

**CITY OF VERGAS
COUNCIL MINUTES
VERGAS EVENTS CENTER & ZOOM
Tuesday, April 21, 2026**

The City Council of Vergas met at 6:30 PM, on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at the Vergas Event Center and on a Zoom for a hybrid regular public hearing.

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Julie Bruhn, Mayor	P	P	P	P/P								
Bruce Albright, Member	P	P	P	P/P								
Paul Pinke, Member	P	P	P	P/P								
Dean Haarstick, Member	P	P	P	P/P								
James Stenger, Member	P	P	P	P/P								
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P	P	P	P/P								
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	A	A	A/A								
Kyle Theisen, Liquor Store Manager	P	A	A	A/A								

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

Present via Zoom: Engineer Blaine Green of Widseth, Editor Bob Williams of the Frazee-Vergas Forum; and Citizens, Tami Rust.

Present in person: Attorney Karen Skoyles, and Citizens, Mary Anderson, Paul Sonnenberg, Loren Menz and Vanessa Perry.

Call to Order

Mayor Julie Bruhn called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Citizens' Concerns

None.

Agenda Additions and Deletions

Bruhn noted one addition to the agenda: a cannabis license item, to be inserted immediately following the consent agenda as Item 5.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Stenger to approve the agenda as amended was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Haaarstick, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Cannabis License — Full Spectrum Wellness

Lammers presented a cannabis license application for Full Spectrum Wellness, located at 235 East Frazee Avenue. The registration was approved by the Council on July 14, 2025. The business has three owners: Kyle Theisen, Jordan Sleen, and Vanessa Perry. They are applying for a Cannabis Micro Business with Retail Endorsement, Cannabis Retailer, and Lower Potency Hemp Edible Retailer licenses. Lammers reported that she had toured the facility and confirmed that state-required items, including a camera system and proper lighting, are in place. Owner Vanessa Perry explained that the City's approval is a prerequisite for the business to obtain its state license, creating a procedural dependency between the two approvals. Accordingly, Lammers recommended that any approval be made subject to subsequent state approval.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright, to approve the cannabis license application for Full Spectrum Wellness, subject to approval by the State of Minnesota. The motion passed unanimously.

Energy and Resiliency Plan

Bruhn presented the completed Energy and Resiliency Plan, noting that the effort began in 2023 following participation in the League of Minnesota Cities. She summarized the extensive work undertaken over the past two years, including energy use trending, energy efficiency assessments through Otter Tail Power Company, and a building envelope assessment by the University of Minnesota's sustainability program involving infrared and blower-door testing. Weatherization needs identified through those assessments were addressed using funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The City also joined a solar installation cohort with West Central Initiative, with solar panels expected to be installed in May 2026. Bruhn highlighted the range of partners involved, including CERTs, the Center for Sustainable Building Research, RDSP, and MVCA. She noted that the plan includes a multi-tiered action plan with 5-, 10-, and 15-year goals, which will be managed by the Energy and Resiliency Advisory Board and incorporated into the City's annual comprehensive plan reporting.

A question was raised about the plan's life expectancy, and Bruhn confirmed the actions extend to 15 years but can be revised by the advisory board as circumstances change.

One specific concern was raised regarding tree-planting goals on page 19 of the action plan, which called for 10 public trees and 20 public-private resilient trees planted per year. Bruhn felt these figures may be overly ambitious for a community of Vergas's size. After discussion, council

members noted that with new housing developments and natural regeneration from homeowners, the goals of 10 and 20 trees annually were likely already being approached and should be retained as aspirational targets. The goals were kept at 10 and 20 per year.

Bruhn noted that the plan is currently in draft form and will be reformatted by the University of Minnesota to meet ADA requirements before being published on their website. The city will also publish its own version. She further noted that a \$8,000 grant from Empowerment of Small Minnesota Communities is available to fund initial action items, such as a planned energy fair following solar installation.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Pinke, to approve the Energy and Resiliency Plan. The motion passed unanimously.

Resignation from Energy and Resiliency Advisory Committee

Bruhn reported that Cal Miller had submitted his resignation from the Energy and Resiliency Advisory Committee and that the committee lacked a quorum at its most recent meeting. She noted the city will be seeking a replacement member.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Stenger, to accept Cal Miller's resignation from the Energy and Resiliency Advisory Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Vergas Community Club - Shops and Hops

Lammers presented a request from the Vergas Community Club for their annual Shops and Hops event on May 30, 2026, from 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM. The request included:

1. A partial street closure from Billy's Corner Bar to the Vergas Liquor Store (the lower portion of the street), consistent with prior years.
2. Permission to operate a beer garden, with a request to waive the \$125 fee.

Council members noted this arrangement is consistent with what has been done in previous years.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Stenger, to approve the street closure and beer garden requests, including the fee waiver, for the Vergas Community Club Shops and Hops event on May 30, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Otter Coffee - Live Music and Food Trucks

Lammers presented Otter Coffee's annual request to utilize a portion of Main Street for their Thursday evening Live Music and Food Truck series running from June 4 through approximately August 13, 2026, from 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The requests included:

1. Closure of street parking spaces in front of the business for food truck use during event hours.
2. City employees to remove trash from park area cans on Thursday and Friday mornings.

Stenger clarified that the closure pertains to the parking spaces in front of the business, not the travel lane of the street itself, consistent with prior years. Bruhn acknowledged that maintenance staff had previously expressed reservations about the trash removal obligation, but noted that the events provide meaningful traffic to the community and surrounding businesses. The motion proceeded as proposed.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Stenger, to approve the Otter Coffee Live Music and Food Trucks requests as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Streets/Sidewalks/Yard Waste Committee

West Elm Street Alley Vacation

The Streets Committee reported that landowners adjacent to a dead-end alley on West Elm Street had appeared at a prior meeting requesting that the city add gravel to the alley. The Committee recommended against this, noting the alley leads directly into a swamp and serves no public benefit. The Committee's recommendation was instead to initiate vacation proceedings for the alley. It was noted that the affected property owners had previously indicated willingness to accept vacation, though they had not wished to bear the cost of filing a petition themselves. The Committee noted that vacation can be initiated either by petition or by a four-fifths vote of the council, with the vacated right-of-way to be divided equally between the two adjacent property owners. Council members confirmed the alley in question and noted that one neighbor's fence may already encroach into the right-of-way.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to initiate vacation proceedings for the West Elm Street alley by Council action. Voting yes: Albright, Stenger, Pinke and Bruhn. Voting no: Haarstick. The motion carried.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to schedule the public hearing for the alley vacation at the May 19, 2026 City Council meeting at 6:15 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Gravel Near Fire Hydrant on West Elm Street

The Committee noted a recommendation to add gravel near a fire hydrant on West Elm Street. This was identified as a routine City maintenance matter not requiring council action.

Yard Waste Site Policy

The Committee reported that the yard waste site had been opened and was operating in an orderly manner following action taken at the April 8 equalization meeting. Discussion turned to updating the yard waste policy. Key concerns included unauthorized dumping of garbage, oversized

wood, and use of the site by non-permit holders, including out-of-state visitors. The council discussed requiring permit holders to sign an acknowledgment of the rules at the time of permit issuance, so that violations can be more effectively enforced. It was also suggested that signage at the site be improved and that a separate area for larger logs be designated, allowing community members to take firewood, which could reduce the volume of material in the burn pile.

No formal motion was required; staff was directed to bring a revised yard waste policy to the May Council meeting incorporating the discussed changes, including a signed permit acknowledgment and a no-garbage clause.

Dust Control

Lammers presented the first-year implementation of the City's Dust Control Policy, pertaining to West Glenn Street and West Lake Street.

Applications from residents were due by April 30, with nine applications already received. Discussion centered on two unresolved policy questions:

1. **Cost allocation method** — Whether to divide costs by linear footage of each property's frontage, or equally among all participating property owners. Residents present, including Tami Rust and Paul Sonnenberg, expressed a strong preference for equal division, noting that a per-foot approach would disproportionately burden corner and larger lots, and that equal division would likely yield higher participation. The Council agreed this approach was consistent with the policy's language, which defers cost allocation to the resident point of contact.
2. **City property participation** — The City has two properties along the affected roads (the shop and a park parcel). The Council debated whether the City should share in the cost of dust control as it does for standard road maintenance.

Tami Rust, speaking as a resident of Glenn Street, expressed appreciation for the discussion and noted that with the City's two properties counted, the group would be at approximately 13 participants, making the project financially manageable. She also raised concern about the administrative burden of residents collecting money from neighbors and suggested payments be made directly to the City office. The Council voted to include the City's two lots in the Dust Control Program and directed staff to coordinate with Cindy Hurt, the designated resident point of contact, to confirm the start and end points of the treatment area, obtain competitive bids, and report back at the May Council meeting.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, that the city participate in the dust control program and be responsible for its share of costs on the two City-owned lots on West Glenn Street. The motion passed unanimously.

Event Center

Stenger presented a proposal to dissolve the Event Center Advisory Board. He explained that with the addition of the Deputy Clerk position overseeing the Event Center Coordinator, the advisory board had become redundant, creating duplicative meeting layers. He proposed that the Municipal Building Committee assume the board's responsibilities, specifically those related to the physical building, while the Event Center Coordinator manages all operational matters and provides quarterly reports to the council. Lammers read the revised duties to be assigned to the Municipal Building Committee: providing input on the event center's physical structure, utilities, and maintenance; overseeing building improvements and maintenance; collaborating with the Event Center Coordinator on building needs and improvements; and providing budget input related to building structure, utilities, and maintenance only. Bruhn noted that the original duties proposed in the packet were too operational in nature and that the revised language appropriately limits the Committee's role to the building itself.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Pinke, to dissolve the Event Center Advisory Board. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to assign the revised duties as read by Lammers to the Municipal Building Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Bruhn noted that the Event Center Advisory Board will be removed from the City Ordinance and that thank-you letters will be sent to committee members for their service.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission recommended that the Council enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with the City Attorney and adopt abatement language into City Ordinances to enable prosecution of ordinance violations. City Attorney Karen Skoyles explained that current enforcement steps proceed through warning letters, a served notice with a fee, and an attorney letter. The Joint Powers Agreement would add a fourth step — the ability to file charges — by authorizing use of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) eCharging system, which is now required for all municipal prosecutions in Minnesota. Skoyles noted that the City would share the flat quarterly fee for BCA system access with approximately nine other cities she serves, including Detroit Lakes, Lake Park, Frazee, Callaway, Audubon, Verndale, Nimrod, and Aldrich, resulting in a cost of approximately \$40 per quarter per City. Lammers noted the agreement can be terminated with 30 days' notice.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve Resolution No. 2026-005, authorizing the City to enter into the Joint Powers Agreement with the BCA eCharging system. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff Reports

Engineering Report

City Engineer Blaine Green participated via Zoom. He reported on two matters:

Dianne Avenue Fill Proposal: A developer working on a lot in the subdivision sought permission to deposit excess excavated fill material at the end of Dianne Avenue, extending it southward toward the gravel pit. Green indicated that based on GIS data and 2019 record drawings, the volume of material could likely fit within the right-of-way. He identified several conditions that would need to be addressed in a Grade and Fill Permit: removal

of existing trees and stumps prior to filling to prevent future road cavitation; installation of erosion control measures; and potential extension of the existing storm sewer outlet. Council members discussed the relationship to adjacent vacant lots, including EDA-owned parcels. The Council approved allowing the applicant to proceed with a Grade and Fill Permit application subject to the stated conditions.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to indicate City approval for the applicant to proceed with a Grade and Fill Permit application for the Dianne Avenue fill project, subject to conditions including tree and stump removal, erosion control, and storm sewer extension as needed. The motion passed unanimously.

Gravel Pit Aerial Survey: Green noted that an aerial survey of the gravel pit, used to monitor activity under the Conditional Use Permit, was delayed due to logistical issues and is now expected to be completed in early May. He will provide a preliminary report as data becomes available. The existing gravel pit permit expires June 1, and the Planning Commission will address renewal at upcoming meetings.

Clerk Treasurer Report

Lammers noted that her full report was included in the council packet and that no items required specific highlighting.

Utilities Report

Lammers noted that hydrant flushing is scheduled for the following Monday through Wednesday. All gravel roads have been graded. She also announced that the City's Safety Committee meeting, normally held in Fergus Falls, will convene at the Vergas park on May 26, 2026.

Liquor Store Manager Report

Lammers reported on behalf of Liquor Store Manager Kyle Theisen. The store completed a cooler reset. The store is currently approximately \$60,000 in the negative through the end of March. However, Lammers noted that \$17,552 in capital outlay expenses — including sewer line replacement and gutter replacement — were incurred early in the year and were largely outside the store's operational control. Excluding those expenses, the negative balance would be approximately \$42,662. This compares to a \$52,143 deficit at the same point in 2024, and a historical baseline closer to \$28,000. Bruhn expressed concern about the current trajectory and noted the store is also obligated to contribute \$30,000 to the general fund. The manager will develop a plan to improve profitability.

Information & Announcements

Bruhn noted the following upcoming meetings, events, and employee training opportunities:

Meetings and Events:

- A. Household Hazardous Waste Day — Thursday, June 25, 2026, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM, Vergas Event Center Parking Lot

Employee 2026 Trainings:

- A. League of MN Cities Annual Conference — June 24–26, 2026, Rochester (Bruhn, Albright, and Stenger)
- B. 16th Annual Operator Expo (MN Rural Water) — August 25, 2026 (Utilities Superintendent and Maintenance Operator)
- C. Clerk's Advanced Academy — September 10–11, 2026, Otsego, MN (Clerk-Treasurer)

Bruhn also noted that she will be presenting at the West Central Solar Celebration the following day, and at the League of Minnesota Cities Annual Conference on the City's energy and resiliency work.

Adjournment

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Pinke, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The business for which the meeting was called was completed and adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Recorded by
Deputy Clerk
Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Julie Lammers, CMC
Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer