



City of Broken Arrow
Visit Broken Arrow
Minutes

City Hall
220 S 1st Street
Broken Arrow, OK 74012

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

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Board Chambers

1. Call to Order

Chairman Brian Dean called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean
Absent: 3 - Trevor Swanson, Kathy Muskrat, Tommy Yardy

3. Presentations - NONE

4. General Visit Broken Arrow Business

A. 26-161 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of Oklahoma Wesleyan 918 Wrestling Open rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$3,125

Tourism Manager Makala Barton reminded the board that Oklahoma Wesleyan University's wrestling team had previously requested hotel rebate support for a December 2025 tournament, with an initial not-to-exceed estimate of \$62.50 based on projected room nights. After completing hotel verification, the actual qualifying rebate amount totaled \$31.25. She introduced Thomas Carr, who joined virtually, to provide a brief recap of the event and report on how it went before finalizing the rebate amount.

Thomas Carr reported that the wrestling tournament went well, with approximately 225 competitors participating, down from about 280 pre-registered due to typical late cancellations occurring the weekend before Christmas break. The event sold around 200 spectator tickets and issued an additional 88 passes for coaches, trainers, tournament staff, and support personnel.

Tourism Manager Barton reported that the tournament generated 75 verified hotel room nights. She noted that Placer data indicated a couple of thousand visitors were present at the event center that day. When asked how attendance compared to prior years in Bartlesville, Mr. Carr explained that the first year drew about 100 competitors, the second year just under 200, and

this year in Broken Arrow slightly exceeded 200, reflecting steady growth. He said the Broken Arrow venue worked very well, offering better space with six mats compared to Bartlesville's four-mat limitation. Board members viewed the increase as a success and encouraged continued growth, with hopes of reaching 300 competitors in the future. While Mr. Carr expressed interest in returning in 2026, scheduling depends on coordination with the school district. Ms. Barton added that school event staff gave positive feedback and would welcome the tournament back, though the venue calendar is busy.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Lisa Ford

Move to Approve Item 26-161 Oklahoma Wesleyan 918 Wrestling Open rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$3,125

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 -

Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

B. 26-237

Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of The Christian Interpreters Conference hotel rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$12,500, pending the receipt of post-event requirements as outlined in the Rebate Guidelines.

Tourism Manager Makala Barton introduced Angie Mathis, the organizer of the upcoming Christian Interpreters Conference, which is scheduled for July 9–11, 2026. Barton noted that the group is requesting a hotel rebate and clarified that, because of the event dates, any funding would fall under Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations. She then invited Angie to provide additional details about the conference.

Angie Mathis explained that the Christian Interpreters Conference is a well-established professional event that began in 2009 under Deaf Missions and has grown significantly over the years. In 2021, it merged with a Deaf Leaders Conference, expanding its reach and attendance. Now under new leadership, the interpreters' portion has transitioned to World-Word Access, which equips interpreters and deaf ministry leaders globally, with Sunshine Interpreting managing the event and Ms. Mathis serving as conference manager.

The 2026 conference, scheduled for July 9–11, is expected to draw at least 300 attendees, with projections closer to 350 or more due to strong interest. Historically, participants have come from up to 30 states and several countries, including Great Britain, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and potentially Ethiopia. The conference features high-level presenters, including university professors, leading professional interpreters, and deaf leaders. It serves a diverse audience ranging from students to seasoned certified interpreters across educational, legal, professional, and church settings. While presented from a Christian worldview, it is a professional development conference, and organizers work to keep registration costs affordable by relying on sponsorships and supplemental funding.

During the discussion, a board member asked Ms. Mathis whether she was aware of the city's complimentary airport transportation program, which covers Uber rides from Tulsa International Airport to Broken Arrow hotels for qualifying events. Ms. Mathis confirmed they plan to utilize the program. She noted that airport transportation was a major factor in selecting Broken Arrow over other competing cities, including St. Louis, Kansas City, Nashville, Dallas, and Omaha. She shared that although she is from Tulsa and worked to keep the site-selection process neutral, Broken Arrow stood out—particularly because of the airport transportation benefit. The exchange concluded on a lighthearted note, with a board member commenting on her resemblance to former Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor and expressing enthusiasm about hosting the conference.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Brian Dean

Move to Approve Item 26-237 The Christian Interpreters Conference hotel rebate

request in an amount not to exceed \$12,500, pending the receipt of post-event requirements as outlined in the Rebate Guidelines.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 -

Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

C. 26-256 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of a film and hotel incentive rebate in an amount not to exceed \$24,450

Tourism Manager Makala Barton introduced Flyover Films' application for a film and hotel incentive rebate, noting this is the third official film incentive request received. The production anticipates approximately 294 hotel room nights, \$5,000 in production office space costs, and up to \$112,000 in local spending. Based on those estimates, the maximum potential rebate would be \$24,450, structured as a not-to-exceed amount. Barton explained that applicants are encouraged to provide conservative, higher-end projections upfront since additional funds cannot be requested later. She then invited the Flyover Films team, who joined virtually, to present details about the project.

Jackie Zhou, director of Flyover, introduced the project as a character-driven comedy about three women from Los Angeles who return to Oklahoma for their 30th birthday, initially seeking love but ultimately rediscovering themselves and their friendship. She described the film as a nostalgic dramedy centered on friendship and personal growth, with a tone similar to films like *The Sweetest Thing*, *Someone Great*, and *Crossroads*.

She emphasized the team's excitement about filming authentically in Oklahoma—particularly in Broken Arrow—rather than using it as a stand-in for another location. The production aims to highlight the community, showcase local landmarks, and celebrate the character and charm of the area within the story. Ms. Zhou noted her commitment to collaborating with the local community to create a film that reflects the true spirit of Broken Arrow. She then transitioned to her producer to discuss production logistics.

Adria Barrata, producer, shared that the team is committed to filming Flyover in Oklahoma and hopes to base as much of the three-week shoot as possible in Broken Arrow. They intentionally sought a location that offers small-town character while still providing access to nearby resources. The production expects to bring 15–20 cast and key crew members from cities such as Los Angeles and New York, who will stay locally, along with a daily working crew of about 60 people, including local hires.

She emphasized that the production intends to spend locally—on lodging, dining, fuel, groceries, and other needs—keeping dollars within the community. The team is already working with local location managers who have identified several Broken Arrow sites, and they are enthusiastic about showcasing the city's amenities on screen. Adria noted that the airport transportation incentive is particularly appealing and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to partner with the city, inviting any additional questions from the board.

During the discussion, when asked whether Flyover is intended for theatrical release or direct streaming. Ms. Barrata responded that the plan is to pursue a film festival run followed by distribution, ideally leading to a theatrical release, though final distribution outcomes cannot be guaranteed.

Board members discussed sharing information about the city's developing film festival, with staff noting they would follow up with the production team. There was also lighthearted curiosity about one of the proposed filming locations, highlighting interest in how Broken Arrow sites are being incorporated into the script.

Tourism staff clarified funding availability, noting that of the original \$100,000 film incentive allocation for Fiscal Year 2026, \$23,827 remains unencumbered after adjustments from prior projects that spent less than anticipated. Staff confirmed that sufficient funds remain to support this request within the current budget fully.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Craig Hagin

Move to Approve Item 26-256, a film and hotel incentive rebate in an amount not to exceed \$24,450

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

D. 26-264 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the post-event summary and sponsorship rebate request for the 2025 Chalk It Up Festival in an amount not to exceed \$7500

Tourism Manager Makala Barton transitioned the meeting from virtual presenters to an in-person speaker, noting that Jennifer Deal was present to provide an update on the September 25 Chalk It Up Festival.

Jennifer Deal shared that the 2025 Chalk It Up Festival was highly successful, drawing an estimated 29,000 attendees, according to city tracking data. She expressed appreciation for the strong community support reflected in the event. She noted that adding Chad Stark to the team enhanced the VIP experience, positioning the festival for continued growth.

Ms. Deal also addressed a security fee waiver that was applied inadvertently, clarifying that the organization did not formally request it and wanted to be transparent as the board considers grant funding. She concluded by inviting any questions from the board.

Board members discussed future funding guidelines for Chalk It Up, noting that while it is a major and successful event, the original intent of the grant program was to help festivals get established rather than provide indefinite year-after-year support. Ms. Barton clarified that funding levels would remain the same for now. Still, she acknowledged that the recent security fee waiver—approximately \$9,000 combined for Chalk It Up and the Rose Festival—occurred during a transition in event coordination and was not intentionally requested. Moving forward, staff will ensure any fee waivers are clearly communicated so the board can make informed decisions in advance.

Ms. Deal explained that security costs are significant for a festival of their size and one reason they seek support, while emphasizing that she understands potential future funding changes and is working to position the event to sustain itself if needed. Board members suggested that, given the shared structure with the Rose Festival, future support could potentially be structured differently, such as city services for one component and funding for the other. They reaffirmed strong support for the festival's impact, especially its growing family participation and youth engagement, while acknowledging increasing demand from other events competing for limited funds.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Lisa Ford

Move to Approve Item 26-264 the post-event summary and sponsorship rebate request for the 2025 Chalk It Up Festival in an amount not to exceed \$7500

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

E. 26-266 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the post-event summary and sponsorship rebate request for the 2025 Rose Festival in an amount not to exceed \$7500

Trish Foster introduced herself and Alisia as co-coordinators of the Rose Festival, along with treasurer George Forester, who oversees the festival's financials. She noted the festival partners with Chalk It Up and spans three days, including a Sunday kite event in the park. Trish reported that this year's festival was very successful and indicated they have detailed attendance and financial breakdowns available for review.

George Forester shared that the 2025 Rose Festival was the most successful year yet, particularly highlighting strong participation in the rose show contest, with entries coming from Broken Arrow and surrounding communities such as Glenpool. According to city-provided attendance data, the festival drew 8,250 attendees on Friday, 21,046 on Saturday, and more than 3,000 on Sunday for the kite event, totaling approximately 31,296 attendees—an increase from 26,800 the previous year.

He emphasized the importance of data in securing sponsorships and noted that the partnership with Chalk It Up, formed during COVID to help manage expenses, continues to be beneficial. A key change this year was expanded cultural inclusion, featuring performances and participation from numerous minority communities representing the more than 59 cultures present in Broken Arrow, including groups from China, Hawaii, Bangladesh, Honduras, and Mexico. This broader representation generated strong community engagement and helped attract five new minority-owned sponsors who had not previously participated.

Mr. Forester highlighted the festival's educational components, children's activities supported by local churches, and its continued status as a completely free event that relies entirely on sponsorships. He stressed that the festival promotes cultural awareness, community ownership, and unity while celebrating Broken Arrow as a welcoming and diverse community.

Board members reviewed the Rose Festival's financials and clarified that total cash expenses were approximately \$14,659, with additional in-kind donations supporting the event. Concerns were raised about fiscal responsibility, noting that while the festival draws more than 31,000 attendees, the board must ensure city funds are used effectively and cannot serve as the largest financial contributor. It was questioned whether a \$15,000 investment represents the best return for the city, particularly when considering economic impact, and indicated that similar funding levels may not continue in future years.

Mr. Forester acknowledged the concern and said organizers understand that city support is meant to help launch and grow events rather than sustain them indefinitely. He emphasized appreciation for past support and reiterated the festival's community value, cultural impact, and free public access.

Board members echoed the tension between loving the event and needing to evaluate funding objectively, observing that attendance numbers reflect the combined festival partnership rather than separate 30,000-person events. The discussion concluded with clarification that the current vote pertains to 2025 reimbursement already approved in principle, not future 2026 funding levels, which would be considered separately.

**MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Ben Buie
Move to Approve Item 26-266 the post-event summary and sponsorship rebate request for the 2025 Rose Festival in an amount not to exceed \$7500**

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

F. 26-267 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the 2026 Chalk it Up sponsorship request in the amount of \$7500, pending the required follow-up report submitted by the deadline and the required receipts submitted to be approved by Visit Broken Arrow for reimbursement

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Brian Dean

Move to Table Item 4 B. 26-267 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the 2026 Chalk it Up sponsorship request in the amount of \$7500, pending the required follow-up report submitted by the deadline and the required receipts submitted to be approved by Visit Broken Arrow for reimbursement

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

G. 26-268 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the 2026 Tuesdays in the Park sponsorship request in the amount of \$5000, pending the required follow-up report submitted by the deadline and the required receipts submitted to be approved by Visit Broken Arrow for reimbursement

Tourism Manager Makala Barton explained that she met with the organizers recently to review the board's new attendance-based funding guidelines. She noted that last year the group received \$10,000, which was increased from \$7,000 due to added expenses such as stage costs. Under the new tiered structure, funding is now tied directly to verified attendance data through Placer reports. Based on the organizers' projected combined attendance of at least 5,000 across their four events, the eligible funding amount would be \$5,000. She clarified that this figure reflects alignment with the updated guidelines rather than a discretionary adjustment.

Janie Green provided an update on Tuesdays in the Park, noting the long-standing tradition of the event and the need to evolve as more live music venues have emerged in the region. Organizers are introducing changes to make the series more impactful and competitive, including collaborations that bring in professional musicians from outside the area to perform alongside local bands.

They also plan to add a VIP section to enhance sponsor engagement and create new revenue opportunities. While hotel impact is not guaranteed, bringing in outside performers could generate some overnight stays. Jaynie expressed hope that the requested \$5,000 grant this year will be the final one needed, as the enhancements are intended to strengthen sponsorship support and move the event toward financial sustainability rather than operating at a loss in future years.

During the discussion, organizer Chad Stark emphasized that they intentionally reduced this year's grant request to \$5,000 as part of a broader strategy to become more self-sufficient. They have restructured sponsorship opportunities to better align with business feedback—allowing companies to participate for a single Tuesday rather than committing to multiple weeks—making involvement more accessible and potentially increasing overall participation and revenue. Attendance projections were based on a five-year city-supplied average to account for weather disruptions last year.

Board members acknowledged that drawing 1,000–1,500 attendees across four nights is significant and comparable to smaller PAC-level events, recognizing the event's impact. They also noted that Tuesdays in the Park, like Chalk It Up and the Rose Festival, contribute meaningfully to the city's quality of life. While emphasizing responsible spending, members expressed continued support for events that enhance community engagement and local

vibrancy.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Lisa Ford
Move to Approve Item 26-268 the 2026 Tuesdays in the Park sponsorship request in the amount of \$5000, pending the required follow-up report submitted by the deadline and the required receipts submitted to be approved by Visit Broken Arrow for reimbursement

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie
Abstain: 1 - Brian Dean

5. 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)

During the general discussion, members praised Erin Hofener and Makala Barton for their professional tourism marketing efforts, noting positive public feedback on social media promoting Broken Arrow as a conference destination. The member emphasized that the city's branding and outreach are elevating its reputation.

A downtown business owner encouraged event organizers to better engage businesses located north of Broadway, pointing out that many are eager to sponsor events but struggle to draw foot traffic that far during festivals and concerts. She suggested creative solutions to help connect event attendees with that area's shops and restaurants.

Members shared anecdotal feedback from visitors who chose to attend a wrestling tournament specifically because it was hosted in Broken Arrow rather than Bartlesville, reflecting the city's growing appeal.

The group also brainstormed ways to improve mobility during downtown events. Ideas included exploring pedicab services as a safer alternative to scooters, particularly given past issues with scooter vendors. Members expressed interest in pursuing pedicab options to address parking concerns and help move attendees more easily between event areas and businesses.

6. Tourism Director Report Including Updates on the Following:

A. 26-270 Presentation and discussion of the Tourism Manager's Report

Makala Barton, Tourism Manager, provided a financial update, noting that the city issued the previously approved one-time \$50,000 sponsorship for the upcoming film festival. Planning is progressing well, with Erin and staff serving on the committee and the event moving forward at the Regal Warren Theatre, primarily utilizing the upstairs space.

Regarding grant funding, remaining Fiscal Year 2026 funds are becoming limited. For Fiscal Year 2027, two grants have already been approved—the Junior Golf Association (\$15,000) and the Christian Interpreters Conference (approximately \$12,000)—leaving \$90,000 remaining in that cycle. Staff indicated that interest is increasing significantly, with several additional conferences preparing to submit applications. At the current pace, Fiscal Year 2027 hotel rebate funding could be fully allocated within the next few months. While this reflects strong demand and positive momentum for Broken Arrow, it may require groups to plan earlier if they wish to secure funding in future cycles.

During the discussion, board members asked about the status of potentially increasing the

hotel/motel tax. Staff responded that the city plans to revisit that conversation after Tulsa’s upcoming vote in August, as Tulsa is considering raising its rate from five percent to eight or nine percent under a rebranded “hotel guest” or visitor-focused tax structure. Staff indicated they are monitoring that outcome before moving forward locally.

Hotel/motel tax collections in Broken Arrow remain strong, with January slightly up compared to last year and overall fiscal year collections continuing an upward trend month over month. Staff also reported continued high tourism activity, including increased grant requests, film-related inquiries, progress on the film festival planning, and a successful joint crime prevention and overnight lodging training with the Broken Arrow Police Department that local hotels well attended. Additionally, staff is beginning the implementation of the city’s tourism strategic plan and balancing multiple ongoing initiatives. Although December occupancy dipped slightly year over year, overall performance remains solid.

7. Adjournment

MOTION: A motion was made Ben Buie, seconded by Lisa Ford
Move to Adjourn

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Brian Dean

Chairperson

Secretary