

City of Vergas Planning Commission Public Hearing
Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on Monday, February 23, 2026, on Zoom and at the Vergas Government Services Building with the following members present: Alex Ohman, Bruce Albright, David Johnston, and Rebecca Hasse. Absent: Jim Courneya. Also present: Clerk-Treasurer Julie Lammers; and citizens Editor Bob Williams with Frazee-Vergas Forum, and David Ebersviller.

Call to Order

Chair Ohman called the public hearing to order at 6:00 PM.

David Ebersviller addressed the commission about the possibility of using his property for a daycare facility. He noted that under such an arrangement, a conditional use permit would not need to be designated for both sites.

Albright introduced himself and provided context, explaining that the EDA/HRA had been exploring daycare options for the city of Vergas, initially working with a couple churches also expressed interest. He emphasized that the overriding goal was simply to get daycare established in Vergas, as the lack of childcare was seen as a barrier to attracting new residents. Albright noted the commission had toured daycare facilities in Perham and Otter Tail County and acknowledged that some of those newer facilities may be beyond the city's price range.

Albright clarified that the current public hearing was specifically tied to the designated site under consideration, and that if the project were to shift to another location—such as Mr. Ebersviller's property—a new public hearing would be required. He invited Ebersviller to stop by the city office to discuss his building and plans in more detail. Lammers confirmed she is available to discuss this with Ebersviller.

Albright also noted for the record that a neighboring landowner to the lot under consideration had requested that pine trees be planted as a buffer between his property and the proposed daycare. Lammers indicated that the city regularly receives donated trees for memorial purposes and that would be the first avenue explored. Lammers added that a six-foot fence was also planned for the site, and that existing trees to the north and west of the property would provide additional screening.

Ohman called three times for public comments. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing at 6:07 PM.

City of Vergas Planning Commission Minutes
Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6:30 PM
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a regular hybrid meeting on Monday, February 23, 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	P										
Bruce Albright, Liaison	P	P										
Dave Johnston, Member	P	P										
Rebecca Hasse, Member	P	P										
Jim Courneya, Member	P	A										
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P	P										
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	A										

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

Also present: Citizens; David Ebersviller

Call to Order

Chair Ohman called the planning Commission meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

Lammers requested two additions to the agenda: *Nuisances* under Old Business, and *Growing Up Vergas* under New Business.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Hasse, to adopt the agenda with the noted additions. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Motion by Albright, seconded by Hasse, to approve the minutes from January 26, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Status of Council Recommendations

None.

Conditional Use Permit

Lammers reported there were no new council recommendations to present, as the conditional use permit matter had been addressed the previous month.

Construction Permits

Active Construction Permits

Lammers provided an updated copy of active construction permits, noting there were no changes from the prior report.

Approved by Clerk-Treasurer Permit

None.

Conditional Use Permit

1. 303 Altona Ave

Following the close of the public hearing, the commission moved to consider the conditional use permit for 303 Altona Avenue. No additional discussion was raised.

Motion by Ohman, seconded by Albright, to approve the Conditional Use Permit for 303 Altona Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

City Ordinance Update

1. Daycare Conditional Use Permit Language

Lammers raised a question about whether the city's zoning ordinance should continue to require a conditional use permit for all licensed daycare centers, noting that other communities do not impose this requirement. She suggested the commission consider either removing daycare entirely from the conditional use permit requirement or limiting it to unlicensed daycare operations, given the extensive state licensing rules already governing daycare centers.

Albright offered his perspective that the conditional use permit process serves a local transparency function, ensuring neighboring residents are notified and have an opportunity to voice concerns. He suggested the licensing and regulatory oversight is handled at the state level, and that the commission's role is primarily to keep the public informed and provide a local forum for feedback. The commission generally agreed that the distinction between a licensed daycare center serving 12 or more persons and a smaller group family daycare was meaningful, with the former warranting a conditional use permit and the latter not. Lammers confirmed this was consistent with past practice, noting the city had processed five home daycare situations, none of which required a conditional use permit because they served fewer than 12 children.

The commission also discussed whether the daycare conditional use permit requirement was reflected in the R-2 zoning district, with Ohman recalling that R-2 was added to address apartments and higher-density residential areas. The commission reviewed the zoning ordinance but was not fully certain of the current language and agreed further review was needed as part of the broader ordinance update.

2. Manufactured Homes

Lammers raised a question regarding whether a conditional use permit is required for a manufactured home placed on an individual lot outside of a manufactured home park, noting that someone had inquired about placing a manufactured home on a vacant lot in

town. After reviewing the ordinance language, which states that manufactured homes must meet certain standards and any conditions of a conditional use permit, Ohman interpreted this as applying only to manufactured home parks. He indicated that a manufactured home on an individual lot would simply be subject to standard R-1 residential requirements, including the requirement that all buildings have a foundation. Lammers indicated she would use this interpretation when responding to the inquiry.

3. Nuisances – Demolition Cars

Lammers reported receiving formal complaints from two residents regarding demolition derby vehicles being brought onto a property on Pelican Avenue. She noted the city had previously addressed this issue with the property owner, who had received a letter, and that the situation had resolved — until a new vehicle was recently brought in on a trailer. Lammers indicated that as long as the vehicle remained on the trailer, no ordinance violation had technically occurred and she did not feel action was currently warranted.

The commission reviewed the relevant nuisance ordinance (§92.2), which states it is unlawful to keep, store, or abandon any motor vehicle that is not in operating condition, is partially dismantled, or is used as a source of repair parts, unless that vehicle is properly licensed under Minnesota Statute 168, or is enclosed in a building or kept out of view from any street, road, or alley. A privacy fence is also permissible under the ordinance. Albright noted the ordinance also permits licensed vehicles to be kept in a driveway, and that some residents exploited this by keeping multiple vehicles under the guise of parts swapping between them.

Johnston asked whether a time limit could be applied to vehicles parked in driveways, but Lammers indicated no such provision currently exists in the ordinance. Ohman suggested inviting concerned residents to a future planning commission meeting to discuss potential ordinance changes. Lammers noted the number of properties involved in similar complaints had grown from one or two to four or five.

The commission discussed whether to recommend that legal counsel review §92.2 and provide guidance, both to assess the city's options and to ensure the commission was aware that this issue had been ongoing.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Ohman, to recommend that city legal counsel review ordinance §92.2 and provide their assessment. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Nuisances – Feral Cats

Lammers informed the commission that the city had received multiple complaints regarding an increasing feral cat population, primarily concentrated near a vacated building by the railroad tracks, which contains a wood pile where the cats had been living. She noted that at the previous council meeting, the council directed staff to continue enforcing existing ordinance provisions: any cat that is not licensed, tagged, or on a leash is presumed feral and, as city staff time allows, such cats would be captured and handled accordingly.

Lammers recounted that a rescue group had come to Vergas the prior summer and removed between 30 and 35 cats, with four or five adopted by Vergas residents and the remainder spayed, neutered, and relocated. Johnston noted that eliminating the habitat — the vacated building — would help reduce the population's return. The commission took no formal action, as Lammers indicated she simply wanted the planning commission to be aware of the ongoing situation.

New Business

Growing Up Vergas

Lammers presented an overview of the ***Growing Up Vergas*** initiative, a program being developed by the city's EDA/HRA. She explained that the EDA/HRA was not intending to enter the daycare business directly, but rather to act as a landlord by acquiring or constructing a duplex property — specifically at 303 Altona Avenue — that would then be rented to licensed daycare providers. A separate grant was already funding an organization to identify and recruit daycare providers, and Lammers reported that two county-connected organizations had told her they could readily fill such spaces.

She highlighted that one of the programs being considered would include a substitute daycare worker who could step in when a provider is sick or unavailable — addressing a key gap in home daycare arrangements where parents are left without coverage.

Lammers emphasized the flexibility built into the **Growing Up Vergas** name and concept: if daycare demand eventually subsides, the same buildings could be repurposed for senior housing, workforce housing, or other community needs.

Lammers stated the EDA/HRA was applying for a grant in March, with results expected by late May or early June, potentially worth up to \$100,000. The plan involved comparing multiple development options — including a duplex from a modular home builder estimated at approximately \$220,000 and a model based on the Otter Tail County construction approach — before committing to a specific path. Albright noted that the city had committed to waiving sewer and water hookup fees for any new daycare facility, but emphasized there would be no direct draw from city tax funds.

Johnston asked about the potential tax impact on residents. Albright clarified that the **Growing Up Vergas** initiative was funded through grants and fundraising, not direct taxation. He also noted separately that the city was exploring a local sales tax specifically for improvements at Long Lake Park, which would require legislative approval and then a public ballot vote. That sales tax, if approved, would sunset upon completion of the park project and could not be redirected to other purposes. Lammers added that any city sales tax would be capped at less than half a percent, and projected that it would raise approximately \$28,500 per year based on 2024 figures.

Returning to the grant application, Lammers requested that the commission authorize Ohman to sign a letter of support for the grant, confirming that 303 Altona Avenue is zoned residential, that a duplex is consistent with permitted uses in that district, and that the proposed use for specialized family childcare aligns with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and serves an important community need. Johnston raised a question about whether approving this letter would lock the project into 303 Altona Avenue, particularly given the earlier discussion about potentially working with Ebersviller's property. Albright and Lammers clarified that the letter was a grant application requirement, not a binding commitment, and that if the project shifted to another site, an amendment to the application could be made before or after the grant award.

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Johnston. to authorize Ohman to sign the letter of support for the **Growing Up Vergas** grant application related to 303 Altona Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Motion by Albright, seconded by Johnston, to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 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 meet with Ebersviller and discuss the building and plans for potential daycare use.
- Lammers: Respond to formal complaints regarding demolition cars by sending a letter if vehicles are found to be unlicensed, in accordance with ordinance 92.2.
- Planning Commission: Put the issue of enforcement and interpretation of the demolition car/nuisance ordinance (92.2) on the City Council's radar for review and further direction.
- Ohman: Sign the letter confirming zoning and support for the proposed duplex/daycare project at 303 Altona Avenue for grant application purposes.
- EDA/HRA: Continue development of **Growing Up Vergas** project, including preparing grant application (due mid-March), and await grant decision (end of May/early June) before finalizing property selection.
- EDA/HRA: Prepare a pamphlet to explain the **Growing Up Vergas** program and fundraising approach to the community.
- Nustad: Include relevant city ordinance information about vehicle storage/nuisance in the next city newsletter for public education.
- City Staff: Continue enforcement of cat/animal ordinances as per council direction, including capturing unlicensed/feral cats as staff time allows