CITY OF JOPLIN

COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ITEM:

Council Bill No. 2025-616 - Approves the Convention & Visitor Bureau's grant funding distribution for FY2026 related to special events, festivals, and marketing.

MEETING DATE:

September 2, 2025

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:

Convention & Visitors Bureau

REVIEWED BY:

Director of Convention & Visitors Bureau-Patrick Tuttle, Director of Finance-Leslie Haase, City Attorney-Peter Edwards, City Manager-Nicholas Edwards

SUMMARY REQUEST:

This Council Bill approves the Convention & Visitor Bureau's (CVB) grant distribution for FY2026 special events, festivals, and marketing. Funding comes from a portion of the Occupational License Tax (Hotel/Motel tax) monies collected, resulting from Ordinance No. 2000-048, as authorized by the City of Joplin voters on November 7, 2000.

BACKGROUND:

This CVB grant program aims to assist qualified organizations with promoting tourism activities that strive to directly increase hotel/motel occupancy and create a positive image for Joplin. Qualifying applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Not-for-profit and for-profit organizations may apply
- Events must be held between November 1, 2025 & October 31, 2026
- Events must be held within 20 miles of Joplin city limits
- Events must be open to the general public

At the July 15 Joplin Convention & Visitors Bureau Advisory Board meeting, they reviewed the FY2026 CVB Grant applications and heard from the requested organizations. At the conclusion of the meeting, the board determined funding allocations, where appropriate, and how much.

Thirteen applications from thirteen organizations were reviewed, totaling $176,304 in funding requests. Funding for the grant program is capped at $140,000. Traditionally, up to $130,000 can be awarded through the initial grant process, with the balance kept in reserve and awarded throughout the fiscal year, in lesser amounts, by the CVB director.

In their review, the board considered many factors, including an event’s tourism draw, potential room nights, growth potential, previous funding and reporting standards, overall appeal, and community development.

Applications are worth 100 points, with a 60-point benchmark being the lowest funding measurement threshold. Each board member scored the applications individually, and the high/low scores were removed. All were ranked by the average score received.

Scoring criteria included the ability to increase event attendance, to attract new visitors to Joplin (from 70 miles+ one-way) outside the market, to retain a visitor in the area (for at least 3 hours), to generate overnight stays, marketing efforts shown to be 40% or more on a digital platform, event scheduled during low-occupancy time of year, show projected growth based on previous year's post-event summary, plus the overall composition and impression of grant application. Following the scoring and ranking of all applications, the advisory board members discussed each application and made final funding decisions.

FUNDING SOURCE:

The CVB Grant funding comes from a dedicated portion of the CVB annual budget. It is 100% funded from the Lodging Tax. No portion of the General Fund or any other revenue stream is used.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Convention & Visitors Bureau Advisory Board respectfully submits the following grant funding recommendations from the FY2025 CVB Budget:

1. Visionary Balloonworx for Route 66 Hot Air Balloon and Kite Festival, in the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars ($25,000).
2. MO-KAN Dragway, for marketing the 2026 drag racing series, in the amount of nine thousand six hundred dollars ($9,600).
3. Ozark Christian College for marketing the 2026 conference series, in the amount of eighteen thousand, four hundred dollars ($18,400).
4. Branco Enterprises & Neosho Schools for the Neosho Holiday (Basketball) Classic, in the amount of eleven thousand two hundred dollars ($11,200).
5. Historic Murphysburg Preservation, Inc. for 2026 events, in the amount of three thousand two hundred dollars ($3,200).
6. Joplin Disc Golf Club for the 21st Annual Four States Open, in the amount of three thousand nine hundred dollars ($3,900).
7. JOMO Pride, Inc. for the 2026 JOMO PrideFest, in the amount of ten thousand three hundred dollars ($10,300).
8. Joplin Roadrunners for promoting the 2026 Race Series, in the amount of three thousand eight hundred dollars ($3,800).
9. Missouri Liars for the MO-Tell Storytellers event, in the amount of three thousand dollars ($3,000).
10. Silver Sage Renaissance Festival organization for the Silver Sage Renaissance Festival, in the amount of fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000).
11. Neosho Arts Council for ArtCon 2026, in the amount of three thousand dollars ($3,000).

12. Newton County Tourism Council for digital marketing and website maintenance, in the amount of three thousand dollars ($3,000).
13. Joplin Trails Coalition for the Maple Leaf Bike Tour, in the amount of nine hundred dollars ($900).

These recommendations represent $110,300 of the $140,000 budgeted for the FY2026 grant program. The balance of $30,000 will be allocated throughout the fiscal year, following the same grant usage guidelines.

The CVB Advisory Board and staff recommend passing this bill on the first reading.

ATTACHMENTS:

Council Bill No. 2025-616