

THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY OF GERING RECREATION, AMUSEMENT AND CULTURAL COMMITTEE, AUGUST 18, 2026

A City of Gering Recreation Committee meeting was held in open session on August 18, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. at Gering City Hall, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE. Present were Councilmembers Wiedeman, Shields, Kinsey, Jackson, Cecil, as well as Mayor Ewing, Administrator Heath, Director of Parks and Recreation Amy Seiler, Police Chief George Holthus, and City Clerk Kathy Welfl. Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Star-Herald (the designated method of giving notice) on August 13, 2026. All proceedings hereafter were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public except as otherwise indicated.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Wiedeman called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

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

Chairperson Wiedeman stated: As required by State Law, public bodies shall make available current copies of the Open Meetings Act which are located on the counter by the press corps. in the meeting room. Per the Open Meetings Act, discussion is limited to the item shown on the agenda. 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 Rec Committee determines the matter requires emergency action.

1. Consider recommendation to Council regarding a 2027 summer baseball team at Oregon Trail Park Stadium

Chairperson Wiedeman stated that the Summer Baseball Team Sub-Committee conducted interviews with three very good baseball organizations on August 17. The interview committee was comprised of Councilmembers Wiedeman and Shields (Rec Committee Chair and Vice-Chair respectively), Administrator Heath, Director of Parks and Recreation Amy Seiler, and Police Chief George Holthus. She noted that all three candidates were very qualified and had impressive proposals; "They are people who want to be here." Each interview committee member then shared with the Recreation Committee their list of pros and cons for each proposal.

Diamond League (based out of Lawrence, KS)

Pros

- Very organized and purposeful presentation
- Very systems/process-oriented
- Owned by a league but are open to partnering with local investors to create local connections
- Believes the team should be an asset to the community and something to be proud of and create relationships with players
- Willing to invest in the fields and has shown that commitment in Grand Island
- Wood-bat collegiate league
- Partners have 100 years of combined experience in college leagues, minor leagues, and pro teams
- Potential for Colorado expansion
- Charter/school bus travel
- Citizens choose team name
- GM and other specifically trained and interested in sports management profession
- Six-team league; all teams owned by league
- Sports marketing/analysis experience
- Professional business
- Spreads risk throughout the league
- Would use this as an opportunity to open front range teams

- Values honesty and transparency
- Long-term vision

Cons

- League is only one year in existence (but has a lot of experience with minor leagues and pro teams)
- Travel area - are exploring moving into Colorado but have not made the connections yet
- Appears to be a large organized company (will they stay with low attendance?)
- GM is the face of the team, no local owner
- Very corporate
- Employees from here, owner not local
- Has teamworks.com recruiting
- A lot of travel at first due to distance of teams

Pecos League (based out of Houston, TX)

Pros

- Largest Class B semi-pro baseball league in America
- League has shown reliability and consistency as it was founded in 2011
- League has 16 teams with two divisions - all owned by league
- League owns all of the teams
- Has come in behind a failing organization and rebuilt relationships in communities
- Has staff that is able to take care of the fields
- 12 years as a league owner, great experience
- Has come to Gering and toured the facility
- Very direct
- Had a team in North Platte, knows what works and what doesn't

Cons

- Travel distance
- Players are typically out of college and older, but typically not over the age of 25
- Concerns about the ability to find host families for older players
- Only two to three home games per week
- Owner would not live in our community
- Travel; one van and car pools
- Most have games on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
- Needs storage building
- Prefers locker rooms
- Different level of baseball
- GM face of team, no local owner

Independence League (based out of Tampa, FL)

Pros

- Presentation was very well done, appears to have put a great deal of thought into proposal
- Has run a very successful business. Has proven that he is process-oriented and can operate at a high level
- Has owned the Caldwell team and then successfully moved it to Casper following a failing organization

- Worked with a potential owner to establish the team and put things in place for a successful team sale
- 17 years of experience in the wood-bat leagues
- Willing to invest in the stadium/facilities
- Appears to have the financial foundation to be successful
- Collegiate wood-bat league
- Shortest travel distances
- Travels by charter bus
- Dedicates and donates to community
- Possible expansion in 2027 and 2028
- Strict policies and procedures for team, coaches, and staff
- Great enthusiasm and interest
- Positive impact on community (hotels and taxes)
- He will own, not league-owned
- Has extensive marketing department in FL
- Has name, colors, and mascot figured out

Cons

- Non-present owner
- Does not see NIL as a recruitment issue; will we get high quality baseball?
- Did not have many questions for the City
- Did not seem to want to find out what Gering is really looking for
- Cashless ballpark concept
- Only three teams currently, but adding two in 2027
- Low estimated salary for GM; GM is the face of team
- Team details already decided
- Stadium lease \$23,000
- Used to bigger markets
- Not really familiar with community
- Will be here to train and then leave

George noted that all three proposals had similar ticket prices. Councilmember Jackson asked which of the three would give the highest quality of baseball. Amy replied that it's hard to say. Most of these teams, and they will tell you this, "You're not going to get many division 1 athletes playing baseball because of NIL." The reasons include: Nobody's going to put their pitching people out there and market them to a whole bunch of other teams that they could pick up. What that means, and they will tell you this also, pitching is going to be mid-level. Councilmember Kinsey noted that fans like homeruns anyway, not pitching battles. Susan added that they would primarily recruit out of D2, D3, NAIA, and JUCO.

James asked who the interview committee thought would be the most successful. It was agreed that they think all three would be very successful. B.J. stated that he thinks it will be hard for players of the Pecos League to stay with host families and then drive 500 miles to games. He thinks that would be a hard sell; Gering would be the farthest away from all the other team locations.

James asked about the "Sugar beets" uniform color. George replied it's for breast cancer awareness. Rebecca added that they have six different uniforms. The players just have to pay a deposit on the uniforms but they do not have to pay to be on the team, as was done previously. James expressed concern about the cashless system. B.J. noted that he didn't think it was a huge deal given this day and age; he doesn't like it either, but it's coming. Everyone noted there would be a little push back the first season, but people will adapt.

Pat stated that with the three proposals that were received, and the pros and cons, any one of these leagues/teams would be excellent for Gering. The question is, how do they go about deciding which one? He suggested the Rec Committee allow them to work on negotiating a little bit. He thinks that's the best route to take, not to make a recommendation at this time - allow staff to negotiate a little bit and see "which one is going to fit the best with our city."

B.J. noted that the first and third teams are probably more suitable for Gering. He likes the Pecos League, but has concerns with the distance; they might be the choice if they weren't so far. James suggested looking at what's best for the City - if they can pay, follow the rules, take care of the facilities, etc. Rebecca noted that one of the leagues invested in one of the stadiums they play at. Councilmember Cecil stated that they each bring their own thing to add to the community. He thinks it would be good to negotiate with all of the teams; they all have something to invest in the community. Susan added that they would all be very involved in the community and have different programs to reach out to the youth.

Pat stated that it's going to be a tough decision; he thinks all three put a very good product together and would have a good entertainment value for the community. B.J. asked if they would pay a lease. Pat replied, yes. Rebecca asked a follow up question of how many years; Pat replied that hasn't been decided yet. Susan stated that any recommendation the Recreation Committee makes to Council will be pending negotiations. B.J. agreed that the Recreation Committee should hold off for now until there are negotiations, and they learn more about recruiting, travel, etc. Susan noted that the Sugar Beets and the Diamond League would both go by charter or school bus.

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

CLOSED SESSION: The Recreation Committee reserves the right to enter into closed session if deemed necessary. None.

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Submitted by,
Kathy Welfl, City Clerk