

1025 P Street, P.O. Box 687

Gering, NE 69341

For immediate release

April 22, 2022

**GERING CITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER PROPOSAL FOR SUMMER COLLEGIATE**

**WOOD-BAT BASEBALL TEAM**

GERING - In 2016, the City was approached by the Expedition League, Inc. about hosting collegiate wood-bat baseball games at what is now known as Oregon Trail Park Stadium. In 2017, after considerable planning and negotiating, the City entered into a lease agreement with HF Baseball, LLC and The Expedition League, Inc. The first season was held in 2018. Over the last four seasons, the community has been extremely supportive of the Western Nebraska Pioneers that have operated out of the new stadium. 30,896 fans attended in the inaugural season. Single and season ticket holders are drawn from a 125-mile radius of Gering, including fans from Western Nebraska and Eastern Wyoming. There is a regional sense of community commitment to sports and baseball, with fan bases that have been extremely loyal and supportive of affordable, fun and wholesome family entertainment. Equally important, it helps ensure the players’ potential for professional baseball.

On October 27, 2021, seven teams from the Expedition League broke away from the League. This separation from the League has put the City of Gering in the position of potentially breaching the agreement with the League if the City allows the Pioneers to play under a new league for the 2022 season at Oregon Trail Park Stadium. City officials actively communicated with the League and Pioneers since November of 2021, and encouraged them to work through the dispute; to date, the two entities have not resolved their differences.

On April 4, 2022 the City of Gering notified HF Baseball and the Expedition League that the existing lease agreement would terminate on April 14, 2022, citing breach of contract. On April 19, 20 and 21, 2022, The City of Gering advertised for Request for Proposals (RFP) for a summer collegiate wood-bat baseball team to play at Oregon Trail Park Stadium for the 2022 summer season. Both the Western Nebraska Pioneers and the Expedition League were notified of the RFP. Proposals had to be submitted by 8 a.m. on Friday, April 22, 2022 at the Gering City Offices.

The City remains optimistic that there will be a collegiate wood-bat baseball season this summer at Oregon Trail Park Stadium. City officials recognize the importance of collegiate wood-bat games continuing at Oregon Trail Park Stadium. Players, local businesses and baseball fans look forward to the season each year. The City, and any future wood-bat baseball team, will have an opportunity to enter into a lease agreement that better meets the expectations and requirements of all parties. The City has made a commitment to sports tourism and hopes to see collegiate games played in Gering long into the future.

The Gering City Council will consider a proposal for a collegiate wood-bat baseball team to play at Oregon Trail Park Stadium at the April 25, 2022 regular City Council meeting at 6:00 p.m., at Gering City Hall, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE.