

## Message from Mayor Morrow

In August, the City Council made the biggest policy decision that must be made on behalf of our citizens each year. City Council adopted, by ordinance, the municipal budget for fiscal year 2016. This year's budget process has yielded great success. In 2016, for the first time in many years, Gardner's utility rate payers will see no increase in rates for water, wastewater or electric utilities. In fiscal year 2015, the City of Gardner implemented a 5.5 percent property tax decrease, and now in 2016, property taxes will remain steadfast at that rate. This budget also marks five straight years that Gardner has not increased property taxes. This year's budget was assembled again using the recognized best practice of priority-based budgeting. Beginning in January of this year, a more lengthy process involving unprecedented citizen participation was instituted. I am proud of the job our citizens, city staff and governing body have done in planning to keep property taxes and utility rates in check.

As you receive this newsletter, we are in the middle of a Special Sales Tax Renewal Election. All registered voters should have already received their mail-in ballot. This ballot must be received at the Johnson County Election Office by noon on Sept. 15.

If you have yet to vote, I encourage you to please educate yourself on the ballot question by visiting [www.gardnerkansas.gov](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov) and viewing the multiple informational links before voting. The proceeds of the sales tax will be used exclusively for funding city infrastructure, including the construction, repairing, rebuilding and upgrading of



*Receive Gardner alerts no matter your location.*

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## City implements new mass notification system to advance communication efforts

The City of Gardner has implemented a new mass notification system to alert the public about emergency and non-emergency activities occurring within the city. Using a software application called TextCaster, residents and businesses can receive emergency information and community updates by email, text, voice call and social media (Facebook and Twitter).

"With TextCaster, we have a robust and versatile tool to keep the Gardner community informed about numerous topics they have an interest in—within minutes," Communications Manager Daneeka Marshall-Oquendo said. "We believe this system will help us achieve many of our public information objectives - one being to provide timely and accurate information to the citizens of Gardner."

TextCaster has been integrated into the city's website, [www.gardnerkansas.gov](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov), under the "Get Connected" button. Residents and businesses will then click on the TextCaster sign-up link, providing them an opportunity to join any group(s) they would like to receive alerts from. The public can also go directly to the TextCaster sign-up page, [www.gardnerkansas.gov/get-connected](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov/get-connected), to manage their preferences. Examples of group types include, severe weather alerts, water main break/boil alerts, snow removal updates, neighborhood crime alerts, parks and recreation activities, city council updates, job postings, road closures and more.

The city will provide notifications from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., except in the cases of a true emergency, such as tornado warnings or other public safety concerns.

"Our goal is to stay connected with the Gardner community and keep them aware of what's going on around them," Marshall-Oquendo said. "And, with this flexible system, the public controls what information they receive and can update their group preferences at any time."

Citizens and businesses can now begin populating the notification system to immediately start receiving alerts.

"We want every Gardner citizen to participate in this service. If someone doesn't have a computer or text-messaging capabilities, they can contact us directly by phone, and we'll sign them up for the voice call notification option for landline users," Marshall-Oquendo said. "That's why the city selected TextCaster, because it provides multiple formats to meet Gardner's diverse communication needs."

For more information about the city's new mass notification system, contact Communications Manager Daneeka Marshall-Oquendo at 913.856.0912 or [dmarshall-oquendo@gardnerkansas.gov](mailto:dmarshall-oquendo@gardnerkansas.gov).

**SIGN UP FOR GARDNER'S MASS  
NOTIFICATION SERVICE TODAY!**

**VISIT [WWW.GARDNERKANSAS.GOV/GET-CONNECTED](http://WWW.GARDNERKANSAS.GOV/GET-CONNECTED).**

## Message from Mayor Morrow (continued)

streets, curbs, sidewalks, stormwater, park trails and more.



This sales tax, if approved, would keep the local sales tax rate at the same level it has been for the past 10 years. Your vote counts, so if you have yet to vote, please do so in advance of the Sept. 15 deadline.

This year, civic engagement opportunities have been at an all-time high. Those opportunities will increase with the addition of five more recently approved citizen advisory committees focusing on: Economic Development, Streets Sidewalks and Stormwater, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Americans with Disability Act compliance. The Streets Sidewalks and Stormwater committee has already been formed and will begin meeting right away. This committee will also have oversight responsibilities for the usage of sales tax proceeds, should the sales tax renewal pass. All other committees will begin meeting in the last quarter of 2015.

At the State of the City address this past March, I highlighted a plan to implement a "Triple C" approach to move Gardner government forward effectively. The three C's represent Civic engagement, Collaboration and Communication. The fiscal year 2016 budget is a shining example of this approach working well. Going forward with five new committees, the citizens of Gardner can expect more civic engagement, collaboration and communication than ever before.

Best Regards,

## Did You Know?

Before deciding whether to fertilize your lawn or not, it's best to get your soil tested. Testing can save time and money by finding out what nutrients your soil already contains and what it needs for good plant health. Johnson County K-State Research and Extension does the testing for free for Johnson County residents, so all you need to do is mail in a soil sample and a request form (found on their website). Visit [www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/soil-testing/free-soil-test.html](http://www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/soil-testing/free-soil-test.html) for more information.



## City highlights methods of leaf disposal

The coming of fall means leaves will soon change colors and drop off their branches. That also means there's lots of cleanup to be done. Off-site and on-site options are available for residents to dispose of fallen leaves. An option for off-site disposal is collecting your leaves in bags, then leaving them for your trash hauler to pick up.

"Before bagging leaves for your trash hauler, you should find out the service's specific guidelines and dates for disposal. Otherwise, your bags might not get picked up. Unlike trash, yard waste doesn't go to landfills but rather to a composting facility," Public Works Director Brian Faust said.

Composting can be done on-site as well. Leaf and grass clippings act as an effective mulch around trees and in gardens, eventually decomposing and adding nutrients to the soil.

The only thing residents shouldn't do with their leaves is rake or blow them into the street. They often are carried down streets and into storm drains, often ending up in creeks and other water sources.

"While street sweepers often come by, many of the leaves still manage to fall into storm drains, eventually going into creeks where they pile up and cause overflow and blockage when it rains. There are plenty alternatives to raking your leaves into the street," Faust said.

### Here's a quick recap of the following leaf disposal options:

**Use compost to dispose of leaves.** This is not only an earth-friendly approach, but decomposed leaves can be used to fertilize spring gardens.

- **Mow your lawn after the leaves fall off the trees, and use as mulch.** Small pieces of the leaves will penetrate the soil. Mulched leaves will help improve your soil for the following spring.
- **Gather leaves in a pile using a leaf blower, leaf vacuum or rake, then collect and dispose of them properly.** Remember to check with your trash hauler to see if they offer leaf pick-up services.

Contact Brian Faust at [bfaust@gardnerkansas.gov](mailto:bfaust@gardnerkansas.gov) or at 913.856.0914 for questions about leaf disposal. More information can also be found at <http://www.jocogov.org/dept/health-and-environment/environment/recycling/yard-waste-and-composting>.



**Leaves raked or blown into the streets can enter storm drains and cause water pollution and street flooding, increasing maintenance costs for your city.**

## Proper recreational vehicle storage required by city

Summer is coming to an end and vacations are finishing up, so you'll likely be storing your recreational vehicles for the fall and winter. In this time, it's important to stay in compliance with city code for parking boats, campers and other recreational vehicles. Owners should leave them in backyards, side yards or garages instead of in driveways or on the street.

"We want to keep Gardner safe and running smoothly at all times, and that's why we want recreational vehicles parked away from driveways or streets," Code Compliance Inspector Kerri Butler said. "Otherwise, it would be a hindrance and possible danger to drivers and walkers trying to see or go around them, so safety is a key component to enforcing the code."

There are exceptions, however. Parking in driveways is permitted for up to 48 hours if unloading or preparing for a trip. A hauling trailer can also be stored in a driveway, as long as it's being used to support a resident's occupation.

"By upholding city code, we're helping the city function efficiently, but we aim to be reasonable in our requests. We hope people who own recreational vehicles have the ability to park them where

they can be easily moved for work and trips," Butler said. "We grant exceptions for certain circumstances as well, so if you don't know whether or not you're parked legally, it's best to check."

Contact Kerri Butler at [kbutler@gardnerkansas.gov](mailto:kbutler@gardnerkansas.gov) or at 913.856.0913 for questions about proper recreational vehicle storage options.



*Recreational vehicles and trailers need to be stored in the garage, clearly on the side of the house, and/or in the backyard.*

## Gardner City Council

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Messages may also be left for any Council Member or the Mayor at 913-856-0939

## City Management

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## City offers automated payment option for utility bills

Starting mid-September, the city is offering another way for residents to pay their utility bills—through its new automated bill payment system.

Citizens can call the utility billing department at 913.856.7535 and be directed through an automated payment process using their utility account number and a credit/debit card.

The city implemented this additional service to increase the speed and ease of doing business.

"The city continually seeks ways to enhance our citizens' customer service experience," Customer Service Manager Amy Foster said. "This secure and easy-to-use option reduces wait times and is more convenient for customers."

Citizens can continue to use the city's other payment methods for their convenience, including:

- Online payment
- Payment by mail
- Payment via the city's drop boxes
- In-person payment at City Hall

For more information about utility payments, contact Amy Foster at [afoster@gardnerkansas.gov](mailto:afoster@gardnerkansas.gov).



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### Mark your calendars



#### City Council Meetings:

- Sept. 8 at 7 p.m.
- Sept. 21 at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 5 at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 19 at 7 p.m.
- Nov. 2 at 7 p.m.

\*View more meeting dates at  
[www.gardnerkansas.gov](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov).

### DON'T FORGET....

#### City to host annual Halloween Boo Bash

The City will host its 19th Annual Halloween Boo Bash on Oct. 27, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Celebration Park. There will be games, activities, candy, prizes, a costume contest, a fire-eating performance, a hayrack ride along the park trails and much more! The evening will conclude with a grand prize drawing! Free pop and popcorn will be available while supplies last. Concessions will also be open. Wristbands will be sold in advance at City Hall from Oct. 12 to Oct. 27 at 4 p.m. The \$3 wristbands give kids ages 2-12 unlimited access to all activities. In case of inclement weather, the event will be postponed to Oct. 28. Call 913.543.5305 to check the weather hotline. Visit [www.gardnerkansas.gov/boo\\_bash](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov/boo_bash) for more information.



#### Sales tax renewal ballots due Sept. 15

Election ballots for the special sales tax renewal are due Sept. 15 by noon at the Johnson County Election Office. Visit [www.gardnerkansas.gov](http://www.gardnerkansas.gov) for more information.

#### Final Movies in the Park showing

Despicable Me 2 will be the final showing as part of the city's Movies in the Park summer series at Cornerstone Park. The free screening is on Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

### Upcoming Gardner Parks and Recreation Activities and Events:

Youth Programs:	Date:	Registration Deadline:	Age/Grade:	Costs:
Volleyball Skills Clinics	Sept. 3,10,24	Sept. 1,8,21	Grades 3-6	\$45/session
Music Lessons	Sept. 12	Sept. 11	6-17 years	\$39
NFL Punt/Pass/Kick	Sept. 13	N/A	6-15 years	Free
Middle School Volleyball	Sept. 20	Sept. 4	Grades 7-8	\$65
Karate for Kids Martial Arts	Oct. 5	Sept. 28	6-12 years	\$40
Teen & Adult TaeKwonDo	Oct. 5	Sept. 28	13 and Older	\$45
Tiny Tigers Martial Arts	Oct. 6	Sept. 28	3-6 years	\$40
Spar Wars	Oct. 9	Sept. 28	3 and Older	\$65
Breaking Barriers	Oct. 10	Sept. 28	All ages	\$45
Babysitting Clinic	Oct. 12	Oct. 2	11-16 years	\$55
Youth Volleyball	Oct. 17	Sept. 4	Grades 3-6	\$55
Youth Basketball	Early Dec.	Oct. 16	Grades 1-6	\$60
<b>Adult/Family Programs:</b>				
Kids' Fishing Derby	Sept. 12	Sept. 7	12 and Under	\$5
Movie in the Park(Despicable Me 2)	Sept. 12	NA	All ages	Free
Women's Volleyball	Sept. 15	Sept. 4	18 and Older	\$150
Scrapbooking	Sept. 18	Sept. 17	12 and Up w/ Parent	\$5
Walk & Read Weekend	Sept. 26, 27	N/A	All ages	Free
Boo Bash	Oct. 27	N/A	All ages	\$3 wristbands