



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, April 14, 2026

Board Chambers

1. Call to Order

Chairman Brian Dean called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean
Absent: 1- Craig Hagin

3. Presentations

4. General Visit Broken Arrow Business

A. 26-459 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the meeting minutes from the March 10, 2026 Visit Broken Arrow meeting

MOTION: A motion was made by Brian Dean, seconded by Tommy Yardy
Move to Approve Item 26-459 the meeting minutes from the March 10, 2026 Visit Broken Arrow meeting

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Lisa Ford, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean
Abstain: 1 - Kathy Muskrat

B. 26-451 Notification of City Manager's execution of an Agreement with the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce for advertising, promotion, and marketing of the Rooster Days Festival for an amount not to exceed \$20,000

For Item 26-451, the discussion focused on funding and oversight for Rooster Days, a long-running community event approaching its 95th year.

Board members clarified that the issue wasn't opposition to the event itself—there was clear support—but rather how tourism (visitor) funds are allocated and who should approve them.

A key concern raised was that, since the funding comes from tourism-related dollars rather than general city funds, the Tourism Board—not just City Council—should have direct oversight and decision-making authority. This led to pulling the item for discussion instead of automatic approval.

There was also a broader policy conversation about restructuring how funds are distributed going forward. Members indicated that future support might shift to a more flexible model—sometimes providing cash, sometimes city services, or a mix—rather than consistent funding levels every year.

From the Rooster Days side, organizers emphasized that the event is not highly profitable and requires significant human resources, meaning reductions in funding could materially impact its sustainability.

Board members also discussed return on investment, noting the need to evaluate which events generate the most tourism benefit—such as hotel stays—and to prioritize funding accordingly, especially as larger, higher-impact events compete for limited dollars.

Overall, the direction was not to cut support immediately, but to: ensure future funding requests come through the tourism board, increase transparency and intentional budgeting decisions, potentially formalize expectations (deliverables, promotion, ROI) in writing, and give organizers advance notice of any changes so they can plan accordingly.

In short, the conversation was about tightening financial oversight and strategy—not eliminating support for Rooster Days.

No vote was taken.

C. 26-460 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of The National Grange 160th Annual Convention hotel rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$40,000, pending the receipt of post-event requirements as outlined in the Rebate Guidelines.

Tiffany Shepard, Vice President of Events and Communication, Chamber of Commerce, presented Item 26-460 and explained that the Grange Convention funding request had been previously tabled for further budget discussion. Since then, during Visit Broken Arrow’s budget meeting, the City Manager approved adding \$55,000 from reserves to next year’s budget to help cover this and similar events, providing more flexibility. She noted that instead of requesting individual budget amendments for each event, this approach builds funding directly into the upcoming budget, which will be finalized in June.

The discussion reflected mixed feelings about the funding request, with some members concerned about the size of the amount and whether the event would generate enough broader economic impact beyond hotel stays. While there was recognition that attracting events like this is something they’ve been working toward, one concern was whether attendees would meaningfully contribute to local businesses, such as restaurants and entertainment, compared to other types of events that might bring more active spending in the community.

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Trevor Swanson
Move to Approve Item 26-460 The National Grange 160th Annual Convention hotel rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$40,000, pending the receipt of post-event requirements as outlined in the Rebate Guidelines.**

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy

Yardy, Brian Dean

D. 26-452 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of Senior Softball USA Oklahoma Championship rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$3,500

Donna McGuire presented Item 26-452, and emphasized that the senior softball tournament would bring significant tourism to Broken Arrow, with around 40 teams expected and most participants staying overnight, dining locally, and shopping. She highlighted that while the funding request is relatively small, it helps offset major costs like facilities, hotels, and out-of-town umpires, and is key to keeping the event in the city, especially given the strong appeal of the local sports complex.

The discussion clarified that the \$3,500 request is a hotel room rebate, with the organizer actually asking for less than the amount she would qualify for. She would provide receipts and documentation after the event, including a full list of where players stayed, since all participants check in and report their hotels. This process ensures the rebate is supported by verified room nights, and organizers expect the overall economic impact to exceed the requested amount.

MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Ben Buie
Move to Approve Item 26-452 Senior Softball USA Oklahoma Championship rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$3,500

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

E. 26-490 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of Battle of Broken Arrow - Taekwon-Do Tournament hotel rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$1,000

The applicant withdrew the request.

MOTION: A motion was made by Tommy Yardy, seconded by Lisa Ford
Move to Strike Item 26-490 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of Battle of Broken Arrow - Taekwon-Do Tournament hotel rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$1,000

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

F. 26-503 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of an update to the hotel rebate guidelines

The discussion focused on updating the hotel rebate program to avoid large, unexpected payouts while still attracting events. Members agreed the current structure—\$500 for every 12 room nights with no cap—was too generous, especially as demand has increased and funds are being depleted each year. They noted the city is no longer in a position of needing to incentivize events to attract them heavily.

There was general support for adding a cap, with flexibility to exceed it through board approval for special cases. The group also agreed to make the rebate less aggressive by changing it to \$500 for every 20 room nights, reducing the per-room payout while still remaining competitive.

Ultimately, they decided to implement a \$20,000 cap per event, allow exceptions with board approval, and adjust the rebate formula accordingly, aiming to manage funds better while continuing to incentivize tourism.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Brian Dean
Move to Approve Item 26-503, an update to the hotel rebate guidelines, a \$500 for every 20 room nights, with a cap of \$20,000, subject to board approval

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

G. 26-464 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of staff request to research and identify advanced data solutions to enhance tracking of visitation and economic impact in Broken Arrow

The discussion focused on supporting the exploration of new software to track better the true economic impact of events in Broken Arrow. Members noted that current tools only measure attendance, not actual spending, making it difficult to justify funding decisions or quantify the value of events. The proposed solution would use credit card and geolocation data to estimate real dollars spent, allowing for more accurate comparisons and data-driven decisions.

There was general agreement that having concrete data would strengthen future planning, especially for tourism, sports investments, and marketing efforts, even though the software would require an ongoing cost. Ultimately, the group supported moving forward with researching options, with the intent to review specific recommendations later.

MOTION: A motion was made by Tommy Yardy, seconded by Trevor Swanson
Move to Approve Item 26-464, a staff request to research and identify advanced data solutions to enhance tracking of visitation and economic impact in Broken Arrow

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

H. 26-393 Consideration, discussion, possible approval, and appointments of four Visit Broken Arrow Board Members to serve on the Marketing RFP review committee

The discussion focused on forming a review committee for the upcoming marketing services RFP proposals. Staff explained that proposals are due by the 30th and that a small group would meet—likely for about two hours—to evaluate submissions using a scoring matrix and narrow down options. Members volunteered to serve, and four individuals were selected, with a motion made to approve them for the committee formally.

Brian Dean, Sonja Schneider, Ben Buie, and Sarah Lopp were chosen to serve on the committee.

MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Kathy Muskrat
Move to Approve Item 26-393 appointments of four Visit Broken Arrow Board Members, Brian Dean, Sonja Schneider, Ben Buie, and Sarah Lopp to serve on the Marketing RFP review committee

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, 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)

Board members clarified that their comments were not meant as criticism of the Chamber, emphasizing they strongly support and even volunteer with the organization. They intended to ensure consistency and fairness in how all groups are treated, not to single out or oppose the Chamber.

6. Tourism Director Report Including Updates on the Following:

A. 26-502 Presentation and discussion of the Tourism Manager’s Report

Makala Barton, Tourism Development Manager, presented Item 26-502 and provided a budget update, noting that about \$13,125 remains in unencumbered grant funding for the current fiscal year, with most funds expected to be fully utilized by June. She also reported \$11,628 remaining in film incentive funds but raised concerns about delays from a previously approved project in requesting reimbursement, suggesting future policy changes to require quicker turnaround. She added that tax collections are slightly down for the month but still up overall year-to-date, and highlighted upcoming tourism-related meetings and events, including a hotelier meeting featuring insights on the significant tournament traffic at BA Lanes.

The discussion highlighted strong engagement from the film industry, with staff noting significant interest in Broken Arrow’s film incentives during a well-attended Capitol event. They also discussed potential increases in state funding for film production and briefly shifted to future considerations around the hotel/motel tax now that the bond vote has passed. Members acknowledged that discussions are still early, but are watching how other cities handle tax increases, including Tulsa, Norman, and Yukon, to inform their approach. There was interest in how the tax is framed—such as calling it a “hotel guest tax”—but also caution that it can still impact local businesses and residents indirectly.

7. Adjournment

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

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Kathy Muskrat, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

Chairperson

Secretary