



Talk of the Town

436-5096 * www.gering.org

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A publication of the City of Gering

Half Cent Sales Tax Proposition

• PROPOSITION 1 •

Why is Gering proposing an additional half cent sales tax?

- State and Federal funding for infrastructure projects has been reduced dramatically or eliminated.
- City streets are deteriorating at a faster rate than annual budgets can support for replacement and improvements.
- ADA accessible ramps and curbs are needed in many areas of the city.
- Some existing water mains date back to 1917 and are in dire need of replacement.
- Sanitary sewer lines are also aging and need replaced or updated.
- **Sales tax is paid by everyone**, not just Gering residents. Many users of public infrastructure do not live in city limits.

- This is **not** a property tax.

LB357 allows municipalities an opportunity to add an additional half cent sales tax as a means to provide funding for infrastructure projects.

How will the funds be used?

The half cent sales tax revenue will be used to fund *only* the following:

- Municipal roads, streets, curbs and sidewalks
- Water mains
- Sanitary sewer lines

Approved projects will be based on their positive impacts on neighborhoods and the community.



On a \$10 taxable purchase, five cents would be added to the total cost.

Is the half cent sales tax the only revenue supporting infrastructure improvements?

No. If **PROPOSITION 1** is passed, the City of Gering will be able to bond infrastructure improvements. Repayment of the bond will come, in part, from the half-cent sales tax revenue (roughly \$350,000 annually) and in part from annual budget allocations from City departments. Bonding the improvements allows the City to accomplish more in a shorter period of time which in turn allows citizens to see and experience the improvements long before the tax expires.

How does improved infrastructure positively impact our community?

Infrastructure impacts: **Housing, Economic Development, Quality of life, Future Growth & Sustainability, Tourism, Recreation and more.**



A Message from the Mayor

How are Utility Rates Determined?

As you are likely aware the Gering City Council recently approved a 2.08% averaged rate increase for water, sewer, sanitation and electric. This was the lowest increase in six years. The Council and I appreciate the need and desire of Gering residents to keep utility rates as affordable as possible. The 2016/2017 rate increase of 2.08% was down considerably from the previous two years which averaged 5.6%. City staff were frugal with a recommended rate increase this year in spite of numerous projects slated to be completed in the next 12 months. This brings me to my next point which is explaining the process of how rate increases are determined.

In May of each year City Department Heads begin putting together their next fiscal year budget. The Street, Water/Wastewater, Sanitation and Electric Departments have numerous projects, primarily infrastructure-related, that are in need of completion. Project costs are estimated by the City Engineer and prioritized. Once this process is complete a

rate increase may be necessary based on costs for these projects. User fees, also known as utility fees, are used in part to fund projects that improve or replace streets, water mains, sanitary sewer mains and other infrastructure. The City Council and I attend a Budget Workshop, which is open to the public, in July or August of each year. At this workshop each department leader explains and substantiates their budget requests and organizational goals to the Council. It's also at this time that utility rate increases are proposed for consideration.

To give an example, the Water Department budgets \$308,000 per year for water main projects; this amount of money completes roughly 2000 lineal feet of new water main which really isn't very much considering there are 75 miles of water main in the City with the oldest dating back to 1917. If we continue at the rate we're at, only allocating \$308,000 per year, it will take until 2029 to complete this project at which time we'll be replacing lines that are 112 years old.

Project costs for street improvements have increased over the years largely because the cost of materials and construction has gone up. However, the tax levy remains the same. In addition state aid to municipalities has been eliminated. Federal funding for

street projects has declined which decreases the amount that states have to allocate to cities like ours. This leaves municipalities, like Gering, to figure out alternative ways to fund infrastructure projects.

Water and sewer rates have gone up mostly because of federal regulations; the City of Gering was required to upgrade our water system in the last six to seven years because of these rules. We were required to build capital projects for sewer such as a 3.2 million dollar upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant. The required water system upgrade was just over 9 million dollars. These improvements were mandated in order to comply with federal regulations such as the Safe Water Drinking Act and the Clean Water Act.

The biggest source of concern this year seemed to be electric rates. Electric rate increases are passed on to the City by WAPA (Western Area Power Administration) and MEAN (Municipal Energy Alliance of Nebraska) based on their costs to provide this resource. In WAPA's case, because of the drought in the western part of the United States, hydroelectric power plants are not able to produce power as efficiently as they

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Fall and Winter Reminders



from the City of Gering

Disconnect
garden hoses
from faucets!

Change batteries in
smoke detectors
with the end of
Daylight Savings
Time!

Winterize
sprinkler system
and backflow
preventers!

Watch for Water Leaks!

- City of Gering Public Works Department



The City of Gering has over 70 miles of water mains buried under streets and alleys and in utility easements. Water leaks can and will happen anytime of the year. Over the last couple of years, the City has experienced water leaks where the street, sidewalk and yard have settled causing between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in damages and repairs. The City is asking Customers to help prevent these expensive repairs, if you see any settlement in your lawn, driveway or a street call the Utility office to report a possible leak. The City does not charge to check for leaks, even after hours.

What to look for to determine if there is a water leak?

Outside the home:

- Check for garden hoses left running
- If an area of your grass is greener and growing substantially faster than the rest of the lawn, the grass is soft and spongy
- Water bubbling up from underground in the lawn, sidewalk or street
- Sudden settlement of curb, sidewalk, driveway, street or lawn
- Slow settlement of curb, sidewalk, driveway, street or lawn
- A sound inside the home of water always running but the water meter is not turning

Water leaks may begin leaking days, weeks or months before the leak will surface. Water leaks should be immediately repaired to prevent damage to structures, lawns and pavement. Water can travel along the pipe and under the home and cause costly repairs to the home that your insurance company may not cover. Water leaks can be very expensive to repair. The City recommends you check with your insurance company to verify if you have or can get coverage for the cost of damages and repairs from water leaks.

Inside the home:

Look for your water meter, once you've located your water meter check the low flow indicator to see if it is moving, (low flow indicators are a red triangle, black triangle, red needle or on digital meters it is a small circle with + flashing inside the circle to indicate flow). If the triangle or needle are moving or the + is flashing in the circle you have water flowing through the meter. Make sure all faucets and appliances that use water are turned off. Again check the low flow indicator on the water meter, if the indicator is moving then water is still running through the water meter and you may have a leak.

Common water losses in the home;

- Leaking toilet, (most common)
- Garden hose left running, (set the oven timer to remind you to move the sprinkler or shut off the garden hose)
- Underground sprinkler system valves or pipe leaking
- Leaking faucets
- Leak under a concrete floor



A Message from the Mayor *cont...*

used to because of lower water levels in reservoirs. Federal regulations on coal have also affected electric rates nationwide.

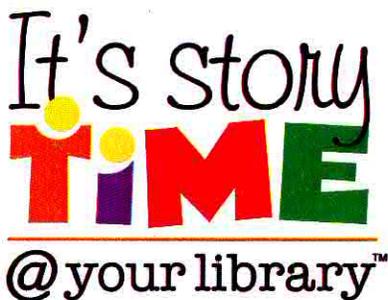
Infrastructure is the backbone of our city; without properly functioning infrastructure our everyday lives would be significantly impacted. User fees are necessary in order to maintain the quality of life we're accustomed to and expect. Future projects that need addressed will have to be funded somehow. The City has an opportunity to add a half cent sales tax to generate revenue to help fund these projects with LB357 which will ultimately offset rate increases. City staff and legislators are continually working to balance the cost of doing business with the responsibility of providing affordable services to our community but more importantly to you, our valued residents and customers.

Mayor Tony Kaufman

GERING PUBLIC LIBRARY

Children's Activities

The library is full of activities for kids this fall! We offer two story time sessions a week. For the younger crowd, Toddler Read and Romp Story Time is Wednesdays from 10:00-10:30 (geared for children from 18-36 months). Move and Groove Story Time is Thursdays from 10:00-11:00 (geared towards 3-6 year old children).



For the school-aged crowd we have Movie of the Month at 3:00 on the first Wednesday of the month. We also have Lego Club and Craft Club in the Meeting Room on alternating Tuesdays from 3:45-4:45. On November 29 we will offer Game Day where the library provides a variety of games for the kids to play in the Community Room and for the computer set we offer Coder Dojo once a month on the third Wednesday from 2:00-3:30. Coder Dojo is taught by AIM for Brilliance and promotes IT learning by teaching kids to code through gaming, website building and any other student-led interest.

This fall Gering Public Library is also starting a teen group. The first meeting will be October 17 at 6:00. We will make plans for future meetings, discuss the formation of a Teen Advisory Board, and enjoy ice cream sundaes.

Calendars with children's activities are on our website: go to www.gering.org then choose "Departments" then "Library" or you can follow us on Facebook for current information.

Great Information Can Be Found On Library Website!

We have links to lots of great sites on our Resources page. "Oh, you mean there are other places than Google, Wikipedia, and YouTube to find information?" Yes! Not all websites are created equally. The Gering Library website has a page full of links that provide high quality information about almost everything you need to know. Whether you are a student looking for homework help or a senior looking for help learning how to use your new tablet we have sites that will help you.

Our Homework Help sites include Encyclopaedia Britannica, 50 States, Fact Monster, Kids.gov, The Kahn Academy and Nebraska Studies. These are all well respected sites and are much better than relying on Google for factual information. Under the Education header you will find GCF Learn Free which has tutorials to help you with math and English homework.

NebraskAccess also has lots of evaluated websites and databases with information about all kinds of things from biographical information to legal forms you can use to make a will or bill of sale.

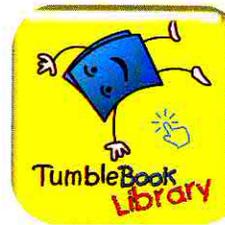


The best homework help databases included in NebraskAccess are:

- Explora Primary-researcher pulls from databases and magazines
- Primary Search-current event news for children (click on PDF)
- Biography Reference Center/Bank- current biographical profiles
- Points of View Reference Center- research both sides of a topic
- Science and Technology Collection (for upper grades)

(The NebraskAccess password changes every 6 months. Call the library for more information or you can use a Nebraska Driver's license number)

The most fun link on our site is **TumbleBooks** which has animated talking picture books like Diary of a Fly and Dad Runs Away With the Circus. You can also find the popular Bedtime Math site and Coder Monkey game on our youth resources page.



Adult Education

Under the Educational header you can find links to websites specifically designed to help seniors with technology. Both Tech Boomers and GCF Learn Free have tutorials on technology like how to

Tech Boomers

use your new tablet and Facebook as well as apps you have been hearing about like Snapchat, Instagram, Youtube, as well as basics like Wifi, Internet Safety, and Microsoft Office.



Annual Friends Meeting

On October 23 Al and Lois Herbel will present "Learning History Through Architecture" at the Annual Friends of the Gering Library Meeting at 2:00 in the Community Room.

"The architecture of homes in Gering and Scottsbluff tells an historical story all its own. Home designs relate, in large part, to what was happening in our country during different decades. Let's discover why certain styles and features were used in home construction in our community during each decade beginning with the 1930's. We will learn how the Cold War, the New Deal, WWII and other current events affected home construction. During this presentation, we will also learn the history of some very unique homes in our community. This exciting project was developed by the 5th and 6th Grade High Ability Learners of Gering Public Schools."



tion operates as a retail committee under the umbrella of the Gering Convention and Visitors Bureau, a non-profit corporation. The association is comprised of representatives of the Gering business community and individuals; and is open to any and all businesses (not limited to retail establishments) and residents of Gering.

The Gering Merchants Association is looking ahead to the future and asking the question; "How do we improve our Association; one that the business community and residents want to be actively involved in now and in the future?" We're asking for

your help; by going to the link below and completing a brief survey (your responses will be completely anonymous) and giving us your input, ideas and directions for the future of the Gering Merchants Association. Please complete the survey; and share your ideas. If you have questions about the survey; contact RaNae Garton, President, Gering Merchants at 308.632.5551. Thank you.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XJ79C5S>

GERING MERCHANTS SURVEY

The mission of the Gering Merchants Association is to support, promote and increase pride, vision and growth of Gering businesses. Gering Merchants Associa-

Environmental Services



The Landfill is accepting shingles again. Please call for more information. 436-7568

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

GREEN CONTAINERS ARE STRICTLY FOR YARD WASTE - PLEASE DO NOT PUT ITEMS OTHER THAN GRASS CLIPPINGS AND YARD WASTE (SUCH AS LEAVES, TWIGS AND SMALL BRANCHES) IN THESE CONTAINERS.

Disposing of Paint and Paint Thinner

1. For a small amount of paint:

a. Remove lid b. Let paint can sit in a well-ventilated area until liquid is dry to a solid state.

2. When dealing with larger quantities of paint, or to speed up the drying process:

- Stir in an absorbent material such as kitty litter or paper.
- Let the can sit in a well ventilated area until liquid is in a solid or almost solid state.
- Place the can in sealed bag; dispose of in garbage dumpster for collection.

Another Option:

For large quantities of paint take an old piece of carpet, lay it out, and pour the paint on the carpet. Allow the paint to dry completely, roll up the carpet and dispose of it at the landfill.



Paint Thinner

1. If there is less than 1/8 amount left in can, leave the can open in a well-ventilated area to allow vapors to disappear. Dispose of can in a bag for collection. 2. For more than 1/8 amount in a can, pour remaining paint thinner into a glass bowl; place it away from children and pets. Allow the liquid to evaporate entirely. Wrap the crystal remnants in paper and place in the trash.

Responsible Pet Ownership begins with YOU!

and, it's the law...

Please remember to keep your pets' Rabies and other vaccinations current, protect pets from harsh weather conditions, make sure they have plenty of clean drinking water, obtain a license annually and don't allow pets to run at large.

Please keep in mind that your pet can succumb to frostbite and hypothermia. It's important to provide a warm, dry shelter for your pet to get out of the elements (by law a domestic animal must be provided with shelter). Remove snow between your pet's toes to prevent frostbite and make sure they have plenty of fresh drinking water at all times. Keep pets away from hazards such as antifreeze and lit candles!

Cold Weather Pet Care Tips

- Thoroughly wipe off your pet's legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws and fur.
- Massaging petroleum jelly or other paw protectants into paw pads before going outside can help protect from salt and chemical agents. Booties provide even more coverage and can also prevent sand and salt from getting lodged between bare toes and causing irritation. Use pet-friendly

ice melts whenever possible.

- Remember, if it's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your pet, so keep your animals inside. If left outdoors, pets can become disoriented, lost or injured. In addition, don't leave pets alone in a car during cold weather, as cars can act as refrigerators that hold in the cold and cause hypothermia.
- Certain plants can be toxic to your pet such as poinsettias, ferns, lilies and more. Foods such as dark chocolate, nuts, raisins and others can also be dangerous for your pet if ingested.

-ASPCA

Energy Education 101

The Path of Electricity: From Generation to Home

by NMPP Energy

Flipping on a light switch is simple enough. Opening the fridge to grab a cold beverage is a routine, common convenience.

Grabbing a hot coffee to start our morning is done without much thought.

These seemingly mundane, daily chores seem extremely simple – but delivering electricity to the products that makes the light come on, the beverage cold and coffee hot is anything but simple.

Delivering electricity from where it's initially generated to where it is consumed relies on a complex maze of interconnected transmission and distribution lines, substations, transformers and other equipment.

When thinking about the path of electricity, a simple analogy might be a long-distance car trip. The start point is typically a large power plant and the end point is a home/business. The “road trip” is coordinated and regulated by third-party regional entities, depending on where the “road trip” takes place, but that is an Energy Education 101 article for a future newsletter. For this article we'll stick with the basic path electricity—from generation to where it is used.

Generation to Transmission

When electricity is generated, it leaves the generation source and travels to a step-up substation. These substations increase the voltage, or electric energy pressure, so it can move long distances over transmission lines. Voltage relates to pressure – the higher the voltage, the longer electric energy can travel. It's similar to water traveling through a garden hose – narrowing the opening increases the pressure causing the water to travel faster.

The step-up substation typically increases the voltage to 345,000 volts for electricity to begin its journey on the high-voltage transmission system. These transmission lines can be identified by their large steel struc-

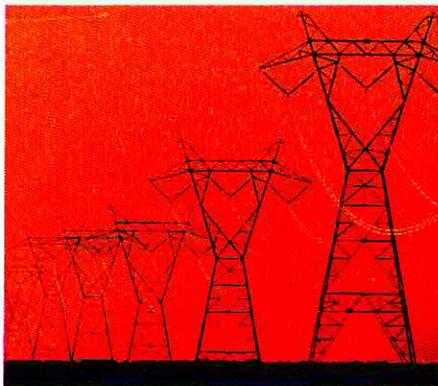
tures. Using our “road trip” analogy – these lines can be thought of as the “Interstates” for electricity travel.

Stepping Down Voltage to Local Substations

After traveling along high-voltage transmission lines, electricity is then delivered to local substations where it is stepped down to a lower voltage (34,500 to 115,000 volts) so it can be used by large industrial users, which need higher voltage power than homes or businesses to run heavy machinery.

From there, electricity is stepped down even more by transformers in neighborhood substations and on electric distribution system line poles so it can be delivered to homes and businesses through local distribution electric lines.

The act of simply flipping on a lightswitch or grabbing a cold/hot beverage is simple – but it's amazingly complex when you really think of what all it takes to have electricity delivered to where we need it when we need it. Not to mention, that the whole process takes place instantaneously in real-time, 24 hours of every day, all year round.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION LINES

Transmission lines and electric distribution lines both deliver electricity but at different stages in the process:

Transmission lines are the regional high voltage “Interstates” of electricity carrying electricity long distances.

Electric distribution lines are the local utility electric lines you see in neighborhoods that carry lower voltage electricity to homes and businesses.

Public Power Line Safety

By the City of Gering Electric Department

Winter is just around the corner and that means hazardous road conditions and colder temperatures are in the near future. There are many things you can do to prepare yourself for the upcoming conditions.

First let's talk about the hazardous road conditions. The roads are icy and you lose control of your vehicle and slide into a power pole. What should you do? Unless your vehicle is on fire or there are other life threatening circumstances do not get out of the vehicle. There could be powerlines on the ground or on your car that still have dangerous voltage running through them. Leaving the vehicle could create a difference in potential and you may make a path to ground for the electrical circuits. This would result in being electrocuted. So if you hit a pole stay in the car and wait for emergency crews to show up and further direct you. Also do not let anybody approach the vehicle as they could also be electrocuted. If for whatever reason the vehicle is not safe to stay in here is what you need to do. Open the door, make sure not to touch the ground, look around to make sure you won't jump into any power lines. Once you've checked your surroundings jump from the vehicle and land with both feet together. Now keep jumping with both feet together until you are a safe distance from the accident. Do not return to the vehicle until the electric utility says it is safe.

The next topic to discuss is the colder weather. With winter storms comes heavy snow and high winds that cause damage to power lines. In the event your power goes out you need to be prepared while crews work to restore the power. Keep plenty of blankets on hand and try to dress warm if your power goes out because your power may be out for several hours. You could also call friends or family to see if they have power and go stay with them while power is being restored.

Another thing to keep in mind with colder temperatures is space heaters. Only use them when you need them and never leave them on when you are not home. Also do not use extension cords with space heaters or plug multiple space heaters into one outlet. All of the things listed are huge fire hazards. If you are using extension cords for anything, please remember to uncoil them completely. Leaving an extension cord coiled up while plugged in is also a fire hazard. Please be responsible with space heaters.

Have a safe winter and if you have any questions please contact your local utility.