

City of Vergas Planning Commission Minutes
Monday, January 26, 2026 at 6:00 pm
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a regular hybrid meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026, on Zoom and at the Vergas Government Services Building.

2025	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alex Ohman, Chair	A											
Bruce Albright, Liaison	P											
Dave Johnston, Member	P											
Rebecca Hasse, Member	P											
Jim Courneya, Member	P											
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P											
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P											

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

Call to Order

Albright called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

None.

Positions

Chair

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Courneya, to elect Ohman as the Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Courneya, to elect Albright as the Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Set Time, Place and Date of Regular 2026 Meetings

The commission discussed continuing their traditional meeting schedule. Albright noted that meetings are held as needed rather than monthly, and the council has budgeted for approximately 10 meetings per year.

Motion by Courneya, seconded by Johnston, to continue meeting on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:00 PM at the Government Services Center as needed. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Albright noted minor corrections to the minutes, including a spelling error for a name and an address correction.

Albright provided context about the Sonnenberg conditional use permit discussed at the October meeting, explaining that the permit allowed them to operate Marlo Motors from their "shouse" in Lawrence Lake Acres with several conditions. No vehicles would be kept on the property, and only a small sign would be displayed. He explained the conditions were established to address neighborhood concerns about bringing a commercial business into a residential area, with the permit being revocable if conditions were violated.

Motion by Johnston, seconded by Courneya, to approve the October 27, 2025 minutes with the noted corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

Status of Council Recommendations

Albright reported that the City Council approved the conditional use permit for Paul and Deb Sonnenberg for Marlo Motors to operate out of their property in Lawrence Lake Acres with all the recommended conditions. This was approved at the Council's November 18, 2025 meeting.

Construction Permits

Active Construction Permits

Albright explained to new member Johnston that simple permits (like window replacements) are administratively approved by the Clerk-Treasurer to prevent delays, while more substantial projects come before the Planning Commission. Courneya and Albright confirmed they had updated the active construction permits list during a recent review.

Approved by Clerk-Treasurer Permit

Lammers reported approving a permit for 235 East Frazee Avenue for an inside remodel and doors, but noted that the sign portion of the permit remained unapproved pending design changes to comply with Minnesota State Cannabis regulations. The Commission discussed that this property, formerly Big Jim's Drive-In, would be Vergas' new cannabis dispensary pending licensing. Discussion ensued regarding the store's location near a park, with Lammers explaining that the Planning Commission had previously decided to allow any type of business in the commercial district. She also noted that no property in Vergas is more than 500 feet from a park, making the state's distance requirements impossible to satisfy within city limits.

Conditional Use Permit

303 Altona Avenue

Lammers explained that this property was recently purchased by EDA/HRA (Economic Development Authority/Housing and Redevelopment Authority) to build two homes for daycare facilities. She clarified that EDA/HRA would not operate the daycares but would rent to daycare operators. A conditional use permit is required for daycare operations in a residential area. Lammers noted that the City Council had waived the standard \$400 fee for the conditional use permit. She recommended scheduling the public hearing during a regular meeting to save costs and suggested it could be included in the newsletter to save on mailing expenses. The commission discussed the timing, with Albright, speaking from his EDA position, noting that while the property had been acquired, many details remained unresolved including financing for the estimated \$500,000-600,000 project. Despite these uncertainties, the commission agreed that obtaining the conditional use permit early would be beneficial for grant applications and fundraising efforts.

Motion by Courneya, seconded by Johnston, to schedule a public hearing for the daycare conditional use permit at the next regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Albright shared that the EDA would be touring Perham and New York Mills daycare facilities to gather information about design considerations and operational requirements. He noted the complexity of daycare regulations, including requirements for separate playgrounds, sick rooms, and laundry facilities.

Old Business

Nuisance Properties

Lammers reported no significant updates on nuisance properties, except that property owner on 350 S Pelican has signed an agreement stating his garage would be removed by May 1st.

Albright explained the city's three-step nuisance property enforcement process for new member Johnston:

1. First notification letter with photo evidence and applicable ordinance
2. Second letter with a \$40 fine if not corrected
3. Final letter from the city attorney with potential further action

City Ordinance Update

Lammers reported that ordinance updates had been completed based on commission discussions, but she still needed to incorporate older ordinances. She anticipated resuming this work after meeting state requirements due at the end of the month. Albright explained that the current ordinances are disorganized, with no continuous numbering or comprehensive index. The updated version would include an index and proper formatting to keep everything in order when changes are made.

New Business

Vergas Comprehensive Plan 2036 - 2025 Update

Lammers presented the updated comprehensive plan with progress notes. She explained that 2023 items are in regular print, 2024 items in bold, and 2025 items will be in italics to track progress by year. Moving forward, they plan to update the document throughout the year rather than waiting until the end of the year. Lammers requested commission members to review the document and inform her of any missing items that should be added to the update. Albright explained that the plan, adopted in 2022, covers a 15-year period through 2036 and was developed with extensive public input. He noted the importance of tracking progress on community goals and periodically reassessing whether certain goals remain relevant.

Adjournment

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Johnston, to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorded by Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Secretary,
Julie Lammers, CMC
Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer

Council Recommendations

None.

Follow Up Actions

- Lammers: Approve the sign permit for 235 East Frazee Avenue after receiving a copy of the updated quote from the applicant.
- Planning Commission: Hold a public hearing for the conditional use permit for the daycare centers at 303 Altona Avenue at the next regular meeting.
- Lammers: Continue updating the city ordinances by incorporating old ordinances and amendments; resume work after state requirements are submitted by end of month.
- All Planning Commission members: Review the updated Vergas Comprehensive Plan and notify Lammers of any missed items to be added.
- Planning Commission: Track 2026 progress items in the Comprehensive Plan as they are completed.