

THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY OF GERING KENO COMMITTEE

February 4, 2026

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 February 4, 2026. Present were Committee Members Darrell Bentley, Matt Janecek, Don Kugler, Julie Morrison and Amy Doll. Absent: Donna Engleman. Also, present were City Administrator Pat Heath, Mayor Kent Ewing, 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 November 5, 2025 Keno Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion by Morrison to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2025 Keno Committee meeting. Seconded by Kugler. There was no discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler, Morrison and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Engleman. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

D. Keno Fund Financial Report

Lyndsey Mathews, City Treasurer, reported the following balances as of December 31, 2025:

- Pooled Cash, US Bank Keno, and Pooled Investments: \$1,351,081.22

Outstanding Obligations:

- Taxes to be paid: \$9,079.17
- Deferred Commissions: \$78,718.37
- Obligations not yet paid: \$64,668.82

She noted there are carryovers from the prior year (May) that have not yet been met (she mentioned they are highlighted in blue).

After accounting for these obligations, the available cash balance is \$1,198,614.86. For the first quarter of fiscal year 2025/2026, \$48,129.64 has been received in Keno funds, that is the City share.

The total cash available without accessing the endowment fund is \$155,463.42, that is with the pooled cash and US Bank Keno funds less obligations to pay.

Darrell asked if the City would wait until the end of May to put the money back into the fund if it has not been requested. Lyndsey said that at the end of May or the first part of June, the money could be put back since it has not been requested. Pat said they would do it again at the end of August.

Darrell inquired about businesses that are no longer operating and whether they could be removed from the ledger. Lyndsey explained that the ledger dates back to the program's beginning, which is why those businesses remain listed. She noted that their combined balance totals \$135,000.00, representing funds previously collected from them and contributing to the overall total.

Lyndsey suggested creating a new ledger beginning with fiscal year 2026 and moving forward, while categorizing earlier records as prior years. Darrell responded that if the businesses remain listed, they should be clearly identified as prior years in case of future inquiries.

Pat recommended keeping the businesses on the list but shading the corresponding columns to distinguish them. Darrell added that maintaining those records demonstrates what Keno has contributed to Gering over the years.

Pat reported that the League of Nebraska Municipalities is proposing a reduction in the Keno tax paid to the state from 2% to 1%, citing revenue losses in some communities due to racetracks and casinos impacting Keno sales. The League hopes the reduction would help offset those losses but is uncertain whether the proposal will pass and expects to know more at the next meeting. Darrell commented that it would be preferable to tax games of skill instead.

Pat noted there is also a bill proposing a 20% increase in the tax on games of skill. He stated that games of skill are currently taxed at 5%, which is the same rate applied to slot machines. Julie asked whether the City receives any revenue from games of skill. Pat responded it does not; he explained that approximately two years ago the state eliminated municipalities' authority to tax games of skill and instead imposed a state-level tax, with all revenue going to the state.

Darrell expressed his appreciation for the committee's stewardship of the citizens of Gering's Keno funds, stating he is proud of the committee's work over the years. He believes they have been responsible stewards and that many positive initiatives have been accomplished without impacting the general fund. Pat added that the Council appears to share that view, noting there has been little debate regarding the committee's funding decisions. Darrell remarked that he was surprised that some organizations that did not receive funding did not approach their Council members.

Darrell also observed that in some past years, the annual Keno revenue received by the City of Gering matched the amount collected in property taxes. He noted that current Keno revenues are significantly lower than property tax revenues and clarified that the figures discussed represent gross revenue spent on Keno.

E. Review and discuss applications for Keno Funds

Information taken directly from Keno Application submitted by each applicant

- 1) WyoBraska Extreme Cheer - \$15,000.00**
Mari Blanco

How WyoBraska Extreme Cheer Positively Impacts the Community

1. Builds Confident, Strong Youth

WyoBraska Extreme Cheer gives kids and teens a safe, structured place to grow. Athletes learn discipline, resilience, teamwork, and leadership skills they carry into school, friendships, and adulthood. Confidence grows when they discover what they're capable of, and that translates into a more positive, motivated youth population within the community.

2. Creates a Safe and Supportive Environment

Many local kids lack consistent extracurricular outlets. WyoBraska provides a positive space after school and on weekends, keeping athletes active, supervised, and surrounded by mentors who genuinely care about their well-being.

3. Encourages Healthy Lifestyles

Cheerleading promotes physical fitness, coordination, and mental wellness. Athletes learn the importance of taking care of their bodies, practicing regularly, and setting goals and habits that influence their long-term health and reduce risky behaviors.

4. Strengthens Community Pride

Whether performing at local events, competing in regional competitions, or supporting local businesses, WyoBraska athletes become visible representatives of the community. Their accomplishments bring excitement, pride, and a sense of unity to the area.

5. Creates Positive Role Models

Coaches and older athletes act as role models for younger children. This mentorship builds a culture of respect, responsibility, and encouragement throughout the program and inspires kids to become leaders in school and beyond.

6. Supports Local Businesses and Partnerships

Through sponsorships, events, fundraisers, and travel, the gym creates opportunities for local businesses to gain exposure and feel connected to youth development. These partnerships strengthen the local economy and build long-lasting community relationships.

7. Provides Opportunities for Children Who Otherwise Wouldn't Have Them

You offer scholarship options, fundraising support, and flexible opportunities so that cheerleading is accessible regardless of a family's financial situation. This inclusivity ensures that ALL kids have the chance to participate, grow, and succeed.

8. Encourages Community Involvement and Volunteerism

Athletes often participate in charity events, parades, community gatherings, and outreach efforts. This instills a spirit of service and shows young people the value of giving back.

9. Helps Reduce Youth Out-Migration

Small towns often struggle to keep young families engaged. A program like WyoBraska Extreme Cheer gives families one more reason to stay, put down roots, and invest in the community.

10. Promotes Empowerment, Diversity, and Positivity

Cheerleading welcomes all skill levels, personalities, and backgrounds. The environment celebrates personal growth and teamwork, creating a culture that radiates positivity and acceptance throughout the community.

2) Stand Up & Play - \$20,000.00

Cindy & Dan Dickinson

Stand Up and Play Foundation

Gering NE Chapter

Monument Shadows Golf Course has become one of the most beautiful destination golf courses in Nebraska. With the wonderful exposure of High School State golf tournaments and numerous local events, it is truly a gem in Western Nebraska. We established a local Stand Up and Play Chapter to provide an opportunity to individuals with limited mobility to continue or begin playing golf. The mission of Stand up and Play is to give wheelchair users and those with mobility

challenges the chance to stand up again and experience the freedom to play sports. Our goal is to have the first VertaCat Adaptive Mobility cart at Monument Shadows Golf Course for golfers of all ages and abilities by Spring 2026. This cart would be available to all veterans, support organizations, rehab centers, youth and individuals with special needs.

We became interested in this project because Dan, who is a bi-lateral below the knee amputee, has enjoyed the game of golf for many years without assistance. As his neuropathy progresses, his ability to play golf has diminished. We recognize that others experience similar challenges however, they still have the desire to play golf for as long as possible. The physical therapy and positive psychological benefits a disabled person achieve by standing, to actually participate in sports and recreation, has an enormous impact on their lives. It is our desire to provide access for all who want to enjoy our beautiful golf course. Because there are a limited number of golf courses with mobility carts in Nebraska, it will definitely become a destination for travelers seeking adaptive recreation opportunities. It will be the first mobility cart at a Western Nebraska golf course!

This is truly a game changer for individuals who are unable to play golf due to physical limitations. This is an opportunity to resume the social and physical benefits of golfing in beautiful Western Nebraska. We have contacted the Veterans Administration and VFW regarding the use of a mobility cart for the Veterans they serve. In addition, we also contacted Camp Scott Children's camp, as the cart is adaptable for children as well as adults.

The VertaCat mobility cart will be kept at Monument Shadows Golf Course and made available to those needing assistance. A support team from the Stand Up and Play Foundation will deliver the cart to the golf course and conduct extensive training with our local chapter members and golf course staff. This cart is powered by a lithium battery and is targeted to last approximately 10 years with proper maintenance. Since the cart will be kept at the City's golf course, it should be insured by the City of Gering.

We are in the process of soliciting sponsorships and donations to help with the purchase and maintenance of the cart. It is essential that we also receive assistance from the City of Gering. As with all major sponsors, the City's logo to be displayed on the cart and recognition will be in all literature. To date, we have received \$4,000 from the Stand Up and Play Foundation; \$1,000 from B & C Steel; \$250 from Sandberg Implement; \$500 from the VFW; \$500 from the DAV; \$7,000 grant from Scotts Bluff County Tourism and \$3875.00 from individual donations.

Your support is extremely important to mobility challenged individuals who want the opportunity to enjoy the great game of golf.

Thank you for your consideration.
Dan and Cindy Dickinson
Stand Up and Play, Gering NE

3) Gering Martial Arts - \$5,000.00
Erik Nemnich

Gering Martial Arts
Sponsorship Request & Community Impact Overview
Program Overview

Our martial arts program is dedicated to strengthening the community by providing accessible training that promotes discipline, confidence, physical health, and personal responsibility. More

than a sport, martial arts serves as a proven tool for youth development, violence prevention, and overall community well-being. Classes are available for kids age 3 and up.

Community Need

Many families—especially youth and at-risk individuals—lack access to structured, positive activities that promote both physical and mental health. Our program addresses this gap by offering a safe, supportive environment that builds character, leadership, and resilience.

Community Impact

Through structured martial arts training, our program delivers measurable benefits:

- **Youth Development & Prevention:** Provides a safe after-school alternative that reduces risky behaviors while reinforcing discipline, respect, and goal-setting.
- **Mental Health & Confidence:** Helps participants manage stress, build self-esteem, and develop emotional control.
- **Physical Health & Wellness:** Encourages lifelong fitness, healthy habits, and improved coordination.
- **Violence Reduction & Safety:** Emphasizes self-control, conflict de-escalation, and practical self-defense skills.
- **Community Connection:** Creates a diverse, inclusive environment where students mentor one another and form strong social bonds.
- **Leadership & Character Building:** Instills values such as accountability, integrity, and service that extend beyond the training floor.

Use of Sponsorship Funds

Sponsorship support will be used to:

- Provide scholarships and reduced-cost memberships for low-income youth and families
- Fund community outreach programs (anti-bullying, women's self-defense, youth mentorship)
- Provide students with their uniforms and sparring equipment.

Sponsor Benefits

- Recognition as a community supporter (website, social media, in-facility signage, events)
- Positive brand alignment with youth development, safety, and wellness
- Opportunities for community engagement and partnership events
-

Closing

By sponsoring our martial arts program, you are investing in safer streets, healthier individuals, and stronger future leaders. Together, we can make a lasting, positive impact on our community.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Erik Nemnich, Owner of Gering Martial Arts 308-641-5936

About Gering Martial Arts

Gering Martial Arts is a community-focused martial arts school based in Gering, Nebraska, offering high-quality martial arts training to students of all ages in the Scottsbluff-Gering area. The school provides a range of classes designed to develop not just physical skills, but also character, confidence, and personal discipline. Programs include traditional martial arts training such as **Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do**, taught under the guidance of experienced instructors and done in a safe, welcoming training environment. Gering Martial Arts serves children as young as age three through adults, making it a **multi-generational hub** for personal growth, self-defense education, and community connection. With a focus on building life skills—such as respect, self-control, perseverance, and teamwork—students gain confidence both on and off the training floor. The facility's emphasis on structured learning and positive mentorship helps cultivate healthier, more resilient community member.

By offering accessible martial arts education and fostering an inclusive, supportive atmosphere, Gering Martial Arts plays an important role in promoting **wellness, character development, and community engagement** in the region.

Gering Martial Arts was founded in **2023** in response to a growing lack of extracurricular opportunities for children in the Gering and Scottsbluff area beyond what local schools were able to provide. Recognizing that many existing youth programs in the community were struggling, closing, or failing to meet the developmental needs of younger children, the school was created to offer a stable, well-structured alternative focused on long-term growth and positive outcomes. The program was intentionally designed to provide **age-appropriate systems and curriculum for young children**, emphasizing not only physical activity but also emotional development, confidence, discipline, and social skills. To ensure high-quality instruction, Erik Nemnich completed multiple training courses in **child development and effective teaching methods for young learners**, allowing the program to be tailored specifically to the needs of early childhood and youth education.

4) High Plains Auto Club - \$3,500.00
Mike Peterson

(Per application): One of the bigger tourism events for our county and city. Many of our entrants use the event weekend as part of their vacation. While they are here, they visit Legacy of the Plains Museum, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Chimney Rock, Rebecca Winters Grave Site, etc. Both cities benefit from the car show. Entrants tell us how beautiful our valley is and how friendly our residences are. It brings economy into the valley with motels, food, gas, and shopping, along with the campgrounds being full. The past few years there have been entrants from seven other states besides Nebraska. We do a car cruise Friday afternoon so the entrants can see our valley and all we have to offer here. Our show and shine is held at Five Rocks. We also give several scholarships for students in auto tech and welding.

Discussion regarding Keno Fund Requests:

WyoBraska Extreme Cheer

Amy stated that the application was prioritized and does not have to be, but it indicates that the project expenditures serve individuals located in Gering; however, she believes they are not actually based in Gering, but has Gering kids. Amy added that while the organization may have children from Gering participating, she does not feel the project qualifies as community betterment.

Julie commented that if the casino comes to Gering and reduces Keno funds, the committee will need to be especially mindful of how funds are allocated. She questioned what truly constitutes community betterment, and stating that serving three or four people does not meet community betterment and that some participants may only come to Gering once or twice a year.

Darrell responded that projects must meet the definition of community betterment but noted that funds can be used outside the immediate area if money is available and the committee agrees to the allocation. Darrell said it was similar to the big fans at the fairgrounds and thought that was a little bit different. Don said they also paid a salary.

Julie thought the travel expenses were quite high. Darrell said he didn't know where they travel to. Amy mentioned there isn't a lot of income coming in, it is not a big group and it isn't in Gering.

Julie asked about giving them \$2,000.00. Amy replied that she believes it does not fit community betterment and said if she was going to start her own business, something she is passionate about, would she ask others to fund it? She understands that it is a non-profit but does not see how it helps the community at large. Darrell said non-profit is a broad word. Amy said they need to be mindful about what is being funded and with everything they are funding, it is setting a precedent.

Julie felt they are like bankers every year. Darrell said they can only spend what is brought in from Keno or what is available, they need to be good stewards of the money and can't do everything. Julie questioned if they should suggest going to Scottsbluff and requesting some funds because this request does not fit community betterment. Amy said they need to pay for the mats and believes it is not a part of Gering Keno.

Motion by Amy Doll to not fund WyoBraska Extreme Cheer. Seconded by Julie Morrison. There was no further discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler, Morrison and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Engleman. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

Stand Up & Play

Julie felt it is good to do things for vets but for \$20,000.00 that they would donate, the community does not have a large population for this type of project and questioned how it qualifies as community betterment based on the number of people it would serve.

Darrell said they had spoken with local veterans and estimated that three or four individuals might use it and they are not trained. Pat wanted everyone to be on the same page, they did indicate they received some additional funds, so \$13,450.00 would be the remaining amount. Matt said they would like a little cushion to do some other things.

Amy asked how the City feels about it. Pat indicated that he had not spoken with Amy Seiler about it yet. Julie responded that they need additional questions answered from the City's side before making a decision.

Pat suggested tabling the item, compile a list of questions, and bringing it back at a future meeting, including clarification on how many individuals it is expected to serve and have Amy Seiler look into it. He said they would need additional insurance requirements even though they are signing a waiver of liability. He said they would need more accurate numbers of how many this would serve. Matt was not sure the Keno Fund needed to fund whatever was left and be the major contributor. Amy Doll questioned if this was more in lines with tourism since during the presentation it was mentioned several times that it could bring visitors to our community. Darrell said if they table it, they can come back next quarter. Julie said they need more information on this before they can make a decision on it.

Amy Doll asked what is the lead time on this once they receive the funds; she thought they would like to have it for the golf season. Darrell said It was indicated they would build it after it was ordered. They might be able to use it a little bit this fall or wait until spring.

Darrell spoke with Robert and he had questions for Amy Seiler. Darrell also spoke with Amy Seiler on the phone. Darrell said, in his personal opinion, they are not staffed at the golf course to take on any more work. If someone came in from out of town, would someone from this chapter be available? Sometimes they may have someone available, but would they expect the City to be

there? Amy Doll said it sounded like they would need to make an appointment for staff to be there.

Julie mentioned that Twin Cities Development is helping with Northfield Haven, maybe they could benefit from something like that or ask where they could go for more funding resources.

Pat asked the committee if they would like to come up with a list of questions. Darrell said if they table it, they need more input from Council or City management. Julie also mentioned park department and golf course, and should it be tabled out twice so the committee can talk with Amy Seiler, Robert and Lyndsey. Matt said it sounded like they said to get it and then they would figure it out. Darrell thought they could have some answers within three months. Amy mentioned it could have a lasting impact on the City. Darrell questioned if this chapter would be around in ten years.

Motion by Matt Janecek to recommend tabling Stand Up & Play for more information from City, park and golf course on staffing and training, operating the program, maintenance and insurance costs. Seconded by Julie Morrison. There was no further discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler, Morrison and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Engleman. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

Gering Martial Arts

Matt asked if Kathy Tabor had scholarships for dance. Amy wasn't sure if they did but the YMCA has scholarships and they are non-profit. Darrell didn't think the YMCA had scholarships but they also have a charge. Matt stated that he appreciates what Erik is doing but wasn't sure about giving him money to give to a student and then give it back to him as payment for the class. Matt said he hasn't taken a salary, and appreciates that, but it is not the Carpenter Center or the YMCA; it is an individual. Amy said if they open that door to anyone that has a business, they may open the door to fund scholarships. Amy said that a good business typically ends the year with a surplus. While that shows financial responsibility, it can make it difficult to justify funding.

Pat said they are not a non-profit; they are a business. Julie said this would be for operating expenses. She said it is someone paying to operate a business to teach classes. Amy said they are free to make their own choices. Amy is pointing out that this isn't about financial need, it doesn't fall under a school's food program at school.

Julie said they have this stringent rule that if they don't show up, would they get their money back. If they don't show up, does that go into a fund for the next person. Darrell does not see how this will benefit Gering; are some of the kids coming from areas not in Gering? Amy said it goes back to Extreme Cheer, people are paying to be a part of it and it's not really helping the general public.

Motion by Julie Morrison to recommend not funding Gering Martial Arts for their scholarship program. Seconded by Darrell Bentley. There was no further discussion. The vote was called. "AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler, Morrison and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Engleman. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

High Plains Auto Club

Motion by Darrell Bentley to recommend \$3,500.00 for High Plains Auto Club. Seconded by Matt Janecek. There was no further discussion. The vote was called.

"AYES": Bentley, Janecek, Kugler, Morrison and Doll. "NAYS": None. Absent: Engleman. Abstaining: None. Motion carried.

F. Discussion on possible new committee member

Pat asked the committee to think about it until the next meeting. Darrell suggested that if someone has a name to let the Mayor know. Pat said that is typically how that is done and suggested if they have a name to let staff know.

G. Recognition of outgoing committee member – Donna Engleman

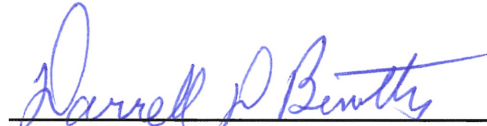
There was discussion about presenting a plaque to Donna and then present it with the family present at a City Council meeting.

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

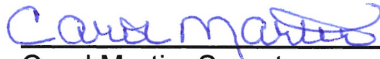
I. Adjourn

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.



Darrell Bentley, Chairman



Carol Martin, Secretary