

CITY OF VERGAS.  
 Park Board Advisory Board Minutes  
 Vergas Event Center & Zoom Teleconference  
 3:00 PM on Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dean Haarstick, Council Appointment	P	N/A	A	A	P							
Sherri Hanson, Member	P	N/A	P	P	P							
Chuck Hanson, Member	P	N/A	P	P	A							
Steph Hogan, Member	P	N/A	P	P	P							
Tiffany Prindle, Member	A	N/A	A	A								
Tony Sailer, Member	P	N/A	P	P	A							
Rachel Nustad, Secretary of the board	P	N/A	P	P	P							
Mike DuFrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	N/A	A	A	P							

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

Present via person: Julie Lammers and Tasha Rohlfs of Otter Tail Lakes Country  
 Present via zoom: Citizen James Stenger

**Call to order**

The City of Vergas Park Advisory Board was called to order by S. Hanson on Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 3:00 PM

**Additions and Deletions 1:50**

Two additions were noted: a Utilities Report and painting the loon.

**Minutes**

**April 9, 2026**

Motion by Hogan, seconded by S. Hanson to approve the minutes from April 9, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

**Status of Recommendations to City Council**

None.

**Giants of Otter Tail County**

Tasha Rohlfs of Otter Tail Lakes Country presented a new summer tourism campaign called "Giants of Otter Tail County." The campaign is designed to capitalize on the high concentration of giant statues within approximately a 30-mile radius of the area — one of the highest concentrations in the United States — by creating a family-friendly, drivable scavenger hunt experience. Participants will collect a card, visit all 10 giant statues, check them off, and drop the completed card at one of five designated locations across the county to be entered into a prize drawing for T-shirts and other items. Upon dropping off a completed card, participants will also receive a pair of "otter ears" and a free pass to Otter Cove Children's Museum in Fergus Falls, where an interactive map installation related to the campaign will be featured.

Billy's Corner Bar in Vergas was confirmed as one of the five card drop-off locations. Rohlfs distributed participation cards to board members and noted that the campaign would be officially launched on social media the following Thursday as a Memorial Day exploration experience, requesting that no one post about it publicly until then.

The Board discussed opportunities to further promote the campaign. S. Hanson suggested that Rohlfs appear on the weekly Vergas video feature. S. Hanson also raised the idea of placing a marked "photo spot" near the Vergas Loon statue to help visitors get the best photograph, as the statue's size makes framing difficult.

**Story Walk**

S. Hanson provided an update on the upcoming Story Walk installation along the Long Lake Trail. The Story Walk will be unveiled at the "Bring in Spring" community event on Saturday, with activities including a visit from Otter Cove, Baron of Bubbles, balloons, and face painting — all free for families. The featured book is *Little Loon Finds Its Voice*, written by a Minnesota author from Minneapolis. The author will be present at the event to sign copies of the book — 100 copies having been purchased by Billy's Corner Bar for distribution to families — and will lead two presentations teaching children the five loon calls featured in the book. At noon, attendees will walk to the start of the Long Lake Trail, where each page of the book has been reproduced as a yard sign along a half-mile stretch of the trail. The Story Walk will remain open through the end of October, with the intent to feature a new book each year on a different nature theme.

## **Pickleball**

S. Hanson reported that she had spoken with Shannon Charpentier, who indicated that the Pickleball board was scheduled to meet on May 20th. Play had already begun, and there was nothing significant to report. Operations appeared to be proceeding well.

## **Baseball Committee**

S. Hanson reported that the Baseball Committee had not formally met, but that members C. Hanson and Sailer had been active at the ballpark installing yellow fence guard along the fencing. It was also noted that they had obtained a line painter. S. Hanson mentioned that Sailer had been working to schedule games at the field. DuFrane raised a separate concern regarding the storage shed at the ballpark, noting that baseball users had been leaving equipment in a disorganized manner, creating clutter and potential safety hazards. He noted that City staff had spent time cleaning the shed and that this had become a recurring issue. It was noted that C. Hanson and Sailer, through the Baseball Committee, would probably address storage expectations with baseball users going forward.

## **Long Lake Park Master Plan**

### **Sales Tax Update**

Lammers reported that she had testified before both the Minnesota Senate and the House in support of the sales tax legislation. The bill has since been folded into the omnibus bill, which is currently awaiting a House vote. The legislative session is scheduled to end around May 18th, and it was noted that a special session remains possible if a vote is not taken in time.

### **Review**

Lammers outlined the vision for the Long Lake Park Master Plan, which includes a new bathhouse with an amphitheater on one side and restrooms on the other, followed by future additions such as a splash pad and other children's amenities. A redesigned driveway is also planned, converting the current layout to a one-way drive-through with additional parking along the sides to improve pedestrian safety and increase parking capacity.

## **Budget**

Lammers reported a discrepancy in the budget figures, noting that the park fund balance had been listed at approximately \$67,051 but the correct figure appears to be \$32,651. She indicated she would investigate what expenditures account for the difference and would report back at a future meeting.

## **Utilities Superintendent Report**

### **Ice Rink**

DuFrane reported that the lake-based ice rink had been unsuccessful in recent seasons, citing persistent weather challenges, safety concerns associated with operating a tractor on the lake near a spring, and damage caused to equipment by dragging sand and water. He recommended that the ice rink on the lake be discontinued and that the board explore an alternative, such as portable rink boards installed at a land-based location such as the ballpark. The board agreed that the lake-based ice rink was not viable going forward and that any future ice rink would require a new approach.

### **Dock Inspection / Warranty Issue**

DuFrane reported that an inspection of the boardwalk on the shore side revealed that bolts on the posts were pulling out of the sidewall in multiple locations. He contacted the contractor, Travis with MN Boardwalks, who reviewed photos of the damage and confirmed it would be addressed as a warranty repair. The board requested that DuFrane follow up to obtain a timeline for the warranty work.

## **Loon Statue Painting**

Nustad reported that Howard Elijah had reached out to the City regarding repainting the Vergas Loon statue and had provided a verbal ballpark estimate of \$1,500–\$2,000. Given the ongoing Giants of Otter Tail County promotion and the expected increase in visitors to the statue, the board agreed it was important to move forward promptly. The board discussed the quality of paint used, with DuFrane noting admiration for a recently painted loon statue near Pelican Lake and suggesting that a higher-quality or glossier paint product might be worth exploring. Haarstick noted that in the past, the wrong type of paint had been applied to the statue, and that the appropriate material must be used. It was noted that the contractor has previously painted the statue twice and likely uses a proper process.

Motion by S. Hanson, seconded by Hogan, to recommend to the City Council approval of up to \$2,000 for repainting the Vergas Loon statue. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Next Meeting Date/Time**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment**

Motion by S. Hanson, seconded by Hogan, to adjourn the meeting at 3:40 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rachel Nustad, Deputy Clerk (assisted by ClerkMinutes)  
Secretary of the Park Board

**Recommendations to City Council**

Recommend to the City Council approval of up to \$2,000 for repainting the Vergas Loon statue.

**Follow Up Actions**

- DuFrane: Send S. Hanson a picture of the type of trailer being considered for transporting the picnic tables, so Sherry can research costs.
- S. Hanson: Research the cost of a suitable trailer for picnic table transport after receiving the picture.
- S. Hanson: Film and coordinate the Vergas show with Rohlfs for promotion of the Giants of Otter Tail County campaign.
- DuFrane: Follow up with Travis (dock contractor) to get a timeline for warranty repair work on the dock posts and report back.
- Nustad: Discuss with painter about potential for more resilient or glossier paint for the loon statue and confirm timeline for painting to minimize downtime during Giants of Otter Tail County promotion.
- Baseball Committee: Address and improve organization and cleanliness of the ball field storage shed, ensuring equipment is stored neatly to prevent damage and safety hazards.
- Lammers: Continue to monitor status of sales tax legislation and report back when updates are available.
- Lammers: Look into details of the \$32,651 West Central account spending to determine how the funds were used.