



City of Broken Arrow

Minutes

Visit Broken Arrow

Chairman Brian Dean
Vice Chair Tommy Yardy
Gene Barber
Ben Buie
Lisa Ford
Craig Hagin
Kathy Muskrat
Sonja Schneider
Trevor Swanson

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

3:30 p.m.

**City of Broken Arrow
Council Chambers
220 South Main Street
Broken Arrow, OK**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Present: 9 - Ben Buie, Brian Dean, Lisa Ford, Gene Barber, Craig Hagin, Kathy Muskrat, Sonja Schneider, Trevor Swanson

Absent: 2 Tommy Yardy, Gene Barber

3. Administration of Oath of Office

Craig Hagin, Ben Buie, and Sonja Schneider were instructed to sign documents before them, clarifying that they were not required to read them aloud or perform formal gestures. They noted that one of the documents is a loyalty oath, emphasizing that it aligns with their obligations as American citizens. The speaker invited questions or concerns about the documents before proceeding.

4. Presentations

A. 24-1511 **Discussion regarding possible amendment to the Visit Broken Arrow grant funding guidelines to include an incentive for film productions**

Makala Barton, Director of Tourism, introduced an item by Counselor Lisa Ford, stemming from her attendance at an Oklahoma Municipal League (OML) conference where discussions centered on the film industry. Counselor Ford had requested a meeting with the speaker and Mr. Spurgeon to explore Broken Arrow's current efforts to engage with the film industry and identify additional strategies to attract film projects to the city. The discussion assesses how the city can more proactively draw film-related opportunities.

After attending a conference on film industry opportunities, Council Member Lisa Ford highlighted that Broken Arrow is certified as film-ready but questioned how the city is leveraging this status. She emphasized the potential economic benefits of attracting film projects and asked about existing strategies, such as a portfolio or promotional efforts, to draw filmmakers to the city.

Makala Barton further stated in 2021, Broken Arrow became certified as a film-friendly city with a streamlined permit process developed by Aaron. While the state lists the town as film-friendly, the next step is determining how to capitalize on this status. Highlighting the success of communities like Pawhuska, which benefited significantly from hosting Killers of the Flower Moon, she emphasized the economic potential of attracting filmmakers. Oklahoma offers a competitive state film incentive, and cities like Oklahoma City provide additional local incentives to attract productions. Broken Arrow is considering similar steps and ensuring its unique locations, such as fields and the Rose District, are well-promoted to maximize its appeal to the film industry.

Ms. Barton further stated Broken Arrow has various filming locations, including abandoned warehouses and scenic areas, listed on the state's website to attract film scouts. Film productions bring economic benefits by boosting local businesses, creating temporary jobs,

and hiring local talent, as incentivized by state programs. To remain competitive, cities like Oklahoma City offer additional local incentives, matching the state's rebate on a percentage of production costs for meeting specific criteria, such as hiring locals or staying for extended periods. Broken Arrow is exploring leveraging similar strategies to attract filmmakers and stand out among other cities.

Film productions, even small ones like *Minari*, bring measurable economic benefits to Broken Arrow by supporting local businesses through purchases, catering, and hiring local talent. For example, *Minari* utilized local resources such as Ace Hardware and local catering. While it involved only a few hotel stays, its impact was notable as an Oscar-winning film. Larger productions, like those in Pawhuska during *Killers of the Flower Moon*, can create significant economic boosts by generating demand for services such as dry cleaning, catering, and extensive hotel stays, showcasing the transformative potential of attracting more substantial film projects.

Ms. Barton and the board discussed leveraging Broken Arrow's film-friendly certification to attract productions and generate economic benefits. While the city has hosted smaller productions like *Minari* and faith-based films, there is interest in smaller-scale and more extensive projects like *Twisters*, which bring significant economic impact but may exhaust funding quickly. The discussion emphasized exploring incentives, creating a dedicated fund, and simplifying the application process to make Broken Arrow competitive.

The board agreed on the importance of further research, including looking into other cities' and states' incentive programs. Suggestions included allocating a portion of grant funds for film projects, developing promotional materials to showcase the city's unique locations, and establishing measurable criteria to manage funding. The team plans to return with recommendations for the next budget cycle.

B. 24-1323 Discussion regarding lodging tax

Ms. Barton discussed the possibility of increasing Broken Arrow's lodging tax, which has remained unchanged since 1999. A comparative analysis of other cities revealed that Broken Arrow's tax is among the lowest, making it less competitive for tourism funding. While appearing to have a 5% tax, cities like Tulsa effectively charge 8% due to an additional TID (Tourism Improvement District) fee for larger hotels.

The council noted challenges in comparing lodging taxes directly due to varying structures, such as city-managed tourism departments, versus those run by chambers of commerce or nonprofits. A similar measure in 2016 failed at the ballot, partly due to opposition from local hoteliers concerned about staying competitive with Tulsa. The discussion remains preliminary, focusing on understanding current rates, regional comparisons, and factors that might influence future decisions.

Further discussion focused on the potential to increase Broken Arrow's lodging tax, which has remained unchanged since 1999, and the associated challenges and opportunities. Comparisons were made to other cities, noting that Broken Arrow collects 100% of its current 4% tax, while others, like Tulsa, use additional mechanisms like TIDs to boost revenue. Concerns about voter perception, particularly when bundling this measure with a bond issue, were raised, alongside the need for clear plans for additional funds, such as transportation to local attractions, marketing, or incentives for hotels.

The discussion also touched on taxing short-term rentals like Airbnbs, which currently fall outside the ordinance unless they have more than five rooms. There was consensus on the need to amend the ordinance to include all short-term rentals, ensuring fairness and tapping into a growing market. Suggestions included using revenue for broader tourism promotion and addressing local competition from amenities like casinos. Further research and consultation with stakeholders, including hoteliers and council members, were recommended to build support and refine the proposal.

5. General Visit Broken Arrow Business

The board discussion centered on evaluating the effectiveness of using a social media influencer to promote Broken Arrow versus traditional paid advertisements. The influencer was retained through Christmas due to the busy season, with plans to reassess afterward. While the influencer's posts aim to attract a different audience, some questioned whether her lack of initial familiarity with Broken Arrow affected her impact.

Concerns were raised about the return on investment, comparing the costs of using the influencer (including meal reimbursements) to spending the same amount on targeted ads. Measuring audience reach, engagement and overall impact was emphasized to determine the best use of funds. It was agreed to conduct a detailed comparison after the holidays to guide future promotional strategies.

The board discussion emphasized the potential of promoting Broken Arrow's existing bike trails and parks to attract visitors and enhance the city's identity. Inspired by a visit to Rogers, Arkansas, and its successful trail development, participants noted how trails could draw tourism, boost the local economy, and help retain young professionals. While impressive, Broken Arrow's trail system is underutilized for tourism purposes.

Suggestions included creating a comprehensive, visually appealing map of the trail system, improving connections to nearby cities like Jenks and Tulsa, and leveraging resources like the recent community survey and potential partnerships with organizations like INCOG. Participants highlighted the success of recent promotions, such as Elam Park, to demonstrate the regional appeal of these amenities and the need to better capitalize on them as a draw for visitors.

The conversation highlighted a recent trip to observe a venue that inspired excitement and provided insights for Broken Arrow's future developments. Participants noted key takeaways, such as practical tips on materials and landscaping, the importance of backstage production, and how revenue is generated primarily through concessions, parking, and memorable experiences rather than ticket sales.

They discussed the area's economic growth, with new hotels and restaurants flourishing around the venue and its busy schedule of 20-45 events annually, including concerts and private rentals. This reinforced the potential for similar developments in Broken Arrow. The conversation also briefly touched on promoting upcoming Christmas events and distributing posters locally.

Board discussion centered on using and promoting Broken Arrow's Uber ride program, which provides free transportation for hotel guests to key areas like the airport, Rose District, and New Orleans Square. Usage has increased, but gaps in communication and awareness among hotel staff and visitors were identified as challenges. Suggestions included creating better promotional materials, such as window clings, and engaging hotel employees directly through mixers or training to improve program communication.

The program allows two trips per night per stay and aims to enhance the visitor experience, particularly for corporate clients and guests without cars. While it has received local media coverage, some visitors remain skeptical of the "free" service. Despite these challenges, there is optimism that awareness and utilization will grow, especially with targeted efforts to promote the program among hotels, restaurants, and corporate partners.

6. Board members' opportunity to address Visit Broken Arrow on general topics related to city business or services (no action may be taken on matters under this item)

7. Tourism Director Report including updates on the following:

A. 24-1493 Presentation and discussion of staff updates on marketing, events, or other miscellaneous items

The board discussed Broken Arrow's upcoming Christmas events, including the kickoff on Thursday with lights, snow, and various promotions. Events like Carols and Cocoa on December 7th will feature multiple choirs, hot cocoa trucks, and a festive ambiance complemented by Victorian carolers and horse-drawn carriages. Marketing efforts include news interviews, advertisements across various platforms, and widespread promotion of the city's attractions.

The city also enhances its visibility with a six-page Broken Arrow section in a regional hotel guest guide distributed to 30,000 rooms. This initiative aims to attract more visitors by showcasing local offerings. Additionally, the hotel-motel tax budget updates indicated minimal recent expenditures, with no significant changes to report. The team remains optimistic about the impact of these efforts on tourism and community engagement.

B. 24-1494 Presentation and discussion of the year-to-date available budget report

C. 24-1510 Presentation and discussion of updated hotel/motel tax collection report

The budget and hotel-motel tax report indicated no significant changes, with only routine expenses incurred over the past few months. There were no notable updates, and no questions were raised during the discussion.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: A motion was made by Brian Dean, seconded by Ben Buie.
Move to adjourn

Aye: 9 -

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ben Buie, Brian Dean, Lisa Ford, Gene Barber, Craig Hagin, Kathy Muskrat, Sonja Schneider, Trevor Swanson

Mayor

City Clerk