

CITY OF VERGAS  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
VERGAS EVENTS CENTER & ZOOM  
Tuesday, October 10, 2023

The City Council of Vergas met at 6:30 pm, on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at the Vergas Event Center and on a Zoom for a hybrid regular council meeting with the following members present: Mayor Julie Bruhn, Council Members: Bruce Albright, Paul Pinke, Dean Haarstick and Natalie Fischer. Absent: none. Also present: Clerk/Treasurer Julie Lammers, Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane, Liquor Store Kyle Theisen, Attorney Tom Winters, Felicia Singer, Jessica Green, Jeff Hattlewick, Kathy Wouters and Lori Moxness, Senior Commercial and Industrial Representative, Otter Tail Power (OTP) and Bob Williams of the Frazee-Vergas Forum.

**Call to Order**

Mayor Julie Bruhn called the meeting to order.

**Citizens' Concerns**

No concerns addressed.

**Agenda Additions and Deletions**

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Fischer to approve the agenda with the following items removed: Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee and Event Center. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright to approve the following consent agenda:

1. Council Minutes of September 12, 13 and 27, 2023
2. Bills paid between Council meetings and Council bills totaling \$269,506.66.
3. Liquor Store bills for September 2023 totaling \$96,446.08.
4. Late water/sewer bills
5. 2023 Investment Schedule/Bond Schedule
6. General Fund/Special Revenue Money Market Account Report
7. 2023 Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Balances
8. American Rescue Plan Funding 2021-2026
9. LG230 Application to Conduct Off-Site Gambling Oct 14 Turn in Poachers
10. Committee Reports, requiring no Council Action-EDA/HRA

Motion passed unanimously.

**Street Lighting**

Lori Moxness reviewed proposal for esplanade streetlights for the Lawrence Lake Acres development. Moxness stated that originally, she had stated the city could put in the old type poles and then change to the esplanade poles but that is not true. OTP has looked at the pole placement and needs of the area and have three options: Option one for 9 poles for \$1,286.54 a month, option two for 12 poles for \$1,563.22 a month and option three for 17 poles for \$2,072.02 a month. Discussed the difference in lighting regarding the 3 different light poles for the development. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to approve option 1 for 9 poles for a total of \$1,286.54 a month. Motion passed unanimously.

Fischer questioned allowing Christmas lights on the existing wood poles. Moxness explained poles need to be engineered to allow wind load. Moxness explained probably not but she would check on the liability of putting Christmas lights on the poles. Moxness requested the specs of the Christmas lights, dates of when lights would be put up and taken down. Fischer will provide specs and dates to Lammers who will email Moxness.

**Vergas 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

There is a group interested in the 125th celebration (in 2028) committee and they are looking for support and if a council member would like to serve on the committee. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to approve support for a 125<sup>th</sup> celebration in 2028. Motion approved unanimously.

## **Government Services Building**

Jessica Green, Northland Securities reviewed the loan structure for purchasing the Government Services Building and the obligations to the city. This is a 15-year loan at an annual proportion of 6.263%. Motion by Pinke, seconded by Fischer to approve resolution 2023-014 (a complete text of the resolution is part of permanent public record in the City Clerk's office.) for Government Services Center. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Pinke, seconded by Haarstick to approve the lease with the Vergas State Bank regarding the government services center. Motion passed unanimously. Lammers reviewed the budget for the remodeling of the City Office portion of the government services center. Currently we have a \$30,000 budget for the remodeling of the office space and for office furnishings. The city is also able to apply for a safety grant for \$10,000 to cover windows, security cameras and doors. We can apply for this grant by December and the funds will be available in January. Motion by Pinke, seconded by Fischer to approve the budget of \$34,000 for the office space at the government services center. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Committee Reports**

### Water and Sewer Committee

Fischer reviewed water and sewer committee meeting held October 6, 2023 (minutes available at the Vergas City Office). Discussed Munibilling and the advantages of having over our current utility billing system. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to approve Munibilling system for \$2,340 and \$235.00 monthly charge. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Albright, seconded by Haarstick to approve SCADA Web Insight system for \$11,600.00 and flow meter for \$5,40.00 for the water system and the \$4,525.00 for the lift station. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Albright seconded by Haarstick to purchase a wrench to turn hydrants valves for \$2,686.00 with payment divided between water and sewer capital improvement funds. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright to increase the base rate for water to \$28.50 a month and sewer for 28.50 a month with a refund of 50 cents for both water and sewer if customer signs up for both ACH and email once Munibilling system is live. Motion passed unanimously.

### Planning Commission

Albright reviewed the planning commission meeting held September 25, 2023 (minutes available at the Vergas City Office). The Planning Commission would like guidance on animal control. Currently we have a cat concern, and our current ordinance states all cats must have a license. How much time and effort should be put into allowing a dispensary if Council states they are not going to allow one? Bruhn stated there are strong feelings regarding selling on Main Street and we will want a public hearing before deciding where to sell and if we want to sell. Discussed cats which are not being licensed and we have 3 people in town currently picking up cats and rehoming them. Felicia Singer asked why the city needs to have pet owners pay for the tags and the Council explained the \$8.00 is to pay for the tags and administrative costs. Motion by Fischer, seconded by Pinke to allow Albright and Kvam to volunteer as construction permit investigators. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Staff Reports**

### Liquor Store Manager report

Felicia Singer has been put on unpaid leave and requested Council terminate her employment. Singer has been given notice to request a hearing and to return her keys to the city office or the liquor store and no response has been made by Singer. Albright stated a letter requesting a hearing and her keys were given to him at the beginning of tonight's meeting. Singer stated she would be getting legal Council and Attorney Winters informed Council they were not to speak to Singer regarding this matter and to set a closed meeting at another time. Singer asked if the meeting had to be closed and Winters stated it is the employee's choice for the meeting to be open or closed but the Council sets the time and date of the meeting. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to hold a meeting to discuss this employee issue on Monday, October 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm. Motion passed unanimously. Winters stated the agenda will state the meeting will be closed and the night of the meeting Singer can state she wants the hearing to be open to the public. Theisen explained the liquor store has begun charging customers for credit card fees and this will save the liquor store approximately \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 a year. Introduced winter hours which change the opening time Monday-Thursday to 11 am. Liquor Store is nominated for an award at the 2024 MMBA Conference for the Hairy Man Liquor.

#### Clerk-Treasurer

Lammers stated she is unable to accomplish both the utility billing system and the Gov Forms system change at the same time and asked Council to wait until after utility billing system is completed to review Gov Forms. The council agreed to review after Munibilling is active.

#### Utilities Superintendent

Motion by Haarstick, seconded by Pinke to approve resolution 2023-013 (a complete text of the resolution is part of permanent public record in the City Clerk's office.) approving purchasing sand from Ottertail County. Motion passed unanimously. DuFrane stated the lift station has had the meter calibrated. Townline Road and Scharf tree trimming has been completed. DuFrane will request Don Schroeder to cut trees on W Lake Street. Hydrants will be flushed as soon as the wrench is received.

#### **2024 Budget**

##### 2024 Fee Schedule

Lammers provided a proposed 2024 fee schedule for the council to review over the next month.

##### 2024 Budget

The council is still reviewing and will pass the final 2024 budget in December.

#### **Information & Announcements**

##### Trainings:

A. LMC, Safety and Loss Control Workshop, Peer Support Training, Cybersecurity Essentials, October 31, 2023 Fergus Falls, (Lammers, DuFrane, Engebretson)

B. Securing State & Federal Funding for your Community, Thursday, November 2, 2023 8:00 am. Thumper Pond Resort Otter Tail Mn 56571

##### Events:

A. Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste public comment meeting regarding Sunset Strip, Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 6:30 pm Council Chambers Vergas Event Center

#### **Adjournment**

The business for which the meeting was called having been completed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Vergas Clerk-Treasurer  
Julie Lammers, CMC