

County of Tarrant  
City of Grapevine  
State of Texas

## MINUTES

The Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors met in Regular Session on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. at the Stephen W. Stinson Boardroom of the Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau, 636 S. Main Street, Grapevine, Texas with the following persons in attendance:

Joe Szymaszek	Chairman
Mark Terpening	Vice Chairman
Cynthia Blankenship	Board Member
Jeff Babcock	Board Member
Fabien Goury	Board Member
Chuck Pacioni	Board Member
Mike Oakley	Alternate Board Member
Kim Farbisz	Alternate Board Member

Absent: Iain Scouller

Constituting a quorum, with the following liaisons and staff members present:

Leon Leal	Council Liaison
Richard Wales	Chamber Liaison
Paul W. McCallum	Executive Director
Leigh Lyons	Assistant Executive Director
Becky Roberson	Executive Assistant

### CALL TO ORDER

Board Chairman, Joe Szymaszek, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

### NEW EMPLOYEE INTRODUCTION

Mr. McCallum introduced Kendyl Dearman, Grapevine Vintage Railroad Sales and Events Manager.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board Chairman Szymaszek called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 9, 2025 meeting.

Motion: Mark Terpening

Second: Jeff Babcock

Ayes: Szymaszek, Terpening, Blankenship, Babcock, Goury, Pacioni and Oakley

Nayes: None

Approved: 7 - 0

### SALES AND MARKETING REPORT

Director McCallum reported on the 2025 Calendar Year End Sales Report. He shared that the CVB Sales team had a record-breaking calendar year with 2,066 group leads sourced, equating to a 5.5% increase year over year. The team sourced more than 2.6 million group room nights, representing a 9% increase year over year. With a 6% increase year over year, the team booked 374 group meetings. Additionally, the team attended twenty trade shows conducted two Convention familiarization tours and conducted 108 site inspections.

National Sales Manager Codi Missimo attended Connect South November 17, 18 and 19. Connect South is an appointment-based trade show focused on connecting planners and suppliers in the Association, Corporate and Religious markets. Ms. Missimo conducted 25 appointments and returned with multiple requests for proposals, ranging from 2026 through 2028. Ms. Missimo also partnered with Reno Convention and Visitors Bureau on a hosted off-site customer dinner which targeted nine meeting planners that have potential business for the two cities.

National Sales Manager Connie Ash, along with a representative from Great Wolf Lodge attended Destination Southwest December 1,2 and 3. Destination Southwest is the premier hosted-buyer event for Southwest suppliers to connect with meeting professionals sourcing programs throughout the Southwest. It brings together qualified meeting buyers with top destinations, hotels/resorts, DMCs, CVBs/DMOs and tourism offices from Texas, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. During the show, they hosted 20 one-on-one appointments and came back with four potential business opportunities ranging from 2026 through 2028.

National Sales Manager Ellie George attended Connect DC Winter Marketplace December 1, 2 and 3. Connect DC Winter Marketplace is a hosted buyer event focusing on the DC market as well as Association, Corporate and Medical Markets. Ms. George hosted 26 scheduled appointments and confirmed one request for proposal for 1,740 total rooms in January 2026. While in DC, she made multiple sales calls and extended invitations to an upcoming familiarization tour.

National Sales Manager Tanja Nichols attended Smart Meetings 2025 December 3, 4 and 5. Smart Meetings is a media company that hosts approximately 8 hosted buyer events per year. This show consisted of education sessions, team building, networking, and a tradeshow including 25, one-on-one pre-scheduled appointments. Ms. Nichols conducted 26 scheduled appointments, met new prospects and met with existing customers. She returned with four potential opportunities stretching into 2031.

Director of Leisure and International Sales Heather Egan and Leisure Sales Manager Brian Hilterbrandt attended the National Tour Association's Travel Exchange November 8 through 12. Together they hosted 20 scheduled appointments, and Ms. Egan also had meetings with tour operators on the floor and at additional events. Multiple updates from various tour companies were shared. One tour group reported that they will bring back their Grapevine Christmas tour. Another tour group committed to create a Texas Tour and include Grapevine. Sports Travel & Tours has a baseball tour returning in 2026 and that will require 50 room nights.

Assistant Director Leigh Lyons, reported on the strategic campaign for marketing the Christmas Capital of Texas. The multi-media channel approach began in October and ran through mid-December. A print campaign targeted Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana with both regional and statewide pushes. Ads ran in various publications including but not limited to Texas Monthly, Texas Co-Op Power, Oklahoma Living, Louisiana Living, The Dallas Morning News, 360 West, DFW Child, and Community Impact. The television campaign targeted the regions of Houston, Oklahoma City, Tyler, Longview, Wichita Falls and more. Interviews ran in Houston, Little Rock, Wichita Falls, Tyler and Longview. Multiple print ads and a television interview highlighting Grapevine as the Christmas Capital of Texas were presented.

There was a robust digital campaign as well. This campaign targeted the markets of Houston, Oklahoma City, Austin, Shreveport, Tyler, Longview, Waco, Temple, Bryan and Wichita Falls. The over-the-top strategy ran on multiple platforms with the goal of reaching potential visitors that reside within a reasonable driving distance from Grapevine. The Digital platform, CultureMap promoted the Christmas Capital of Texas in Dallas and Fort Worth but also in Houston, San Antonio and Austin. Posts on Facebook and Instagram were enhanced.

Outdoor signage advertising was also utilized within the marketing campaign. Outfront billboards and Clear Channel outdoor billboards could be seen throughout Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex. Sky banners in Grapevine Mills Mall showcased the Christmas Capital of Texas.

Ms. Lyons reported that as the Christmas Capital of Texas marketing campaign was coming to an end in mid-December, the marketing and advertising campaign for Spring Break kicked off and will run through March 1, 2026. Once again, a multi-media channel approach was being utilized with an emphasis on the drive market of Texas and neighboring states. Examples of the regional and statewide coverage were shared. Print, television, digital and outdoor signage were covered. Ms. Lyons reported that Convention & Visitor Bureau staff was working closely with the Parks and Recreation team to promote all that Grapevine has to offer for Spring Break travelers. Family friendly and budget-friendly activities were being promoted. Grapevine Vintage Railroad has multiple

excursions planned for the weeks associated with regional and neighboring state Spring Break schedules. Prehistoric Park was once again returning to Meadowmere Park.

Assistant Director Lyons presented on website traffic for the month of October. The pages receiving most views on the Visit Grapevine website were Santa's North Pole Express, Buy Tickets, Christmas Capital of Texas Buy Tickets, Santa's North Pole Express Dates and Times and Day Out with Thomas. The website had more than 1.2 million page views in October, which is an increase of 34% year over year.

Social media platforms reported incredibly strong numbers for December. The Visit Grapevine social accounts were reviewed. The monthly impression total for Facebook was over 2.1 million, which was a 25.5% increase from November. The total reach was more than 898 thousand, which was a 30.1% increase from the prior month. Instagram had a monthly impression total of more than 708 thousand, a 15.8 increase from November and a reach total of over 97 thousand which equates to a 142% increase from the prior month. Total Instagram followers saw an increase of 3,906. The Visit Grapevine YouTube saw a monthly view total of 185,100.

Marketing and leisure emails were reviewed. Two emails were sent in December, the first going out on December 9 highlighting Christmas Capital of Texas events and activities and the second email being sent on December 17 and focused on Spring Break activations. The total reach was reported as 50,514 and 56,102 with both emails showing an open rate of 60%. Visit Grapevine page visits attributed to the emails were reported as 1,184 and 716.

Ms. Lyons also reported on recent media coverage. The national news segment on FOX & Friends showcasing Grapevine as the Christmas Capital of Texas from December 4 was played. Spectrum News presented a story at ICE! focusing on Christmas Capital of Texas activities and ICE!, which has aired multiple times. An interview on KLIF brought attention to Christmas happenings and additional coverage included the Peace Plaza Ice Rink. Additional media interviews included Little Rock, Houston and DFW Good Morning Texas shows.

Ms. Lyons presented recent publications that spoke to Grapevine interests. Some of the articles came as a direct result of the Communications and the Leisure Sales team working in tandem. Mein Amerika had a full one-page story on Grapevine and Route 66, which came from a collaboration between the Communications team and the International Leisure Sales team. The Association Convention & Facilities Magazine showcased Grapevine updates including hotel renovations. Stakeholder properties mentioned included Gaylord, Hyatt Regency DFW, Hilton DFW Lakes, Great Wolf Lodge, Meow Wolf, Grapevine Mills and Chicken N' Pickle. In the November 2 issue, The Travel Section of the Boston Globe Sunday listed Grapevine as one of eight holiday escapes worth exploring.

Ms. Lyons reported on recent familiarization tours as the Christmas Capital of Texas offers a unique experience and garners great interest from travel writers. Partnering with Travel

Texas, several high-profile British writers, representing publications such as Family Traveler Magazine, Sunday Post, Daily Express and Metro UK were hosted on a media tour in early November. A well-known freelancer for Texas Monthly, Texas Highways, Texas Co Op, Southern Living and Travel and Leisure was hosted on a media familiarization tour on November 20. Our team partnered with Hotel Vin to highlight all things related to wine in Grapevine. Helen Hatzis, the founder and writer of Trip Jaunt via Travel Texas Canada, was in town November 21 -23.

Roberto Serrini, a travel writer with Get Lost Magazine was hosted over December 18 -22. Mr. Serrini is known for both his articles and his travel videos. He had visited Grapevine before but had never visited during the Christmas season. During his hosted tour, he was able to experience Christmas traditions from yesteryear at Nash Farm, creating one-of-a-kind glass art with David Gappa at Vetro, and take in all that Grapevine Mills has to offer such as the Scuba Santa at SEA LIFE Grapevine.

Director of Communications Elizabeth Schrack hosted a Christmas Capital of Texas familiarization tour December 2 – 6. Some of the participants included a freelance writer for LA Times, MSN, AOL, New York Daily News, Yahoo, and The Chicago Tribune, a freelance contributor whose work appears regularly in Dallas Morning News, Thrillist, Texas Monthly, D Magazine, Texas Highways, The Denver Post, an accomplished writer to Newsweek, Charlotte Observer and Sacramento Bee and a blogger that has found a following of moms who like to travel and has written for syndicates to MSN, USA Today, USA Today 10Best, The Epoch Times.

#### ONGOING BUSINESS

Jeff Babcock served as the Marketing Chair for the Marketing Committee and presented the FY2026 Marketing Plan and gave an executive summary. He explained that the marketing plan came as a result of a collaborative, and highly disciplined planning process. The Marketing Committee, comprised of an intentional assortment of stakeholders that represent all aspects of the Grapevine Tourism economy, convened on Wednesday, September 24 and had meaningful discussion. Feedback was taken from the committee and implemented into a revised document which was then discussed at the second committee meeting, held on Wednesday, October 15. The document was then discussed and distilled down into a further refined state. At that time, the committee agreed that any further additions would be taken via email.

The FY26 Marketing Plan embraces a comprehensive omni-channel marketing approach designed to keep Grapevine top-of-mind for both leisure and group travelers. It leverages significant global and national opportunities on the horizon, including the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the America 250 Celebration, while proactively navigating headwinds such as inflationary pressures and increased hotel competition across the region. The plan balances near-term demand generation with long-term brand stewardship.

Each key division within the Convention & Visitors Bureau has clearly defined objectives that collectively advance the mission. The Convention Sales Team will focus on driving new group business to Grapevine's partner hotels in 2026 with the objective to generate a minimum of 1.25 million sourced room nights, representing 50% of the overall group room night goal, from groups that are either new to Grapevine or have not met here within the past five years. This growth will be driven by a strategic expansion into new target markets, participation in new tradeshow and sales missions, execution of targeted familiarization tours and site inspections, and proactive prospecting of emerging group opportunities. The Destination Services & Experience strategy focuses on providing a comprehensive suite of services to enhance the visitor experience and drive repeat visitation, including event logistics, visitor support, community engagement and marketing. The primary goals are to increase the number of groups serviced by 10%, boost "Show Your Badge" merchant participation by 15%, grow the distribution of marketing brochures by 3%, and assist 4% more visitors at both the Grapevine CVB lobby and Main Visitor Information Center. Additionally, the Communications team will garner coverage and obtain \$10 million in ad value equivalence in earned media for 40<sup>th</sup> Annual GrapeFest and other festivals and events throughout the year, pitch to major media outlets to obtain multiple media spreads and increase press trips/ fam tours by 10%.

In summary, the FY26 Marketing Plan is data-driven and opportunity-focused. It reflects the collective expertise of stakeholders and the operational realities of the hotels, attractions, and businesses. Most importantly, it positions Grapevine not just to compete, but to lead, delivering sustained economic impact, strong hotel performance, and an exceptional destination experience in the year ahead.

Chairman Szymaszek thanked Mr. Babcock for his leadership and Director McCallum expressed his appreciation for the time and energy that went into the meetings and the Marketing Plan.

Mr. McCallum presented a Christmas Capital of Texas update. He reported that by all measures it had been a successful event. Merchants on Main Street have shared very positive feedback regarding foot traffic and record sales. Many businesses reported long customer lines and restaurants reported that they were so busy that guests were waitlisted. Wildflower Outlaws reports that it was a spectacular season and stated that it was "eye-opening to have so much interaction and exposure to guests who were from out of the state or out of the country." They also reported that one day they sold 38 Cowboy hats. Howdy Honey also reports they were up \$20,000 in total sales.

Grapevine Mills reported that they saw a 7% year over year increase in comparable sales. The newly opened Primark quickly became their busiest store in Texas. The Coach store was up 40% year over year. And the Nike store set an all-time high in sales volume increase year over year. Bass Pro Shops Grapevine shared that they had a strong 2025 season. They

took more Santa pictures this year than in 2024. Santa was in store November 1 – December 24. Sales were also up this year.

One of the most exciting accolades we received this season was being named the Best Christmas Town for the second time by the readers of Newsweek magazine. And on December 4, FOX & Friends on the FOX News Channel featured Grapevine to kick off their weekly Christmas segments. The segment was hugely successful and featured a variety of Grapevine stakeholders and partners including Mayor William D. Tate, Santa and Mrs. Claus, Peace Plaza, Good Things for All Seasons, Chez Fabien, Grapevine High School Fillies, Grapevine Cornet Band and merchants all along Main Street. The seven-minute segment was a highlight of the season.

Guests were able to watch the Merry & Bright drone shows along Main Street with the North show being visible from Northwest Highway to Hudgins Street. Audio for the drone shows was expanded this year so that attendees could hear the show music throughout Main Street. The street was blocked off through the weekend until after the show for both shows allowing attendees to use all of Main Street the entire day of the drone shows as a pedestrian corridor. Parks and Recreation increased staff on the street to help with traffic and pedestrian flow prior to the shows, during the shows, and following the shows.

More than 115,000 visitors came through either the Grapevine Main Visitor Center or the lobby of the Grapevine Convention & Visitor Bureau during Christmas Capital of Texas season, an increase of 55% year over year. The Hometown Christmas exhibit in the Convention & Visitor Bureau Lobby welcomed more than 13,000 guests with more than 8,300 experiencing the included offerings at the Settlement to City Museums. The Observation Tower welcomed more than 4,200 guests with two marriage proposals. There was also a marriage proposal that took place in front of the Grapevine Christmas Tree on Peace Plaza.

There are multiple reports from both merchants and visitors that really appreciated the closure of Main Street. This added safety element greatly enhanced the experience for the guests in a very positive way. The Knights of Columbus provided additional safety at the fence at the Railroad crossing by securing fencing while TexRail crossed the tracks. New this year, the Knights were also present on Sunday evenings. Additionally, the Knights extended their daily service time by 30 minutes per evening.

The Palace Theatre hosted 74 shows, movies and events with more than 19,582 guests which is a 7.6% increase year over year. Live performances accounted for 27 shows from 12 performers/groups with a reported total 9,977 tickets sold, a 5% increase year over year. 19 of these 27 shows sold out. The Palace Theatre showed 24 classic Christmas movies, and the total attendance was up 9% year over year. Staff hosted 23 sessions of Cartoons and Crafts which saw an 18% increase in tickets sold year over year with many sessions reaching capacity.

Board Member Mike Oakley departed the meeting at 8:50 a.m.

Chairman Szymaszek stepped out of the meeting to take a call at 8:50 a.m.  
Board Chairman Szymaszek returned at 8:51 a.m.

The weather was much more cooperative for the Peace Plaza Ice Rink in 2025. In 2025, 8% more sessions took place with 12% more skaters overall. This was the second year with Baylor Scott & White as the sponsor of the Peace Plaza Ice Rink.

The enhanced Christmas Market at North Pole Neighborhood proved to be successful. The expanded vendor market featuring the new booths hosted 19 participating vendors throughout the season, many of whom reported robust sales. One vendor reported \$75,000 in total sales. Three of the jewelry vendors reported strong sales ranging from \$10,000 to \$17,000. A popular food vendor reported \$25,000 in sales.

Santa's North Pole Express General Store had a very successful season. Sales in the General Store were up approximately 75% year over year. For the General Store Photos with Santa, the team launched a new partnership with Cherry Hill Programs. This partnership was extremely successful and led to an increase in package sales of 30%. We look forward to partnering with Cherry Hill Programs again in 2026.

In 2025, Santa's North Pole Express welcomed more than 84,000 riders, an increase of 38% year over year. This increase is attributed to adding 55 additional excursions in 2025. In 2024, there were 150 excursions and in 2025, there were 205 excursions.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Director McCallum reported that the public restrooms in the Historic Cotton Belt Depot District had been built in 1992 and were the first public restrooms on Main Street. These restroom facilities are open to the public throughout the year. Mr. McCallum reported that there were a handful of events that put an immense strain on the facilities. He also reported that as the Christmas Capital of Texas has grown in notoriety and popularity that the crowds have also grown. The constant crowds during this event put great pressure on the public restrooms, but especially the restrooms located within the Historic Cotton Belt District. There was discussion among the group that many had witnessed the robust crowds and long lines leading to the public facilities attributed to Grapevine Vintage Railroad's Santa's North Pole Express and the Christmas Market at the North Pole Neighborhood. There was a consensus that the public facilities were outdated and unable to adequately serve the number of guests that utilized them. It was unanimously agreed that the public facilities would require upgrades and an expansion in order to keep up with the demand of the time periods that bring large numbers of visitors and put a strain on the facilities.

Board Member Pacioni departed the meeting at 9:14 a.m.

HOTELS/ATTRACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Grapevine Chamber Liaison, Richard Wales reported on upcoming Chamber of Commerce events such as the Community Awards scheduled for January 29 and the Business Expo scheduled March 31.

Ms. Lyons gave an update on the groundbreaking of Dig World that took place on December 12, 2025. The opening is tentatively scheduled for the end of May and Dig World is projecting 250,000 guests in their first year of operation. Chairman Szymaszek shared that there was excitement about the venture as construction was moving along well and the planned ticket price of \$29.99 offered a great value for visitors to operate machines at this construction-themed amusement park.

Ms. Lyons also shared that renovations to Terminal D at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, the primary terminal for international travel, will get additional security check-ins and screening options. Two lanes to the central passenger screening checkpoint will be added along with 19 self-service bag drops and 42 self-service check-in kiosks. Right-hand access into Terminal A is now open. A news release from the airport stated the access opened December 19, 2025, which was earlier than planned and construction was accelerated in anticipation of the Christmas travel season. A new bridge to the terminal and associated roadway improvements were also made.

Chairman Szymaszek shared that Bubble Planet at Grapevine Mills was continuing to prove to a popular activation and was reporting strong numbers. He also reported that Primark was already seeing higher than projected sales.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chairman Szymaszek called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 a.m.

Motion: Mark Terpening

Second: Jeff Babcock

Ayes: Szymaszek, Terpening, Blankenship, Babcock, Goury, and Farbisz

Nays: None

Approved: 6- 0

ATTEST:



Becky Roberson  
Executive Assistant

APPROVED:



BP- Joe Szymaszek    Mark Terpening  
BP- Chairman    Vice Chairman