Hotel/Motel Excise Tax disbursement to supplement other non-public revenue to cover the costs of food and non-alcoholic beverages directly related to business development and the promotion of the City of Columbus. The portion of the 2026 Hotel/Motel Excise Tax designated for the promotion and publicizing the City of Columbus and appropriated to Experience Columbus is projected to be \$14,736,000.00 and no more than ten percent (10%) of that amount may be used for the public purpose of funding the purchase of food and non-alcoholic beverages directly tied to when Experience Columbus hosts potential clients, industry representatives, meeting planners and the media. That amount is subject to an annual audit.

Experience Columbus is the county convention and visitor's bureau and provides marketing services to increase tourism and convention business. These services require expertise that cannot be provided by current city employees.

Greater Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau dba Experience Columbus, FID: 314153118, CC#: CC-006014 (non-profit).

Emergency action is requested so that tax proceeds can be disbursed without delay to ensure timely payments so that marketing services increasing tourism and convention business can continue in the greater Columbus area with no interruption in service.

FISCAL IMPACT: This ordinance authorizes an expenditure of \$14,736,000.00 from the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Fund with Experience Columbus for marketing services related to increasing tourism and convention business for the City of Columbus. These funds are budgeted in the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax fund for these services. Funding for this contract will come from receipts into the Hotel/Motel tax fund in accordance with Section 371.02(c) of the Columbus City Codes and is **contingent upon ordinance 2940-2025 passage**.

To authorize the Finance and Management Director to enter into contract with the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, dba Experience Columbus, for destination marketing services to promote and publicize the City of Columbus as a desirable location for conventions, trade shows, and similar events; to authorize the expenditure of \$14,736,000.00 from the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Fund; to authorize the expenditure of funds for reasonable food and non-alcoholic beverage expenses; and to declare an emergency. (\$14,736,000.00)

WHEREAS, Section 371.02(c) of the Columbus City Codes, 1959 specifies that 2.39% of the combined rates of 5.1% of the revenues of the hotel/motel excise tax are to be used to promote and publicize the City of Columbus as a desirable location for conventions, tourism, trade shows, and similar events; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 2940-2025 appropriated \$14,736,000.00 from the monies in the fund known as the Hotel-Motel

Tax Fund, Fund No. 2231, and from all monies estimated to come into said fund from any and all sources during the 12 months ending December 31, 2026, for the public purpose of promoting and publicizing the City; and

WHEREAS, the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, dba Experience Columbus, is the designated destination marketing organization responsible for promoting and publicizing the City; and

WHEREAS, Experience Columbus often hosts potential clients, industry representatives, meeting planners and the media to promote and publicize the City; and

WHEREAS, the expenditure of funds for food and non-alcoholic beverages may at times be necessary in support of this public purpose; and

WHEREAS, no more than ten percent (10%) of the monies appropriated through this ordinance may be used for the public purpose of providing food and non-alcoholic beverages directly tied to when Experience Columbus hosts potential clients, industry representatives, meeting planners and the media for the public purpose; and

WHEREAS, use of the 10% shall be subject to an annual audit by the City; and

WHEREAS, the Experience Columbus Board of Directors will dedicate funding in its annual budget for economic and human growth, collaborative image/brand awareness and increased quality of life for residents by measuring growth of key data points on a community score card; and

WHEREAS, this contract is awarded pursuant to provisions relating to non-profit services of City Code Chapter 329; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Finance and Management in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Finance and Management Director to enter into a contract with Experience Columbus without delay to ensure timely payments so that marketing services to promote and publicize the City of Columbus as a desirable location for conventions, trade shows, and similar events can continue without interruption, all for the immediate preservation of the public health, peace, property, safety and welfare; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the Director of the Finance and Management Department is hereby authorized to enter into contract with the Greater Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, dba Experience Columbus, for the public purpose of promoting and publicizing the City of Columbus as a desirable location for conventions, trade shows, and similar events. That no more than ten percent (10%) of the monies appropriated below may be used for the public purpose of funding the purchase of food and non-alcoholic beverages directly tied to when Experience Columbus hosts potential clients, industry representatives, meeting planners and the media for promoting and publicizing the City. This amount is subject to an annual audit by the City.

SECTION 2. That said contract shall provide for payment by the city for such services in accordance with Chapter 371.02(c) of Columbus City Codes and 2.39% of the combined rates of 5.1% of the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax, currently estimated at \$14,736,000.00, is hereby authorized to be expended from the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Fund 2231, Sub-Fund 223105 in Object Class 03 Contractual Services per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

SECTION 3. That this contract is awarded in accordance with the relevant provisions of Columbus City Code Chapter 329 relating to not-for-profit service contracts exceeding fifty thousand dollars.

SECTION 4. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all

contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 6. That for reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this Ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.