

**THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GERING CITY COUNCIL,
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021**

A special meeting of the City Council of Gering, Nebraska was held on September 1, 2021 at 5:15 p.m. at Gering City Hall Council Chambers, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE. Present were Mayor Kaufman and Councilmembers Gillen, Backus, Bohl, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison and Cowan. Also present were City Administrator Pat Heath and City Clerk Kathy Welfl. Absent was Councilmember Smith. Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Star-Herald, the designated method of giving notice. All proceedings hereafter were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public except as otherwise indicated.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kaufman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. A quorum of the Council was present and City business could be conducted.

1. Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer
2. Roll Call

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

Mayor Kaufman 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 Council determines that the matter requires emergency action.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Public Hearing for the purpose of hearing support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers and citizens relating to the City of Gering Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Proposed Budget

Mayor Kaufman opened a public hearing for the purpose of hearing support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers and citizens regarding the City of Gering Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Proposed Budget at 5:18 p.m.

Mayor Kaufman stated the following:

FY22 budgeted government-wide total revenues net of transfers is \$28,510,984 (increase due to ARPA funds, sales tax revenue projections, Muni Equalization payments from State).

FY21 budgeted government-wide total revenues net of transfers was \$26,833,140.

FY22 budgeted revenues - General Fund only \$5,282,657 (includes enterprise transfer in of \$1.93M and \$503,027 transfer in of sales tax revenue; no transfers in from sinking fund for capital purchases).

FY21 budgeted revenues - General Fund only \$5,308,348 (transfers in from sinking fund to cover capital purchases).

FY22 budgeted property tax revenues is \$1,767,985.

FY21 budgeted property tax revenues was \$1,688,429.

FY22 budgeted sales tax revenues is \$1,618,054.

FY21 budgeted sales tax revenues was \$1,565,000.

FY22 budgeted enterprise transfers is \$1,990,000.

FY21 budgeted enterprise transfers was \$1,897,575.

FY22 budgeted government-wide total expenditures is \$37,613,025 (includes capital expense of \$5,349,027, debt service \$1,210,679, contingencies \$750,000).

FY21 budgeted government-wide total expenditures was \$34,475,657 (includes capital expense of \$3,266,511, debt service \$1,342,640).

FY22 budgeted total operating expenses (excludes debt and capital expenses) \$27,586,219 (largest increase was payroll and benefits 4% COLA - \$241,420, also includes 5% increase in work comp insurance expense, 12.6% increase in property and vehicle insurance across all funds and 8% increase in liability insurance across all funds), additional expense budgeted for insurance repairs for hail storms.

FY21 budgeted total operating expenses (excludes debt and capital expenditures) \$26,000,414.

FY22 budgeted expenses - General Fund \$5,305,159 (includes \$22,000 in capital expenditures).

FY21 budgeted expenses - General Fund \$5,312,875 (included \$100,000 in capital expenditures).

FY22 budgeted operating expense for the General Fund without capital improvements or contingency is \$5,283,159.

FY21 budgeted operating expense for the General Fund without capital improvements or contingency was \$5,212,875.

FY22 Budgeted FTEs authorized is 87

FY21 Budgeted FTEs authorized was 84

Mayor Kaufman asked if anyone in the Council Chambers wished to speak in favor of the Fiscal Year 22 proposed budget.

Mike Brunner, 1785 21st Street in Gering, addressed the Council and thanked them and the department heads for the time they put in on the budget. He thinks everyone did a wonderful job. Having worn those shoes in the past, he knows what a time-consuming and thankless task this was. His major observation of the budget is the Electric Fund. It appears to be used as an escrow account and slush fund. The budget document anticipates approximately one and three quarter million dollars from personal and real property taxes, but over two million in transfers from surplus fees. If the utility fund has excess money to transfer every year to the General Fund, why increase utility fees? He noted that the Administrator's letter at the beginning of the budget document stated that municipal comparability data was used to see where Gering is on the user fee spectrum - "below on some and above on others". He asked, why not put us on the low end of all of them? There is obviously plenty of money left at the end of the year. Use this as a selling point to get young families to locate here. The city needs to grow and it needs families with children. Those are the folks who are probably on a budget; if you show them that the cost of living is cheaper and the quality of life is higher, they'll move here. He, like many, has an escrow on his home mortgage. At the end of the year, they settle up - like federal and state income taxes, you pay if you're short and enjoy a refund if you're over. The best way, the most money-smart way to end the year, is with a zero balance. He added that he probably tried to over-simplify a very complex document, but that is his observation.

Mayor Kaufman thanked Mr. Brunner for his comments.

Mayor Kaufman asked if anyone else wished to speak in favor of the proposed FY22 budget. Hearing none, he then asked twice if anyone wished to speak in opposition of the proposed FY22 budget. Hearing none, he asked if the Administrator or Council had any thoughts to add.

Councilmember Wiedeman commended the department heads and the Interim Finance Director, Liz Loutzenhiser, and everybody who had a hand in the budget. She felt that this year Council got more information to make better decisions and they could actually see where the money is going and where the long-term is. She thanked everyone for giving Council a really good budget and a good document to make decisions from.

With no further comments, the administrative record was closed and the public hearing closed at 5:28 p.m.

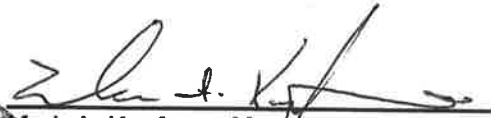
CLOSED SESSION: None.

(Council reserves the right to enter into closed session if deemed necessary.)

ADJOURN:


Motion to adjourn by Councilmember Gillen. Second by Councilmember Morrison. There was no discussion. Mayor Kaufman called the vote. "AYES": Gillen, Backus, Bohl, Wiedeman, O'Neal, Morrison, Cowan. "NAYS": None. Abstaining: None. Absent: Smith. Motion Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Mark A. Kaufman, Mayor

ATTEST:



Kathleen J. Welf, City Clerk

