

McCurtain County Tourism Authority Minutes

Held Tuesday, May 19th, 2026 - 10:00 AM

The meeting was held in the Broken Bow Area Chamber of Commerce at Broken Bow Public Library in the community meeting room at 404 N. Broadway in Broken Bow.

Voce Board chairman, Jerry Don Smith called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

Board Members were present: Jerry Don Smith, Josh Latta, Michelle Blackmore, Ed Fulmer, and Phil Silva. Executive Director, Charity O'Donnell and Communications Specialist Laura Lester were also present. Guests in attendance include Kristina Warta, Jackie Lacrone, Craig Young, Brad Bollinger, Vicki Joiner, Tawsha Davenport, Ali Persinger, Destiney Perry, Samanta Parsons, Chantell Fuller, Shalee Buzan, Stevie Steel, Haley Harris, Brianna Reed, Erin Auff, Matt Farly, Kevin Murray, Rusty Duncan, and Debby Lawson. Board member Wenda Blankenship was absent.

Advertising Grant Proposal presentations:

Wright Rodeo July 1-4th Chantell Fuller discussed the rodeo grant and stated new advertising plan is to reach more in Arkansas. Michelle Blackmore asked what forms of advertising, Chantell responded radio, TV, digital, live remote from Mena, and Facebook. She stated she is requesting \$5,300 for this year's advertising reimbursement grant. The board thanked her for coming and presenting.

Next Samantha Parsons and Stevie Steel came up and spoke about the McCurtain County Rodeo which will be August 6-8, 2026. Stevie spoke about the advertising they did last year for both the fair and rodeo and he mentioned the Free Fair is September 9-12th. He talked about what they plan to do differently this year and all the out-of-town guests that come to the rodeo and fair. Phil asked what the capacity was for over there, Steve said he didn't know however the rodeo gets very full as long as it isn't raining. He stated he is asking for \$8,400 for each event.

Chantell left the meeting.

Jackie Lacrone with Fall Fest in Idabel presented next, she stated is scheduled for October 3, 2026. She spoke about TV ads in Shreveport, Arkansas and Dallas this last year. She stated they also added Hulu ads. She stated Fall Fest is turning out to be a successful festival for Idabel they are expanding their events and adding new things to keep it growing.

Next Kristina Warta presented the grant proposal from the City of Broken Bow for the Fall in Love downtown event which will be held October 10, 2026. She stated that it is growing but very new. She stated half of the visitors were from out-of-town last year. She stated this year they are wanting to expand advertising into Arkansas and adding more broadcast media. She stated the twinkie eating contest and bed races are the most popular events.

Then Vicki Joiner from Kiamichi independent Bikers spoke about the October rally. She stated it was scheduled for October 9-11, 2026. She stated how they plan to advertise and that they are adding paid Facebook ads for a while. She stated all funds raised are used to benefit the local community.

Broken Bow Theatrical Society Evening with Poe Play in October 2026. Tawsha Davenport reported what they plan to do, she also spoke about the veteran's play planned for November. She stated that the Veteran's play is a fundraiser for the veteran's museum. She stated that the Veteran's play and dinner theater are selling out they are running out of room they are looking for a bigger location. She stated that for the Poe play she asked for \$800, the veterans play \$550 and the biggest play the Christmas Carol she is asking for \$1,000 then she spoke about the Gatsby Murder Mystery play they do in the Spring she is asking for \$800 for that play.

Stevie Steel and Samatha Parsons left the meeting.

Then Brianna, Haley and Shalee got up and presented the Beavers Bend Folk Festival that will be held November 13-15, 2026. They explained that last year they did East Texas Radio and this year their costs almost doubled, so they are taking that amount and plan to put it into Netflix ads through KTBS in Shreveport. The Beavers Bend Folk Festival asked for \$5,850 for advertising reimbursement.

Brianna, Shalee and Haley left the meeting.

Kristina spoke about Winter Wonderland scheduled for December; it is a free event like the Folk Festival. Last year the event attracted 30,000 visitors and half were from outside of the county. She stated that they are asking for \$7,500 so they can continue to expand advertising to other markets and attract more tourists from other areas.

Then Kristina spoke about the Okie Gras event to be held March 13, 2027, she stated that they are asking for \$7,500 to expand advertising into Arkansas. This was the 3rd Okie Gras, and this one-day event drew in 5,800 people, with 5,000 being

from outside the county. She stated this event is growing quickly and they have lots of fun events.

Vicki spoke about the KIB March Rally and said that she is asking for the same amount as the other rallies.

Then Jackie spoke about Dogwood Days which will be held April 3, 2027, she stated she is asking for \$10,000. She spoke about how they logistically pivoted because it rained the entire time. She said most everything was moved either inside or to a different time frame. She said out of 60 runners in the 5K in the rain and over half were from out of town. Jackie Lacrone spoke about the newest event in Idabel called Summer Fest which will be held June 13, 2027. She talked about the car show being the biggest draw. She stated last year no advertising dollars were spent, this year they are requesting \$10,000 so that they can advertise this event and bring in more.

Special Projects grant presentations:

Kristina with the City of Broken Bow spoke about the Special Projects Grant request for Winter Wonderland, she stated they are asking for \$24,500 to purchase more Christmas Lights to add to the current drive through and walk through areas. She stated the goal is to keep adding it to it and make it bigger and bigger.

The City of Idabel's Mayor Craig Young spoke about the Downtown Speaker Project. He stated he wanted to install a wireless speaker system downtown that would play music and would be used to make announcements when there is emergency and for announcing the Christmas parade and announcements during festivals and events. He stated they are asking for \$24,900 and the city will pay the difference they expect the project to cost \$60,000.

Craig Young and Jackie Lacrone left the meeting. At 10:43.

Brad Bollinger spoke next about Beavers Bend Lodge Trail Project; he is representing the Beavers Bend Trail Blazer Club. He stated that they are rebranding and hope to help with trail systems in McCurtain County. He spoke about mountain biking and hiking in the region. He wants to revamp the existing trail, and this project will be the beginning of introducing this segment to our county. He expects this project to take around 2 months. This brings another segment to draw visitors to our existing tourism base. He said that trail will be redone and add in features that enhance the mountain biking experience. He talked about the trails in the park being overcrowded and this specific trail is the only one for mountain biking. They

formed an organization to help add more trails and revamp existing trails to make them more accessible and safer. By adding more trails, it gives others more to do while here and helps with the overcrowding of the existing trails by making new trails. He said this trail is the lesser known of the trails a lot of people don't know about because it is on the lake side. He stated it is a four-mile trails however you can do it in segments if you need to. He stated he is asking for \$24,950 and overall project will cost around \$50,000 and they have commitments to most of the rest of it. He stated that he wants this project to be done by end of summer.

Kristina left the meeting.

Charity O'Donnell spoke about the Broken Bow Area Chamber Special Projects grant request. The proposal is to get \$16,000 to add onto the existing Christmas tree that serves as the focal point for the community. The current tree was purchased in 2021 and a new ornament package for the entire tree and to be added to it. She said this state she wants to add 4 feet to the existing tree making it taller. She stated that people come to town and take pictures with the tree, they host a tree lighting event.

Discussion and possible action to approve the budget for July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027: Charity went over the budget. A motion was made by Ed Fulmer to approve the budget as presented; the motion was seconded by Josh Latta. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes

Discussion and possible action to approve advertising grant approvals: Phil asked if there was a vetting process to make sure they meet the criteria of our mission. Jerry Don explained that that is what we do on this agenda item.

Charity explained the purpose of these grants is to advertise their events and festivals to bring people here. And we really want them to spend some of this on advertising outside of the area. If you don't feel like they are doing that she stated don't fund them or reduce the amount of funding, they are asking for. She stated that you don't have to fund the entire amount if you think their advertising plan is weak. She stated and remembered that they have spent it correctly and then we reimburse them after they submit all appropriate documentation showing they paid for it.

She stated that some spend all of it, however, a majority of them do not. The goal of this grant is to raise awareness of their events and festivals. "Is the advertising they are doing going to draw people to our area for their event for festival, if the answer is

not ‘yes’ then you shouldn’t fund them. And if they don’t do what they are supposed to do then don’t fund them.”

ICG arrived.

Charity stated this makes up 2% of the budget and this year’s budget is \$88,700. If you grant everyone that asked today the amount would be \$88,100. Michelle stated that the asks seemed relative to what they are doing and asking for. There wasn’t anyone asking for a larger amount, not planning to do a lot with that amount and those that were asking for not very much are not doing very much because they are a smaller amount. A motion was made by Ed Fulmer to approve all the grant requests as presented; the motion was seconded by Josh Latta. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Debby Lawson arrived at the meeting at 11:47.

Insight Creative Group (ICG) presentation of Marketing Plan for 2026-2027 fiscal year and this year’s advertising update: Matt Farley reported that Tax Revenue has increased 5.87% and visitation has increased 4.82%. He also said McCurtain County is leading the state, it is one of the top performing and has been for several years. When compared to OKC, Tulsa, Carter, and Love County. We hold 3.9% of the total share. Our average growth rate for the state from 2017 to 2025 was 12.6%. Social media continues to be the largest drivers to our website. Through April we have 96,542 followers across all our platforms. 2.5 million views on our videos. Paid digital media 45.7 million impressions. They showed us some creative from this past year. He spoke about winning 6 addy awards from our creatives. We have won 38 in total since they have been working on our account. He spoke about Digital Media numbers, Website performance, App performance, and partnership we had this year. Coming up still in this fiscal year is our Dude Perfect Outdoors partnership, Matt explained the plan for that and that it would come out of this fiscal year.

Marketing this next fiscal year, they spoke on travel trends, visitor trends, and booking behavior patterns. The goals for this coming year are to continue to increase the tax revenue, target key time frames with the most growth opportunity, to increase web visitation, and increase social media followers. Our visitor demographics are 31% 25-44, 33% 45-64 and 21% 65+. Primary segments are Young Parent and Young Adult; the secondary market segments will be Newly Empty Nesters. For emerging audiences, we want to tap into group travel and focus

on bachelorette parties and small business corporate retreats. And they also want to focus on first time visitors and repeat visitors. They talked about creative goals and plans. Then they spoke about the media approaches that will be used to implemented. Our geographic focus is DFW, Tulsa, Tyler, Shreveport, and OKC. They talked about new to this year is atmosphere TV and adding an AI bot to the app. Other channels to advertise discussed were geofencing, outdoor, retargeting, print, etc. Broadcast will make up 24.2% of the media mix, OTT will be 22.4%, social media 15%, Digital Video 10.2%, Digital Display 8.6%, OOH (out of home) 15.8% and print 3.8%. Matt spoke about the upcoming tourism summit, he said 75 are already registered. They are looking forward to getting everyone together to show them what we are doing and get their feedback on what we can do to help them progress.

Debby Lawson presented her special project proposal: Debby spoke about the “If walls could Talk” Mural project that she is continuing adding more murals to Idabel. She explained they are trying to get murals on 8 buildings so they can develop a mural trail. She stated the side of GI surplus will be the next one. She said one mural cost so much that our grant helps a little with the costs and would allow them to continue. She is asking for \$24,999. After she presented, she left the meeting.

Discussion and possible action about the trash initiative with Commissioner Williams possibly getting an AG Opinion: Charity state that after the last meeting Wenda heard back from John Williams saying the AG said no we couldn’t fund trash. She stated that normally the AG puts that in writing at this point we haven’t gotten it. But this is really our final answer that we can’t fund it. So be thinking about for next meeting how we need to relocate that money into our advertising budget.

Discussion, consideration and possible action to approve the marketing plan for next fiscal year: A motion was made by Ed Fulmer to approve all the marketing plan as presented; the motion was seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Discussion and possible action to approve special projects grant: Charity state that special projects for everyone that are new, this is a little greyer. What you are determining on this is “do you feel like if they get this grant to spend this money that their project is this project in that tourism development category is this something that is going to help better our area to pull people here?” She went on to say, “Are they enhancing something with their project to where it is going to bring people here

and help them enjoy our area better?” She stated maybe focus on does it enhance the visitor experience or draw them here.

Charity read from the grant application that projects must focus on promoting, encouraging, and developing tourism and recreational activities within McCurtain County. They should increase visitation by showcasing local attractions and facilitate engagement to increase recreational activities. To promote, encourage, and develop. Develop is to invest in upgrading existing infrastructure and or create new recreational activities or supporting local projects that cater to tourism to enhance the visitors’ experience in our area. She stated the total budget for numbers for this item is 5% of the budget which is \$221,750.00.

The board discussed the City of Idabel Speaker project in detail and finally concluded that being able to use it for announcing the festival activities and other downtown events would enhance the experience of those that attend downtown Idabel events.

A motion was made by Ed Fulmer to the Winter Wonderland Special project grant as presented; the motion was seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, abstained; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

A motion was made by Ed Fulmer to approve all the Beavers Bend Trail Blazers Club Lakeview Lodge Trail special project as presented; the motion was seconded by Phil Silva. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

A motion was made by Phil Silva to approve Broken Bow Area Chamber Tree project as presented; the motion was seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

A motion was made by Michelle Blackmore to approve all the City of Idabel downtown speaker special project grant as presented; the motion was seconded by Josh Latta. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, abstained, and Phil Silva, yes.

A motion was made by Phil Silva to approve all the IIDA Murals special project grant as presented; the motion was seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Discussion, consideration, and possible action to approve meeting dates for the next fiscal year: A motion was made by Phil Silva to approve all the meeting dates as presented; the motion was seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Discussion, consideration, and possible action on board appointments for next fiscal year: Charity reported that Phil Silva, who just got on our board is up for reappointment because he was serving out the rest of Dave Smulyan's term. Also, Wenda Blankenship is up for reappointment. A motion was made by Josh Latta and seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Discussion, consideration, and possible action to approve requisition officers and receiving officers: The board agreed that we changed these recently and changes were good. A motion was made by Phil Silva and seconded by Michelle Blackmore to keep Charity and Jerry Don Smith as receiving officers and for Ed Fulmer and Michelle Blackmore as requisitioning officers. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Discussion, consideration and possible action to approve the March meeting minutes: A motion was made by Josh Latta to approve March minutes as presented; the motion was seconded by Phil Silva. The motion was carried 5-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; Ed Fulmer, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Ed Fulmer left the meeting after this vote at 1:45.

Discussion and possible action to approve the financial report as presented: Charity O'Donnell presented the financial report. Phil Silva made the motion to approve the Financial Report as presented, seconded by Michelle Blackmore. The motion was carried 4-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

Purchase Order amounts for April and May were presented and reviewed: Michelle Blackmore made a motion to approve the purchase orders and seconded by Phil Silva. The motion carried. The motion was carried 4-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.

New or Unscheduled Business: Charity stated the Tourism Summit is scheduled for June 2nd, don't forget to register and attend.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Michelle Blackmore to adjourn the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Phil Silva. The meeting ended at 1:50pm. The motion was carried 4-0. Josh Latta, yes; Jerry Don Smith, yes; Michelle Blackmore, yes; and Phil Silva, yes.