

CITY OF VERGAS
Event Center Advisory Minutes
Vergas Event Center & Zoom Teleconference
5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, July 22, 2025

The City of Vergas Event Center Advisory Committee was called to order by James Stenger on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 5:30 pm with the following members present: James Stenger, Deb Jacoby, Robert Jacoby, and Event Center Coordinator Rachel Nustad. Also present Julie Lammers City Clerk-Treasurer. Absent: Vanessa Perry

Approval of the Agenda

Agenda approved as presented

Minutes

Motion by R. Jacoby, seconded by D. Jacoby, to approve the minutes from May 27th, 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

Additions and Deletions

Solar was added to the agenda.

Status of Recommendations to City Council

None

Income and Expense

Lammers presented the income and expense report provided in the meeting packet. She noted it was time to begin planning for the 2026 budget. Lammers introduced Nustad as the newest member who would be taking over some of Lammers responsibilities as the event center coordinator.

Lammers explained that she had copied last year's budget with some changes, noting they were \$4,000 less in expenses. She indicated wages had decreased since Nustad, who is already working with the city, would be spending 2-5 hours every two weeks on event center matters.

Lammers reported that professional services had increased because they've already spent \$1,301 on security and cleaning services. She clarified that security costs are now part of the rental fee that renters pay, which amounts to \$1,500 for a weekend.

Office supplies and operating expenses were increasing. Lammers mentioned that utilities were not changed yet, but would be addressed during the solar discussion. She noted that utility services might decrease by \$2,000, but a loan payment for the solar project would balance this out for 2-3 years.

Lammers stated that a more detailed budget proposal with explanations for changes would be presented at the next meeting.

R. Jacoby asked about assessment payments. Lammers explained these were for the road work when it was redone, and the city was assessed for that portion. She mentioned it was almost paid off. She also clarified that the solid waste fee on the taxes was for garbage collection, which costs \$70 for residents and more for commercial properties.

Rental

Free and Reduced Rental Form

The board discussed the current policy regarding free and reduced rentals. Stenger expressed concerns about the strict criteria, particularly how events serving alcohol automatically disqualify applicants from free rental consideration. He cited a recent example of a fundraiser for a child with cancer that was charged because alcohol was served.

Stenger explained that such events often require alcohol to attract attendees and maximize donations. He noted that several fundraisers had chosen other venues instead of the Event Center due to the cost.

R. Jacoby expressed concern about giving free rentals too liberally, pointing out that taxpayers ultimately subsidize these events, and many groups from outside city limits would expect free use without contributing to taxes. He mentioned that even the local fire department pays for their events.

D. Jacoby suggested that fundraiser organizers could have reached out to the Lions Club for assistance, as she had offered to help with the cancer fundraiser.

Lammers explained that the policy was written by a committee that included Paul Haarstick, Vanessa Perry, Bev Flateland, Mary Dietrich, and Lyle. She suggested researching past meeting minutes to understand the rationale behind the current policy.

The board agreed to table the discussion until they could review the historical context and have a full committee present.

Schedule of Events

Nustad presented a spreadsheet showing events held at the center in 2025, including details on quantities, amounts paid, amounts still owed, and total expected revenue.

Stenger inquired about the upcoming circus event, as many people had been questioning its legitimacy. Nustad assured the board that the circus had paid their deposit and had checked the building, confirming it would work for their needs. She noted there was some concern about cleanup since the Ms. Vergas Pageant would begin the next day.

Nustad discussed her work on a new brochure for the Event Center. The draft brochure included information about offerings, local lodging options, and rental rates. She mentioned including Josh Hanson's rental properties, Pelican Hotel, and Lakes Inn, and was waiting to hear back from Loonies Pub and Campground.

The board suggested adding Nathan Soland's Sybil Haus as another lodging option. They discussed creating separate, specialized brochures for different types of events such as weddings, birthday parties, and meetings. Lammers also mentioned Nustad's work on the Facebook page, planning to highlight different event types each week.

The board agreed that more promotion of different events could increase rentals. Lammers noted that the event center information could be included in the city newsletter that goes out with water bills.

Building Review

Kitchen

Window/Door Closure

Lammers reported that contractors were having difficulty resolving the window/door closure issue. She explained that the solid wall construction presented challenges, and contractors have been stumped on finding a solution. The board discussed possibly using a modified version of the existing accordion doors but acknowledged the visual gap between the accordion door and the counter would remain problematic.

Stove Top

R. Jacoby explained that the Lions would like to replace the stovetop and purchase a 48-inch cart on wheels at their expense. The wheeled cart would allow it to be moved into the storeroom when not in use to create more space in the kitchen.

The board discussed two concerns: whether the electrical system could handle the increased power draw, and whether the storage room had enough space given upcoming solar equipment installation. Stenger expressed safety concerns about putting hot cooking equipment on wheels.

The board agreed to wait until after the solar panel installation to pursue this project, as the electrical work would need to be evaluated and modified.

Sink Backsplash

Nustad presented research on backsplash options, recommending a simple pebbled white plastic interior panel that would be waterproof and would not swell or rot. The estimated cost was \$25.80 for a 4x8 piece.

Motion by R. Jacoby, seconded by Stenger, to install the pebbled white plastic backsplash. Motion carried unanimously.

Nustad suggested that city maintenance staff could install it.

Large Meeting Room

Projector

Stenger reported that he had contacted vendors about projectors, but they were currently focused on school installations. He planned to visit Best Buy in the next couple of weeks to speak with a representative about options and pricing for a projector for the Event Center.

Committee: "To-Do" List

Stenger suggested adding mobile stairs for the stage to the committee's to-do list. He explained that having stairs on both sides would make the stage more accessible and functional for events like the fireman's dance, where announcers would prefer to be on stage rather than on the floor.

The board discussed the potential cost (estimated between \$139-269 per unit on Amazon), storage considerations, and whether one or two stair units would be needed. Stenger agreed to research options and bring specific ideas to the next meeting.

Lammers also provided an update on the solar panel project approved by the city council. She explained that the Event Center would be getting approximately eight solar panels on the roof and a battery backup system to serve as an emergency center during power outages. The battery system would require an enclosed cage that would take up space currently used for salt storage.

The project would be financed through a zero-percent loan from West Central Initiative, with grants covering most of the cost except for approximately \$6,000. Once paid off, Lammers explained the system could generate up to \$70,000 over the next 30 years. The installation would also include electrical panel improvements that might help address some of the kitchen power issues.

Adjournment

Motion by D. Jacoby, seconded by R. Jacoby, to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Nustad, Deputy Clerk
Event Center Coordinator

Council Recommendations

None

Follow-up Actions

Stenger look into information on window/door closures.

Stenger will continue to look into options to replace the projector.

Stenger will look into options for stairs in front of the stage.

Nustad will research past meeting minutes to understand the rationale behind the current policy of the free or reduced rental form.