

September 3, 2026

Members of the Faulkner County Quorum Court  
Faulkner County, Arkansas

**Re: Proposed ordinance concerning Dragonstone Springs, home of the Arkansas Renaissance Festival**

Dear Members of the Faulkner County Quorum Court,

I respectfully ask for your support and favorable vote on the proposed ordinance concerning Dragonstone Springs, home of the Arkansas Renaissance Festival.

Over the past several years, we have invested over \$3.5 million in direct private investment into Dragonstone Springs with the goal of creating a permanent tourism destination in rural Faulkner County.

That number does not include the additional investment made by more than 40 independent vendors who have used their own funds to construct permanent buildings at Dragonstone Springs.

Over the past two years, our events have welcomed tens of thousands of guests, including visitors from throughout Arkansas and surrounding states. Our target for the 2026 Renaissance Festival season alone is approximately 45,000 guests.

During Festival operations, we employ more than 100 people, host approximately 100 to 150 vendors each weekend, and present more than 70 entertainment offerings each day. We also spend hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on payroll, entertainment, construction, supplies and operations.

From the beginning, we have worked intentionally to be a good member of the Faulkner County community through our involvement with local schools, churches, community events and local businesses.

**Tourism Benefits Faulkner County**

Tourism is already an important economic engine for Faulkner County.

According to the 2025 Arkansas Tourism Economic Impact Report, visitors generated approximately:

- \$243.9 million in visitor spending
- 1,809 tourism-supported jobs
- \$55.9 million in labor income
- \$4.8 million in local tax revenue

Our goal is to add to that economic activity by bringing more visitors into Faulkner County and giving them more reasons to stay overnight and return throughout the year.

Arkansas Renaissance Festival currently invests more than \$120,000 annually in marketing, with a substantial portion directed outside Central Arkansas specifically to attract visitors into Faulkner County.

We have also entered into a tourism partnership with the City of Conway Advertising & Promotion Commission and Conway tourism officials.

As part of that partnership, our advertising outside Central Arkansas incorporates Visit Conway branding, and we deliberately market Dragonstone Springs as being 35 minutes from Conway, Arkansas.

We want visitors coming to Dragonstone Springs to view Conway and Faulkner County as part of their destination experience—to stay in area hotels, eat in local restaurants, shop locally, purchase fuel and visit other area businesses and attractions.

National research supports the broader economic importance of destination entertainment. Oxford Economics found that an out-of-town live-entertainment attendee spending \$100 on an event ticket generated approximately \$334.92 in additional local spending.

## **Why This Vote Matters to Our Next Phase**

What has been built at Dragonstone Springs today is only the first phase of our long-term vision.

We want Dragonstone Springs to become a regional, year-round tourism destination.

The next major step is construction of an approximately 7,000-square-foot castle and event facility, representing an estimated additional \$1 million to \$1.5 million in private investment.

Our current facilities limit many of our year-round events to approximately 150 guests.

The proposed facility could allow many of those events to accommodate approximately 500 to 1,000 guests, making it practical to market them throughout Arkansas and into surrounding states.

Moving from approximately 150 guests to 500–1,000 guests also changes these events from primarily local programs into events that can be economically marketed throughout Arkansas and surrounding states.

That facility would allow us to substantially expand into:

- Weddings and receptions
- Corporate events and retreats
- Formal balls and masquerades
- Themed dinners and feasts
- Private celebrations
- Holiday events
- Additional festivals
- Other regional destination experiences

These events could occur throughout the year rather than only during the Renaissance Festival season.

However, this is where the proposed ordinance becomes important.

Without the ability to responsibly provide controlled alcoholic beverage service, Dragonstone Springs is at a significant competitive disadvantage for weddings, corporate functions, formal dinners and other destination events where beverage service is commonly expected.

This vote therefore affects far more than beverage sales.

It directly affects whether we can move forward with the next major phase of development: the castle and event facility, expanded weddings and receptions, corporate events, larger year-round destination events, and the additional jobs and tourism spending those activities can create.

If we can successfully enter the wedding, corporate and regional special-event markets, we believe Dragonstone Springs can create additional:

- Year-round jobs
- Construction activity
- Vendor opportunities
- Hotel stays
- Restaurant spending
- Retail spending
- Fuel purchases
- Local tax revenue
- Tourism throughout the year

Those visitors may arrive in Faulkner County, stay in a Conway-area hotel, eat locally before the event, attend Dragonstone Springs, and eat or shop locally again before returning home.

That is the economic opportunity we are trying to develop.

## **A Conservative Approach to Alcohol Service**

Our goal is not to change the family-friendly environment of Dragonstone Springs, and alcohol is not intended to become the focus of the Arkansas Renaissance Festival.

Although the private club permit process may allow broader beverage options, our current operating plan is beer, wine and mead only. We are not proposing hard liquor.

We also do not intend to immediately make alcohol available throughout the Festival.

Our plan is a deliberate three-phase rollout.

## **Phase One — Limited Special Events**

Initial service would be limited to highly controlled environments such as:

- Champions Feast and other Feast Hall experiences
- Formal dinners
- Tasting and pairing experiences
- Weddings and receptions
- Corporate events
- Other limited-seating or private events

This allows us to establish procedures, train personnel and demonstrate responsible operation before considering any expansion.

## **Phase Two — Designated Mead or Beverage Garden**

Only after Phase One operates successfully would we consider a designated mead or beverage garden during the Arkansas Renaissance Festival.

This would be a clearly defined and controlled service environment.

## **Phase Three — Limited Additional Festival Locations**

Only after demonstrating continued responsible operation would we consider a limited number of additional locations offering beer, wine and mead.

At every phase, our current plan remains beer, wine and mead only—no hard liquor.

We have also developed safeguards that go beyond simply checking identification. Our current plan includes identification scanning, a nonreplaceable wristband, electronic tracking of purchases, a maximum of three alcoholic beverages per registered guest per day, festival-controlled alcohol sales rather than outside alcohol vendors, and immediate authority to stop alcohol service if problems occur.

We have been very deliberate about this because our goal is not to change the character of Dragonstone Springs. We have built our reputation around creating a safe, family-friendly destination, and protecting that environment remains extremely important to us.

## **The Opportunity Before Us**

Our goal is not to change what Dragonstone Springs is.

Our goal is to give Dragonstone Springs the ability to grow.

We have already demonstrated our willingness to invest our own resources and accept the financial risk necessary to build something unique in Faulkner County.

We are prepared to make the next major investment, but the ability to competitively operate the weddings, corporate events, formal dinners and regional events that would support that investment is an important part of whether that expansion is financially viable.

With a favorable vote, we believe Dragonstone Springs can continue moving toward:

- Additional private investment
- More year-round jobs
- More regional events
- More overnight visitors
- More hotel stays
- More restaurant and retail spending
- More tourism dollars entering Faulkner County

We respectfully ask the Faulkner County Quorum Court to give us the opportunity to continue developing Dragonstone Springs into a regional tourism destination by voting favorably on the proposed ordinance.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to Faulkner County.

Respectfully,

**Patrick Taft**

Steward, Dragonstone Springs  
Arkansas Renaissance Festival Inc.  
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## **Supporting Research**

**Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism / Tourism Economics**

*2025 Arkansas Tourism Economic Impact Report*

**Oxford Economics**

*The Concerts and Live Entertainment Industry: A Significant Economic Engine*

**Events Industry Council / Oxford Economics**

*Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy*

**Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration — Alcoholic Beverage Control Division**

*Applicable private club statutes, regulations and permitting requirements.*