

THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GERING CITY COUNCIL, MAY 26, 2026

A regular meeting of the City Council of Gering, Nebraska was held in open session on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. at Gering City Hall, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE. Present were Mayor Ewing and Councilmembers Shields, Gillen, Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. Absent were Councilmembers Kinsey and Jackson. Also present were City Administrator Pat Heath, City Clerk Kathy Welfl, and City Attorney Jim Ellison. All proceedings hereafter were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public except as otherwise indicated.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ewing called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and stated that a quorum of the Council was present and City business could be conducted.

1. Recital of the Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer
2. Roll Call
3. Excuse Council Member absence (None)

OPEN MEETINGS ACT - NEB.REV.STAT. CHAPTER 84, ARTICLE 14

Mayor Ewing stated: 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 Mayor. As required by State Law, 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 Council determines that the matter requires emergency action.

CONSENT AGENDA:

(Items under the Consent Agenda are proposed for adoption by one action for all items unless any member of Council requests that an item be considered separately.)

1. Approve minutes of the May 11, 2026 regular City Council Meeting
2. Approve Claims

Claims:

A & A PORTA POTTIES \$250.00, ACE HARDWARE \$1,109.15, ACUSHNET COMPANY \$550.95, ADVANCED SERVICES, INC. \$123.75, AFLAC \$957.18, ALTEC INDUSTRIES, INC. \$1,682.93, AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES \$4,660.70, AMGL \$1,400.00, APPLIED CONCEPTS, INC. \$5,112.00, AT&T MOBILITY \$1,633.54, B & C STEEL \$8,009.22, B & S RASK GRILL \$693.00, BEACON ATHLETICS, LLC \$1,036.30, BLUE RIBBON SOD \$5,830.00, BLUFFS FACILITY SOLUTIONS \$582.74, BORDER STATES INDUSTRIES, INC \$1,761.94, CALLAWAY GOLF COMPANY \$675.78, CATTLE BANK & TRUST \$11,080.03, CENGAGE LEARNING/GAGE \$23.60, CHASE DANIELZUK \$60.00, CITY OF GERING \$18,226.73, COLUMN SOFTWARE, PBC \$148.81, CONNECTING POINT \$821.00, CONTRACTORS MATERIALS, INC. \$640.00, CORE & MAIN LP \$2,021.02, CROSSROADS COOPERATIVE \$34,961.77, CS PRECISION MANUFACTURING \$25,575.22, DANKO EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT CO \$227.84, DOOLEY OIL \$1,217.75, DUTTON-LAINSON COMPANY \$727.35, EAKES INC \$279.30, ECOLAB \$434.86, FASTENAL COMPANY \$507.69, FEDEX \$552.37, FIRST NATIONAL BANK OMAHA - POLICE \$584.00, FLOYD'S TRUCK CENTER, INC. \$391.28, FRANK PARTS COMPANY \$379.00, FRONTIER OVERHEAD DOOR \$180.00, FYR-TEK, INC. \$906.67, GALLS, AN ARAMARK COMPANY \$648.93, GERING VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT. \$1,096.19, GOLDEN WEST INDUSTRIAL SUPPLY \$265.60, GOLF & SPORT SOLUTIONS \$12,922.16, GRAINGER \$53.32, GREATAMERICA FINANCIAL SERVICE \$4.83, HDR ENGINEERING, INC. \$10,576.14, HOMETOWN LEASING \$164.55, IDEAL LAUNDRY AND CLEANERS, INC. \$666.73, IMPERIAL PUMP SOLUTIONS \$1,901.20, INGRAM LIBRARY SERVICES \$289.14, INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE \$64,852.93, J RODZ \$460.00, JAMES & REBECCA MCALLISTER \$29,133.86, JOHN HANCOCK USA \$22,566.10, JOHN HANCOCK USA FIRE \$1,075.74, JOHN HANCOCK USA POLICE \$11,247.75, JOHN MITCHELL \$750.00, JOHNSON SERVICES \$12,229.90, JORDAN MCBRIDE \$112.00, JUSTIN BERNHARDT \$200.00, KENT EWING \$237.01, KRAUPIE'S REAL ESTATE & AUCTIONEERS \$3,400.00, KRISTI DIX \$75.00, L.L. JOHNSON DISTRIBUTING \$1,399.47, LAWSON PRODUCTS \$286.33, LEAGUE ASSOC./RISK MANAGEMENT \$1,564.93, LEGACY COOPERATIVE \$9,003.44, LONDON FLATS, LLC \$6,342.70, MASEK DISTRIBUTING INC \$83.92, MATHESON TRI-GAS INC \$368.40, MATTY B'S HVAC \$1,605.68, MENARDS \$484.32, MIDWEST CONNECT \$412.47, MILLER PAINTING & DECORATING, INC. \$4,922.52, MOUNTAIN RECOVERY ROAD SOLUTIONS \$240.00, MUNICIPAL ENERGY AGENCY OF NE \$312,362.23, MUNICIPAL SUPPLY, INC. OF NE \$10,986.33, NC CHILD SUPPORT CENTRALIZED COLLECTIONS \$105.82, NEBRASKA CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENT CENTE \$714.93, NEBRASKA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT \$3,444.87, NKC TIRE \$282.99, NMC INCORPORATED \$1,198.23, NMVCA \$295.00, NORTHWEST PIPE FITTINGS, INC \$215.65, O'REILLY AUTOMOTIVE STORE \$173.44, PANHANDLE AUTO GROUP \$115.52, PANHANDLE CONCRETE PROD. INC. \$1,702.00, PANHANDLE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE, INC. \$1,415.00, PAUL REED \$7,433.04, PAUL REED CONSTRUCTION & SUPP \$776.20, PETE'S QUICK LUBE \$91.79, PGA OF AMERICA \$664.00, PING INC \$269.21, PIPE WORKS PLUMBING LLC \$9,050.00, PLATTE VALLEY BANK \$3,458.54, POWERPLAN OIB \$99.71, PREFERRED AUTO PAINT & SUPPLY \$363.76, PRESTIGE FLAG \$718.53, PT HOSE AND BEARING \$82.21, PVB VISA \$9,022.77, QUADIENT POSTAGE FUNDING \$800.00, QUALITY BRANDS OF NORTH PLATTER \$800.00, RECREONICS \$7,049.88, REGIONAL WEST MEDICAL CENTER \$30.00, REM SCREENING LLC \$2,208.00, RIVERSIDE DISCOVERY CENTER \$5,000.00, RIVERSTONE BANK \$652.24, ROBYN BURGMAN \$250.00, ROOMDAD PRODUCTIONS \$425.00, RVW INC \$17,351.12, SANDBERG IMPLEMENT, INC. \$393.18, SARGENT DRILLING CO. \$11,371.19, SCB COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS \$10.00, SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY \$109,543.88, SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT \$319.54, SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY TREASURER \$24,366.40, SCS ENGINEERS \$5,105.00, SHERWIN WILLIAMS \$105.80, SIMMONS OLSEN LAW FIRM, P.C. \$4,287.50, SIMON CONTRACTORS \$2,863.72, STEVE BAIRD \$3,925.00, TERESA TOSH \$18,815.52, THE LODGE AT DEADWOOD GAMING RESORT \$285.00, THE MIXING BOWL \$35.00, TINA WORTHMAN \$388.60, TORRINGTON SOD FARMS \$416.80, TROY & LISA WEBORG \$97,392.07, TYNDALE \$727.72, UNANIMOUS, INC.

\$960.00, UNITED HEALTH CARE \$137,952.81, VALLEY AUTO LOCATORS LLC \$1,373.03, VERIZON CONNECT \$25.90, VERIZON WIRELESS SERVICES, LLC \$329.09, W J R INC. \$137.50, WESCO RECEIVABLES CORP. \$7,321.02, WESTERN COOPERATIVE COMPANY \$8,341.95 TOTAL \$1,174,059.96

Motion by Councilmember Gillen to approve the Consent Agenda. Second by Councilmember Wiedeman. There was no discussion. Mayor Ewing called for the vote. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

ORDINANCES:

1. Consider approving Ordinance No. 2186 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GERING, NEBRASKA VACATING THE SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 2, SHADOW LANE ESTATES, A SUBDIVISION OF THE CITY OF GERING, SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY, NEBRASKA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE HEREOF; PROVIDING FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE AS PROVIDED BY LAW

City Engineer, Annie Folck, explained that the property owner of Block 2, Shadow Lane Estates has submitted a petition to vacate the subdivision of Block 2. While the property was originally platted as Block 2, Shadow Lane Estates, it was later further subdivided into two lots, with an alleyway between them. The alleyway was never developed, and locates were called to ensure that there were no utilities installed in that right-of-way. The property owner would like to build across the property lines and alleyway, and cannot do that until the subdivision is vacated, reverting the property back to one parcel.

Councilmember Gillen made a motion to introduce Ordinance No. 2186 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GERING, NEBRASKA VACATING THE SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 2, SHADOW LANE ESTATES, A SUBDIVISION OF THE CITY OF GERING, SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY, NEBRASKA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE HEREOF; PROVIDING FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE AS PROVIDED BY LAW. Seconded by Councilmember Cecil. There was no discussion. Mayor Ewing called for the vote. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

Councilmember Wiedeman moved that the ordinance be designated as Ordinance No. 2186 and the title thereof approved, and that the statutory rule requiring ordinances to be fully and distinctly read on three different days be dispensed with, and that the ordinance be passed as read, which motion was seconded by Councilmember O'Neal. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

2. Consider approving Ordinance No. 2187 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GERING, NEBRASKA, PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF A SALES AND USE TAX, SPECIFYING THE AMOUNT, TERMS, CONDITIONS AND EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE SALES AND USE TAX; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT WITH THIS ORDINANCE AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE HEREOF

Mayor Ewing noted that this particular ordinance is being adopted because at the May 12 Primary Election, a majority of Gering voters voted to continue a 1% sales and use tax for the City of Gering. The Nebraska Department of Revenue requires a signed copy of this ordinance as one of the requirements to continue quarterly disbursements of 1% sales tax proceeds to the City of Gering.

Councilmember Shields made a motion to introduce Ordinance No. 2187 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GERING, NEBRASKA, PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF A SALES AND USE TAX, SPECIFYING THE AMOUNT, TERMS, CONDITIONS AND EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE SALES AND USE TAX; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT WITH THIS ORDINANCE AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE HEREOF. Seconded by Councilmember Gillen. There was no discussion. Mayor Ewing called for the vote. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

Councilmember Cecil moved that the ordinance be designated as Ordinance No. 2187 and the title thereof approved, and that the statutory rule requiring ordinances to be fully and distinctly read on three different days be dispensed with, and that the ordinance be passed as read, which motion was seconded by Councilmember Wiedeman. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

CURRENT BUSINESS:

1. Recognition of the 1% Sales Tax Public Education Committee



Mayor Ewing presented certificates to Ria Rebman, Jordan Diedrich, Eric Wilcox, Jeff Wolfe, and Jodi Lewellen for their work on the 1% Sales Tax Committee to educate the public regarding Proposition No. 1 resulting in the ballot measure passing. Other members not present were Tom Swan, Crystal Sandberg, RaNae Garton, and Bryan Venable.

2. Discussion regarding Ordinance No. 2047 pertaining to fireworks

Administrator Heath explained that staff was asked to place a discussion of Ordinance 2047 (passed in 2017), pertaining to fireworks, on the Council meeting agenda. He noted that it's important for elected officials and citizens to realize that the Gering Fire Department is also the Gering Rural Fire Department. "Our jurisdiction is not only the City of Gering but it also encompasses a large portion of the southern half of Scotts Bluff County, 128 square miles."

He explained that based on the current drought monitor, this region is in exceptional drought conditions. It will only take one spark to start a fire. Proof of this is the fires that were started by lightning on Wednesday, May 20th near Harrison, Crawford and Chadron; and on Saturday, May 16th southwest of Gering and west of Harrisburg.

Additionally, Gering's mutual aid partners may not be able to leave their districts to assist the Gering Fire Department due to the increased threat of fires and firework discharge in their own districts. It is highly possible Gering's Fire Department will have delayed responses if there are multiple fires in Gering's 128 square mile district.

Fire Chief, Nathan Flowers, addressed Council and thanked the elected officials and everyone present in the chambers for their interest in public safety and for attending the Council meeting. He also thanked the volunteer firefighters; many of whom were present at the meeting. He added "Your countless hours of hard work and attendance does not go unnoticed. No words can describe my appreciation for your commitment to our department."

Chief Flowers stated he was asked to discuss in a public forum the conditions in the area and share some concerns he has regarding fire potential during the 4th of July. Ordinance 2047 allows the sales, possession and discharge of fireworks within the corporate limits of the city. There are two parts to the ordinance; sales and discharge. In his opinion, the focus of the conversation should relate to discharge. "I am in no way interested in modifying or changing the portion of the ordinance relating to sales" he added.

He explained that there are three key components on which he would touch base at this meeting. Each part is just as important as the next. He stated "I want to speak on the capabilities of the fire department and mutual aid partners; I want to share data and statistics relating to current conditions and expected outlooks. And finally, I want to provide some suggestions in order for Council to maybe make some decisions that could help us provide the level of response our community expects."

Chief Flowers went on to say that Gering's department is actually comprised of two agencies - The City of Gering and the Gering Valley Rural Fire District. Each political subdivision works very well together and uses the same manpower to manage the overall department. "We have 36 dedicated members supported by 1.5 FTEs. Our department responds to various emergencies and non-emergencies. Along with fire suppression, we also respond

to vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, technical rescue, hazardous response, material leaks, search and rescue and other non-emergent calls. We have 12 total apparatus and an ISO rating of 4."

Gering's district covers 128 square miles (Monument west to CR 26 and the river south to the county line, excluding Terrytown). This covers the city limits and the Gering Valley area. They have a great working relationship that benefits each of the departments. They are not unique as many other departments across the state are both a city and rural department. He added that each political subdivision is great to work with and for. Council's support and insight have created a very strong department. "And when you have the people behind me filling the roster, in my opinion you have one of the best fire departments in the state of Nebraska."

Despite all of this, he truly believes that no fire department in the nation is completely prepared to respond to emergencies in today's environment and conditions. He reads news articles and stories every day about the lack of volunteerism across the nation. Many states have seen an exponential loss of volunteers in the past five years. Boy Scouts, VFA, social clubs and church organizations are seeing less people volunteering. The challenge isn't dedication - it's time. Volunteer fire departments across the country are facing the same reality: fewer available people, increasing call demands, and more complex emergencies due to conditions, as well as training demands throughout the year - it becomes challenging to keep up with the ever changing standards.

He stated "Our department also belongs to Scotts Bluff County Mutual Aid. We also have other agreements in place to coordinate our responses with local and state departments and agencies. We have MOUs and agreements with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Nebraska Forest Service, and the USDA. 14 other amazing fire departments belong to our mutual aid association. 13 of those 14 are volunteer departments, which are similar to us. When a call for service arrives, volunteer members leave their location and travel to the fire station and then respond on the apparatus to the emergency. Travel times from home or work can take upwards of five to seven minutes. It is the nature of having a volunteer fire department that does not staff the fire station 24/7. Despite meeting NFPA standards on response, there's a nature of delay based on volunteers."

He added that every department in "our" mutual aid are concerned about current conditions. Because each department has their own district to protect, staff are considering various models to provide mutual aid response if needed. "One of those options is to hold back members and apparatus in the event we have something within our own district and vice versa."

He then talked about conditions and provided statistics relating to the current drought in the region. This data shows response during a drought during the 10-day time period between June and July where discharging fireworks was permitted. In 2021, 18% of their call volume was fire. Drought increased in 2022 and so did fires, jumping to 23%. There was a very wet spring in 2023 and call volume dropped down to 9% during that June-July time slot. He stated "Clearly, when drought occurs and increases, the potential for fire also increases."

Currently, this region is experiencing the worst drought since 2004 within the same time period as fireworks. Despite recent moisture, this area is experiencing D4, or Exceptional Drought, which has long term impacts. In exceptional drought, the U.S. Drought Monitor quotes several impacts that could happen, including wildfire season being destructive and costly. He stated they look at current NOAA 8-14 day outlook proposals and see slight increased temperatures with a slight increase in precipitation. Per NOAA's website, they suggest outlooks only provide a 33% change either way in precipitation and temperature. Several agencies rely more on the ENSO criteria and formulate outlooks based on El Nino or La Nina conditions. He stated "Currently, we are ENSO-Neutral, but climate models strongly suggest we will transition into El Nino in July and August of 2026. The weak La Nina earlier this year has faded. For Nebraska, we see drier patterns during La Nina and cooler/wetter patterns during El Nino." He added that despite those outlooks, fire conditions still depend on local ERC values, fuel moistures, wind events and short term drought.

ERC stands for Energy Release Component. In short, ERC represents the maximum potential rate of heat energy released from a fuel like grass, shrubs, or trees if impacted by a flaming front or if the fuel ignites.

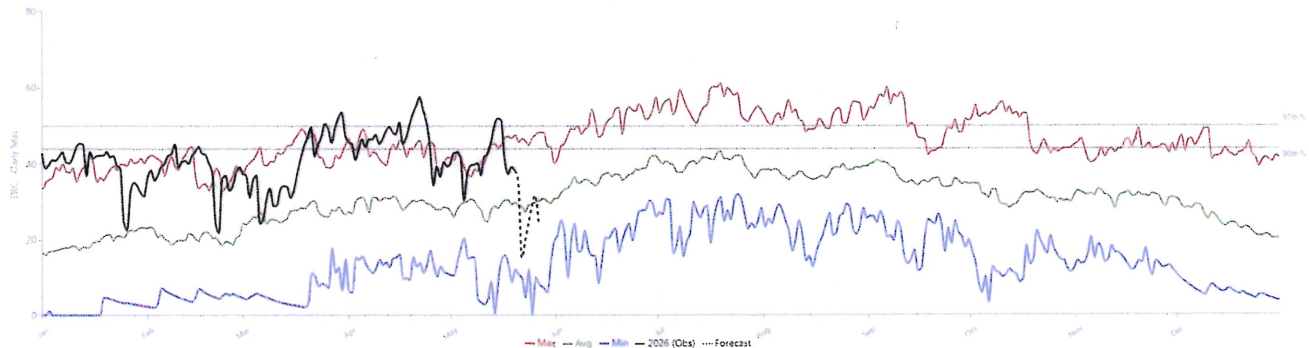
- ERCs are measured in BTU's, similar to a home furnace.
- It reflects the contribution of the fuel itself to how intense the fire would be if that fuel ignited.
- The ERC number represents the potential "heat release" per unit area in a flaming zone.
- Essentially, the drier the fuels become, the more capable they are of intense fire behavior.
- ERCs are cumulative and build over time. ERC values provide a good reflection of drought conditions.

- Along with fuel moisture, ERC becomes a relatively stable evaluation tool for planning decisions within several days prior to expected fire.
- ERC does not factor in topography and weather in relation to how fire behavior will act.

Overall, ERC values are a great tool to evaluate fire behavior conditions and how it would relate to fire suppression.

He then showed a slide that presents current ERC values in the area. This data is derived from several weather stations in this area, including one at the Scotts Bluff National Monument, as shown on the top left of the graph.

**Scotts Bluff NFDRS Fuel Model
Energy Release Component – Daily Max**

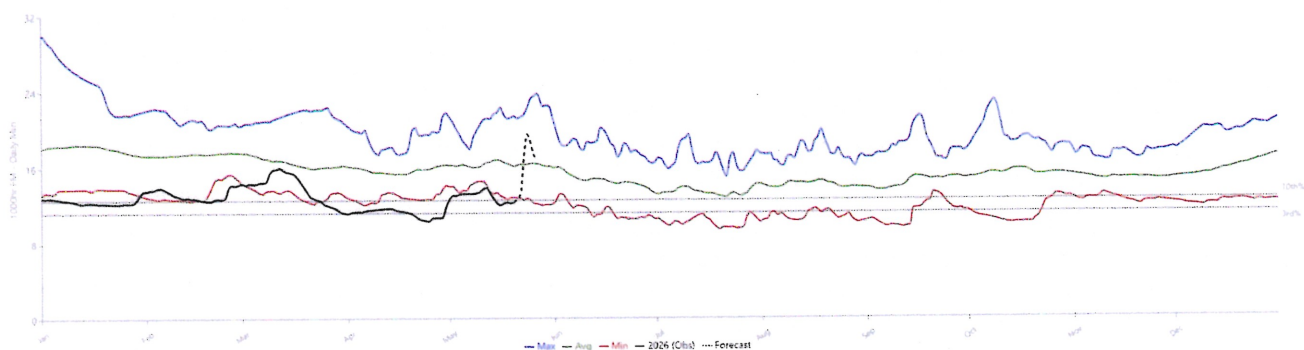


- This graph is comparing current conditions against historical conditions from January 2005 through December 31, 2024.
- On the bottom of the graph, there is a timeline of the year displaying each month.
- As can be seen, the green line is the average ERC model each year between 2005 and 2024.
- The blue line indicates the minimum ERC values for each month that occurred over the time period of 2005 and 2024.
- The red line is the maximum ERC value that occurred in a single month during the time period of 2005 and 2024.
- The black line indicates the current year in relation to the historical data. The black dotted line indicates forecast ERC values.
- And finally, the two gray straight lines indicate the 90th percentile and 97th percentile respectively.

He noted that this year, the ERC for this area has surpassed the maximum amount several times that they've ever historically seen on record; definitely occurring earlier this month. Despite that the ERC forecast shows a decrease, based off of historical ERC values "We will see an increase throughout the year. We consider conditions to be extreme and absolutely historical and uncommon when ERC values exceed the 97th percentile. This year, we have exceeded it on three different occasions."

Chief Flowers expounded that along with ERC values, they also measure thousand-hour fuel moistures. Essentially, this is the amount of water in live and dead fuel such as grass, shrubs, and trees. The lower the fuel moisture is in a tree, the greater chance of ignition and burning.

**Scotts Bluff
1000 Hr Fuel Moisture – Daily Min**



Chief Flowers explained:

- This graph is similar to the ERC graph in the previous slide. Data is recorded from Scottsbluff RAWs and shows data from 2005 through 2024. This is measuring 1000-hour fuels, like a tree.
- Data runs throughout the year and the left side displays the moisture levels, measured in a percentage from 0% to 32%.
- Blue line is the maximum amount of moisture in "our fuels." Red is the minimum amount.
- Black line is the 2026 observations, which has been consistent or lower than the minimum fuel moisture recorded through the past 20 years.
- Observations places current moisture in 1000-fuels around 10%, which is extremely low.
- Nebraska Forest Service has physically tested fuel moistures in our local area in Ponderosa Pine trees and measured 8% to 10%. A 12% fuel moisture level is dangerously low for a living pine tree. It indicates the tree is extremely dry and poses a severe fire hazard.
- These fuel moistures are for fuels that are not irrigated. We have several areas within the city that are not irrigated and rely solely on precipitation, as well as the County and rural district.

Fuel moistures do change throughout the season and environment. There becomes a time lag where fuels will take on moisture and shed moisture. This is dependent on the size and characteristic of the fuel. Fuel moisture in grasses change hourly, while fuel moistures in trees have a much longer time lag. He noted "Again, the graph notes that fuel moistures tend to get lower as we extend into the summer."

Chief Flowers explained that "Combining our local fire department's capabilities with our current conditions poses significant challenges this year. Fuels are extremely dry and have been difficult to suppress. We have seen large fires in March and across the state which have been difficult to control. Recently we have seen dry lightning spark seven fires in our county. Those are conditions we're used to seeing in August and September, not in May."

He went on to say that all fire departments are affected. They are requesting assistance from "our neighbors" much sooner. Just a few weeks ago, every department was in the county on a large structure fire that impacted grass. Multiple other fires started from dry lightning and Gering couldn't send anybody because they were engaged on a fire. He stated "The good news is no matter what, fire will eventually go out. The bad news is how much it will consume before it does. Every fire department's goal is to have a positive impact on the fire environment faster than the fire can impact the environment and have destructive effects. In the past few months, those goals seem to take longer to achieve."

Their job is to protect the community and their firefighters. He is in no way trying to scaremonger or push the "big red button". However, the current situation is concerning because fire truly threatens an entire community. This is why Council adopts ordinances and codes. This is why fire prevention measures are implemented. If a fire starts in the right conditions and is left unchecked, it will consume grass, trees, homes, vehicles, and communities. Several fires in recent years started as grass fires and eventually created such a conflagration that they had massive economic impacts to communities.

He noted that realistically, not all fires will have an impact like the Marshal Fire did. "We catch the majority of our fires and keep them small. The amazing team behind me work in extreme conditions to keep the majority of fires from having major impacts. And at times, we aren't so lucky. When conditions align, like wind, weather, and fuels, Lady Luck is immediately against us."

Chief Flowers stated "I ask the Council and our community to partner with us to find workable solutions during our firework season. I understand it is difficult to make decisions without knowing how our weather will change and affect our environment in a month or so. We can only do the best we can with the current information. What I know is a firework is an ignition source. In today's conditions, despite our community being as careful as possible, introducing ignition sources to our community poses significant risk. My job again is to protect our community and our firefighters. Because of that, I would be in support of eliminating fireworks this year. I also know that that stance is unrealistic to our retailers, consumers, and our city."

He suggested rather than a complete ban on discharging fireworks, Council could reduce the number of days of allowing the discharge of fireworks within the city limits. And of course, "We could see conditions improve and allow discharging fireworks for 10 days. I understand each solution would have related challenges. We have looked at enforcement, citizens going elsewhere to discharge fireworks, and maybe reduced sales for retailers. We get it."

If discharging fireworks remains permissible this year, his recommendation is that Council authorize temporary staffing funds so they can place volunteer firefighters on casual employee status and provide scheduled standby during peak periods. "Our department officers will develop a response model that improves response time, increases firefighter safety, and helps us contain fires faster before they escalate. Depending on the number of operational days approved, the estimated cost would range between \$15,000 to \$18,000. This solution is commensurate with values at risk and allows us to respond as fast as possible to limit any fire spread."

He thanked the Council for hearing his concerns and offering the community opportunities to work together to mitigate threats that fireworks pose to the community and its firefighters. "I'm also grateful for the hard work our volunteer fire department puts in day in and day out. I am in awe of their willingness to volunteer for this job. Every day I get to work with the best humanity has to offer." He added "Our responsibility is to respond to fires after they start *and* to reduce the likelihood that small fires become community disasters." He then offered to answer questions from the Council regarding this agenda item and the next three regarding firework shows.

Councilmember Gillen asked Administrator Heath to speak regarding other municipalities and their stance on fireworks. Administrator Heath replied that staff have had discussions with both Scotts Bluff County and the City of Scottsbluff. At this time, they are waiting to see what happens. No action has been taken by the County or the City of Scottsbluff. Councilmember Morrison asked if they gave any indication as to when that decision would be made. He replied no, they have not. Chief Flowers interjected that he spoke with other partners today, like Minatare and Alliance. He has also reached out to the County Commissioners in regards to his concerns. Overall, he knows the consensus is that everybody is concerned.

Administrator Heath stated that Alliance will be discussing it at their regular meeting on June 2. Minatare has also had some discussions. City Attorney Ellison stated Minatare was opting for no fireworks, but they have not made a final decision yet; they will continue discussing it at a June meeting.

Councilmember Morrison asked if Council has to process the ordinance at a certain time. She asked "If we can wait until we see what the weather does and if we get any moisture. Or does this have to be decided now?" Administrator Heath clarified that ordinance No. 2047 is already in place; the longer Gering waits, it affects the firework distributors. One of them has indicated he's holding off on an order as once it's placed on the truck, they have to pay for it – so he's holding off on that. He added "We don't want to wait too long, otherwise it does affect them." Councilmember Morrison asked, if Council says fireworks can be discharged for three days, does that affect anybody? Eric Wilcox, a firework distributor, stated from the audience that if that happened, he would have to lay off people. They've already hired people, and he has 100% of his inventory in. There are already people coming in to town to do fireworks; tourism is going to be affected. There's a lot of factors that go into it.

Mayor Ewing asked, regarding the long-term forecast between now and then, "Do we see any changes in moisture levels at all?" Chief Flowers replied that he doesn't put too much stock in NOAA long-term outlooks. One of the volunteer firefighters works at the UNL Extension Center and checks moisture levels every day; he has indicated that even with the moisture the area has been getting, because it's so dry, it barely raises the needle. It would take quite a bit of moisture to be able to bring up the moisture level. Historically, neutral tends to be neutral. He thinks it's great to have these discussions now. Mayor Ewing clarified "Even if we do get moisture, we're not going to change these ERC numbers substantially, I would think." Chief Flowers replied that "We would need significant moisture similar to what we saw in 2023; in 2022, we were almost in the D4 position. Additionally, we didn't have any snow this last winter. This is a long-term thing that has affected us since last September. To get out of this would take quite a bit." It (substantial moisture) could definitely reduce the potential for risk.

Chief Flowers expressed his understanding that there's no clear choice based off of what Council has done in the past. In terms of the ordinance, he knows that Alliance went to seven days; that happened quite a while ago. He could try to get some data from them (and other municipalities) across the state to see how that affected them and retailers, but he knows that everybody is "just as concerned as we are this year."

Councilmember Gillen commented that if Gering changes the days in which fireworks could be discharged, and if the city across the river decides not to change, fireworks could still be sold - then it becomes a law enforcement effort, too. "We shift the burden from the Fire Department to the Police Department." He added that the Police Department are all paid, and staffed accordingly, but he wants to be mindful that there will still be enforcement

issues. Chief Flowers replied if it was reduced to three or four days within the city, he would definitely advocate for that, but it does have other challenges. People can go elsewhere, they can pay the same amount for fireworks and discharge them elsewhere as opposed to municipal limits, and that would pose challenges on other departments. If Council does adjust the ordinance, proposing hiring temporary employees during that time, that would help offset some of those enforcement issues. He added that he knows there's not a one solution fits all.

Councilmember Gillen asked if the Council were to authorize the hiring of volunteers, how would that be accomplished within the budget that was already set last year? Obviously, Council and staff weren't aware the area was going to be in a drought season (when the budget was set). He asked if the City has the ability to come up with "those kinds of funds" to hire staff - \$20,000 isn't a drop in the bucket. Chief Flowers replied that he looked at his budget and there are some areas he could shift over and would be able to provide that option while still maintaining the overall line in the fire department.

Administrator Heath reminded Chief Flowers and Councilmember Gillen that the discussion pertained to the ordinance, not on hiring or adding employees as that's not on the agenda, and it's not up for discussion. Councilmember Gillen replied that he thinks it's impactful though, because if Council changes the ordinance and the number of discharge days, "We have to take into consideration the implications on our volunteer core. Unfortunately, it's going to have to go hand in hand; this may have to be an additional agenda item if we want to discuss staffing of the volunteers." He doesn't think they can make a well-thought decision without having that consideration - whether the City lessens the number of days allowed for discharge, or hires volunteers on a longer basis "We would have to understand the implications of that to make a decision." Administrator Heath replied that he agreed with him on that. He noted that Council can't change the ordinance at this meeting, but they can discuss it and direct staff on what information could be brought back on the next Council meeting agenda. Chief Flowers agreed that no action needs to be taken; he was just providing information.

Mayor Ewing entertained a motion regarding Ordinance 2047 pertaining to fireworks and/or direction from Council and City staff.

Councilmember Gillen stated that Council needs to understand the implications from a budgetary standpoint - of hiring volunteer staff and what that staffing would look like on a three to 10 day period. He doesn't know that he'd be in favor of a complete ban of fireworks because people are still going to discharge them if they're sold in the area; it would be a nightmare for the Police Department. Mayor Ewing commented that there needs to be more research; maybe this discussion should be moved to the next Council meeting with further information. Councilmember Gillen asked if Council could recommend moving it to the Public Safety Committee so staff and the committee can meet and make a recommendation to the Council at the next Council meeting. Administrator Heath reminded Council that there is a very short period of time between this meeting and June 8.

Councilmember Wiedeman noted that the challenge is also other items on the agenda; three events that hinge on that decision. It's very difficult to tell these people they're going to have to wait. Mayor Ewing replied that the ultimate issue is dependent on conditions and the recommendation of the Fire Chief. There could be no fireworks (shows) even if Council okays them tonight, tomorrow, or whenever. If Council gets some more information and if weather conditions change, Council could get to the point of whether or not there will be fireworks. Councilmember O'Neal clarified that her understanding is that Ordinance 2047 already stands; it doesn't need to be voted on. Administrator Heath replied correct, Council doesn't need to vote on it. Staff would need direction of what Council would like to see between now and the next Council meeting or committee meeting - if there's time to get a committee meeting set up between now and the next meeting.

Chief Flowers said he doesn't think action needs to be taken (at this meeting), he thinks Council just needs to provide guidance on what staff can look at moving forward. Ultimately, they would propose that if temporary staffing is put in place, it would need to be an approval by Council - which could happen at a different Council meeting. But in order to do so, he would like to know if it's the full 10 days, a mixture, or zero days, or whatever Council decides in order to be able to give Council the correct data. In regards to the special event permits, those are applications. That conversation is much different than fireworks in the public and in the streets and lighting off fireworks and introducing ignition sources. If there was a show at the amphitheater, golf course, or stadium, preventative measures could be taken as well as some mitigation with fuels and watering. The Fire Department can staff those as well. In the past, Council has made the decision to allow special event permits to be approved with the caveat that staff

would determine on that day, yes or no. He added "As a Fire Department and as a City, we would do the best we can because those are controlled environments. Those are areas we could staff heavily and be able to pre-mitigate." He indicated to Councilmember Gillen that staff would go ahead and put together a further detailed budgetary list and look at a 10-day, seven-day, four-day, or three-day time period and bring that back to Council to show what that would look like on the budget.

Councilmember Morrison noted that she's concerned about public safety and the safety of everything, more than anything. She's not as concerned about the budgetary side of it, but understands it's tough. She added that she's not concerned about the controlled things (events) because staff are going to be there. It's the community - the part that scares her is July 4th is on a Saturday; people are going to be out more and don't have to go to work the next day, and more.

Motion by Councilmember Morrison to direct staff to schedule a Public Safety Committee meeting as soon as possible and to do more research for the budget side of this matter as well as the public safety side, and to determine and recommend a timeline/timeframe of how many days fireworks can be sold and discharged. Second by Councilmember Gillen. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

3. Consider Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks at the Member-Guest Golf Tournament at Monument Shadows Golf Course on June 26, 2026 submitted by the Monument Shadows Member-Guest Tournament Committee

Justin Allred addressed Council and stated that all three fireworks show special event permit applications are provided by him as the event coordinator. As in the past, they ask for assistance from the Gering Fire Department and the Gering Police Department. He entertained questions from Council. Councilmember Wiedeman inquired, what if when the event date(s) dawn and there's wind like there is today, and the Fire Chief indicates the event can't be held. Mr. Allred replied that it has always been the Chief's call. They almost had to call an event a couple years ago for that reason. Public Safety is first and foremost; if weather does not permit for discharge, they don't discharge. Administrator Heath added that in that case, it was delayed for about 15 minutes and then the winds died down and they were able to go. The Fire Chief has always been the one to make the call. This year, Chief Flowers expressed concern about making the call. Staff recommend that Chief Flowers make a recommendation to the Administrator this year, who will make the final call. He noted that in the agenda summary explanation, it states that:

If Council approves the Special Event Permit for a fireworks show, conditions should include:

- Applicant and Chief Flowers will communicate leading up to the event and on the day of the event to determine if conditions are favorable for a fireworks show on City property. Chief Flowers will make a recommendation to the City Administrator who will make the final decision.
- Applicant will take all necessary precautions to ensure a safe event; fire department personnel must be on scene if the show is held.

Administrator Heath explained that he is no expert on fire and fire conditions; he will rely on Chief Flower's expertise. If he says "no go", then Administrator Heath will cancel the show.

Motion by Councilmember O'Neal to approve a Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks at the Member-Guest Golf Tournament at Monument Shadows Golf Course on June 26, 2026 submitted by the Monument Shadows Member-Guest Tournament Committee contingent upon the applicant and Chief Flowers communicating leading up to the event and on the day of the event to determine if conditions are favorable for a fireworks show on City property. Chief Flowers will make a recommendation to the City Administrator who will then make the final decision. Additionally, the applicant will take all necessary precautions to ensure a safe event; Fire Department personnel must be on scene if the show is held. Second by Councilmember Cecil. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

4. Consider Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks near the Oregon Trail Park Stadium for a post-game fireworks show on June 27, 2026 submitted by Western Nebraska Pioneers

Motion by Councilmember Cecil to approve a Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks near the Oregon Trail Park Stadium for a post-game fireworks show on June 27, 2026 submitted by the Western Nebraska Pioneers contingent upon the applicant and Chief Flowers communicating leading up to the event and on the day of the event to determine if conditions are favorable for a fireworks show on City property. Chief Flowers will make a recommendation to the City Administrator who will make the final decision. Additionally, the applicant will take all necessary precautions to ensure a safe event; Fire Department personnel must be on scene if the show is held. Second by Councilmember O'Neal. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

5. Consider Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks at Five Rocks Amphitheater for the Allred Brothers Fireworks Show on July 3, 2026 submitted by Justin Allred

Motion by Councilmember O'Neal to approve a Special Event Permit Application with a request to discharge fireworks at Five Rocks Amphitheater for the Allred Brothers Fireworks Show on July 3, 2026 submitted by Justin Allred contingent upon the applicant and Chief Flowers communicating leading up to the event and on the day of the event to determine if conditions are favorable for a fireworks show on City property. Chief Flowers will make a recommendation to the City Administrator who will make the final decision. Additionally, the applicant will take all necessary precautions to ensure a safe event; Fire Department personnel must be on scene if the show is held. Second by Councilmember Wiedeman. There was no discussion. The Clerk called the roll. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS:

1. Consider approving Resolution 5-26-2 regarding Funding of Ambulance Services

Administrator Heath explained that an agreement for ambulance services was put in place in 2002 when Gering stopped transporting patients to Regional West. The initial agreement was with Valley Ambulance and Scotts Bluff County. That has changed to Regional West and Scotts Bluff County. Scotts Bluff County pays for two thirds of the cost of the agreement, which is approximately \$49,000 this year. The Cities of Scottsbluff and Gering pay the other one third of that agreement. The costs for Gering are broken down in the resolution. It will go up 2% each year for the next four years. This is a very good deal for the City of Gering. Regional West provides advanced life support with paramedics during transport. Staff recommends approval of the resolution.

RESOLUTION 5-26-2

Be it resolved by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Gering, Nebraska that:

1. The City of Gering, the City of Scottsbluff, and the County of Scotts Bluff, entered into an agreement captioned "Agreement for the funding of Ambulance Services within Service Area under the Interlocal Cooperation Act", which agreement has been extended on several occasions.
2. That following the last extension of said agreement, the provider of said ambulance service has transferred from Valley Ambulance Service, Inc. to Regional West Medical Center (RWMC).
3. Public safety, convenience, and welfare will be enhanced by the continuation of the agreement for an additional period of four (4) years with the understanding that the provider of the ambulance services is now RWMC.
4. The City of Gering now notifies the County Clerk of Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, and the Clerk of the City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, of its agreement to continue the obligation of funding ambulance services for an additional four (4) year period ending June 30, 2030, subject to the same terms and provisions that existed in the Agreement for the funding of Ambulance Services within the Service Area under the Interlocal Cooperation Act of July 1, 2002 with the exception of the change noted in paragraph three (3) above and the contribution amounts set forth herein below.
5. The City of Gering will contribute the following amounts which shall be payable to the County of Scotts Bluff, Nebraska:
 - a. July 2026 to June 2027 \$410.83 each month or \$4,929.96 per year;
 - b. July 2027 to June 2028 \$419.05 each month or \$5,028.60 per year;
 - c. July 2028 to June 2029 \$427.43 each month or \$5,129.16 per year; and
 - d. July 2029 to June 2030 \$435.98 each month or \$5,231.76 per year.
6. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

Passed and approved this ____ day of _____, 2026.

Kent Ewing, Mayor

Kathleen Welfl, City Clerk

Motion by Councilmember Morrison to approve Resolution 5-26-2 regarding Funding of Ambulance Services. Second by Councilmember Wiedeman. There was no discussion. Mayor Ewing called for the vote. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

2. Consider approving Resolution 5-26-3 regarding Depositories and/or Financial Investment Institutions and Designated Signatories

RESOLUTION 5-26-3

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GERING, NEBRASKA:

1. Platte Valley Bank, US Bank NA, First National Bank Omaha, Riverstone Bank (formerly First State Bank), all with local branches in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, and the Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust (NPAIT), Heartland Trust Company, Moreton Capital Markets, LLC and Invesco, are designated as depositories and/or financial investment institutions for funds of the City of Gering, Nebraska ("City").

- a. Depository funds of the City deposited in each bank or financial institution shall be subject to withdraw upon checks, notes, drafts or other orders for the payment of money when signed on the City's behalf by any two of the following City officials:

**Kent E. Ewing
Pat Heath
Kathleen J. Welfl**

- b. All investment funds of the City held as Government Money Market Funds, Certificates of Deposit, Treasury Notes, and other authorized securities purchase by the City shall be signed by the Finance Director for the City, Lyndsey Mathews, and one of the following City officials per the City's Investment Policy:

Pat Heath or Kathleen J Welfl

2. Provided, the City Treasurer/Finance Director for the City, Lyndsey Mathews is authorized to make ACH drafts and withdrawals for payroll, electronic claims, utility payment drafts and debt payments on behalf of the City from any of the financial institutions named in paragraph 1 of this Resolution.
3. The banks are authorized to pay all orders and receive them for the credit of or in payment from the payee or any other holder without inquiring into the circumstances of the issue or the disposition of the proceeds.
4. Platte Valley Bank is authorized to issue Visa credit cards to City personnel. The personnel to receive the cards and the credit limit on said card, shall be as approved by the City Administrator or his or her designee.
5. This resolution will revoke all prior banking resolutions and shall be delivered to all banks named in this Resolution. This Resolution will remain in effect until notice of revocation is delivered to any of these banks.

Passed, approved and effective this ____ day of May, 2026.

Kent E. Ewing, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kathleen J. Welfl, City Clerk

Motion by Councilmember Cecil to approve Resolution 5-26-3 regarding Depositories and/or Financial Investment Institutions and Designated Signatories. Second by Councilmember Morrison.

Discussion: Councilmember Gillen declared a perceived conflict of interest due to his employment at one of the financial institutions with which the City does business. He asked Attorney Ellison to weigh in. Mr. Ellison replied that legally, Councilmember Gillen does not have a conflict of interest. He does not have ownership, but he can elect not to vote if he's so inclined.

Mayor Ewing called for the vote. "AYES": Shields, Gillen Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

OPEN COMMENT: Discussion or action by Council regarding unscheduled business will not take place. This section is for citizen comment only.

Tammy Frye, 805 O Street, Gering, stated that she has been a fireman's daughter for 26 years. He spent hundreds of hours training in the fire department, just like our guys do now. She has empathy for the distributors of fireworks. There's not one person in this room that can tell her a life or livelihood is more important than fireworks sales. The Morrill Fire was so bad; it burned over 700,000 acres. Ranchers lost their livelihoods. One person very dear to her lost their life in that fire. This is one season of fireworks, is that enough to cover all of this loss in our community? And it can happen here, they had to call the feds in. "Fighting fire isn't cheap. We have volunteers yes, but we have expenses that we have to cover." She doesn't think the City can risk the safety of those people this year. "It's not like we're putting a hold on fireworks for the future; we are in a really bad drought season." She would hate to see anything else happen.

Greg Trautman, 955 17th Street, Gering, thanked everyone for being on Council. He appreciates their time and consideration. He knows it's not an easy decision and it affects a lot of people. He also thanked Chief Flowers and the volunteers of the Department. He appreciates Chief Flower's openness and communication. He added that he has a brother-in-law and a father-in-law that serve on the department. He has a heart for the volunteers and he does understand it. He stated that he is here to partner with the City and the Council. More signage, more PSAs, and preventative stuff. All fireworks that are lit are not necessarily an ignition source. They are manufactured a lot different these days. They are much more reliable. He's not going to say they are 100% because "we all know that isn't true." He stated regarding the comment on volunteerism, one year of fireworks off will affect what he can volunteer for. He would have to look hard at the school board, which takes up a lot of time. He has served on the GO Baseball Board; he's working with Legion now. He teaches classes at his church. He knows Mr. Wilcox also helps the City. Regarding the bond issue for the middle school, he was willing to partner with the City on holding off on that ballot measure so the City could have its 1% sales tax ballot question on the primary ballot. They recognized that the community good was important. They pushed their bond issue to a different date and he's glad they did that because the City needs that 1%. They aren't outlaws just because they like fireworks. He doesn't like fire any more than anyone else. He's willing to partner with the City and he's here to continue having discussions. He thinks it's a positive step that Chief Flowers isn't looking at banning them altogether. He would encourage the City to look at seven days if the City is going to restrict it, just because there are people that get together around fireworks. "I can't explain to you why, but we do." He added. By moving to four or three days, it does diminish their potential retail opportunities. It also limits the opportunity where they miss a weekend - that families might get together before they disperse elsewhere for the 4th. He went on to say that a lot of the ignition forces being talked about and a lot of the dryness is actually in the county. The city is highly irrigated. He's not going to say it all is, there are dry spots in the city. He reminded Council that the ordinance only pertains to city limits. Even if Council bans them for the first six days and only allows four days, he's concerned it could be more dangerous for the public. He referenced an example from the prohibition. He has a concern about a ban in the city limits. He personally thinks "We are better irrigated in the city limits and Chief Flower's staff would have more access to water, fire hydrants, truck access rather than the county." His concern is that fireworks will still be available and "We will push people out of the city limits." He concluded by saying for what they do as a family and what they are able to give back to the community as a family, and the time it takes to be unpaid for all of those, it actually drives up every fireworks season. He added that he appreciated Council's time and he's available if there are other questions.

Eric Wilcox, 2445 Country Club Road, Gering, stated that with this also being the nation's 250th year and Discount Firework's 50th. He has been in the community most of his adult life. He started selling fireworks with his dad when he was five. They've been through dry spells; fireworks are totally different now than what they used to be. One of the things they pride themselves on is handing out informational sheets to the public on fire safety. He's also willing to share or partner on some public service announcements - "If it's dry, don't let them fly." He stated that throughout the years, they have employed hundreds of students. If Council reduces the season, he has to reduce their hours. He noted that even though he retails in Scottsbluff, he was on the Proposition No. 1 Committee and he donated towards that campaign through his business and personally. He currently sits on the Economic Development Citizens Advisory Committee for Gering, and for almost 20 years he has been on the Scotts Bluff County Planning Commission. He's able to do that because of the revenue he makes in those 10 days. There are plenty of families that come back the first weekend from out of town that do stuff with their families; this would take that opportunity away. He stated "You're talking hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and Fresh Foods because if people aren't going to have a barbecue the weekend before, you're going to see a major revenue decrease, not just fireworks sales."

He noted that he does feel for the fires that have happened. He recalled that in 2012, within the city limits, there was an emergency meeting, and they went ahead and had a season because "we were within city limits. We do have irrigation; we are not on water restrictions at this time." He doesn't see that happening until maybe August if the drought issue continues, but by then, fireworks season will be over. By current state laws and statutes, Scotts Bluff County does not have the ability to ban fireworks in the county. "So, if you push people out where it is dry, we're going to have more issues. Those were issues that were talked about back in 2012 and in 2004 when they were looking at dry conditions, too." The key to him is educating the consumer when they come in. He then handed out plastic bags that had fire safety tips on them. He stated "Be aware of where you are lighting them. If it's dry around your area, clean it up." It's educating the public just like it is with anything else. Council has his email and phone number and can reach out to him anytime with questions. He would like an opportunity for them to be able to sit in on the Public Safety Committee meeting so the retailers with the knowledge and experience would be able to give their side. Right now, he has 20 some employees that are in that junior high/high school/college age, and he has six teachers that are planning on this for their summer income. If he doesn't have the ability to have consumers light fireworks, he has to cut their hours. He added that it's not just going to affect his livelihood, it will affect quite a few. Most of them are Gering residents or their parents are. He thanked Council for their time.

Eric Anderson, 2755 Chinoe Rd., Gering, stated that 1985 is when he had his first job working for Mr. Wilcox's dad; he has ever since had a fondness for fireworks. He's concerned about a comment that was made that controlled fireworks are awesome, but all the other people are a concern. "We are all smart individuals and we can be trusted to shoot fireworks off." He stated shortening that window takes away the opportunity for families to get together. It takes away the opportunity for this town to have sales tax revenue. And that's a tough thing. He went on to say that "We talked about something that's a great concern to me right now. And that's something that got snuck by us, and that's when you guys talked about what you're going to do to my 10th Street. For you guys to vote and say it's a good thing to turn 10th Street into a two-lane road, that is a horrible idea. And for you guys to advertise that it's going to reduce accidents by 47% is misleading, and it is so disrespectful to the knowledge of the people that live in this community. They deserve better from you than what you've given them." He commended one Council Member for saying no. "And after taking an opportunity to purchase a property on that 10th Street, to think that you want to take two thirds of my traffic away because you don't care about where I'm at or what I'm doing, is discouraging from the City of Gering." He hopes it gets readdressed and stated "And to think that for an extra two million, we're talking \$20,000,000, the Council could have proposed a five lane. But we kept that on hushes too, correct? You just weren't thinking, you were in such a hurry you had to go the easy way."

Curtis Richter, 495 2nd Street, Gering, stated regarding the 10th Street Corridor, he's approaching it from two different hats. In his position with the County, he appreciated the City approaching him for input regarding SS4A. They talked at length and he attended a number of committee meetings. When this was recently discussed at a Council meeting, he was at a national conference. What was talked about at that meeting was completely different than what was talked about at the last committee meeting. He sent a letter to his Council Members who are not present at this meeting. He went on to say that Council has discussions on economic development and a new housing development in Gering – more people, more traffic. He then read the letter aloud "so it's on record":

Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed 10th Street Corridor Lane Reduction

Dear Ward IV City Council Representatives,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed reduction of the 10th Street corridor from four lanes to two lanes between U Street and Twin City Drive.

While I understand the City's desire to address pavement conditions and infrastructure costs, I believe reducing this corridor from its current four-lane configuration would create significant long-term issues for traffic flow, safety, and business access in one of Gering's most heavily traveled commercial areas.

Several concerns deserve careful consideration before moving forward with this road diet proposal:

Traffic Volume and Future Capacity - This corridor serves as a major east-west transportation route for Gering and carries substantial daily traffic. Before any lane reduction is considered, current traffic count data and projected future traffic demands should be fully evaluated and made available to the public. Reducing capacity on such a critical corridor risks creating unnecessary congestion, especially during peak travel times.

High Truck Traffic - 10th Street experiences consistent commercial truck traffic. Larger vehicles require more space to maneuver safely and can significantly impact traffic flow when lane capacity is reduced. A two-lane configuration could create bottlenecks and increase delays for both commercial and passenger traffic.

40 MPH Speed Limit - The posted speed limit along this corridor is 40 mph. At this speed, reducing lane availability could increase the potential for rear-end collisions and abrupt braking as vehicles slow to make turns or respond to congestion.

I do, however, support the proposed transition to a two-lane plus center turn lane configuration between M Street and U Street. That section of corridor presents substantially different traffic characteristics, including greater pedestrian activity, bicycle traffic, nearby residential access, and more frequent crossing movements. In that area, the safety benefits of traffic calming and improved multimodal accommodation are clear and appropriate. My concerns are specific to extending that same design westward from U Street to Twin City Drive, where traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, truck usage, and commercial access demands create a significantly different roadway environment that warrants maintaining the existing four-lane configuration.

****Business Access** **I do, however, support the proposed transition to a two-lane plus center turn lane configuration between M Street and U Street. That section of corridor presents substantially different traffic characteristics, including greater pedestrian activity, bicycle traffic, nearby residential access, and more frequent crossing movements. In that area, the safety benefits of traffic calming and improved multimodal accommodation are clear and appropriate. My concerns are specific to extending that same design westward from U Street to Twin City Drive, where traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, truck usage, and commercial access demands create a significantly different roadway environment that warrants maintaining the existing four-lane configuration.

Turn Lane Functionality - This stretch contains a high concentration of businesses with employees, customers, delivery vehicles, and service traffic entering and exiting throughout the day. The center turn lane is critical for maintaining traffic flow and allowing safe access to these businesses. Any design that reduces through-lane capacity places greater pressure on turning movements and could negatively impact both safety and accessibility.

Condition of Existing Right-Hand Lanes - The reduced use of the right-hand lanes—particularly when those lanes are already in poor condition—should not be used as justification for permanently eliminating them. If deterioration has made portions of the roadway less desirable for regular use, that points to a maintenance issue, not a traffic design issue.

Willingness to Support Infrastructure Investment - While I recognize that taxes are already a concern for many residents, I believe most constituents would be amenable to paying more if necessary to preserve a safer, more functional four-lane corridor with a dedicated center turn lane. Investing in proper reconstruction and maintenance now would likely prove far more beneficial and cost-effective than implementing a lane reduction that may need to be revisited later.

I respectfully urge the Council to reconsider this proposal and instead pursue options that maintain the current four-lane plus center turn lane configuration. At a minimum, I encourage transparent public review of traffic studies, engineering analyses, and business impact assessments before any final decision is made.

10th Street is a vital commercial corridor for our community, and decisions regarding its future should prioritize safety, accessibility, and long-term functionality.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these concerns.

Mike Bruner, 1785 21st Street, Gering, stated regarding the fireworks ordinance discussed earlier in the meeting, no matter how low the chances are, "Do you really want to be the one to say it was okay this year?". Everyone is talking about doing something, Minatare, Alliance, Scottsbluff. He stated "Be the leader, do something first." He added "Don't let the enjoyment of some and the monetary benefit of a few taint your decision. And remember, common sense is so uncommon that it now qualifies as a super power. The general public doesn't have it."

Michele Mahaffey, 450 19th Street, Gering, stated that she respected all the information Chief Flowers presented at this meeting; it was very informative. She supports the Allreds; one event is a great idea, like they used to do at the college; she likes the fact that it's controlled by the fire department. What she doesn't like is her neighborhood. She stated "These people are idiots; that's the only word I can come up. It's a war zone for 10 nights. You can't see across the street, I have headaches, my dogs... it's awful, they caught my yard on fire and it wasn't even a

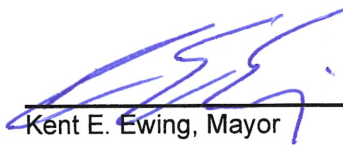
drought season." She asked Council to use common sense. She referred to the materials Mr. Wilcox handed out pertaining to public education. She stated that unfortunately, people don't read it; they aren't going to abide by it. All they want to do is fire those things off. Additionally, she doesn't think families are going to come to Gering just for fireworks. If she's going to go see her family, she's going because she wants to see her family and spend time with them; that isn't going to affect her family coming here because they can't shoot off fireworks for 10 days. She stated "Common sense – July 1st through the 4th. Cut it down over a few days, not the whole thing. Make it more usable for Nathan and his team; they're already stressed out and pulled in every direction." She asked "Do we really want them in worse conditions than that, to the fact that they can't get to somebody's house?" She noted that Administrator Heath lives near her and asked how he'd feel if his house caught on fire or her house, and added that it's going to affect somebody - it can happen; it really can. She stated that she really hopes Council will use their common sense. Everybody will survive without fireworks. She hates that it might take away somebody's paycheck, but she doesn't want to lose her house or property either. She concluded by saying "As a citizen, please use that common sense factor, use what Nathan has to say, support the local guys that are doing a controlled thing like Allreds." She encouraged them to go to an event like that and see the community support that like it used to at the college years ago. She knows they can't change the ordinance permanently, but cut it down to maybe prevent some issues this year; she would really appreciate that.

Kevin Hauser, 2596 21st Street, Gering, stated regarding the 10th Street project, he would agree with Mr. Anderson that it is not a good idea at all - taking four lanes of traffic down to two on the City's busiest street on the City's largest truck route in front of a lot of businesses. In front of an area where the City should focus on rehabilitating, beautifying, and making it a better area. It's just a bad idea. "You're going to impact so many businesses and all of your citizens." He suggested they take a look at what happened in Scottsbluff when they changed Broadway from four lanes to two and how much that impacted, how much congestion it created especially at the railroad crossing. If Council wants to take a look at what this is going to do, look at Avenue I at the railroad crossing (in Scottsbluff). It's two lanes of traffic that get backed up continuously throughout the day, anytime a train comes through, for blocks. It's going to be worse in Gering because the traffic level is higher. There's a street light right across the railroad tracks. It's going to make safety an even worse issue. The tracks on Ave. I in Scottsbluff are just one set of tracks. He asked "How often do we have two trains coming through at the same time?" He added that if it's an issue of getting money to fund repaving it because of disrepair, find another avenue or option. He asked Council to use common sense. "You don't want to bottleneck all of your traffic into Gering just to get some additional funding. Make Gering be welcoming, have people want to come in instead of closing it off."

ADJOURN:


Motion by Councilmember Gillen to adjourn. Second by Councilmember Cecil. There was no discussion. Mayor Ewing called for the vote. AYES": Shields, Gillen, Cecil, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Kinsey, Jackson. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Kent E. Ewing, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathleen J. Welfl, City Clerk



