

City of Ralston
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www.cityofralston.com

October 2021
Volume 4, Issue 4

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE!!!

Our Town

Mayor's Message

Happy Fall Everyone!!!

I really can't believe that it is fall 2021 already. Seems like summer just started and now here we are.

There have certainly been some weather challenges during 2021. We had a huge wind storm that took down many trees around town. The Public Works Department opened up a drop site for the tree debris and were out all night moving trees from the streets so we could get around town the next morning. A huge oak tree in the park next to my house fell due to the wind storm. That tree was in perfect condition! It's really sad to see those beautiful trees fall.

We had a wonderful Independence Day parade and evening fireworks. There were not quite as many people as in the past but everyone that joined had a great time. Thanks to the Fire Department for having the water fights and the Optimists for having the fun run in the morning. Next year hopefully we will be back to having all the Independence Day events!!

The new apartments downtown on Park Drive are really coming along. The first renters will be moving in on October 1st. The Granary is also making progress and should be functional by mid-November. They are renting space to businesses so that project will be moving along very well.

Hope everyone has a safe fall. Enjoy the changing color of the trees in Ralston!!

Mayor Don



Inside this issue

A Big Win	2
Bright Library	3
Ralston Arena Events	3
Officials	4
Halloween Safety Tips	4
Three New Officers	5
Theft Prevention Tips	6
Bats	6
Winter Driving Tips	7
Response to Opioid Overdoses	8

Just a reminder . . . It is unlawful to deposit snow or leaves onto City streets.

Ralston Municipal Code §8-313 states:

STREETS; UNLAWFUL DEPOSITING OF SNOW OR LEAVES

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, corporation, or other party to remove snow or leaves from any public, semi-public, or private parking lot, or driveway or sidewalk and place it upon any street or sidewalk within the City, or upon any fire hydrant. Also, it shall be unlawful for such snow to be placed within 150 feet of the intersecting centerlines of 2 streets at height above which such snow would become a traffic hazard by inhibiting proper sight distance at intersections herein determined to be a height of 2 feet above the top of the curb.

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A Big Win: Ralston's Bond Rating Improves

By Rick Hoppe, City Administrator

Anyone who has a mortgage, a monthly car payment, or credit cards knows about credit scores. A credit score can have a huge impact on a person's life. The ability to borrow funds at key moments—whether it's buying that first house or paying for the kids to go to college—has a big impact on a family's future.

Cities also have credit scores, but they are known as "bond ratings." Bond ratings have the same impact as credit scores. Bond ratings, like credit scores, determine the rate of interest on borrowed money. In a city's case, that can have a dramatic impact on property taxes. Cities typically borrow money for big capital projects like streets because a low interest rate today is cheaper than paying the cost of project inflation tomorrow. Bond ratings are a key to strong financial health.

Improving Ralston's bond rating has been a focus at City Hall. A better bond rating is central to our plans to repair streets, fix sewers, and refinance the Arena bonds for lower payments.

In September, we received good news from the bond rating agency Standard & Poor. They took the first step in raising our bond rating, changing our outlook from "negative" to "stable." That change was the result of hard work by our Mayor, Council, and City staff to implement better financial practices:

- We paid off \$2.9 million in short-term borrowing in the 2020-21 budget. Rating agencies see short-term borrowing as a weakness and we completely eliminated ALL of the City's short-term debt. This was an amazing achievement as the amount paid off is equal to about 2/3 of what we spend in a year on basic government services.
- The City now has a 32% cash balance. Cash balance is critical to solving unexpected issues that arise and providing the cash flow that prevents negative account balances. Before we made a concerted effort to improve, our cash balance was 15%.
- In 2020, we implemented the City's first Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The Plan puts together a schedule and identifies funding for improvements to streets, sewers, parks, and City facilities. A CIP was specifically identified by S&P as something they needed to see.

These successes in budget management didn't happen by accident. They were the result of tough budget choices over the last few years. I completely understand the frustration of residents who want park equipment replaced or potholes filled more quickly. But those service cuts allowed us to pay off debt and set Ralston up for a much brighter future.

Our budget sacrifices to pay down debt has had additional benefits. Funding that was going to pay debt service is now freed up to start addressing community needs. For instance, City Hall is funding street panel replacement for the first time in several years. A consistent panel replacement program prevents potholes. On the parks side, the Serum Avenue Trail bridge is scheduled to be repaired this spring after being closed for a couple of years and Ponderosa Park sidewalks will be fixed. A new plow truck will help us better move snow.

The City is on the right financial path and our improved standing with S&P is an endorsement that our budget prudence is paying off. This is a big win for Ralston.

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BARIGHT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Ralston, NE

Be careful! You may have whiplash from all the exciting developments coming from the Baright Public Library!

It seems that one thing after another is happening here at the library and we can hardly keep up ourselves.

The first of these developments being Sara Scott, our new Youth Services Librarian! Originally from Kansas, Sara has been in Nebraska for almost a year now. She has worked in both public and school libraries which led her to pursue a career in youth services. There is never a dull moment when you work with kids!

Beyond this, there are many other exciting things happening this fall at BPL! We started Discovery Storytimes at Ralston Park on September 21st. These are weekly storytimes held on Tuesdays at 10:30 AM where we read, sing, dance, and explore through experiments and activities related to the stories we read.

Halloween is quickly creeping up on us and we have some fun activities planned! On Tuesday, October 26th, we will hold a spooky storytime, a candy hunt, and some mad science experiments here at the library!

While we've been planning all our fall activities, we've also been working hard to improve the Children's Room. We have moved a few collections around and are working on cleaning up the others to better serve the browsing and findability of all our items. The cleaning and movement of collections is part of our plan to reimagine our Children's Room into a space where kids and parents/caregivers can stay, play, and connect with others.

Check back with us often to see the progress we've made! And be sure to stop in to meet Sara !!



Discovery Storytime at Ralston Park

Ralston Arena Events

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

- ◆ Omaha Lancers Hockey—October 8, 2021—April 22, 2022
- ◆ Gerardo Diaz, Zamora Live—October 9, 2021 at 8:00 PM
- ◆ REO Speedwagon—October 12, 2021 at 7:00 PM
- ◆ Nelly with Blanco Brown—October 20, 2021 at 7:30 PM
- ◆ Autumn Festival—An Arts & Crafts Affair—November 4th through 7th, 2021
- ◆ UNO Men's Basketball vs Hastings College—November 9, 2021 at 7:00 PM
- ◆ Styx World Tour—November 18, 2021 at 7:00 PM
- ◆ Cody Johnson with special guests Easton Corbin & Ian Munsick—November 19, 2021 at 7:30 PM
- ◆ Blue Collar Boxing—November 24, 2021 at 7:00 PM
- ◆ Price is Right Live! - December 5, 2021 at 7:30 PM
- ◆ Gabriel "Fluffy" Ingelsias—February 4, 2022 at 8:00 PM
- ◆ LOL Surprise! Live—March 17, 2022 at 6:00 PM

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

Local Government Officials & City Department Heads

City of Ralston

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.

Mayor—Donald Groesser

City Council Members:

Ward 1—Tim Brousek

Ward 2—Lee Fidelity

Ward 3—Brian Kavanaugh

Ward 4—Jerry Krause / Council President

Ward 5—Michael Sanchez

Ward 6—Ben Preis

City Administrator—Rick Hoppe

Finance Director—Tim Bohling

City Clerk—Rosie Russell

City Attorney - Don Ficenec

Chief of Police—Marc Leonardo

Building & Safety Director /

Chief Building Official—Dan Freshman

Public Works Superintendent—Greg Dittmer

Library Director—Amanda Peña

Arena General Manager—Brian Krajewski

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Halloween Safety Tips 2021

Halloween is once again right around the corner. With the continued uncertainty of Covid this year, the Ralston Police Department is providing some tips to keep you and your family and friends safe and healthy. For those that may choose to go out and trick-or-treat, or for those that may want to stay closer to home to celebrate, using caution and care are the best options to stay safe.

For those that will be going out, the following safety tips should always be utilized:

- Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.
- Plan a trick-or-treating route in familiar neighborhoods with well-lit streets.
- Only walk on sidewalks whenever possible, if not, stay to the right-edge of the roadway facing traffic to stay safe.
- Choose bright costumes and have children carry flashlights or glow sticks so they are easily visible (Hint: try adding reflective tape to costumes or candy bags).
- Always walk younger children to the door to receive treats.
- Eat only factory wrapped treats, avoid eating homemade treats made by strangers.
- Teach children to say “NO” in a loud voice if someone tries to get them to go somewhere, accept anything other than a treat, or leave with them.
- Be careful crossing streets and look in both directions to make sure no cars are coming. Hold any small child’s hand when crossing a street.
- Never go into a stranger’s house or even ring their doorbell for treats unless your parents are with you and say it is okay.
- Be sure children do not approach any vehicle occupied or not, unless you are with them.
- Never accept rides from strangers.

-Examine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating them.

-Make sure your children know your cellphone number, their home telephone number and address in case you are separated. Consider giving them a cellphone so they can reach you easily and teach them how to call 911 in an emergency.

Some Covid related tips to remember this year:

- Make and wear a cloth face mask as part of the costume.
- Take hand sanitizer with you and use it frequently.
- Keep your groups small and stay outside - do not go inside other homes to get your treats.
- Stay six feet away from other people not from your household. Talk to your children about not rushing a house door or grabbing candy. If another group is at the door, stay back on the sidewalk and wait until you can approach without coming within six feet of others.
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home and wash them before and after eating candy.

There are several other ideas you can celebrate Halloween in a safer way:

- Have a family scary movie marathon.
- Host a costume contest with friends and family. Keep things outdoors, in small groups, or try a virtual or drive-by contest.
- Hide treats around the house or outdoors for your kids to find. You can even try a spooky scavenger hunt.
- Have a family pumpkin-carving contest. Keep things outdoors or have a virtual contest.
- Avoid indoor trick-or-treating settings that typically draw larger crowds where it could be hard to stay six feet apart.
- Call ahead to check Covid-19 precautions if you plan on going to Halloween activities, like at haunted houses, farms, pumpkin patches or corn mazes.



Ralston Police Department Hires Three New Officers

On August 27th, the Ralston Police Department hired three new officers to join the force due to recent vacancies. These officers were certified in either Nebraska or another state which allowed them to start immediately on the road with a Field Training Officer (FTO), after a brief one-week training session. These officers will complete three months of field training and then a two-week shadow phase before they will be released to patrol on their own shifts. The officers were approved by the City Council and were officially sworn in on Tuesday night, September 7, 2021. When you see them out on patrol, please say hello and welcome them to our community!

The following are brief biographies on each officer:

Officer Jason Grob: Officer Grob comes to us from Bellevue, NE. He graduated high school from Bryan High School in and has attended Metro Community College and Bellevue University. Officer Grob served in the U.S. Navy from November 2009 until November 2014 where he was a Combat Engineer/Seabee where he was honorably discharged. Officer Grob moved for a short period of time to Australia from November 2017 to February 2018 before moving back to the United States. Officer Grob worked for the Bellevue Police Department for a little over one year before joining the Ralston Police Department.



Officer Alexandria Stobbe: Officer Stobbe comes to us from Grand Island, NE. She graduated from Loup City HS and has attended Central Community College in Grand Island and Rockhurst University in Kansas City, MO. Officer Stobbe worked as a security officer/supervisor for G4S Solutions and as an armed security officer with Rockhurst University. Officer Stobbe was hired by the Grand Island Police Department where she worked for four years until May 2020. After leaving the police department she worked for a FedEx ground company, seasonal UPS work, and recently with the USPS as a carrier assistant until she joined the Ralston Police Department.

Officer Joshua Sexton: Officer Sexton comes to us from Texas, although he was born in Colorado and raised in Omaha in the Millard area. Officer Sexton graduated from Millard South High School. Officer Sexton served in the U.S. Army at Fort Hood TX from August 2005 to November 2009 where he was honorably discharged. From 2009 to 2013 he worked as a correctional officer in both Nebraska and Texas. From 2013 to 2019 he worked twice as an officer for the Beeville Police Department and Bee County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy. From February 2019 to January 2020 and April 2020 to August 2021, he worked for the San Patricio County Sheriff's Office in Texas before moving back to Nebraska and joining the Ralston Police Department.



L-R: Officer Jason Grob, Officer Joshua Sexton & Officer Alexandria Stobbe

Theft Prevention Tips from the Ralston Police Department



The majority of crimes being committed recently in Ralston consist of vehicle break-ins which occur in driveways, on the street in front of homes, or in apartment complex parking lots. Thefts from vehicles would be drastically reduced if people would lock their car doors, stop leaving valuables in their vehicles, and by following some of the following tips. This list is not all inclusive, but it does give valuable tips that can help you from becoming a victim.

- ◆ Remove all items of value from your vehicle such as wallets, purses, cell phones, sunglasses, tools, money, laptops, iPads, bags or presents when you are not driving. Take out removable radios and faceplates. Do not leave anything in the center console or glove compartment, that is the first- place thieves look. Theft is often a crime of opportunity. Remove all items of value from open display, such as on the dashboard or sitting on a seat, as they are an open invitation to a criminal. Leaving nothing visible gives thieves little or no reason to enter your vehicle.
- ◆ Lock your doors as this is a huge deterrent to would be thieves. Most of the time, criminals are checking for unlocked vehicles or homes. Also, a high percentage of all stolen vehicles were left unlocked.
- ◆ Turn on exterior lighting or install motion activated lights. Thieves love to operate under the cover of darkness. By lighting up the exterior of your house, it can deter them from

approaching your vehicle/home. Also, consider getting a security system or camera for the exterior of your home.

- ◆ Report suspicious behavior immediately to either the non-emergency dispatch number of 402-444-5802, or 911. RPD officers check neighborhoods all hours of the day and night, but we cannot be everywhere at once. If you see something suspicious, report it and give us the opportunity to contact the individuals in a timely manner. Please do not wait until the next day to report something or someone out of place.
- ◆ If you have a garage, try to use it rather than parking outside where your vehicle is more vulnerable. Make sure you close your garage doors when not outside, day or night.
- ◆ Get involved and watch out for your neighbors. Talk to them regularly about activity in the area and become familiar with those who belong in your neighborhood.
- ◆ Record serial numbers. This gives us an opportunity to recover your property, and possibly arrest the party(s) responsible if a theft does occur.

Please do not leave firearms in your vehicle. According to recent studies, thieves steal between 300,000 and 600,000 firearms every year. Do your part and help keep this number down.

Bats . . .

Bats seek the warmth of homes during all seasons, but the months of August and September usually see an increase of bats entering homes. The following information is from the Douglas County Health Department along with the Nebraska Humane Society on how to deal with bats.

Because bats can carry rabies – a fatal disease - the Douglas County Health Department and the Nebraska Humane Society are asking residents to protect themselves from these evening invaders. The first step is educating the public to avoid exposure. The next is to make certain proper treatment follows if someone is bitten. The biggest fear is that an individual will be bitten while asleep and not realize they are infected. That is because bat bites may not leave an obvious mark.

The Douglas County Health Department defines an exposure to a potentially rabid bat as: (1) A person has been bitten; (2) There's a potential that the bat's saliva has infected a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound; (3) One awakens and finds a bat in their room; (4) A bat is found in the room of a child; (5) A bat is found in the room of a mentally challenged or intoxicated person

The best option is to keep bats out of your home, however you can "bat-proof" a home by closing any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch. To do this, you can caulk the opening or use window screens, chimney caps or stainless steel wool. Outside entry points are especially important to cover. Doors to the outside should be kept tightly closed.

If you find a bat in your home, call The Nebraska Humane Society at 402-444-7800, Extension 1.

A laboratory test is needed to confirm if a bat has rabies. If you are bitten by a bat or exposed to bat saliva, call the Nebraska Humane Society and your doctor.

If you have questions about bats, please call the Douglas County Health Department at 402-444-7489 or The Nebraska Humane Society at 402-444-7800, ext. 1. For more information on bats and how to protect yourself from their bites, just go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site at www.cdc.gov and enter bats in the search box.

If a bat accidentally flies into your house, don't panic and follow these tips: **Do not try to handle the bat. Like all wild animals, bats will bite if they feel threatened; **Help the bat get back outside where it wants to be by closing the door to the room and opening windows; **If the bat is not flying, or the room does not have direct access to outside, capture the bat using a box or small container. Be sure to wear thick work gloves; **After capturing a bat, open the container on its side, in the air or against a tree to allow the bat to fly away

If a bat bit someone in the home, the bat will need to be tested for rabies. Capture the bat using a box or small container and contact the Douglas County Health Department right away at 402-444-7214.

If you are not able to do a bat exclusion on your own, professional help is available (Douglas County Health Department does not provide this service). Be sure to ask your local provider to follow humane methods for removal. Install a bat house nearby prior to the exclusion. Do not perform an exclusion between May and August. Create a one-way door allowing bats to exit rather than applying chemicals or pesticides inside the home.

Winter Driving Tips



Winter will be here before you know it, along with cold weather and snowfall amounts that will definitely cause problems on the roadways. It's time to think about preparing for winter driving. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when going out on those cold and/or snowy days and nights.

1. Before bad weather begins, get your car serviced and have the mechanic check for leaks, badly worn hoses or other needed parts, repairs or replacements.
2. Read your vehicle's manual to familiarize yourself with the safety features on your vehicle—such as antilock brakes and electronic stability control—and how the features perform in wintry conditions.
3. Remember to keep a scraper in your vehicle at all times. Always completely scrape your windows before proceeding to drive your vehicle. A “peephole” is not a safe way to operate your vehicle.
4. Don't let your gas tank get below ¼ tank. If your vehicle gets stuck you might need to run the heater to keep warm. Also, it's a good idea to keep several extra blankets in your vehicle, just in case.
5. Check your tire pressure to be sure your tires are properly inflated. Also, check your tires to be sure they have enough tread depth so that you can get traction on wet or snowy pavement.
6. Check your car battery to be sure that it has enough cold cranking amps to get your car going on those cold days. If not, replace your car battery.
7. Be sure to keep your washer fluid reservoir full. When the snow melts, the roads get messy and you will need it to keep the windshield clean.
8. Also, check to see if your wiper blades need to be replaced. If they appear worn or aren't operating properly, they should be replaced so that you get maximum visibility.
9. Always clean the snow off of your headlights and taillights. You might “think” your vehicle can be seen, but if the person in front or behind you can't see the lights on your car you might be hit by another vehicle. Remember to have your headlights on while driving if it's raining or snowing.
10. A small shovel is a good thing to keep in the trunk. This is in case you get stuck or need to dig out your vehicle. Also, a bag of sand or kitty litter is a good thing to have on hand as it can be poured under the tires to help get traction.
11. Stock your car with other emergency items such as jumper cables, flashlight and warning devices such as flares or emergency markers.
12. Keep a cell phone charger, water, food and any necessary medicine in your vehicle when travelling on longer trips and driving in lightly populated areas.
13. These days when many people have a garage and park close to the door when going somewhere don't always wear a coat or jacket. Take one with you in case your vehicle gets stuck or breaks down. Keep a hat, gloves and boots with you too.
14. Last, but not least, make sure to keep plenty of distance between you and the car in front of you, and always make sure everyone is wearing seatbelts. It takes extra time to stop your vehicle when the roads are wet or icy. Pump your brakes so that they don't lock up or you could lose control of your vehicle.



More Photos from the Swearing-In Ceremony on September 7th, 2021



Nebraska Naloxone Standing Order in Response to Growing Opioid Overdoses

Opioid overdose deaths are a growing concern in Nebraska. In 2019, 168 people died of a drug overdose and at least 64 of those deaths were opioid related. Nebraska's death rate per 100,000 people has increased from 3.6 in 2004 to 8.68 in 2019.

All fifty (50) states have made Naloxone (or Narcan) available to anyone who is concerned about their personal use of an opioid or any other person who is using an opioid legally or illegally. Each state has a different process for a person to obtain Naloxone.

Nebraska DHHS, Division of Public Health, Dr. Janine Fromm, MD, has issued a standing order to further facilitate the availability of Naloxone (in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. 28-470 and 38-2840). Expanding the availability of Naloxone to friends, family and bystanders will increase the likelihood that it will be administered in a timely manner, and prevent death from an opioid overdose.

To make this easier to understand, we will use a scenario to explain the process. Assume that you have a child (or best friend or colleague, etc.) who you know or suspect is using an opioid. You can go to any pharmacy in Nebraska and ask the pharmacist for Naloxone. The pharmacist will write a prescription for the Naloxone with the requester's name as the patient (even though he/she is not the patient). The pharmacist will place the name of Dr. Janine Fromm (who authorized the Standing Order) from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services as the prescriber on the prescription. The requester will pay for the medication (right now a two-dose nasal spray runs about \$150). There are several dosage forms available (identified in the Standing Order) although the two-dose nasal spray is the easiest and cheapest dosage form to use. It's that simple and hopefully will save lives.

The following may be signs and symptoms of an individual experiencing an opioid-related overdose:

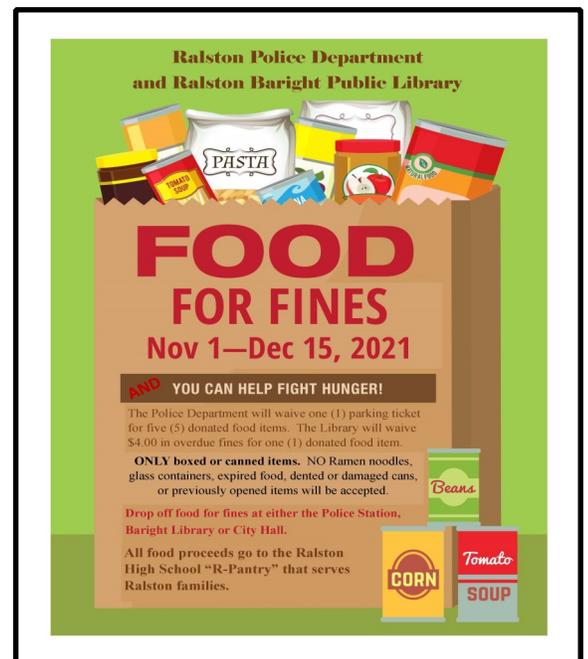
- A history of current narcotic or opioid use or fentanyl patches on skin or needle in body
- Unresponsive or unconscious individuals
- Not breathing or slow/shallow respirations
- Snoring or gurgling sounds (due to partial upper airway obstruction)
- Blue lips and/or nail beds
- Pinpoint pupils
- Clammy skin

Note that individuals in cardiac arrest from all causes share many symptoms with someone with a narcotic overdose (unresponsiveness, not breathing, snoring/gurgling sounds, and blue skin/nail beds). If no pulse, these individuals are in cardiac arrest and require CPR.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Dr. Edward M. DeSimone II, R.Ph., Ph.D., FAPhA, Professor of Pharmacy Sciences, Creighton University both contributed information for this bulletin.

If you would like more information on the Standing Order or the State laws surrounding it, you can contact the Ralston Police Department at 402-331-1786.

If you would like to research more educational materials about naloxone, they can be found at: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Drug-Overdose-Prevention-Naloxone.aspx>



Food for Fines returns November 1st through December 15th, 2021