



# Talk of the Town

436-5096 \* [www.gering.org](http://www.gering.org)

February 2017

A publication of the City of Gering

It's winter in Nebraska. We've had some cold temps and a few big snow storms. Naturally our homes are colder this time of year causing our heaters to work harder and possibly increasing utility bills. The City of Gering wants to help you be efficient with your heating methods and energy resources which in turn can help keep your utility costs down. The energy saving tips below were brought to you by the Consumer Energy Center.



## SAVING *and money!* ENERGY



**1. AIR DRY:** Air dry dishes instead of using your dishwasher's drying cycle.

**2. TURN IT OFF:** Use timers and motion detectors to turn off lights and be sure to unplug TV entertainment systems when travelling (use power strips for easy on/off switching) and don't leave your computer and monitor on needlessly.

**3. DON'T GET BURNED WITH HOT WATER:** Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120F. Water heaters are the second highest source of energy use in the home.

**4. FILL IT UP:** Wash only full loads of dishes and clothes.

**5. KEEP 'EM CLEAN:** Check furnace, heat pump, and AC filters once a month and replace them regularly. A dirty air filter can increase your energy costs and cause problems with your equipment.

**6. GET A CHECK UP:** Get your heating system checked once a year. A licensed professional will make sure that your system is operating efficiently and safely. Checkups can identify problems early.

**7. STOP THE BREEZE:** Caulk and weather-strip around drafty doors and windows.

**8. GET AN AUDIT:** Your utility company may offer free energy audits that can identify expensive energy losses in your basement, unfinished rooms, attics and leaky ductwork. Sealing your ducts can give big savings on energy bills and help keep you from turning up the thermostat because of one cold room.

**9. TAKE A WALK:** Circle your home with an easy-to-use spray foam insulation and look for openings and gaps around pipes, chimneys, lights, windows and basement brick and cement work.

**10. GET WITH THE PROGRAM:** Install a programmable thermostat which automatically adjusts the temperature during the day or at night, keeping you from forgetting as you dash off to work. A programmable thermostat can save you up to \$100 a year.

**11. STAY BRIGHT:** As "old-school" incandescent light bulbs burn out, replace them with new, light emitting diode bulbs (LEDs) and save about \$90 a year in electricity costs. You pay more up-front, but shop around, prices are dropping. They use up to 25% less energy, can last up to twelve times longer.

**12. BE A STAR:** Look for products and appliances that have earned the ENERGY STAR label. They meet strict new energy efficiency criteria that will reduce your utility bills. ENERGY STAR clothes washers, for example, use approximately 40% less water and 25% less energy for washing than standard models. For more energy-saving information visit [energysaver.gov](http://energysaver.gov) or [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov).



**The City of Gering is hiring for the following positions:**

### Electric Line Apprentice -

This is an assistant-type position in the installation, maintenance and repair of overhead and underground electric distribution systems. This person is engaged in a training period for four years duration. After completion of the training period, the apprentice then may be classified as a Journeyman Lineman. During the apprenticeship, the person in this position assists other linemen on all phases of installation, maintenance and repair of the electrical distribution and line system of the City. Closing date for applications will be Friday, March 31, 2017 at 4:30 p.m.

### Electric Journeyman -

This person performs skilled line work in the operation, maintenance and repair of overhead and underground electrical distribution systems and operates a variety of s

pecialized related equipment and vehicles. Work is performed with some independence with respect to method and procedure when assignments are received. Closing date for applications will be Friday, March 31, 2017 at 4:30 p.m.

### Police Officer -

Performs police patrol, investigation, traffic regulation and related law enforcement activities. Persons in this position have the responsibility of enforcing the ordinances and criminal laws of the City of Gering, State of Nebraska and the United States of America. Closing date for applications will be Friday, March 3, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. Applications are available online at [www.gering.org](http://www.gering.org) or at City Hall located at 1025 P Street, Gering, NE.

### Seasonal Summer Positions -

Positions will be available for the summer season in Parks, Pool, Cemetery, Water/Wastewater, Golf Maintenance and Streets. Positions will be available until filled. The City will begin taking applications for these positions beginning March 1, 2017.

Applications are available on the City's website: [www.gering.org](http://www.gering.org) or at 1025 P Street, Gering, NE.

# Your City

## GOVERNMENT

### Commonly asked Questions about City Government:

#### When does the Gering City Council meet?

Answer: Regular meetings, by ordinance, are scheduled on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 6 p.m. unless they fall on a holiday or if Council votes to cancel the meeting or change the date. The Council may also schedule special or emergency meetings when deemed necessary.

#### When does Council review/discuss the proposed upcoming fiscal year budget?

Council attends a Budget Workshop, that is open to the public, in July or August of each year. The date/time of the budget workshop is published in the public notice section of the newspaper (Star-Herald). It will also be posted on the City's website: [www.gering.org](http://www.gering.org). In addition, the City will publish the date and time of the 2017 Budget Workshop in the next newsletter scheduled for June of 2017.

#### May I address the City Council at a meeting?

The public may address Council during the open comment section of a City Council meeting. However, because it is considered unscheduled business Council cannot take action or discuss your issue. If you wish to put a specific item on the Council agenda you may complete a "Request for

Future Agenda Item" form. Staff will review the completed form and determine if the matter should be placed on a Council agenda or if it can be addressed by staff.

**Public Hearings:** For certain items of business Council must, by statute, conduct public hearings. The public is welcomed and encouraged to attend public hearings to state their support or opposition to various matters such as the annual budget, zoning changes, TIF and other matters that require a public hearing.

#### How do I contact a Council Member?

Council Member email addresses are available on the City's website, they are also show below:

Dan Smith: [dsmith@gering.org](mailto:dsmith@gering.org) - Ward I  
Michael Gillen: [mgillen@gering.org](mailto:mgillen@gering.org) - Ward II  
Ben Backus: [bbackus@gering.org](mailto:bbackus@gering.org) - Ward III  
Phil Holliday: [pholliday@gering.org](mailto:pholliday@gering.org) - Ward IV  
Susan Wiedeman:  
[swiedeman@gering.org](mailto:swiedeman@gering.org) - Ward I  
Pam O'Neal: [poneal@gering.org](mailto:poneal@gering.org) - Ward II  
Julie Morrison: [jmorrison@gering.org](mailto:jmorrison@gering.org) - Ward III  
Troy Cowan: [tcowan@gering.org](mailto:tcowan@gering.org) - Ward IV  
Mayor Tony Kaufman: [mayorkaufman@gering.org](mailto:mayorkaufman@gering.org)

Phone numbers for Council Members are also available on the City's website.



## Your cooperation is needed...

During the recent snow storms of January 4, 2017 and January 24, 2017, City staff observed snow from several driveways and sidewalks that was pushed into the street.

City of Gering Ordinance 76.04 "Driveways and Snow Removal from Private Property" states that snow from a private driveway, private sidewalk, business driveway, or parking lot



may not be placed on a city street. The penalty could be a citation and punishable by a fine.

City of Gering Zoning and Subdivision Regulations Section 10.1: Visibility at Intersections indicates that a sight triangle shall be provided and nothing shall be placed above 2-1/2 feet in height within 50 feet of the intersection (sight triangle) in such a manner as to impede vision at the intersection. During the recent snow storms City staff observed snow from several driveways and sidewalks piled at intersections that have caused line of sight issues at some intersections. This could also result in a citation and punishable by a fine.

**In addition, for public safety, the City is asking Citizens not to pile snow within 8 feet of a fire hydrant.**

**The City is reaching out to all Citizens in an effort to gain your voluntary compliance with City Ordinances.**

If you should have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the City of Gering at 436-5096.



# Working

## SMOKE ALARMS

### SAVE LIVES



A portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives; but portable extinguishers have limitations. Because fire grows and spreads so rapidly, the number one priority for residents is to get out safely.

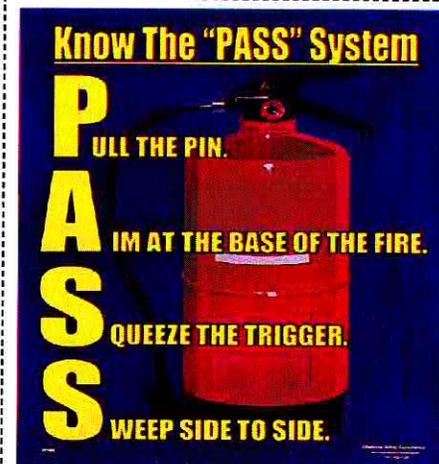
**Safety tips:** Use a portable fire extinguisher when the fire is confined to a small area, such as a wastebasket, and is not growing; everyone has exited the building; the fire department has been called or is being called; and the room is not filled with smoke.

To operate a fire extinguisher, remember the word **PASS**:

- **Pull the pin. Hold the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from you, and release the locking mechanism.**
- **Aim low. Point the extinguisher at the base of the fire.**
- **Squeeze the lever slowly and evenly.**
- **Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side.**

For the home, select a multi-purpose extinguisher (can be used on all types of home fires) that is large enough to put out a small fire, but not so heavy it's difficult to handle. Install fire extinguishers close to an exit and keep your back to a clear exit when you use the device so you can make an easy escape if the fire cannot be controlled. If the room fills with smoke, leave immediately.

**Know when to go.** Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan, but the primary element is safe escape. Every household should have a home fire escape plan and working smoke alarms.



## Fire Safety Tips

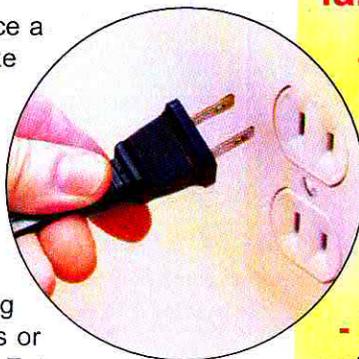
### Electrical Safety

- Have all electrical work done by a qualified electrician.
- Only plug one heat-producing appliance (such as a coffee maker, toaster, space heater, etc.) into a receptacle outlet at one time.
- Major appliances should be plugged directly into a wall outlet; do not use extension cords or plug strips.
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to reduce the risk of shock.

GFCIs shut off an electrical circuit when it becomes a shock hazard. They should be installed inside the home in bathrooms, kitchens, garages and basements.

- Test AFCIs once a month to make sure they are working properly
- Check electrical cords to make sure they are not running across doorways or under carpets. Extension cords are intended for temporary use.
- Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the lamp or fixture.

Source: NFPA



### Call a qualified electrician or your landlord if you have:

- Frequent problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers.
- A tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance.
- Discolored or warm wall outlet.
- A burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance.
- Flickering or dimming lights.

# DOG PARK



## Community Members Work with the City on a plan to create a Dog Park in Gering

- by Amber Schiltz

A group of local community members have begun working with the City of Gering to establish a five-acre, off-leash dog park recreation area on the Southwest corner of Five Rocks Road and U Street. The community members belong to the Common Grounds Dog Park Committee (CGDPC), a non-profit organization dedicated to establishing and supporting a dog park in the Scottsbluff/Gering community.

"We believe that developing a dog park would promote responsible dog ownership, provide a safe environment for citizens to exercise their dogs and provide a common ground that enhances a thriving community," said Stacey Fisher, CGDPC President.

While the CGDPC would work to raise the project funds and rally community support, the City of Gering would work closely with the group to provide support and guidance during the development of the park. Once the park is established, the City will add it to their existing park system and help maintain it for the community. The park will be completely fenced around the five acres of land, and will have separate sections for small dogs and timid dogs in addition to the large free play area.

Today approximately 37-47% of all United States families own a dog, making them more present in our community and more important than ever in our homes. Off-leash dog parks are a growing trend among communities across America, and provide many benefits to dog owners, dogs and the community alike. Having a dog park in the community can promote responsible pet ownership and an active lifestyle for dog-owning residents. They can also serve as a destination for the many

tourists who prefer traveling with their canine companion.

Dog parks in the community can even improve health and safety. Dogs that are allowed to exercise are better neighbors and

are less likely to create a nuisance with excessive barking. Additionally, well-socialized dogs that are able to play with other animals and people, other than their owners, are more adjusted and less of a danger. Lastly when people and their dogs recreate at off-leash dog parks there are less instances of people illegally exercising their dogs off leash in other city parks, which also decreases the amount of dog feces found in City parks and the community.

If the Scottsbluff and Gering communities share a similar dog-owning rate to the rest of the nation, there could be anywhere from 3,000 to 4,000 dogs in the greater twin cities area, which proves the need for a large fenced in off-leash dog park.

"Establishing this dog park will provide a beautiful space for dogs, their owners and tourists to recreate freely, exercise together and meet and socialize with other community members. We are so

excited about this worthwhile project and are looking forward to breaking ground on the park as soon as we raise the funds!" said Amber Schiltz, CGDPC secretary.

The organization estimates that the initial infrastructure cost of establishing phase one of the dog park will range from \$45,000 to \$55,000; they plan on submitting grants, using a crowdsourcing funding website, working with local business sponsors and seeking private donations. Phase one consists of all fencing, water

hydrants, signs, parking lot, etc. Eventually the group plans to raise an additional \$30,000 for Phase Two of the project, which would include an ADA accessible paved walking path around the perimeter of the park, a dog agility course and a dog water feature.

The City of Gering Recreation Standing Committee has met twice with the CGDPC to learn more about their plans for a dog park in Gering. While the project will require Council approval, the Recreation Committee agrees that this would be a nice addition to the City.

If you are interested in learning how you can help with this project or would like more information, contact Amber Schiltz at [amberfan17@gmail.com](mailto:amberfan17@gmail.com).



# BACKFLOW PREVENTION

**Backflow prevention is necessary to ensure that the water we get from our faucets and taps is safe to drink.**

State of Nebraska Statutes require all public water systems to conduct an ongoing program to detect and eliminate cross connections. There are many different ways to prevent backflow from occurring, this article will introduce you to some of these methods, devices and assemblies, and point out where they might be found and why they are there.

**AIR GAP** - Air gaps are the most common means of protecting against backflow, and they are also the best protection. An air gap is simply a physical break between the source of the water and the container into which it is running

Air gaps are built in to most sinks found in residences. Kitchen and bathroom sinks, as well as, bathtubs, showers, washing machines and dish washers are designed with an air gap to protect the water supply. Placing a hose on the end of these faucets will render the air gap useless and could allow the contents of the sink to be drawn back into the water supply. Water bed filler kits and old fashioned spray hoses that fit over the faucet are common ways of bypassing an air gap. *These should be avoided at all costs.*

**HOSE BIB VACUUM BREAKERS** - Most houses have hose bibs installed on them so that the owner can use a garden hose to water the lawn and gardens, or use it to wash the car or do other chores that require water.

Newer hose bibs are constructed with a built-in vacuum breaker to prevent backflow, but many older homes do not have this type of outside faucet.



These older faucets need to be protected with a hose-bib vacuum breaker which can be screwed onto the hose bib, and the hose is then attached to the vacuum breaker. These vacuum breakers need to be left on the hose bib to prevent backsiphonage occurring in the event of a loss of water pressure. The contents of any

container on the end of the hose could be siphoned back into the water system if this vacuum breaker is removed. No one wants to drink the contents of a baby pool, a hot tub or the bucket of suds used to wash the car. If you do not have hose bibs with built-in protection or hose bib vacuum breakers installed, you can purchase these from your local hardware store or plumber and install them yourself.

**PRESSURE VACUUM BREAKERS** - Pressure vacuum breakers are the newest testable backflow preventers available. These testable backflow preventers are primarily found on underground sprinkler systems to protect against backsiphonage.

There are many different manufacturers of pressure vacuum breakers, and some of them may look a little different than this picture, but they all function pretty much the same way. There is a check valve inside of the assembly that has a spring keeping it closed so no water can pass back through the assembly if the supply pressure drops for any reason. There is a spring in the top of the assembly that will open an inlet valve which allows air into the system to break the siphon affect and allow the water downstream to flow out of the piping. These devices are very good at preventing backflow on sprinkler systems. City of Gering plumbing codes require all new underground sprinkler systems to be protected by pressure vacuum breakers. It should be noted that this protection is in the best interest of every homeowner as any contamination pooled around a sprinkler head, such as pesticides, herbicides or animal waste could be siphoned into their water pipes anytime there is a loss of pressure. This loss of pressure could be from the water supplier or due to plumbing repairs within the home itself.



**DOUBLE CHECK VALVES** - Double check valves are good protection for low hazards, which are hazards that are not harmful to human health.

Breweries, vineyards and food services are examples of low hazards. Since most inside uses of water in homes are protected with built-in air gaps, these assem-

blies are seldom found in residential buildings, though homes that are heated with boilers connected to the public water supply system may need one of these installed on the boiler feed line. Where they are installed, they must be tested annually by a grade 6 licensed tester to insure they are functioning properly.

**REDUCED PRESSURE PRINCIPLE BACKFLOW PREVENTER** - These assemblies are used in situations where a high hazard exists, and an air gap cannot be used.



This can occur when water pressure is required beyond the point of protection. In this case, an air gap would not likely work well as water pressure can only occur beyond the air gap if a pump is installed to place the water back under pressure.

These assemblies are not common in homes; though homes that are heated with boilers connected to the public water supply system may need one of these installed on the boiler feed line. As with the other assemblies, a reduced pressure principal backflow preventer will have to be tested on an annual basis by a licensed backflow tester to insure it is operating properly. If you find one of the testable backflow preventers on your property, you should check with the City to determine if you need to have it tested on a routine basis, or if there is any regular maintenance that needs to be performed.

**SURVEY YOUR RESIDENCE** - Homeowners should inspect their plumbing to determine if they have any of these devices or assemblies installed. State Statutes require every homeowner and business to survey their facilities every five years. The City mails surveys to customers every five years. Surveys are also available online <http://www.gering.org/departments-services/public-works/water-department> and at City Hall. If you need assistance completing the survey you can call the water department at 436-6834.

**Preventing backflow is the responsibility of all customers of the water system, and the safe water that results from installing proper protection benefits everyone.**

# Gering Public Library



The Gering Public Library hosted a re-imagining meeting January 12 with Joseph R. Hewgley and Associates and Humphries Poli Architects, to formulate a vision for our library. The goal of this process was to explore opportunities to improve our library, thus better serve the people of Gering. If you couldn't make it to the meeting, you can go to [www.gering.org/library](http://www.gering.org/library) to find a link to the re-imagining slideshow.

The architects bring this feedback to their drawing boards (so to speak) to review and note the most significant ideas presented by the community. These ideas are then incorporated in the design process moving forward.



## Did you get a tablet or other ebook device for Christmas?

Make an appointment with Sherry at the library to learn how to get ebooks or audiobooks from the Overdrive online library. "Overdrive has a whole library of books you can check out to listen to or read on your new device," according to Gering Library Director Diane Dower.

- New to the resources page at [www.gering.org/library](http://www.gering.org/library)
- Links to printable 2016 state and federal income tax forms
- Link to Nebraska practice driving tests
- Useful links on the Library website
- Encyclopedia Britannica
- NebraskAccess has a host of useful sites available with a password from the library

## The Gering Library Loves Kids!

The Gering Library has made it a priority to provide quality programming for kids of all ages. We have Toddler and Preschool Story Time, Lego Club, Craft Club, Coder Dojo, Movie of the Month, and Gaming Day which are held throughout the school year. Then during the summer of course we have the Summer Reading Program. Now we have added two more facets to our kids' programming.



The first new program is the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) which was formed this fall and has 12 active members ranging from 7th through 9th grade. They meet monthly to plan programs for teens in the community. They would like to have a program at least every other month. Other goals the TAB has is to conduct fundraisers for local groups such as the Panhandle Humane Society and possibly volunteer at the Riverside Zoo. The first event the TAB held was a bake sale fundraiser at the library to raise money for teen programs. The event was very successful thanks to community and library patron support. The funds that were raised helped to provide popcorn for a Teen Movie Matinee that was held in the library community room January 21. Teens in grades 7-12 are welcome and invited to join TAB.

The second new program is in the planning stages and is set to begin in March. It is called LEAP! (Learn, Explore, Achieve, Play!). It is a weekly evening program for parents and children ages 2-5. The program will focus on mostly open-ended fine motor skills activities as well as early literacy and math activities. Parents will be encouraged to interact with their children as they explore and play so they will be involved in the learning process. The hour long program will always begin with a short storytime and sometimes the directed activities will revolve around the story and or the theme. Registration will be required for this program and more information will be forthcoming when the official start date is set.

Please contact youth services librarian, Christie Clarke for more information about any of our kids' programming or to be involved with our TAB.

## Community Conversations with Pam O'Neal and Michael Gillen

The Gering Public Library is hosting a series of open meetings with our local city government officials. "This will be a great opportunity for Gering citizens to speak directly with their local government officials," said Library Director Diane Dower. Community Conversations will be held

at different times on different days throughout the year to allow everybody a chance to attend.

O'Neal and Gillen will be at the Gering Public Library on Thursday, February 16 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Stop by to visit with your Ward 2 Council members. Refreshments will be provided.

### QUESTIONS?

Contact the Gering Public Library at (308) 436-7433 or [gpl@geringlibrary.org](mailto:gpl@geringlibrary.org).



# Reminders

from the City of Gering

The Mayors Prayer Breakfast will be held May 4, 2017 at the Gering Civic Center at 6:45 a.m.

Please trim your trees in alleys to allow sanitation trucks to pass through easily!

Replace batteries in smoke detectors when Daylight Savings Time begins.

If you're building a garage, putting up a fence, adding on, installing a furnace, etc., don't forget to come to City Hall to get your permit!

## Environmental Services



### Solar Eclipse 2017

Watch for information about events in our area!

Yard Waste pick up begins in mid-April



### REMINDER!

PLEASE do **NOT** put plastic bags and glass in the recyclable containers at 9th and N Street and the Northfield Church locations. Thank you!

## Fast and Free Energy Tips

[ConsumerEnergyCenter.org](http://ConsumerEnergyCenter.org)



**Let the sunshine in** - Open drapes and let the sun heat your home for free (close again at sundown so they help insulate).

**Keep it shut** - Traditional fireplaces are an energy loser - it's best not to use them because they pull heated air out of the house and up the chimney. When not in use, make absolutely sure the damper is closed. If you decide not to use a fireplace, then block off the chimney with a piece of rigid insulation from the hardware store that fits snugly into

the space (dampers don't shut fully without some leaking).

**Eliminate wasted energy** - Turn off lights in unoccupied rooms. Unplug that spare refrigerator in the garage if you don't truly need it - this seemingly convenient way to keep extra drinks cold adds 10-25 percent to your electric bill. Turn off kitchen and bath-ventilating fans after they've done their job - these fans can blow out a house-full of heated air if inadvertently left on.

**Shorten showers** - Simply reducing shower time by a few minutes can save hundreds of gallons of hot water per month for a family of four. Showers account for 2/3 of your water heating costs. Cutting your showers in half will reduce your water heating costs by up to 33 percent.

**Use appliances efficiently** - Use the cold water setting on your clothes washer when you can. Using cold water reduces your washer's energy use by 75 percent.

**Put your computer and monitor to sleep** - Most computers come with the power man-

agement features turned off. On computers using Windows, open your power management software and set it so your computer goes to sleep if you're away from your machine for 5 to 15 minutes. Those who use Macintosh computers look for the setting in your Control Panels called "Energy Saver" and set it accordingly. When you're done using your computer, turn it off (see next tip). Do not leave it in sleep mode overnight as it is still drawing a small amount of power.

**"leaking energy" in electronics** - Many new TVs, chargers, computer peripherals and other electronics use electricity even when they are switched "off." Although these "standby losses" are only a few watts each, they add up to more than 50 watts in a typical home that is consumed all the time. If possible, unplug electronic devices and chargers that have a block-shaped transformer on the plug when they are not in use. For computer scanners, printers and other devices that are plugged into a power strip, switch off the power strip after shutting down your computer.