

CITY OF VERGAS
Event Center Advisory Minutes
Vergas Event Center & Zoom Teleconference
3:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 10, 2025

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
James Stenger, Council Appointment	P	P	P	N/A	P	P	P	P	N/A	P	N/A	P
Vanessa Perry, Member	P	P	P	N/A	P	A	A	A	N/A	P	N/A	A
Rachel Nustad, Member						P	P	P	N/A	P	N/A	P
Deb Jacoby, Member	P	P	A	N/A	P	P	P	P				
Robert Jacoby, Member	P	P	P	N/A	P	P	P	P	N/A	P	N/A	P
Jay Norby, Member											N/A	P

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

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Stenger at 3:00 PM.

Additions and Deletions

Nustad requested to add a review of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the event center, to determine if items have been completed and provide updates.

Motion by R. Jacoby, seconded by Nustad, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Motion by R. Jacoby, seconded by Nustad, to approve the minutes from October 28, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Status of Recommendations to City Council

None.

Income and Expense

2025 Income and Expense

Nustad addressed previous questions about insurance costs, noting that insurance increased by 14% in 2025 and will increase by another 14% in 2026. R. Jacoby pointed out that the insurance costs had actually increased more significantly, from \$3,900 to \$5,900. He questioned why the proposed 2026 budget only included \$1,500 for insurance. He also noted that the utilities budget was substantially reduced, which Stenger confirmed was due to the installation of solar panels. Stenger requested information about the total number of events held at the center for the year. Nustad agreed to provide this information at the next meeting to establish a baseline for setting goals for 2026.

Rental

Free and Reduced Rental Form

Nustad shared research she had conducted on free and reduced rental policies from other venues in the area:

- Otter Tail Community Center allows local nonprofits to use their facility at no charge for special events or meetings, provided they follow cleaning protocols.
- Lakeside Golf Course offers reduced rates for people using multiple services (golfing and venue rental).
- Fair Hills provides complimentary room rental for groups with lodging blocks.

R. Jacoby expressed concern about comparing Vergas (population 350) to larger communities, noting that Vergas taxpayers ultimately subsidize any free rentals. He also pointed out that other venues like Frazee Event Center have additional revenue sources like a bar that Vergas lacks.

The board discussed the current policy and metrics for evaluating free or reduced rental requests. Stenger expressed frustration that the current evaluation process is ineffective, as requests are consistently denied despite the lengthy review process. He suggested either eliminating the option entirely or creating a more workable system.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by R. Jacoby, to recommend to the City Council that the free or reduced rental form be eliminated. The motion passed unanimously.

The board also discussed concerns about the \$500 resident discount, noting that it makes three-day events cheaper than one-day events in some scenarios, which doesn't make logical sense.

Schedule of Events

Nustad indicated she is working on a new system to track events to make it easier to monitor payments and maintain records.

Rental Checklist

The board reviewed the rental checklist drafted by Nustad. They discussed several revisions and adjusting the layout of the rental checklist so it will be simple for the renters to follow. Nustad confirmed she would require renters to return the completed checklist before receiving their deposit back.

Motion by R. Jacoby, seconded by Nustad to recommend to City Council to approve the rental checklist as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Rental Form

The board discussed concerns about the rental rates structure, specifically the large price difference between the \$800 three-day event without alcohol and the \$1,500 three-day event with alcohol. The board questioned the rationale behind the \$700 difference when security only costs about \$140 (4 hours at \$35/hour).

R. Jacoby suggested the difference might be related to insurance costs or bar usage fees, but no one was certain of the original reasoning. The board decided to seek clarification before making recommendations.

Accountability of Rental Forms

Nustad expressed concerns about inconsistent policies regarding rental forms and deposits. She noted situations where people fill out rental forms for others (such as benefits) but those actually using the facility don't know the requirements. She also mentioned instances where deposits were waived for certain groups, like bank-sponsored benefits, but then problems occurred (such as a broken sink).

The board agreed that all renters should be treated consistently and required to provide deposits regardless of who they are, as deposits are returned if no problems occur. They also discussed the need for clearer instructions with pictures showing how tables and chairs should be stored.

Building Review

Kitchen

Stove Top

The stove top replacement is on hold pending the completion of the solar panel installation. The board discussed concerns about delays with the solar panel project, noting it needs to be completed in time to install the new stove for Maple Syrup Fest in April.

Large Meeting Room

Tables (donation from Lion's)

Nustad confirmed that Clerk-Treasurer Julie Lammers had discussed the table donation with Norby, and everything is set to move forward with requesting funds.

Bar Cooler

Stenger reported that after consulting with Tom Winters, who handles catering events, a four-door cooler would be preferable to a three-door model for efficiency. He is researching options but noted that four-door models are harder to find. Nustad mentioned that Otter Tail Power offers custom rebates on used coolers less than five years old. It was also mentioned that cleaning the coils might resolve some of the current cooler's freezing issues.

Ash Tray

Stenger reported that the ashtray mounted on the side of the building has created fire hazards, with people having to put out fires in

the ash tray during recent events. The board agreed to recommend removing it and potentially replacing it with a movable ashtray placed farther from the building.

Committee: "To-Do" List

No specific additions were made to the to-do list.

Members

Lions Member

Norby has decided to fill the Lions Member spot, that was previously Deb Jacoby, for the time being.

Member Terms - Robert Jacoby

R. Jacoby's term was up for renewal.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Nustad, to recommend to City Council to appoint Norby as the new Lions member and accept R. Jacoby for another term as citizen member. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Date and Time

The board discussed changing the meeting schedule to better accommodate members' availability and to better align with City Council meetings. After discussing various options and conflicts (including Lions meetings on second Tuesdays), the board agreed on a new schedule.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Nustad, to schedule meetings for the second Wednesday of each month at 3:00 PM, starting January 14, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Comprehensive Plan

The board reviewed the comprehensive plan to identify items related to the event center that had been completed in 2025, including the new oven and stovetop, new projector, and backsplash. They also noted progress on expanding the use of the event center for non-traditional events and rental opportunities.

Adjournment

Motion by Stenger, seconded by R. Jacoby, to adjourn the meeting at 4:00 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Nustad, Deputy Clerk
Event Center Coordinator
(Assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Council Recommendations

- Recommend to City Council to eliminate the Free and Reduced Rental Form.
- Recommend to City Council to approve the Rental Checklist with the changes.
- Recommend to City Council to accept Jay Norby as the new Lions Member on the board.
- Recommend to City Council to accept Robert Jacoby for another term as a citizen on the board.

Follow Up Actions

- Look into changing the door code more often.
- Ask Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane to remove the ash tray from the side of the building and the board will discuss a replacement.
- Review the Rental Form and discuss the differences in pricing of rentals.
- Nustad will put together and end of year report to present at the next meeting to establish a baseline for setting goals for 2026.