

Street/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee Meeting Minutes
Emergency Yard Waste Meeting
Government Services Center
December 4th, 2025 at 3:00 PM.

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bruce Albright, Council Liaison	N/A	P	N/A	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	N/A	P
Paul Pinke, Council Liaison	N/A	P	N/A	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	N/A	P
Mike DuFrane, Utilities Superintendent	N/A	P	N/A	P	A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	N/A	P
Julie Lammers, Clerk Treasurer	N/A	P	N/A	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	N/A	P

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

An Emergency Yard Waste meeting of the Vergas Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste (SSYW) Committee was held on Thursday, December 4th, 2025 at 3:00 PM at the Vergas Government Services Center and Zoom. Also present; citizen James Stenger.

Lammers called the meeting to order at 2:55 PM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

None

Yard Waste

Fire Dec. 3

DuFrane provided details about the recent fire at the yard waste site. He explained that staff attempted to burn the yard waste on Monday and Tuesday but couldn't get the fire started. However, at approximately 8:45 PM on Tuesday, a fire call went out. The Vergas Fire Department responded and called in mutual aid from surrounding departments to help extinguish the fire. Over 150,000 gallons of water were used, including water from the tower and from the lake using pumper trucks. After the initial response at 8:45 PM Tuesday, the fire rekindled and Vergas was called out again at approximately 2:44 AM on Thursday, December 4. Mike noted that he was embarrassed by the situation and that he had not called the sheriff's department or DNR to inform them they were attempting to start a burn as he normally would, since they were unsuccessful in lighting the fire. Lammers reported that the estimated cost of the fire could be approximately \$2,000 for fire calls, plus other costs including damage to an Otter Tail County recycling dumpster valued at \$3,400, staff time, sand for the roads due to water, and approximately 40,000 gallons of water from the city tower.

Yard Waste Rules & Regulations

The committee discussed the current operation of the yard waste site. Lammers reported that the city had issued 291 permits this year. DuFrane expressed concern about the volume of material being brought to the site, noting that it has grown significantly over time, with many users coming from outside Vergas. He also expressed concern that some contractors were obtaining permits and bringing large quantities of material to the site despite the rules prohibiting commercial use. Committee members discussed the current rules, with DuFrane and Albright both mentioning that the site was originally intended primarily for Vergas residents. Albright mentioned other communities like Perham restrict their yard waste sites to residents only. The committee also discussed potential regulatory issues, with DuFrane mentioning that after reviewing ordinances, he believes the city may need permits from the MPCA for operating the site, which they currently don't have.

Solutions to yard waste violations

The committee discussed several potential solutions to address the yard waste site issues:

1. Contact the county to see if they would be willing to take over operation of the yard waste site.
2. Close the site temporarily until a permanent solution can be determined.
3. Close the site permanently.
4. Limit access to Vergas residents only.
5. Restrict the site to only grass clippings and leaves (no brush).
6. Have fire personnel present whenever burning occurs at the site.

After discussion, the committee reached consensus that the yard waste site should be temporarily closed effective immediately. A sign would be posted at the site, and the closure would be announced on social media. The city would not sell 2025 permits while the closure is in effect. The committee also agreed that Lammers should contact Otter Tail County to inquire about the possibility of the county taking over management of the yard waste site. DuFrane would develop survey questions for residents to gather input on possible long-term solutions.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to recommend to the City Council that the yard waste site be closed immediately as of the next council meeting date. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to adjourn the meeting at 3:50 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Recommendations

- Recommend to the City Council that the yard waste site be closed immediately until further notice.
- Recommend to City Council the approval of community survey.

Follow Up Actions

- DuFrane: Call about the dumpster damage costs after the committee decides on recommendations.
- Lammers: Research MPCA permit requirements and regulations for the yard waste site.
- Lammers: Create survey questions about yard waste site options for residents with help from the Deputy Clerk.
- DuFrane: Put up a "Yard waste closed" sign at the disposal site. 12/4/25.
- Lammers: Post on Facebook that the yard waste site is temporarily closed due to the fire. 12/8/25
- Lammers: Stop selling yard waste permits for 2025. 12/4/25
- Committee: Contact the county to see if they would be willing to take over the yard waste site.
- Committee: Put yard waste discussion on the next Council meeting agenda.