



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, March 10, 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, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean
Absent: 1 - Kathy Muskrat

3. Presentations

A. 26-158 Presentation and discussion about the 7 propositions of the 2026 General Obligation Bond package, and a separate 8th proposition to fund improvements at the public sports facilities

City Manager Michael Spurgeon presented Item 26-158 and outlined a voter-approved initiative developed over two and a half years through extensive community input, narrowing \$1.2 billion in proposed projects down to a \$415 million bond package that maintains the current property tax rate and funds 129 projects across seven propositions. He emphasized transparency, public engagement, and that the projects reflect community priorities. The package also includes an eighth proposition proposing a temporary half-cent sales tax for five years to fund \$53 million in sports facility improvements, expected to boost tourism and economic activity while being partially funded by non-residents. Voters must approve each proposition individually on April 7, with most requiring a simple majority and stormwater-related items requiring 60 percent approval. Overall, City Manager Spurgeon framed the initiative as a generational investment in infrastructure, public services, and quality of life in Broken Arrow.

City officials discussed the uncertainty of revenue from sports complex improvements, noting that a single soccer tournament recently generated over \$3 million in economic impact. However, future projections depend on the number of events attracted. They emphasized that upgrading facilities could restore tournament activity that has declined over time. When asked how to support the initiative, the City Manager Spurgeon encouraged increasing public

awareness of the April 7 bond election rather than advocating for votes directly, highlighting outreach efforts including meetings, mailers, and public forums. He noted strong in-person support from residents and framed the initiative as an important opportunity to sustain the city's growth, community identity, and high national ranking.

4. General Visit Broken Arrow Business

- A. 26-373 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the 2026 Chalk it Up sponsorship request in the amount of \$7,500, pending the required follow-up report submitted by the deadline and the required receipts submitted to be approved by Visit Broken Arrow for reimbursement**

Jennifer Deal presented Item 26-373 and explained that, following prior discussions, their funding request for the Chalk It Up event has been split, with the Rose Festival requesting the fee waivers while they (Chalk It Up) are requesting \$7,500 from the board for visitor-focused expenses like entertainment, stage production, and marketing. She highlighted the event's strong community impact, including about 29,000 attendees, dozens of artists and vendors, and significant volunteer involvement, and noted plans to expand programming and partnerships while maintaining the event's energy without overextending its scale.

The board clarified that the Rose Festival is now seeking in-kind support from the City through fee waivers, rather than direct funding, while Chalk It Up is requesting \$7,500 separately from the board in the form of a rebate. It was noted that in the past, both events received \$7,500, but this year the funding approach has been adjusted in line with prior discussions and to follow the newly adopted guidelines.

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Tommy Yardy
Move to Approve Item 26-373 approval of the 2026 Chalk it Up sponsorship request in the amount of \$7,500, 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: 8 -** Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

- B. 26-381 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the meeting minutes from the January 13, 2026, Visit Broken Arrow meeting**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Tommy Yardy
Move to Approve Item 26-381 approval of the meeting minutes from the January 13, 2026, Visit Broken Arrow meeting.**

The motion carried by the following vote:

- Aye: 8 -** Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

- C. 26-382 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval of the meeting minutes from the February 10, 2026, Visit Broken Arrow meeting**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Ben Buie
Move to Approve Item 26-382 approval of the meeting minutes from the February 10, 2026, Visit Broken Arrow meeting**

The motion carried by the following vote:

- Aye: 8 -** Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy

Yardy, Brian Dean

D. 26-392 Consideration, discussion, and possible approval and authorization to submit a Request for Proposal to obtain marketing services as set forth in the Visit Broken Arrow Strategic Plan

Tourism Manager Makala Barton presented Item 26-392, a draft RFP to seek bids for a new third-party marketing firm, explaining that the city has worked with In-House Marketing for three years but is now at a point where a specialized destination marketing firm may better support its growth. While satisfied with current work, she emphasized the need to explore new options in alignment with the recently completed strategic plan. She noted that it is standard practice to go out to bid periodically. She proposed opening the process to both local and national firms, forming a board committee to review submissions, and selecting a provider in time to begin a new contract by July 1.

MOTION: A motion was made by Lisa Ford, seconded by Ben Buie
Move to Approve Item 26-392 approval and authorization to submit a Request for Proposal to obtain marketing services as set forth in the Visit Broken Arrow Strategic Plan

The motion carried by the following vote:

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

E. 26-396 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.

Tourism Manager Makala Barton presented Item 26-396. She introduced representatives from the National Grange's 160th Annual Convention, noting that the city has been coordinating with them for over six months and that they have selected Broken Arrow as their host location. She also highlighted the need for greater financial awareness as tourism grant requests increase, explaining that for fiscal year 2027, \$32,500 has already been allocated, leaving \$57,500 remaining. Ms. Barton emphasized the importance of tracking available funds moving forward, as growing demand may require deferring future events to later fiscal years.

Mark Gibbons provided an overview of the National Grange, a longstanding nonpartisan organization founded in 1867 with about 1,400 local chapters focused on agriculture, rural issues, and community improvement. He explained that their 160th annual convention will be held in Broken Arrow from November 6–15, with attendees staying primarily at the Stoney Creek Hotel and additional lodging at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn. He noted that attendees are eager to return to a U.S.-based event after last year's cruise-based convention and expressed confidence in Broken Arrow as a strong host location. Mr. Gibbons also stated that they are requesting a \$40,000 grant rebate to support the event.

Susan Hanks explained that the convention will focus not only on business meetings but also on engaging and enriching experiences for attendees of all ages, including youth members. The goal is to highlight Broken Arrow by incorporating local speakers, tours, and activities that showcase the community. She emphasized that their funding request is primarily to enhance attendees' experience, so they leave with a strong impression of the city and are motivated to return in the future, even outside of Grange events.

Mark Gibbons added that the convention will include community-focused activities, such as a public food truck event and potential service projects where youth members give back to local

organizations. He emphasized the organization's tradition of engaging with host communities and highlighted the wide age range of attendees. He reiterated that the requested rebate would help enhance the overall experience for participants, while also fostering a lasting relationship with Broken Arrow and bringing broader exposure to the area through the organization's nationwide presence.

The group discussed the \$40,000 rebate request, with Mr. Gibbons explaining that while not all host locations offer rebates, it is common for them to seek available funding to offset costs, as the event is largely supported by registration fees and aims to avoid operating at a loss. He emphasized that attendees contribute economically and typically stay around five nights, with total attendance generally ranging from 350 to 500 people, depending on the location. Officials also noted logistical considerations, such as transportation needs for elderly attendees, and highlighted added appeal from the convention coinciding with Broken Arrow's Christmas kickoff event. Some board members expressed interest in reviewing budget details further before making a final decision.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ben Buie, seconded by Lisa Ford
Move to Table Item 26-396 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, to budget meeting.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 - Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, 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) - NONE

6. Tourism Director Report Including Updates on the Following:

A. 26-380 Presentation and discussion of the Tourism Manager's Report

Makala Barton, Tourism Manager, presented Item 26-380 and reviewed the budget and tourism activity report, noting efforts to reduce printing by moving to digital packets and highlighting recent spending, including a scaled-back hotel guide due to unclear return on investment. She reported remaining grant and film incentive funds, continued growth in tax collections, and ongoing tourism initiatives such as a film festival, amphitheater planning, and collaboration with other cities. She also outlined upcoming events and observed that while hotel occupancy dipped slightly in January, increased tax revenue likely reflects higher room rates.

The board discussed concerns about current funding practices, including a long-term agreement with Bass Pro that requires annual payments for limited advertising value, with little flexibility to exit the contract. Members expressed frustration over budget constraints as demand for tourism funding grows, emphasizing that not all applicants need to receive full requested amounts and that financial support should not be used to cover event deficits.

They explored potential changes to policies, including adding caps or "subject to budget availability" language to hotel rebates, revisiting the per-room-night formula, and possibly shifting to set application periods rather than rolling approvals. There was also discussion about balancing large, high-impact events against smaller, diverse ones, considering overall economic impact beyond just hotel stays, and ensuring funds are distributed strategically throughout the year. Additionally, staff noted plans to tighten timelines for reimbursements and revisit guidelines in a future meeting to manage limited funds better and increase demand.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m.

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

Move to Adjourn

The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 -

Trevor Swanson, Sonja Schneider, Sarah Lopp, Craig Hagin, Lisa Ford, Ben Buie, Tommy Yardy, Brian Dean

Chairperson

Secretary