Minutes of the 1st Hakuba Village Accommodation Tax Utilization Project Review Committee Meeting, FY2026

Date & Time

Tuesday, June 9, 2026, 15:00–17:00

Location

Hakuba Village Office, Conference Rooms 201 & 202

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Greetings
3. Appointment of the Chairperson and Greetings
4. Discussion Items:
    - Draft of the Hakuba Village Tourism Destination Management Vision First-Half Action Plan
        - Action Plan Formulation Flow
        - Draft Policy for the First-Half Period
    - Basic Strategies and Implementation Projects (Draft)
    - Management of Accommodation Tax Allocation
        - Allocation Management System
        - Draft Guidelines for the Delivery of Accommodation Tax and Other Utilization Project Subsidies
5. Other Business
6. Closing

Attendees

Committee Members

- **Chairperson:**
    - Tomohiko Maruyama (Hakuba Hifumi)
- **Committee Members:**
    - Yudai Shirahama (Sustainability Coordinator)
    - Hideki Arikado (Representative Director, EX Communications Co., Ltd.)
    - Yasuo Kurata (Chairman, Happo-one Kaihatsu Co., Ltd.)
    - Koichi Ito (President, Hakuba Goryu Tourism Association)
    - Kenichiro Yoshikawa (Secretary General, Hakuba Village Promotion Public Corporation)
    - Noriko Fukushima (Lodge Yamajiu)
    - Kazuma Maruyama (Hakuba Mominoki Hotel) *(Left midway)*
    - Ian Miller (HIBA/Panorama Hotel) *(Participated online)*
    - Koichi Shinozaki (Secretary General, HAKUBA Society of commerce and industry)

    - Kyoko Yamagishi (Hakuba Ekimae Promotion Association)
    - Alexandria Owen (Goryu Co., Ltd.) *(Absent)*

Secretariat

- Daisuke Yamagishi (Director of Hakuba Village Tourism Division)
- Hiroki Yaguchi (Chief of Tourism and Commerce Section, Hakuba Village Tourism Division)
- Kaori Fukunaga (Senior Researcher, Tourism Research Department, Japan Travel Bureau Foundation)
- Kanane Yamamoto (Researcher, Tourism Research Department, Japan Travel Bureau Foundation)
- Yojiro Fukushima (Secretary General, Tourism Commission of Hakuba Village)
- Yuya Shinro (Deputy Secretary General & General Affairs Manager, Tourism Commission of Hakuba Village)

Meeting Proceedings

1. Opening

2. Greetings

3. Appointment of the Chairperson and Greetings

4. Discussion Items

Draft of the Hakuba Village Tourism Destination Management Vision First-Half Action Plan /Action Plan Formulation Flow / Draft Policy for the First-Half Period

- **Chair:**

The collection of the accommodation tax has begun as of June 1. I previously participated in the "Financial Resource Security Review Committee" that designed this accommodation tax system. We held highly intense meetings reviewing various aspects, such as whether to adopt a flat-rate or percentage-based system. The official name of this committee is the "Accommodation Tax Utilization Project Review Committee." Our ultimate role is to select and review projects to be implemented using the accommodation tax revenue. However, I believe it would be best for each committee member to first deepen their understanding of their respective roles in this committee, and discuss what exactly we should be focusing on during this meeting.

- **Ms. Fukushima:**

My understanding is that we should focus on discussing how to preserve and utilize Hakuba's natural environment for future generations.

- **Mr. K. Maruyama:**

I share the same understanding as Ms. Fukushima.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Under the "Hakuba Village Ordinance on Sustainable Tourism Destination Management," the uses of the accommodation tax are strictly defined. While the tax must be used for projects that align with those specified purposes, this committee needs to discuss how we actually use the funds and what criteria we use to select or reject projects. The First-Half Action Plan serves as the implementation plan for the "Tourism Destination Management Vision," which outlines the future image we want Hakuba to achieve. Crucially, the Action Plan does not only target projects funded by the accommodation tax; it also covers projects funded by other financial resources. Furthermore, it involves a wide range of actors, including the local government, DMOs, and private companies. The accommodation tax is simply one tool utilized to accelerate the realization of these goals.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Yamagishi):**

In the previous fiscal year, the Tourism Destination Management Vision was formulated at the Tourism Destination Management Meeting, establishing 4 strategic pillars and 18 items. Moving forward, local businesses, economic organizations, DMOs, and the village government will submit project proposals to be funded by the accommodation tax based on these strategies. The role of this Review Committee is to select those projects. Therefore, the primary purpose of this committee is to judge whether the proposed contents align with the Vision. However, since the Tourism Destination Management Vision is a long-term, 10-year plan with broad directions, making direct judgments based solely on it can be difficult. Thus, we are creating this Action Plan to first define the priority areas for the next 4 years. To begin, we would like to hear the committee members' opinions on the contents of this Action Plan.

- **Mr. Kurata:**

I might not fully comprehend everything yet, but I would like to think about this while listening to everyone's opinions.

- **Mr. Ito:**

Initially, I thought of this meeting as a place to choose projects from among applications—essentially a screening process to sort proposals into "conforming" and "non-conforming." However, thanks to your explanation, I now understand that we first need to establish the criteria that will guide our reviews.

- **Chair:**

Keeping in mind the need to clarify the project evaluation criteria based on this explanation, let us proceed to the discussions on (1) the Action Plan Formulation Flow, and (2) the Draft Policy for the First-Half Period.

- **Mr. Yoshikawa:**

Has the actual content of the Action Plan already been drafted?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

In the next agenda item, draft projects based on each basic strategy will be presented. For now, we would like to receive your feedback on the core points and policy directions of the Action Plan.

- **Mr. Shinozaki:**

I appreciate how the survey previously conducted with local businesses was organized in a way that aligns with each strategy of the Vision. We should first review the results of that categorization before finalizing the Action Plan. Following that, we can discuss which of the projects outlined in the Action Plan should be funded by the accommodation tax. I believe it is important to first establish the Action Plan broadly, rather than working backward from the premise of having the accommodation tax.

- **Mr. Shirahama:**

I understand that the Vision was finalized last year, and now we are discussing the policy direction of the Action Plan based on it. Personally, since this Action Plan also defines the usage of the accommodation tax, I believe the perspective of wealth/resource redistribution is crucial. We must ensure that the benefits do not solely flow to tourism operators, preventing a scenario where tourism thrives and keeps everyone busy, yet wages do not rise and quality of life fails to improve for residents.

- **Mr. Kurata:**

I would like to clarify the upcoming schedule. Will we be inviting project proposals from businesses around August or September of this year to be funded by the accommodation tax? I am still unclear about what this committee needs to decide, and by when.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

We plan to finalize this Action Plan by the end of June. Based on it, we will begin accepting proposals for accommodation tax-funded projects starting in August. We will hold an explanatory session in late August, followed by the application period in September and October. This committee will then review those proposals and decide which projects to approve. In simple terms, it will function similarly to a subsidy program. To determine the scope of what the accommodation tax can cover, we will need to discuss detailed matters—such as whether personnel costs should be eligible—in future meetings.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Fukushima):**

This Action Plan will serve as the criteria for our evaluations.

- **Mr. Shinozaki:**

Using the accommodation tax as a subsidy-like mechanism for private businesses is an interesting approach. At the same time, doesn't the local administration have its own planned uses for the tax? You mentioned that both public administration and private proposals will be evaluated on the same playing field, but is that the right approach?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Yamagishi):**

Yes, we will start by placing administrative projects on the same table. For example, infrastructure-related improvements are naturally issues that the administration should tackle, but even these matters will first be submitted to the Review Committee as proposals for your discussion.

- **Ms. Yamagishi:**

I assume meeting the baseline criteria does not automatically guarantee selection. It feels like we need a higher tier of evaluation criteria on top of the minimum standards. Will that be established in a separate discussion?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

We plan to include specific project drafts, expected implementing bodies, and implementation periods in the First-Half Action Plan. These will serve as our evaluation benchmarks. However, for areas where hard criteria cannot be easily set, we expect the Review Committee to make judgments based on the opinions of the members.

- **Mr. Arikado:**

What happens if a committee member is directly involved in a project proposal?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

We intend to conduct reviews strictly, which means asking members with a conflict of interest to temporarily step out of the room or abstain from those specific discussions. While the village and the Tourism Commission will also submit proposals, we will ensure our own biases do not interfere, maintaining complete transparency in the review process.

Basic Strategies and Implementation Projects (Draft)

- **Chair:**

Following that detailed explanation of the materials, are there any general opinions to start with?

- **Mr. Shinozaki:**

I feel it is very well organized. However, with so many items listed, it might be difficult to implement everything. Perhaps we should organize and prioritize which tasks are most urgent.

- **Ms. Fukushima:**

I would like to speak as a resident. In the draft points of the First-Half Action Plan, there is a phrase: "protecting the quality of life of residents." Looking at the proposed projects, it seems this is addressed through transport infrastructure and secondary transportation. However, I feel this is not what the villagers are actually seeking. Under Measure 1-2, "Implementation of Education Characteristic of Hakuba Village," there are descriptions covering elementary to high schools, but absolutely nothing about nurseries or preschool-aged children. In reality, there is a severe shortage of teachers, and many families cannot find childcare. This has become a practical issue where mothers cannot work, household incomes decline, and families end up moving out of the village, yet such voices are not being heard. I feel that the policy of "protecting the quality of life of residents" is not well reflected in the actual plan.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Yaguchi):**

In response to residents struggling with trash, noise, and bad manners due to the increase in inbound tourism, we have included items like Measure 4-2. We also included Measure 1-4 to address rising prices. Specifically, we are considering using the accommodation tax to subsidize villagers riding the Hakuba-Nagano bus line, for example. The core intent of the accommodation tax is to "properly reinvest the taxes collected from tourists back into tourist-facing services." By dedicating tourist tax revenue to tourist needs, we can free up local tax revenues (paid by residents) to be spent fully on residents rather than tourists. The trash and manner issues mentioned earlier were identified during the formulation of the Tourism Destination Management Vision last year. If you review the Vision and find areas where you feel it falls short, we might be able to incorporate those ideas into the First-Half Action Plan in some form, so please feel free to make suggestions.

- **Mr. Shirahama:**

I agree with the concept that the accommodation tax should be used to advance tourism promotion using revenue generated directly from tourism. I understand this to mean that the taxes paid by residents can then be used entirely for the residents' benefit, and I feel it is important to clearly re-emphasize this philosophy. I would like to clarify the process. According to the formulation schedule, the first meeting decides the 4-year policy and project drafts, while the second meeting decides the projects, division of roles, and schedules. Given this, is it correct to assume that we should now focus on discussing "these are the projects we should carry out over the next 4 years"?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

That is correct. Last year we created a 10-year Tourism Destination Management Vision, and this meeting will decide what to implement during the first 4 years as the First-Half Action Plan.

- **Mr. Shinozaki:**

"Kick-off projects" were already identified in the preceding Management Vision. Is it correct to assume that the First-Half Action Plan will prioritize these?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Yaguchi):**

Yes, as you pointed out, the kick-off projects serve as the baseline premise for discussing the First-Half Action Plan. In addition to those kick-off projects, we will formulate the Action Plan by taking into account anticipated changes in internal and external environments, feedback from businesses, and comments from this meeting.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Since it may be difficult to review all project drafts and provide feedback right now, we would like to collect your opinions at a later date.

Management of Accommodation Tax Allocation

Allocation Management System / Draft Guidelines for the Delivery of Accommodation Tax and Other Utilization Project Subsidies

- **Mr. Miller:**

I have experience participating in a similar accommodation tax project in the United States. In that case, implementing all the proposed projects would have cost around 20 billion yen, so we held a public referendum to decide which projects to fund. Since implementing all approved projects would take about 10 years, each project secured loans based on the guaranteed future revenue from the accommodation tax. In other words, they secured 10-year loans because their income was locked in through the tax. Consequently, the allocation and rules of the accommodation tax could not be changed or decided otherwise during those 10 years. This is a common approach in the US.

- **Chair:**

While that is a different model from what we are currently considering in Hakuba, I feel the high level of importance placed on the evaluation process is the same. So, you decide what to do over 10 years through a vote, and the next step is only taken 10 years later?

- **Mr. Miller:**

Yes, the committee doesn't make decisions every year; we hold just one vote, and once it passes, that's it. After the election, the accommodation tax goes to those projects every year. The scale of the projects ranges from very small to very large. If we completely use up the funds on a single-year basis every year, as currently being considered for Hakuba, we might not be able to execute large-scale projects.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

It is true that if we spend everything within a single fiscal year, we cannot undertake massive projects. However, if a proposal for a large-scale project is submitted, it is possible to carry over funds because this accommodation tax is set up as a fund (endowment). For example, to execute a project costing 1 billion yen in 10 years, we could save 100 million yen annually for 10 years. Still, your point stands that large projects are harder to carry out under this setup, so the secretariat will look into measures to address this.

- Mr. Ito:

That is exactly what I wanted to ask. Looking at the schedule, it seems to assume that projects must be single-year and completed within that year. However, the text also mentions "projects with continuity rather than transient ones." To maintain that continuity, do we have to submit applications every year, or can we apply for multiple years' worth of funding at once?

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

The secretariat considers multi-year project applications to be acceptable. However, it will be necessary to submit progress reports at the end of each fiscal year and settle accounts annually.

- Mr. Shirahama:

If a 3-year plan is established and subsidized for 3 years, submitting progress reports each fiscal year seems reasonable. If a project fails to yield results compared to the original plan at the end of the first year, will there be a decision-making process on whether to continue or cancel it?

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

Yes. We expect to evaluate projects in April for what was done in the previous fiscal year, and requesting a suspension or termination of the project is a real possibility.

- Mr. Yoshikawa:

Among the priority areas, there is an item called "projects where visitors can feel the tangible impact." People probably have different thoughts on this. Will we be able to see the monitoring results showing what was actually felt by visitors?

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

By "projects where visitors can feel the tangible impact," we mean projects that directly improve customer convenience. Ideally, we would monitor how much convenience they felt, but we had not planned that far ahead yet. For instance, if we use the accommodation tax for an existing event run by the Tourism Commission, the service delivered to tourists doesn't change, so they won't feel the effect of the tax. We want to avoid situations where tourists feel, "I paid tax, but nothing became more convenient."

- Mr. Arikado:

So you mean things like installing signage, where tourists can clearly see "this is where the tax went" when they arrive?

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

Yes, exactly. The idea is that visitors can actually experience a difference, such as more frequent bus services, a brand-new event, or easier-to-read information. We want to avoid a state where funds are simply allocated to existing operations without the visitors noticing any positive change.

- Chair:

Are there any opinions regarding the draft allocation policy, evaluation criteria, or items that could serve as priorities? Also, we would like to hear your thoughts on the outline of the draft delivery guidelines, such as the eligible recipients, eligible expenses, and the subsidy rate (flat-rate with a maximum of full subsidy).

- Mr. Kurata:

If personnel costs are excluded from eligible expenses, I feel the subsidy will be difficult to use. Also, what kind of entity are you imagining for the "individual" category in the eligible recipients?

- Mr. Ito:

When executing projects, outsourcing to organizations or companies with specialized expertise is a common approach. Therefore, excluding personnel costs across the board might narrow the scope of projects. On the other hand, making all personnel costs eligible may not be ideal either, making this a difficult judgment.

- Mr. Arikado:

There should be precedents from other subsidies. For example, there are rules setting a daily cap on personnel costs or unit rates for hiring external lecturers. We could refer to those to set baseline standards in advance.

- Mr. Shirahama:

I think personnel costs could be eligible, but the method of calculating those costs under the subsidized project will likely spark debate. It also comes down to how strictly we want to audit them.

- Secretariat (Mr. Yamagishi):

The interpretation of "personnel costs" varies by person. It can be paid as "outsourcing fees," or treated as "honorariums" or "fees" for dispatching specialists for a specific task. Excluding all of these entirely as "personnel costs" would indeed make projects unviable. Therefore, we will clearly specify the breakdown in the guidelines and have you deliberate on it. While it is labeled simply as "personnel costs" today, we want to translate this into the guidelines with specific examples of when they are eligible.

- Chair:

Understood. The secretariat will present calculation standards that the committee members can easily evaluate. Next, what is the secretariat's image regarding the "individual" category for eligible recipients?

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

We were assuming sole proprietors (individual business owners). However, we also have concerns that their liabilities and risks might be larger compared to corporations. Additionally, if we receive a flood of applications from a wide variety of individuals, the administrative processing could become overly complicated.

- Mr. Arikado:

Some sole proprietors operate in a structured manner very close to a corporation. However, as pointed out, if anyone can easily submit a proposal as an individual, it could lead to chaos. Therefore, even if they are not a corporation, it might be better to limit eligibility to those who have officially filed a sole proprietorship notification (notification of opening a business) and are properly operating a business.

- Mr. Kurata:

I agree; I am concerned about potential confusion. Also, we are expected to finish the evaluations within this fiscal year, but do we have a reasonably clear forecast of the tax revenue amount at this point? In the launch phase, we should assume a high volume of applications and proceed with a setup that allows for smooth, orderly operations. We can make adjustments later as needed.

- Mr. Shirahama:

I also think we do not need to include individuals. Sole proprietors can be supported separately through existing frameworks like small business assistance programs from the Chamber of Commerce. Even if accommodation tax funds are used to support a sole proprietor's business, I question how much that would contribute to "improving convenience and satisfaction for the entire village or region," as stated in our allocation policy.

- Mr. Shinozaki:

Regarding the subsidy rate, I find the term "flat-rate" (定額制 - teigaku-sei) confusing. Does "flat-rate" mean we intend to approve 100% of the eligible expenses, or does it mean a fixed lump sum will be granted per application? When we open the public call, we should make sure the guidelines clearly explain how much support applicants can expect.

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

Since the accommodation tax is ultimately money invested into the future of Hakuba Village, we believe we should not routinely force financial burdens on operators. Thus, we think "full subsidy" (10/10) should be an option. While we could write "10/10 (full subsidy)," we must also prepare for cases where we receive massive applications, or where we only approve a portion of the proposed content. For example, if the estimated fund is 100 million yen, and we receive three different 100 million yen proposals, we might choose not to pick just one, but instead partially fund all three. With these scenarios in mind, we thought "flat-rate" (flexible fixed funding up to the cap) was more appropriate than expressing it strictly as "1/2" or "1/3."

- Chair:

Who decides whether to subsidize 10/10 or only approve a portion, and when is that decision made? Please clarify whether this committee only needs to decide on the approval or rejection of the project, or if we also need to decide on the specific subsidy amount.

- Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):

Basically, we assume it will be the full amount requested, but we will look into the decision-making body and process for cases where only a portion is approved. While we do not expect this committee to decide the exact subsidy rates, we would like to hear your opinions on general directions, such as which projects should receive more generous funding.

- Secretariat (Mr. Yamagishi):

The fundamental rule is to judge the applicant's proposed budget and project content. Whether this committee will decide the subsidy ratio has not been finalized yet. However, we may conduct hearings to gather information—such as "this part can be carried over to the next year" or "we will cover this portion ourselves if we can get this much subsidy from the accommodation tax"—and then ask this committee for its judgment based on those findings.

- Mr. Shirahama:

Is my understanding correct that the secretariat will draft the evaluation guidelines, and today you are gathering our feedback to help shape those guidelines?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Yes, that is exactly correct.

- **Chair:**

Are there any other points that should be added to the "Draft Accommodation Tax Allocation Policy"?

- **Ms. Yamagishi:**

Is this draft policy meant to be shared only within this committee, or will it be made public when we invite applications?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

We plan to make it public.

- **Ms. Yamagishi:**

Under eligible recipients, it was noted that they are "not limited to within Hakuba Village." However, operators within Hakuba Village would naturally be prioritized, wouldn't they? If so, we should state that clearly in the guidelines.

- **Mr. Shinozaki:**

Suppose we receive 1 billion yen worth of applications for a 100 million yen budget, resulting in an approval rate of about 1/3. The amount of accommodation tax revenue available for the next fiscal year is estimated to be 140 million yen. To decide how to distribute this, I believe we must have clear evaluation criteria, such as public interest and alignment with the project.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Based on the feedback received today, we will draft detailed guidelines and procedures. We would like to gather your feedback on them again at the second meeting and make a final decision.

- **Chair:**

This concludes the discussion items.

5. Other Business

- **Mr. Kurata:**

I would like to ask about the current status of the accommodation tax collection.

- **Chair:**

We have been smoothly collecting the tax for stays starting from June 1.

- **Mr. Arikado:**

Is it okay to share the contents of this meeting within our respective organizations?

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Yes, that is perfectly fine. We also plan to compile and organize these minutes.

- **Chair:**

I would like to clarify what the committee members need to do before the next meeting, and what we will cover during the meeting on June 29.

- **Secretariat (Mr. Shinro):**

Please take the draft of the First-Half Action Plan home and review it. We would like to gather your opinions at a later date. If you have any remaining thoughts from today's discussion or if you think of anything new, please send them to us via email or other means. Before the next meeting, the secretariat will revise the application guidelines, administrative details, and the First-Half Action Plan, and share them with you a few days (at least one day) before the meeting. The 2nd Committee Meeting will be held on June 29, from 15:00 to 17:00, in Room 302 of the Hakuba Village Office.

6. Closing

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