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Dallas officials say ousted Fair Park operator falsely said event contracts were over

Records reveal the latest in tensions between Dallas and Oak View Group as the contract to manage Fair Park nears its end.

By [Aria Jones](#) and [Devyani Chhetri](#)
Staff Writers

Sep. 11, 2025 | Updated 2:26 p.m. CDT | ⌚ 3 min. read



Fair Park in Dallas, Texas, Friday, August 9, 2024

ANJA SCHLEIN / SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR



Update:

This story was updated at 7:13 p.m. to include comment from Oak View Group.

Dallas officials say Oak View Group, the company tasked with running Fair Park’s day-to-day operations, is falsely telling event organizers their agreements with the city are ending as the parks department takes over the site’s management.

An Oak View Group spokesperson said the company simply notified its licensees that they would need to transition their contracts to the city.

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John Jenkins, the city’s park department director, said the former subcontractor falsely told clients who had booked venues in Fair Park that the city would not be carrying the contracts forward and risked adversely impacting the park, in a memo obtained by *The Dallas Morning News*.

The Oak View Group spokesperson said that’s not true. In a statement Thursday, OVG said the city had not said it intended to assume any of the

agreements. Additionally, the spokesperson said the company sent a letter to the city stating people were being notified.

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“Please know that late yesterday afternoon OVG360 notified event clients that their agreements will be terminated effective September 16th,” Jenkins wrote.

“This action without any notice to us and false information from OVG360 seems intended to harm the city and potentially jeopardize our clients, customers, and citizens,” the memo further said.

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The city decided to end its [contract with Fair Park First](#), the park’s nonprofit manager and OVG, which was subcontracting with the nonprofit earlier this year.

The nonprofit and the venue management company, which also handles operations at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, were put under a microscope after it was revealed that \$5.7 million of restricted donor funds were spent on park operations.

Meanwhile, several vendors are yet to receive payments for their services. Under these circumstances, Dallas officials decided to end the contracts with Fair Park First and Oak View Group and had cobbled together a transition team to take over the maintenance and operations of the 277-acre park.

But very little was known about how the transition was panning out until now.

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A notice to an events organizer signed by Brad Murphy, an OVG executive, telling the client that the contract between Oak View Group and the city would terminate, ending the event's license to operate unless the city approves the continuation of the agreement.

“As of today's date, the City has not advised OVG360 that it is electing to have your contract assumed by the City,” the document says.

Jenkins wrote that Oak View Group's assertion “couldn't be further from the truth,” adding that the city has been requesting event agreements and contracts from the company since June 26, to no response.

Documents appear to show the city and Oak View Group cannot agree on when contracts terminate, with the city saying its contract ends Sept. 16

and Oak View Group seeing the date as Sept. 25, when it decided to terminate its contract with Fair Park First.

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“We’ve been going around them for the past two months to get anything done,” Jenkins told *The News*, adding that he was deploying security measures to ensure OVG officials left the premises by Sept. 16. “I just can’t trust what they’ll do.”

He said park officials were going to do everything to protect the city’s asset.

OVG, however, says the city has had access to the booking software with the events calendars and contact information for licensees since Aug. 1.

It’s unclear how many clients were impacted, but Jenkins said there were several the park department was reaching out to. Documents the city requested from Fair Park First included all active contracts involving the nonprofit, management company or the park itself, records show. The list included events, tenants, vendors, service providers, sponsorships and construction contracts.

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“We are endeavoring to immediately contact all the impacted event organizers to reassure them that we very much want to host their events and will do everything possible to ensure success for their event,” Jenkins said, noting that he would be alerting news media and using social media to set the record straight.

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By Aria Jones

Aria writes about southern Dallas. She previously reported on breaking news and is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and Dallas College. Aria has interned at the Austin American-Statesman, the Texas Tribune and the El Paso Times.

By Devyani Chhetri

Before joining the Dallas Morning News, Devyani Chhetri covered South Carolina politics and presidential primaries at the Greenville News. She went to Boston University for graduate school.

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