

Our Town

Mayor's Message

Hello Ralston. As I sit in my dining room office overlooking Oak Park, I can watch people walking with their families and friends and walking their dogs. Remember, take care of yourself and your family, but also maintain social distance.

Exercise, take a walk or run outside. . . But when you do go outside, do your best to maintain at least six feet between yourself and non-family members. Going outside is important and the weather is improving. So, go outside every day if you can.

I hope everyone takes this opportunity to get to know your neighbors (from six feet away, of course) and make sure they are fine and help them if they need anything during this stressful time.

City staff is conducting morning conference calls to discuss any important news and potential issues. All of our city buildings are closed to the public, but city employees are still working and available to assist you in any way we can. Our playgrounds and park restrooms and water fountains are closed as well to minimize the risk of spreading the virus.

The Library staff has implemented curbside service on Mondays and it has been very well-received. The Police and Fire Departments continue to do all they can to protect and assist us. Right now they have the necessary safety equipment to keep them safe during these uncertain times.

Stay safe.

Mayor Don

Ralston Arena News

Arena staff is currently working on a number of projects throughout the venue during this period of paused events. All locker rooms have been deep cleaned, sanitized and painted.

Agents and promoters are still reaching out for show dates in the fall and into 2021, which is a great sign!! As of today, shows impacted by the arena closure have rescheduled or plan to reschedule.



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The City of Ralston now has a Facebook page. Follow us to make sure you get up-to-the minute news and information
www.facebook.com/CityofRalstonNE
or @CityofRalstonNE



A Few Thoughts from the Ralston City Administrator

By Rick Hoppe

COVID-19 and Ralston

Facing the challenge of the COVID pandemic isn't exactly how I envisioned my first three months as the Ralston City Administrator. But the crisis has taught me a lot about our people and our community, especially our City leadership.

Mayor Groesser, Council President Jerry Krause, the City Council, and all of City government are fighting to stay ahead of the crisis and protect our community. We are following the advice and guidance of our Governor and the Douglas County Health Department. We have even gone above and beyond, closing the Baright Library and park playgrounds early on to slow the spread of the virus.

As we continue to focus on protecting the community's health, we are also focused on protecting Ralston's economic well-being and City Hall's ability to maintain critical services, such as law enforcement and street repair.

We are learning all we can about the COVID stimulus packages to help educate Ralston business owners. The Chamber of Commerce is stepping into a leadership role to help Ralston's businesses weather the economic storm. If you have any questions about the COVID stimulus legislation, please contact us and we will help you find the resources you need.

The City is facing deep reductions in sales and restaurant taxes and keno revenue, making it tough to fund the services on which Ralston residents depend. Fortunately, the Directors and staff are giving their all to save money and help solve the anticipated deficit. Public Works is taking on additional responsibilities to save dollars. The Library is loaning staff to City Hall. I am proud of our teamwork and our employees' dedication to the Ralston community.

The road ahead is a tough one, but I have learned in my first few months on the job that Ralston's people are up to the challenge and will forge ahead together. It's the Ralston way.

Downtown Parking

I have been working closely with a group of Ralston residents and business owners to develop a plan for parking in the downtown area. As you know, the City sold the public parking lot on Park Drive to start the first investment associated with the Hinge Economic Development Project. A parking study was conducted to determine how we address parking needs after the lot becomes a new three-story residential and commercial building. The study recommended that we review ideas like public-private parking lots, parking time limits, and enhanced parking information on the City website and social media.

Our group met several times over the last few weeks to develop a plan so we are prepared when the City parking lot will no longer be available later this summer. The group developed smart, sensible and creative solutions that will benefit our downtown businesses, and the people who live, work, and patronize our downtown.

The next steps are to get wider input from the downtown business community and then the wider Ralston community. You will be seeing the draft plan very soon and I urge everyone to make their thoughts known. We can make this work if we pull together and find as much consensus as possible.

The Hinge Project

The COVID crisis is not slowing progress on the Hinge project. In fact, it is just the opposite. As the national economy has slowed, our determination to jump start our local economy has accelerated. We are making substantial progress.

The new residential and commercial building to be located on Park Drive, known as Zehv's Place, will be an investment in Ralston of approximately \$5 million.

The new owners of the Granary property have exciting plans for the site and are working closely with City Hall to realize the vision of the Hinge Master Plan. The site could become the next major investment in the Hinge.

City leadership is cooperating with an entrepreneurial group that is creating a Ralston 2.0 Fund. The Fund that will encourage investment in the Hinge area and help investors realize the benefits of federal Economic Opportunity Zones (EOZ). The Hinge area was designated as an EOZ, providing investors with tax benefits that will stimulate new investment. It is a tremendous advantage for Ralston and a great opportunity for Ralston's downtown property owners to reinvest in the community.

We are working on a plan to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs to the area to create jobs, fill the new residential and commercial buildings and provide new clients for existing downtown businesses.

The Hinge Project is an ambitious project that will have a major impact on our future economic success. We are working hard to make it happen.

Stay in Touch

I want to hear from you. If I can help solve a problem or listen to a concern, I hope you will call (402-610-2720) or email me (rhoppe@cityofralston.com). I have really enjoyed working with Ralston's residents and want City Hall to be a partner on whom you can depend.



BARIGHT PUBLIC LIBRARY
Ralston, NE

The library was excited to start a new storytime series called Sensory Storytimes in March. Every Wednesday morning in March we would discuss one of the five senses (touch, smell, taste, vision and hearing). This program is geared towards children birth to pre-school (4 years old). Many times, children receive their first vision and hearing screenings when they attend elementary school or Kindergarten. There are many benefits of getting your children screened for vision and hearing as early as possible. Having poor vision can affect children's academic performance. If a baby has hearing loss, it can have an effect on delayed or limited language and speech development along with learning and social problems. Yearly preventative dental care for children is important for their self-esteem, nutrition and overall health.

Our first sensory storytime was March 4th, and we focused on HEARING. We had some fun stories and songs to discuss different sounds in our world. Following storytime, Boys Town Pediatrics' Center for Childhood Deafness, Language and Learning offered free hearing and speech delay screenings. Kate Addison also joined us. She is a service coordinator for RPS Early Development Network. Our second sensory storytime was on March 11th, and we focused on TASTE. We had a few dental hygienists from OneWorld to talk about how important it is to have good dental hygiene and to brush out teeth. They also sent the kids home with new toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, and a timer to help kids know to brush their teeth for at least two minutes. Sadly, we weren't able to finish our series because the library closed on March 16th due to health concerns. We were hoping to do a storytime on TOUCH and SMELL where we would have explored different tex-

tures and smells through play. We also had planned to have Lions Club International here to do a storytime on VISION. They were providing free vision screenings for kids. We are hoping to do this full series again this fall!

The library took some adapting as we had to close our doors to the families in our community. To help parents with having their children at home, we are offering a new program called Spring Into Reading through Beanstack. Beanstack is a website where you can easily track your reading to earn incentives at your library and stay motivated to read more. We have utilized Beanstack for families to log their time for our Winter Reading

To help parents with having their children at home, we are offering a new program called Spring Into Reading through Beanstack.

Programs and the Summer Reading Programs. This new programmed, Spring Into Reading, is for children ages birth to 12 years old. It started March 17th and will continue till May 30th. Each week you will have a new virtual badge to try to earn. To earn the badge, you have to complete certain tasks. The first week we learned about rainbows. One of the activities included a science experiment using only water, cups, food coloring and paper towels. Each virtual badge has a different theme. The children have learned about rainbows, their five senses, and extreme weather so far. You can sign up at any time!

If you are interested in staying current with library updates, you can check our website or sign up for our e-newsletter by filling out the form at the bottom of our website. Since March 16 the library has been closed to the public until further notice, but there are a ton of online resources on our website to check out including ebooks, emagazines, video content and more!

Visit us at www.ralstonlibrary.org.

Ralston Arena Events

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the following events at the Ralston Arena!!

June 2020

Jun 5

Hairball

Jun 13—Aug 1

Omaha Beef

July 2020

Jul 9

Nebraska Labor Unions Present Golden Gloves Midwest Regional

August 2020

Aug 8

Omaha Red Devils

Aug 18

Styx

Aug 22

Hillsong Worship

November 2020

Nov 19

Baby Shark LIVE

**New events are added daily!
Keep up on the events by
visiting the Ralston Arena
website at
www.ralstonarena.com**

City of Ralston

Our Vision Statement

"The City of Ralston will deliver economic, creative, cultural, and community development strategies to generate a quality of life that is a beacon of dynamic and independent small town culture within the metro area."

Local Government Officials & City Department Heads

Mayor—Donald Groesser

City Council Members:

Ward 1—Maureen Konwinski

Ward 2—Lee Fidelity

Ward 3—Brian Kavanaugh

Ward 4—Jerry Krause / Council President

Ward 5—Michael Sanchez

Ward 6—Ben Preis

The Ralston City Council meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 5500 S. 77th Street.

City Administrator—Rick Hoppe

Finance Director—Tim Bohling

City Clerk—Rosie Russell

City Attorney - Don Ficenec

Chief of Police—Marc Leonardo

Public Works Director—Dan Freshman

Library Director—Bailey Halbur

Arena General Manager—Brian Krajewski

To receive this newsletter via email, visit our website at www.cityofralston.com.

Click on the newsletter tab and sign up.

Or contact us at cityhall@cityofralston.com

Mowing Tall Grass in Wildewood Park



Before—left



After—right

New Ralston Residents

The City of Ralston has new resident packets available. Visit our website at www.cityofralston.com and click on the "new to Ralston tab". Fill in the form to get the new resident packet mailed to you. The packet contains information on schools, utilities, trash pick up, Ralston parks, as well as other helpful information.