

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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“Keno Money”



On May 13, 2008, Norfolk residents voted to approve Keno as a source of recreation revenue for the city. The Norfolk City Council directed that the initial four years of Keno revenue be utilized for parks and recreation expenditures. It's been three years since Keno was introduced to Norfolk and funds have since provided over \$650,000 to the city for new playground equipment, baseball field improvements, work equipment, and additional park staff.

“We've been able to do some upgrades to equipment, add and improve play areas, and hire the necessary staff to help maintain the ever increasing green

space in Norfolk,” said Pat Mrsny, City of Norfolk Parks Superintendent. Mrsny estimates that in the last few years there has been an additional 100 acres that need to be tended by the parks department including the grassed medians on west Highway 275. Ta-Ha-Zouka Park alone covers 180 acres.

In 2009, a little over \$400,000 in Keno money was received by the city and used to pay for many recreational improvements in Norfolk.

One of those items is a new play system installed near the main entrance to Ta-Ha-Zouka Park. The “Infinity Web” play structure and NEOS 360 interactive electronic game were both added to the park and were the first of their kind in Nebraska.

Adult and youth baseball teams alike have benefited from the baseball field improvements made possible by Keno money. These improvements include concrete walkways and bleacher pads and the addition of a playground with a shade structure over it near the baseball fields. The bleachers also had shade structures built over them. New lighting was added to two of the ball fields.

Federal safety regulations require that bleachers be updated with guardrails and other modifications so park staff was able to use Keno funds to make these required changes to bleachers around the city.

With thousands of people using the parks each year leaving behind tons of trash, the city needed a more efficient trash removal system so Keno funds were used to purchase a hydraulic dump bed with lifter and trash carts.

Trees need to be planted, trimmed and removed regularly. Keno funds enabled city staff to purchase new trees for city parks. Keno funds also paid for additional work vehicles including a pickup snowplow attachment and four pickups to replace outdated vehicles.

Mrsny said that additional park staff was greatly needed to mow the thirteen parks in Norfolk, city property, care for flowerbeds across the city, and keep up with the clean up and spruce up of acres of city parks. Keno funds allowed for the hiring of two fulltime and two part time park employees.

In 2010, about \$250,000 of Keno money was received by the city for recreation purposes. Some of the funds were used for a Trails and Park Master Plan for the City of Norfolk. Results of that study were presented at the May 24, 2010 city council work session and can be found on the city website at [http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/parks/Park and Trail Master Plan Information.htm](http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/parks/Park_and_Trail_Master_Plan_Information.htm).

Last June, the Elkhorn River, which runs adjacent to Ta-Ha-Zouka Park, went over its banks and flooded much of the park and ball field complex. By July, city park and street workers had cleaned and prepared the park for use again. Expansions and extensive improvements were able to be made to a ball field at Ta-Ha-Zouka Park last year- all paid from Keno funds as was the salary of two fulltime and two part time park staff.

Mrsny said that city staff is planning to use some of the expected Keno funds from 2011 to pay for camping improvements at Ta-Ha-Zouka including new restroom and shower facilities and poured concrete pads for campers.

According to state law, not less than 65% of the funds wagered in Keno must be rewarded to players as prizes. In Norfolk, 73.5% of the funds are rewarded to the players with 12.5% going to the city for recreation expenditures. Of that 12.5%, the city must pay 2% for the state lottery tax and also pay for auditing costs. Fourteen per cent of the Keno funds goes to Big Red Keno, the administrator of Keno in Norfolk.

The Big Red Sports Bar and Grill Keno location at 2101 West Pasewalk Avenue is the main Keno location in Norfolk. The satellite locations are at the American Legion Club, TJ's Sports Bar, The Phoenix Room, Michael's Cantina, Eagle's Norfolk Aerie 3611, Fifth Street Tavern, Harbor Bar, Mel's Drive Inn, the "O" Lounge, the Office Bar, The Vet's Club Post 1544, Wolfgang's Pub and the Mint Bar.