

Street/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee Meeting Minutes

Government Services Center

May 14th, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

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

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

A Yard Waste meeting of the Vergas Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste (SSYW) Committee was held on Tuesday, May 14th, 2026 at 9:00 AM at the Vergas Government Services Center and Zoom.

Present via Zoom: Engineer Blaine Green of Widseth and citizen James Stenger.

Lammers called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

Albright requested an addition regarding the alley by the parking lot.

Minutes

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to approve the minutes from March 31, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Streets

West Lake Street

Improvement Project

The Committee discussed the status of safety improvements to West Lake Street from Glenn Street to Highway 17, estimated at approximately \$105,000. Discussion centered on the ongoing difficulty in securing right-of-way easements, which has stalled the project for approximately five and a half years. City Engineer Blaine Green confirmed that the engineering drawings are complete and in order, and the remaining obstacle is the preparation of easement documents by the City Attorney.

One adjacent property owner had previously met with a representative and was provided paperwork but has not returned signed documents to the attorney. The property owner indicated he is not in favor of the project and wishes the City to bear associated costs. No further progress has been made on that easement.

A separate right-of-way issue involving the railroad property was also discussed. The Committee was informed that the City and Otter Tail County are jointly pursuing the relocation of a railroad switch that currently causes significant traffic delays. The railroad has completed engineering analysis and determined that moving the switch is the preferred solution. The County is applying for grant funding in collaboration with the railroad, with grant awards expected in 2027, engineering to follow, and the switch relocation projected for 2028. The City has submitted supporting letters from the Mayor, Fire Chief, EMS, and the school. The Committee noted that the frequency and severity of train blockages appears to have improved compared to prior years. Photographic documentation of train delays was requested urgently to support the grant application, which has a deadline at the end of the month.

Tree Trimming

The Committee reviewed three quotes received for tree trimming and removal along West Lake Street from Glenn Street to the City limits. The quotes were from Heartwood Tree Experts, Carrs Tree Service and Three Pines Tree Service, with Three Pines providing a quote of \$2,450. However, the Committee determined that all three quotes were inadequate because they described trimming of overhanging branches and removal of only dead or small-diameter trees, rather than full removal of all trees within the right-of-way.

Albright emphasized that the trees must be removed entirely from the right-of-way — not merely trimmed — both as a safety measure and in preparation for a future road improvement project. He noted that stumps should also be treated to prevent

regrowth. It was observed that the majority of trees along the corridor are dead, and that the ongoing hazard to motorists, including incidents involving campers and trucks losing clearance, warrants prompt action.

The Committee identified that the right-of-way on the north side may be 40 feet rather than the standard 33 feet, based on a prior platting by a previous property owner. Green indicated that a surveyor could verify this relatively quickly, noting that one of the firm's surveyors lives in town.

The Committee agreed to restart the bidding process with a revised, clearly defined scope calling for complete tree removal within the right-of-way. Green agreed to prepare a map indicating the right-of-way boundaries, which would then be provided to Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane to obtain new quotes. The item will be carried over to the next Council meeting if quotes cannot be obtained before the upcoming Tuesday meeting.

Glenn Street/W Lake Street

Dust Control

The Committee was informed that the dust control bid for Glenn Street/West Lake Street came in at \$2,500, and that the property owners have paid \$2,499.90 toward that cost. The dust control contractor will proceed at their own scheduling. DuFrane raised the question of whether the road should be graded by a contractor prior to the dust control application, noting that in past years a grader had been used before spraying to ensure a flat, even surface. It was clarified that road grading was not included in the current agreement with the dust control contractor or the cost-sharing arrangement with the landowners. It was suggested that DuFrane coordinate informally with a local grading contractor if conditions allow, particularly if rain is forecast, as a freshly graded surface would yield better results.

Crosswalks

The Committee discussed the need to repaint crosswalks in advance of the upcoming tourist and Memorial Day season. It was noted that the County originally installed the crosswalks and that maintenance is the City's responsibility. Concern was raised that crosswalks painted late in the prior season had peeled over winter and should be done earlier this year.

The Committee considered whether City staff could borrow a line painter from the City of Pelican Rapids and complete the work in-house, versus contracting with a local asphalt contractor. During the meeting, DuFrane contacted Randy of Newling Asphalt by phone. Randy indicated he could complete the work by the following Tuesday or Wednesday — prior to Memorial Day weekend — at a rate of \$20 per block. With approximately five to six crosswalk blocks, the total cost is estimated at \$400–\$600. The Committee agreed this was a more cost-effective approach than mobilizing City staff and equipment.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to hire Newling Asphalt to paint the crosswalks at a rate of \$20 per block. The motion passed unanimously.

DuFrane indicated he would call the contractor back to confirm following the meeting. The Committee agreed that reflective glass beads were not necessary at this time and that standard paint would suffice.

W Elm Street

The Committee received an update on the proposed vacation of the alley adjacent to West Elm Street. A Public Hearing on the matter is scheduled for the following Tuesday. The Clerk Treasurer noted that one affected property owner supports vacating the full alley, while a second property owner is undecided. It was clarified that under Minnesota State Statute 412.851, the City does not have discretion over how vacated right-of-way is distributed — it is automatically absorbed equally by abutting property owners. The City Attorney is preparing the vacation resolution, which will preserve all existing utility easements, including access to a manhole in the area. The alley in question runs from West Elm Street to Highway 17 and affects three properties: 106 E Elm St, 110 W Elm St, and 251 1st Ave N. A separate alley segment extending toward North 2nd Street was discussed briefly but cannot be included in the current vacation as it was not included in the public notice; a separate hearing would be required for that portion. DuFrane was asked to place a small amount of gravel near the fire hydrant on West Elm Street where standing water has been an issue due to vehicle parking.

Road Graveling

The Committee discussed the need to place gravel on several City streets, with West Lake Street and the road near 301 W Looney Lane property identified as priorities. Albright suggested that City staff prepare a map identifying all streets in need of gravel, including estimated footage, so that quantities can be calculated and bids obtained. DuFrane noted that West Lake Street has historically been a jointly maintained road, and that the Township has previously contributed to gravel costs on that road. The Committee agreed it would be appropriate to approach the Township again once quantities and costs are established, but emphasized that Council approval would be needed before any formal request is made.

Alley by Parking Lot

Albright noted a concern regarding the drop or grade change at the apron where the alley meets Main Street near the post office. It was discussed whether the transition should be repaired. Green confirmed that the concrete contractor had previously reviewed the issue and agreed it could be feathered or patched, but the Committee expressed concern that a patch could create a larger mess given the relatively new pavement. It was suggested that County highway staff be consulted for their assessment before any work proceeds. The Committee noted that the County retains responsibility for the Main Street sidewalks and adjacent infrastructure. No action was taken; the matter will be reviewed further pending a County consultation. DuFrane also raised that several punch list items from the recent construction project remain incomplete, including signage in the alley and near the post office. Green indicated he would visit the site the following day to walk through outstanding items with DuFrane.

Yard Waste

Lammers reported that 152 yard waste permits have been sold to date, with 292 sold in total during all of the prior year. Increased advertising has brought in new permit holders who were previously unaware of the program.

The Committee discussed the rapid accumulation of material at the yard waste site and the challenges associated with burning. DuFrane explained that the City holds a DNR variance for burning at the compost site, which is issued for a limited period (approximately one week at a time) and includes a condition that smoke must not bother neighbors or obstruct roadways. Due to dry and windy conditions, no burning has been possible recently. The pile has grown quickly since opening, and concerns were raised about contractors and residents depositing non-compliant materials, including stumps, large wood, and possible construction debris. The Committee discussed the need to get the yard waste site security camera operational. Staff reported that the Arvig is working to replace wireless point-to-point transmitters as a first step. The Committee emphasized the importance of operational cameras to catch violators. It was agreed that if a violator is identified, the matter should be reported to Lammers for referral to the City Attorney.

Albright confirmed that the City has filed the appropriate registration with the MPCA for the yard waste disposal site, that the resulting ash is not considered a pollutant by MPCA, and that the DNR variance provides the legal basis for burning. The Committee agreed to have DuFrane forward a copy of the current variance documentation to Albright and Lammers for reference.

The Committee noted that if the burn ban continues and the pile reaches capacity, the Council has previously agreed to limit intake — permitting leaves and small material while halting larger brush loads. The upcoming Memorial Day weekend was identified as a period of high expected activity.

Budget – Goal Setting

5-Year Budget

Lammers presented an overview of the preliminary five-year budget through 2031 for the streets, recycling, and shop departments. Items currently identified for inclusion are: grapple costs (to be split between the recycling center and streets budgets), a skid steer, and a future snowblower replacement. DuFrane indicated that more detailed conversations with staff are needed to refine the numbers. The Committee discussed the potential purchase of a grapple attachment for the City tractor, which is compatible with tractor attachments. A new unit was estimated at approximately \$4,500–\$6,000, though DuFrane noted that used units are frequently available on the secondary market for approximately \$2,000–\$2,200. The

committee agreed that a used grapple would be appropriate and that the item should be brought to Council with a price comparison once a suitable unit is identified. The grapple was noted as particularly relevant to yard waste management and potential structure demolition activities. Lammers also reviewed the current bond schedule and investment accounts. Outstanding bonds include approximately \$147,000 for the parking lot and \$740,000 for the 2019 street project (original principal \$985,740). A 2015 bond has approximately \$33,000 remaining. Dedicated accounts are maintained for seal coating, sidewalks, yard waste, street improvements, and bond payments.

Adjournment

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 AM. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Recommendations

None.

Follow Up Actions

- Green: Provide a map to DuFrane showing the required tree removal area (right-of-way) for West Lake Street.
- Lammers: Send documentation of the 40-foot right-of-way to the north to Green.
- DuFrane: Get new quotes from tree removal companies based on the updated map and clear removal specifications from Blaine/Lammers.
- DuFrane: Bring new tree removal quotes to Council for recommendation after receiving map and documentation.
- DuFrane: Contact the dust control bid winner to confirm if grading is included or if another grader operator needs to be scheduled before spraying; coordinate timing with weather/grading.
- DuFrane: Create maps showing areas needing gravel, with quantities/lengths, and provide to Council for bid purposes.
- Council/DuFrane: After maps/quantities are prepared, get gravel bids and then approach Candor Township for cost-sharing on West Lake Street gravel, pending council approval.
- Green: Walk the parking lot and other areas with DuFrane to review punch list items and address any new issues from winter.
- DuFrane: Forward DNR variance/burning permit documentation to Julie and Paul for review.
- Albright: Drive up to yard waste site, take photos, and monitor for illegal dumping (stumps, building debris, etc.); report violations for enforcement.
- DuFrane: Work with Arvig and suppliers to ensure all city security cameras are operational and connected; coordinate repair/replacement of wireless equipment as recommended by Arvig.
- DuFrane: Bring snowblower and skid steer quotes/numbers to Lammers for 2027 budget planning.
- DuFrane: Monitor Facebook Marketplace and other sources for used grapple; bring viable options and pricing to Council for approval if found at significant savings.