



City of Broken Arrow

Minutes Visit Broken Arrow

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

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

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

Board Chambers

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call and Introductions

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

3. Presentations

A. 25-953 Presentation of Oklahoma Tourism Redbud Awards to the Visit Broken Arrow Board

Makala Barton, Tourism Manager, presented Item 25-953, two awards: a Merit Award for Best Marketing Campaign (Small Budget) for Bullseye and Best Media Coverage for Christmas in Broken Arrow. Ms. Barton thanks everyone for their support, mentions that they placed second in media coverage behind a major Tulsa event, and suggests taking celebratory photos. There's enthusiasm about possibly presenting the awards at a council meeting and joking about planning a celebration.

4. General Visit Broken Arrow Business

A. 25-955 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of Oklahoma Wesleyan 918 Wrestling Open rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$6,250

Tom Carr, Head Wrestling Coach at OKWU, presented Item 25-955. For the past two years, a collegiate open wrestling tournament has been held in Bartlesville, growing from 100 to 200 participants. With expectations for continued growth, organizers are seeking a new venue, as Bartlesville lacks a facility large enough for six or more mats. They are now considering relocating the event to the latest event center, with support from the sports commission, and are requesting approval to proceed.

Discussion continued about relocating the wrestling tournament to Broken Arrow, noting that the new venue could likely accommodate up to eight mats, although this hasn't been physically

tested. Organizers were reminded that hotel stays in Broken Arrow must be adequately documented to qualify for tournament-related reimbursements. A young wrestler, Ryan Dement, was introduced as a visiting student from Broken Arrow High School, interested in learning about city operations. The group also acknowledged the success of the Broken Arrow girls' wrestling team, which recently won the state championship.

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

Move to Approve Item 25-955 Oklahoma Wesleyan 918 Wrestling Open rebate request in an amount not to exceed \$6,250

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 -

Brian Dean, Tommy Yardy, Ben Buie, Lisa Ford, Kathy Muskrat, Trevor Swanson

B. 25-931

Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of a film incentive rebate in an amount not to exceed \$59,000.

Randy Wayne, a film producer for Rebellion, a Tulsa-based film production company, presented materials about an upcoming movie and their company's background. After working in L.A. as an actor, he returned to Oklahoma and has produced 17 feature films in the state, including six in Tulsa in the past two and a half years. He explained that they follow film tax incentives and now plan to film in Broken Arrow, with the upcoming production centered at Stoney Creek Hotel. The project is fully cast, with a 92% local crew, and filming is set to begin on July 19.

The film, titled *Horried*, is a horror comedy that playfully critiques and celebrates the horror film industry and its fan base. It focuses on actors who build their careers through fan conventions, making it a meta-homage to horror culture. Despite a modest budget of \$1.8 million—set to be spent in Broken Arrow over seven weeks—the production secured a strong cast through personal connections, with many actors working at reduced rates.

The production team estimates that they will use approximately 530 hotel nights during their four-week shoot in Broken Arrow, with the cast staying at Stony Creek and the crew at nearby hotels. They quickly applied for the city's film incentive upon its announcement, drawn by the supportive hotel and local infrastructure. The film primarily takes place in a fictional "Golden Arrow" hotel and town, with some driving scenes and minor locations, including a gas station and a rehab center. The story follows a lead character as they overcome addiction. The filmmakers are mindful not to portray Broken Arrow in a negative light and plan to highlight the remodeled hotel in a positive light. A lighthearted exchange followed about past film work and the small-world nature of the industry.

MOTION: A motion was made by Brian Dean, seconded by Lisa Ford

Move to Approve Item 25-931 film incentive rebate in an amount not to exceed \$59,000.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 -

Brian Dean, Tommy Yardy, Ben Buie, Lisa Ford, Kathy Muskrat, Trevor Swanson

C. 25-921

Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of a 3-year Promotional License agreement with Scotfest, Inc., including participation in cost sharing of shuttle services to be utilized at Scotfest 2025

Rocky Henkel, Community Development Director, presented a proposed three-year promotional license agreement with Scotfest, a festival celebrating Scottish, Irish, and Celtic culture through music, dance, athletics, food, and drink. Traditionally held in Broken Arrow's Events Park on the third weekend in September, this year's 45th annual event will be relocated to Central Park due to construction, running from September 19–21, 2025. Scotfest began in

Broken Arrow in 2018 and became a signature event in 2021. A question was raised about shuttle usage at the previous festival.

Mr. Henkel explained that, although they don't have exact shuttle usage numbers, the hotel shuttles were more frequently utilized than the NSU ones. Due to limited parking, especially with the Arrowhead complex unavailable on Saturday—the event's busiest day—shuttles will be crucial this year. The team plans to reduce the number of shuttles but improve communication about their schedules and pickup locations. Lessons learned from last year's last-minute venue change and inadequate downtown parking have influenced this year's media and logistics plan. They also addressed prior complaints about the lack of shade and heat by planning to install a large tent near the Highland Athletics area to improve comfort and account for potential rain.

The Scotfest team has confirmed that the 2025 event will run from Friday to Sunday, with the following hours: Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. City officials expressed concerns about declining attendance, citing tracked figures that showed 8,300 attendees in 2024, compared to higher numbers in previous years and other city events, such as Camp Bandits and Rooster Days. Organizers acknowledged the drop, attributing it to last year's last-minute venue change to Central Park, limited parking, and setbacks including a \$60,000 loss and the theft of an \$80,000 trailer. They emphasized that their ticket sales reported around 25,000 in 2024, though that number includes multi-day passes, which may not accurately reflect the number of unique visitors. The city offered to explain its tracking system to clarify the discrepancy in attendance figures.

A hotelier suggested that Scotfest consider requesting rebates from local hotels to help cover shuttle transportation costs, noting that hotel guests are the primary users of the shuttle. Organizers had not previously pursued this option or received support from Rose District businesses, but they were open to the idea. Uber was also suggested as an option to offer attendees more flexible transportation. Hotel data showed approximately 600 room nights in 2023, with high occupancy rates at Stoney Creek and Hilton during the event.

The board discussed concerns about declining attendance and potential future support. Some members questioned whether to continue funding at current levels if numbers fall below expectations, while others emphasized the value of keeping unique festivals in Broken Arrow. Organizers explained that the 2022 spike in attendance was due to post-COVID conditions and the appearance of celebrity guest Graham McTavish. They hope to bring him back or introduce similar attractions and plan new features, such as kilted midget wrestling, to boost engagement.

The current proposal is a renewal of a three-year promotional contract, following a similar agreement from 2022 to 2024. A question was raised about why the funding doesn't follow the traditional room-night reimbursement model, and whether the flat \$31,000 grant corresponds to those figures.

Board members questioned what qualifies an event as a "signature event," noting that Scotfest had 8,300 attendees in 2024 compared to higher-attendance events like Shamrock (22,000) and Rooster Days (27,000). Staff clarified that a signature event is generally considered one of the city's prime or most popular events, though specific criteria were not defined. Scotfest organizers defended their reported attendance, stating they sold around 25,000 tickets and disagreed with the city's lower attendance estimate, which is based on geofencing data that tracks cell phone activity. It was also clarified that the proposed \$31,000 agreement includes not only funding but also in-kind city services, such as police, fire, and road closures.

City Manager Michael Spurgeon clarified that a "signature event" is one that the City Council has chosen to provide enhanced support for, whether through direct funding or in-kind services. He cited the New Orleans Square Block Party as an example, which the Council backs annually due to its role in revitalizing that area. Scotfest became a signature event around 2021–2022 to justify similar support, including financial and logistical aid. With the current three-year agreement set to expire, the City Council is considering its renewal. The Tourism Committee, as a recommending body, can choose whether to allocate tourism funds for the event—such as for shuttle services—or recommend that the Council support it through general city funds instead. Multiple funding options are available, depending on the committee's stance.

The Tourism Board held a detailed and complex discussion regarding continued funding for Scotfest. Questions were raised about the justification for its designation as a "signature event" and whether the current \$31,000 funding structure—comprising city services, shuttle service, and marketing—should be maintained, restructured, or transitioned to a performance-based reimbursement model tied to hotel room nights.

City Manager Michael Spurgeon clarified that the City Council designates signature events based on their community impact and that Scotfest was elevated to that status in 2021–2022 to justify a higher level of support. He proposed a compromise: approve the three-year agreement but recommend that 2025 funding come from the city's general fund rather than tourism dollars. Future years (2026–2027) could then be funded solely through tourism if Scotfest demonstrates adequate hotel room usage.

Board members generally supported this approach, expressing concerns about the shuttle's cost-effectiveness and the timing of the funding request but emphasizing the importance of keeping the event in Broken Arrow. They agreed to proceed with two separate motions: one to support the three-year agreement and recommend the use of general funds in 2025, and another to restrict tourism fund reimbursement to hotel room performance data. Board members emphasized transparency, fiscal responsibility, and fairness across all funded events, while remaining open to supporting Scotfest if the criteria are met.

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

Move to Approve Item 25-921, a 3-year Promotional License agreement with Scotfest, Inc., including participation in cost sharing of shuttle services to be utilized at Scotfest 2025

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Brian Dean, Tommy Yardy, Ben Buie, Lisa Ford, Kathy Muskrat, Trevor Swanson

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

Move to Deny Scotfest Shuttle services

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Brian Dean, Tommy Yardy, Ben Buie, Lisa Ford, Kathy Muskrat, Trevor Swanson

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)

Council Member Lisa Ford congratulated the team again on their recent awards. She expressed appreciation for their hard work on the Block Party, noting it was a successful event for their business.

6. Tourism Director Report, Including Updates on the Following:

Makala Barton, Tourism Manager, noted that due to the special meeting, there would be no standard report at this time, given the time constraints. Updates included that Tuesdays in the Park was rescheduled for tonight and July 8, with a post-event summary for reimbursement expected at the August 12 meeting. Additionally, Broken Arrow will be represented at the Oklahoma Society of Association Executives (OSAE) conference on July 14 by Trevor and Pam Carlson of Hilton Garden Inn. Visit Broken Arrow is sponsoring the lunch and will showcase their promotional conference video, responding to hotelier requests to promote the city as a conference destination. An update on the conference will be shared at the August meeting.

The meeting concluded with several announcements and expressions of excitement about upcoming events. Staff highlighted a new conference brochure promoting how easy it is to host events in Broken Arrow, which Trevor will bring to the OSAE conference. Members were reminded about participation in strategic planning focus groups scheduled for July 22–23. The next regular meeting is set for August 12. Additionally, Broken Arrow will host the National League of Cities' Women in Municipal Government event next June, led by Councilor Ford, with plans to coordinate it alongside the Oklahoma Municipal League's women's event. Staff also celebrated the success of the city's first film incentive project and expressed enthusiasm about attracting productions like *Horrid*, noting that the incentive was key to bringing the filmmakers to Broken Arrow.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.

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

Move to adjourn

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 -

Brian Dean, Tommy Yardy, Ben Buie, Lisa Ford, Kathy Muskrat, Trevor Swanson

Chairperson

City Clerk