THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY OF GERING KENO COMMITTEE
August 6, 2025

A regular meeting of the City of Gering Keno Committee was held in open session at 4:30 p.m. in the Gering City Hall Conference Room at 1025 P Street, Gering, NE, on August 6, 2025. Present were Committee Members Darrell Bentley, Donna Engleman, Matt Janecek, Don Kugler and Amy Doll. Absent: Julie Morrison. Also, present were City Administrator Pat Heath, City Treasurer Lyndsey Mathews, and Secretary Carol Martin.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Star-Herald, which is the designated method of giving notice. All proceedings hereafter were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

A. Call to Order and Roll Call
Chairman Darrell Bentley called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

B. Open Meetings Act - Neb. Rev. Stat. Chapter 84, Article 14, As required by State Law, public bodies shall make available at least one current copy of the Open Meetings Act posted in the meeting room. Agenda items may be moved up or down on the agenda at the discretion of the Chairman. Additions may not be made to this agenda less than 24 hours before the beginning of the meeting unless they are considered under this section of the agenda and the Keno Committee determines that the matter requires emergency action.

C. Approval of May 7, 2025 Keno Committee Meeting Minutes

> **Motion by Matt Janecek to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2025 Keno Committee meeting. Seconded by Don Kugler. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Engleman, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.**

D. Keno Fund Financial Report

Lyndsey Mathews, City Treasurer, presented the Keno financials as of June 30, 2025. The following figures were reported:

- Pooled Cash Balance: -$471,839.00
- U.S. Bank Keno Account: $250,515.00
- Pooled Investments: $1,515,383.00

Darrell expressed concern regarding the negative pooled cash balance. Lyndsey acknowledged the issue and assured the group that a plan is in place to address it.

She reported that the total available cash is $1,127,595.00, with $166,463.00 in outstanding obligations. Lyndsey noted that some requests have expired—either because the full amount was used and no additional funds were needed, or because no further requests were made within a year. She added that some additional requests from this fiscal year have also expired. As of now, the total amount still outstanding to be paid is $59,990.00.

Lyndsey explained that approximately $312,000.00 remains outstanding for the Endowment portion for the pickleball project. All payments for Keno requests are made from the pooled cash account, rather than from separate accounts for each fund. She noted that instead of maintaining 13 separate bank accounts, the City uses a single pooled cash account to manage fund activity. This structure is what led to the current negative balance of $471,000.00. Of that amount, $312,000.00 is still owed back to the Endowment, while the remaining $159,000.00 reflects community betterment funds that have already been paid out for requests.

Lyndsey noted that there is approximately $1,515,000.00 currently held in investments. She explained that, in September 2022, a resolution was approved allowing the Endowment Fund to drop below $1,000,000.00 in order to support the pickleball project. However, due to the transition between Liz's departure and her own onboarding, the replenishment of those funds was never completed. To address this, Lyndsey recommended transferring $500,000.00 from the investment account. This would fully repay the $312,000.00 still owed to the Endowment, and replenish the Keno pooled cash account, turning the current -$471,000.00 balance into a positive balance of approximately $29,000.00.

She stated that following this transfer, the investment balance would be approximately $1,015,000.00. A CD is set to mature on August 29, and along with available funds in the money market account, the investment balance can be fully restored by August 30. The CD will be allowed to mature as scheduled to ensure full interest earnings.

Lyndsey also suggested that moving forward, any time pooled cash trends into a negative balance, it should be replenished from the U.S. Bank Keno account or through discussion of another CD. This approach would ensure continued transparency while keeping the Endowment balance above $1,000,000.00, with all obligations fully repaid.

Pat Heath explained that when the pickleball project was approved, it was understood that the Endowment Fund would temporarily fall below $1,000,000.00, and a council resolution was passed to authorize that. However, due to the staff transition between Liz's departure and Lyndsey's arrival, the planned replenishment was never carried out. Pat emphasized that the Endowment will not actually drop below $1 million, but rather about $1 million— within $15,000.00—but the necessary funds will be restored. Once the cash is returned, all accounts will show positive balances, and the Endowment will remain at or above $1,000,000.00.

Lyndsey added that this approach will provide a clearer financial picture, avoiding the appearance of a large negative deficit in the pooled cash account. Pat agreed, stating that the only negative balance visible should reflect outstanding public betterment funds that have been approved and are still due to be paid.

Darrell noted that the Endowment currently has over $1 million, and if that amount continues to grow, the City could consider placing additional funds into a new CD or another investment for future use. Lyndsey agreed and explained that the pooled cash account only receives revenue when funds are transferred from either the U.S. Bank Keno account or the investment account. By state statute, all Keno revenue must be deposited directly into the U.S. Bank Keno account, which is maintained separately for that purpose. She added that the investment account has not been touched and continues to earn interest through its existing CDs. While they may need to make transfers from it more frequently going forward, Lyndsey believes doing so would provide a clearer financial picture, especially since the negative pooled cash balance has been an ongoing concern.

Lyndsey reported that $38,412.00 in revenue was brought in this quarter. In conclusion, Pat asked whether the group should take a formal vote to authorize the $500,000.00 transfer, and Darrell agreed, emphasizing the importance of restoring financial clarity and placing the funds where they belong.

Motion by Matt Janecek to approve the recommendation to make the pooled Cash Whole and complete the transfer of the Endowment Payback of $312,375.83 as well as replenish the Pooled Cash account to positive by transferring a total of $500,000.00 from the Investments account. Seconded by Don Kugler. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Engleman, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

Darrell stated the Committee needs to keep in mind what was brought in this quarter and that there is still one more quarter.

E. Review and discuss applications for Keno Funds

<u>Information taken directly from Keno Application submitted by each applicant:</u>

1) **Empowering Families – $5,000.00**

As part of Empowering Families' education pillar is the Multicultural Youth Leadership Conference (MYLC). This year will be the 27 annual Multicultural Youth Leadership Conference. Held over two days, this conference consists of two separate daytime sessions geared towards middle and high school students and an evening community event that is free and open to the public.

Last year our event reached over 150 community members and 225 students. Students have shared with us the following impact they gained from keynote speakers that have attended this conference:

- "I don't usually share my Native culture with others but after hearing **Notorious Cree** take pride in his culture, it makes me more proud of my own."
- "She **[Shiloh LeBeau]** was really inspiring. The fact that she didn't give up gives me hope."

This conference provides an opportunity for our Panhandle community to learn about other cultures and experiences (as well as themselves) through informational sessions, community-building activities, and inspirational keynote speakers. Session topics range from leadership and career development to education and physical/mental well-being.

This will take place on September 24 and 25, 2025 at the Gering Civic Center. Our community event will occur on September 24th at 6PM also at the Gering Civic Center. Empowering Families is seeking $5,000 from Keno Funds to cover the speaking fee of the keynote speaker.

This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Julia Garica, is a world-renowned psychologist, who speaks to the core of our generation's most complex issues. Through stories and science, she provides an interactive space to have what we innately desire most: Connection. Her speaking fee is approximately $10k.

2) Gering Public Library - $2,450.00

Explain in detail what the Keno Funds will be used for:
The library would like to purchase a cooking-grade demonstration table with a mirror. Owning a demonstration table will allow the library to host cooking programs and let the audience see how the food is being prepared. During our Sushi & Sake program in February most of the 34 attendees were unable to see how the sushi was being made, because it was done on a standard table. A table with a mirror would allow the participants in the back to watch the process in the mirror. In the last month, two other people have approached the library about doing a cooking class, one on sourdough and one on cookie decorating. UNL Extension also has proposed cooking programs at the library. Another sushi demonstration is also in the works. This table would be useful in all of these instances.

Owning a demonstration table with a food-grade surface will be a useful (and safe) tool for food prep classes. We would also be willing to lend it to other local entities, for example, the Legacy of the Plains Museum could use it for a demonstration of how to make local ethnic foods at a festival. Other uses might include demonstrating beading techniques and use by presenters at the Harvest Festival, and use by University of Nebraska Extension as well.

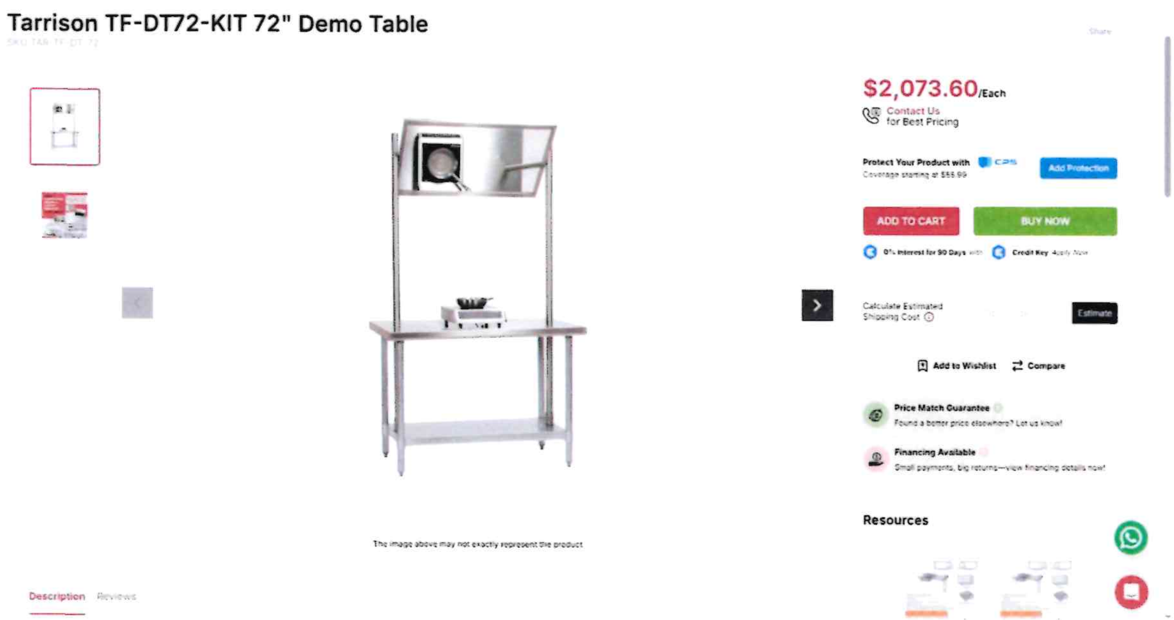
Do you receive matching funds with the support you receive from the city?
The City of Gering provides the primary funding for the library. The Friends of the Gering Library provide assistance with some programming expenses, such as the purchase of prizes. The Gering Library Foundation has provided supplemental funding for performers, but they are beginning to focus on other library related projects.

Describe how your organization impacts the community:
The Gering Library has a lively adult programming schedule. An average of 228 adults per month attended library programs in the last year. These programs have covered a wide variety of topics including train safety, Mah Jongg, gardening, crafts, wine tasting, book groups, and an Elvis impersonator. The extensive selection of programs means that everyone can find something of interest at our library.

Gering Public Library is a learning and exploration center for all residents of the community. We promote lifelong learning, with the knowledge that free access to materials and services improves the quality of life in communities. We serve people by providing educational, informational, personal, social, and historical services and materials. Our library serves people of every age, gender, ethnic background and socioeconomic status, thereby empowering them to become better citizens, engaged in their communities.

City of Gering Public Library
Request for Keno Funds

Quotes:
We contacted Eakes Office Solutions in Scottsbluff and Nebraska Total Office in Alliance. Both were unable to find a supplier who carried demonstration tables. The image and price below is of a 72-inch table (without shipping added), whereas the vendor we chose had a 60-inch table, which will be easier for us to store and move. We were looking for a table with a food-grade surface that would be portable. Many similarly priced demonstration tables were heavier but had laminate surfaces, which are not likely to be the same quality, or portability.



3) Project Prom of Western Nebraska - $10,000.00

Subject: Request for Support: Project Prom of Western Nebraska
Dear Sirs,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Kimberly Soule. I am reaching out on behalf of Project Prom of Western Nebraska, an initiative dedicated to making prom dreams come true for students across our region.

Our mission is to provide free dresses, tuxedos, suits, and accessories to students who might otherwise miss out on this memorable occasion due to financial barriers. Prom is more than just a dance—it's a milestone that helps build confidence and lifelong memories. By offering these items at no cost, we hope to foster a sense of inclusion, self-worth, and community support.

This year, our giveaway event is scheduled for April 2026. We are seeking financial contributions to help cover essential expenses such as: • Radio advertisements to spread the word to students and families across Western Nebraska • Supplies like mirrors, banners, and fitting materials to create a welcoming and organized event space. We also need a storage space to store our supplies from year to year.

Your support would make a significant impact in helping us reach more students and provide a positive experience for everyone who walks through our doors. Any contribution, large or small, will directly support this cause and will be recognized in our promotional materials, social media, and event signage.

We deeply appreciate your consideration and generosity in helping make prom possible for all students in our community. Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Soule/President Project Prom of Western Nebraska

Discussion regarding Keno Fund Requests:

Motion by Amy Doll to recommend $2,500.00 for Empowering Families. Seconded by Matt Janecek. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: Engelman. Motion carried.

Motion by Donna Engleman to recommend $2,450.00 for Gering Public Library. Seconded by Don Kugler. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Engleman, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Amy Doll to recommend tabling Project Prom of Western Nebraska because it does not fit the criteria yet, they need to set up their bank account for 501(c)(3), an EIN number, show what other donations they have received and what the Keno funds will be used for. Seconded by Matt Janecek. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": Engleman. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

F. Donna Engleman – Request to discuss the future of the committee

Reflecting on her 32 years of involvement, Donna raised the topic of establishing formal By-Laws for the committee. She asked that a meeting be scheduled to discuss the development of these By-Laws. In response, Darrell stated that this issue had already been addressed in May and that no meeting would be scheduled for this purpose. He added that all necessary operational requirements were already documented. Donna disagreed, emphasizing the distinction between requirements and formal By-Laws. She reiterated her desire to see the committee governed by a formal set of rules, including a mission statement, meeting schedules, and a list of officers.

Pat asked Donna to clarify her concerns regarding the operation of the committee. Donna responded that there needed to be a clearly defined mission statement—whether it aligns with the City of Gering or is uniquely tailored to the committee—and that key details such as officer roles and meeting dates should be formally codified in By-Laws. She emphasized that she was not seeking to change the process, but to ensure clarity and structure through formal documentation.

Pat responded by stating that the application process already includes deadlines and that the Keno Committee has operated under the same structure since 1995. He explained that typically there is a recommendation to the Mayor or the Mayor chooses a committee member. This is similar to the process used for the Planning Commission and Plumbing Board; Library Board is a little different. He stated that the Mayor welcomes input from the Committee or someone who may be recommended to the City. Most of the time that recommendation is accepted. He added that there is often a lack of people who what to serve on a committee.

Donna maintained that both requirements and By-Laws are necessary. Drawing from her past experience as Secretary of the Keno Committee, she recalled that in earlier years, the Secretary handled all correspondence. There was someone that took minutes using shorthand and were transcribed and typed up for the next meeting. However, over time, she stated she was no longer permitted to take roll call or vote and eventually the correspondence piece. She felt put aside, stating she was never once asked to contribute meaningfully as a committee member or officer over her 32 years of service. Donna shared that she felt like a token presence and expressed deep personal hurt, particularly recalling a moment when she was told someone was "taking Darrell's place" during an illness. She questioned why she held the title of Secretary if she had no duties and suggested eliminating the position if it was not going to be used.

Donna brought written notes to the meeting, hoping to review and suggest changes to a potential set of By-Laws. She proposed replacing the term "President" with "Chairman" and introducing a "Co-Chairman" role to ensure continuity in the Chairman's absence. Additionally, she recommended the introduction of a "Sergeant-at-Arms" to be referenced in three separate places. It was noted that the city website refers to the committee leader as a "Chairman" and believed there might already be a Vice Chairman. Donna asked if a formal document existed confirming this structure. Pat replied that appointments were made by City Council and that Darrell had been named Chairman. He thought—but could not confirm—that Julie was appointed as Co-Chairman.

Donna responded by again questioning the necessity of the Secretary role, noting her lack of involvement despite decades of service. Pat clarified that there was no Vice Chairman currently but agreed that one could be added if needed. Donna reiterated the importance of having both a Chairman and Vice Chairman and asked why the committee could not have formal By-Laws. Darrell questioned the need, pointing out that the committee had functioned effectively for over 30 years without them. Donna restated that some guidance was still necessary. Pat added that committees such as the Planning Commission and Plumbing Board do not have By-Laws either, as they are all established by City Council resolution.

Donna raised concerns regarding communication practices among committee members. She provided an example involving a prior meeting with individuals such as Ferguson and Cozad. According to Donna, by the time the committee convened, the matter appeared "cut and dry," implying that discussions had occurred outside of the official meeting, leaving some members without context or information. She emphasized that any issues or questions regarding committee matters should remain within the board and not be addressed individually outside of the group. Donna stressed that all members should rely on the minutes and shared documentation to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Donna expressed concern that only a select few individuals were engaging with applicants or outside parties prior to meetings, giving them an informational advantage. She stated this was unfair to the rest of the committee, who entered discussions without the same background. Her position was that discussions should remain internal so decisions could be made based on shared information, accessible to all members equally.

Darrell responded by stating that over his 30 years on the committee, he had always received application materials at the same time as everyone else. He explained that if he had questions, he would reach out to the applicant or party involved so he could speak knowledgeably at the meeting. Donna responded reiterating that Darrell is only one member of a larger committee and that decisions and inquiries should be shared among the full group. She stated that when one member seeks out information independently, it creates imbalance and undermines transparency.

Darrell asked whether she believed he should not be allowed to seek clarification outside of meetings. Donna replied that she didn't think so, reinforcing her position that all discussion and clarification should occur during committee meetings so everyone operates with the same understanding. She added that committee members should review the application and minutes beforehand, then bring their questions to the full group during the meeting for open discussion.

Pat addressed the concerns by comparing the committee's practices to those of the City Council. He explained that council members often reach out to individuals on the agenda—such as applicants for zoning changes—prior to meetings in order to better understand the issue and make informed decisions. Pat acknowledged that due to time constraints in public meetings, sometimes five minutes is not enough to gather all necessary context, so follow-up is common. He emphasized that this approach allows council members to be more knowledgeable and that it should not be any different for the Keno Committee or the Planning Commission.

Donna clarified that her comments were not directed at City Council procedures, but specifically at the committee's internal operations. Pat maintained that gathering additional information is a legitimate and necessary part of the process, as long as committee members do not pre-determine or announce their vote prior to the official presentation and discussion. Darrell added that members should not be "tutoring" applicants on what to say. Donna responded that individuals who reach out privately often have an advantage in discussions, as the rest of the committee is left without any responses or context for the project under consideration. Pat clarified that all committee members have the right to contact applicants to ask questions, but they must not disclose how they intend to vote beforehand. He reiterated that forming a decision prior to the official presentation is the only restriction.

At this point, Donna expressed that it seemed members would continue doing what they had always done and were not open to making changes. Darrell responded by saying that the committee would not simply "do what they want," but rather continue with the processes that have been in place for years. Donna stated that not all past practices have been correct and expressed concern that meetings often lack structure—such as calling for old business, new business, or having a motion to adjourn. Darrell asked Pat if City Council meetings require a motion to adjourn or if they simply end. Pat confirmed that, like council meetings, committee meetings must be adjourned with a formal motion and vote. He added that discussion must be limited to agenda items, and nothing outside the agenda (new business) can be discussed during official meetings.

Donna stressed that the committee's agendas are often incomplete and should include all necessary topics. Pat responded that the committee's agenda mirrors the City Council's format and contains all appropriate items. The conversation turned again to committee structure. Donna noted that there should be three designated officers and reiterated the importance of having a Vice Chairman. She expressed understanding that the Mayor can help count the votes. She stated that while the Mayor recommends who will serve on the Keno Committee, the structure and selection process should be formalized in By-Laws.

Pat explained that the Mayor typically appoints someone and then brings the selection before the City Council for approval. The majority of the time, it is a person recommended to him. Donna continued, voicing concerns that in some cases, the Mayor may vote according to what the City or staff wants, rather than independently. Pat clarified that while that can happen, the Mayor does not always vote in alignment with City preferences. He added that if the committee had a vacancy and wanted to suggest someone, they could agree on a candidate among themselves and present that suggestion—outside of a formal meeting—for consideration.

Donna reiterated that this lack of structure was exactly why the committee needed formal By-Laws. Darrell again questioned the necessity, pointing out that no other city committees have By-Laws. Pat confirmed this, explaining that the newly formed Land Bank Committee is the only exception, due to its governance by interlocal agreement and state statute. Donna asked whether the City itself had By-Laws. Pat responded that the City operates under ordinances and resolutions, not By-Laws. He explained that the Keno Committee was created by a City Council resolution, which outlines how funds are awarded and how the committee is structured.

Donna concluded by stating she would remain on the committee through February 2026, but stressed that changes are needed, as things are not being conducted in a way she feels is correct.

G. OPEN COMMENT: Discussion or action by Keno Committee regarding unscheduled business will not take place. This section is for citizen comment only. None.

H. Adjourn

Motion by Amy Doll to adjourn. Seconded by Matt Janecek. There was no discussion. "AYES": Bentley, Engleman, Janecek, Kugler and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Morrison. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Darrell Bentley

Darrell Bentley, Chairman

Carol Martin

Carol Martin, Secretary