

Water Sewer Committee Meeting

The Vergas Water/Sewer Committee met at the Vergas Government Services Center on
Wednesday, November 5, 2025, at 9:00 AM.

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dwight Lundgren, Mayor	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	N/A					P	
Bruce Albright, Liaison											P	
Dean Haarstick, Liaison	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	
Mike DuFrane, Utilities Superintendent	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	

P: Present. A: Absent N/A: No meeting

Also present: Engineer Blaine Green with Widseth.

Call to Order

Lammers called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Additions and Deletions

None.

Minutes

Motion by Albright, seconded by Haarstick to approve the minutes from May 21, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance Review

Lammers presented ordinances from Frazee, Detroit Lakes, and Audubon that were provided by the city attorney for reference. Albright acknowledged he had not thoroughly reviewed all the materials yet. Lammers explained that she brought copies of the 2010 ordinance, the proposed 2024 ordinance, and the changes that had been made by the water committee. She noted the differences between the documents needed to be analyzed. Discussion ensued regarding the timeline for ordinance adoption. Lammers explained that if there is no Planning Commission meeting in December, the ordinances would go to Planning Commission in January and to the Council in February. After a public hearing and two readings, the ordinances would become effective in April. Albright noted there was a lot of material to review, including ordinances from multiple cities and previous changes. He emphasized the importance of thoroughly examining differences between the ordinances and ensuring they are applicable to Vergas today. The committee discussed issues with water service charges at 123 Main St E. The situation involved his curb stop, which wasn't being used but was still being billed. The resident attended the October council meeting requesting that he not pay the past charges of approximately \$1,050 and that he not be required to pay the \$30.50 monthly service charge going forward. He also raised concerns about the city's water line running through his property without an easement. After extensive discussion about the implications of making exceptions and potential impacts on other property owners, the committee decided to table the ordinance review and make a recommendation at the December council meeting. Motion by Albright, seconded by Haarstick, to table the ordinance review and bring a recommendation to the December council meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Lammers agreed to inform the resident of 123 Main St E of this decision so he wouldn't unnecessarily attend the upcoming meeting.

Leaves in storm sewers

DuFrane, Utilities Superintendent, raised concerns about residents blowing leaves into the streets rather than collecting them. He noted this was creating problems throughout the city, particularly on Pelican Avenue, Elm Street, and Third Street. The leaves were plugging up storm drains, causing issues with drainage when snow melts in the spring. DuFrane mentioned that while it's only certain individuals causing the problems, they likely don't realize the harm they're doing. The committee discussed how to address this issue, considering that the next newsletter wouldn't go out until December 1st, which might be too late. Albright offered to draft content for the newsletter regarding this issue. Albright explained that leaves in storm drains create water quality issues, as they can flush into waterways during rain events, potentially harming fish and wildlife. He shared an example from Fargo-Moorhead where a small rain event flushed debris from storm drains into the Red River, resulting in a massive fish kill.

Curb Stops

DuFrane explained issues with curb stops at several locations:

1. 219 Frazee Ave and 235 Frazee Ave: These curb stops behind Skal's building had been repeatedly hit, likely by delivery trucks. Due to the shallow depth of the water main in that area, the curb stops stick up about 6-8 inches above ground level, making them vulnerable to damage. DuFrane reported that they had recently attempted to shut off water to one of the properties but were uncertain if the curb stop functioned correctly.
2. 430 Pelican Ave: This address was identified as the third problematic curb stop location.

The committee discussed options for addressing these issues. Property owners had reported seeing the curb stops hit at least four times. Potential solutions included putting cement pillars with yellow markers to protect the curb stops or digging deeper holes to lower the curb stops. Albright suggested sending letters to the property owners informing them of the non-functional curb stops and citing ordinance section 52.27, which states that the property owner is responsible for the curb stop and valve. Motion by Albright, seconded by Haarstick, to send notification letters to the property owners at 219 Frazee Ave, 235 Frazee Ave, and 430 Pelican Ave informing them of the non-functional curb stops and their responsibility to repair them. The motion passed unanimously.

Lead and Copper

Engineer Blaine Green provided an update on the lead service line inventory. He reported that MBA (their contractor) had moved up their site visit date and completed about half of the remaining unknown service lines, leaving approximately 29-30 properties still needing verification. DuFrane expressed frustration that the inventory wasn't completed as promised, noting that when he accompanied the contractor previously, they had been able to verify 25 properties in just a couple of hours. Blaine explained the challenges in completing the inventory, including difficulty accessing properties and the strict requirements from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). He noted that out of all the properties inspected, only one galvanized line was found, with no lead lines identified.

The committee discussed options for completing the remaining inventory, including:

1. Having city staff complete the remaining checks.
2. Sending letters to remaining property owners.
3. Making phone calls to schedule appointments.

Lammers offered to have the Deputy Clerk call the remaining property owners, and Blaine agreed to send the survey materials to Lammers. Blaine also offered to update the GIS system with the results at no charge if city staff could complete the remaining inspections.

Haarstick and DuFrane left the meeting on a rescue call.

Projects

Due to the absence of committee members who were called to a rescue operation, the discussion of projects was brief. Lammers noted she had received a quote for the installation of a new 4-inch base elbow bracket and riser on the main lift station for \$11,600, not including freight or the vac truck required for installation. However, without DuFrane present to provide details, the committee decided to move this item to the December meeting agenda.

2026 Budgets

Sewer Budget

Lammers reported that the sewer fund was currently \$51,000 in deficit, with approximately \$40,000 in revenue expected in the remaining two months of the year. The fund would likely end the year with a negative balance due to unexpected pump repairs. The committee noted \$49,000 had been spent on repairs when only \$3,000 had been budgeted.

Water Budget

The water budget was in better condition, currently showing a \$12,000 positive balance. Lammers noted that the previous year had ended with a \$3,238 deficit, but this year was looking better. However, she expressed difficulty in preparing future budgets without knowing what projects would be needed and their associated costs.

Albright mentioned that DuFrane had previously discussed the need to replace lift station pumps that were 32 years old and being damaged by sanitary wipes. The committee also discussed the need for a fence around the water treatment plant, which was included in the budget with a potential \$10,000 grant.

After reviewing the financial situation, Albright suggested keeping water rates the same but increasing sewer rates to match water rates (\$31.50 base rate and \$4.50 per 1,000 gallons) to address the deficit and prepare for future infrastructure needs.

The committee agreed to revisit the budget discussion at the next meeting when more members would be present.

The committee agreed to schedule the next meeting for Tuesday, November 25, 2025, at 9:00 AM.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM.