

City of Vergas Planning Commission Public Hearing
Monday, April 27, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on Monday, April 27, 2026, on Zoom and at the Vergas Government Services Building with the following members present: Alex Ohman, Bruce Albright, Jim Courneya, and David Johnston. Absent: Rebecca Hasse. Also present: Clerk-Treasurer Julie Lammers, employees of Mark Sand and Gravel: Brianne Balcer and Brandon Brusven and citizens; James Stenger.

Call to Order

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

A representative from Mark Sand & Gravel, Brianne Balcer, provided an overview of current operations at the pit. She indicated that crushing operations are currently underway, producing Class 5 material as well as high-fracture BA material for a state project near Fergus Falls involving roundabout construction. She noted that no bituminous plant is currently planned for the site in 2026, and that operations are progressing northward through the pit. No county projects are currently scheduled out of that location, though township and other work remains possible. Courneya raised a question about an unusually bright, strobing white light he had observed the previous night in the direction of the pit. Balcer stated she was unaware of any equipment or personnel that would account for the light, as no leg plants are on site and the gates are typically locked on weekends. She committed to investigating the matter. The Commission noted that operational hours at the site are restricted to 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, and that no noise complaints had been received during the prior season.

Ohman called three times for public comments. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing at 6:04 PM.

City of Vergas Planning Commission Minutes
Monday, April 27, 2026 at 6:05 PM
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a regular hybrid meeting on Monday, April 27, 2026, on Zoom and at the Vergas Government Services Building.

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alex Ohman, Chair	A	P	P	P								
Bruce Albright, Liaison	P	P	P	P								
Dave Johnston, Member	P	P	P	P								
Rebecca Hasse, Member	P	P	P	A								
Jim Courneya, Member	P	A	P	P								
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P	P	P	P								
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	A	A	A								

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

Present in person: Employees of Mark Sand and Gravel Brianne Balcer and Brandon Brusven.

Present via zoom: Citizen James Stenger

Call to Order

Chair Ohman called the planning Commission meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

Lammers requested the addition of scheduling the next month's meeting under New Business, as the regular May meeting date falls on a holiday.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Courneya, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Motion by Albright, seconded by Johnston, to approve the minutes from March 30, 2026 with noted corrections. The motion passed unanimously.

Status of Council Recommendations

Nuisance Properties

Lammers reported on the long-standing nuisance property at 350 Pelican Avenue, specifically an unuseable garage that has been subject to enforcement action for approximately 12 years. The City Attorney drafted new legal paperwork, which the property owner voluntarily signed. Under the agreement, the owner has until May 15 to remove any personal items from the structure, after which the City will proceed with demolition. The owner has until September to remit payment for the removal costs, with any remaining balance subject to being assessed against the property taxes at the Council's discretion. Discussion touched on the need to solicit competitive bids for the removal work, both for cost comparison and due diligence purposes. Concerns were raised regarding the potential presence of hazardous materials—including animal carcasses and possible asbestos—which would require licensed contractors and specialized handling procedures. It was also noted that the condition of the floor (earthen or concrete) and whether it would be removed could not be fully assessed until the contents are cleared.

Resolution State of MN Joint Powers Agreement

It was reported that the City Council adopted the resolution to join the Minnesota Joint Powers Agreement for nuisance abatement. There was initial hesitancy among council members, but the City Attorney noted that approximately 14 surrounding communities have already entered the agreement. The agreement provides an additional enforcement tool by allowing the City to work with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the City Attorney to pursue criminal proceedings against non-compliant property owners, supplementing the existing notice-based process.

Construction Permits

Active Construction Permits

The Commission was reminded that, per the City's Nuisance Policy, inspection tours are to be conducted in May, July, and September. Members were also reminded of the open meeting law restriction prohibiting three or more commission members from conducting tours together or gathering informally in a group context.

Old Business

City Ordinance Update

The Commission continued its review of the City's Ordinances in the context of several emerging nuisance concerns.

A recently erected camper on a Frazee Avenue property was discussed at length. Lammers noted that the camper appears to have been set up for an extended period. Staff researched applicable Ordinances and identified that, within 1,000 feet of lakeshore, Otter Tail County's Lakeshore Management rules apply—which prohibit two dwellings on the same parcel. Additionally, a 2016 City Camping Ordinance (Ordinance 2016-001) requires camping to occur within a designated campground; no such campground currently exists within the City. Additional relevant provisions were located in City Code sections 73 and 92.19 pertaining to recreational vehicles. It was noted that the City does allow campers on a temporary basis with a permit, subject to a 14-day limit. Staff will continue to identify the precise applicable Ordinance section and prepare documentation for the next meeting. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of proper sanitary hookups at the location.

Additional nuisance complaints were noted, including a vehicle on Hill Street stored on pallets without tires, and a property on Pelican Avenue that reportedly had shown some improvement over the prior weekend. A general concern was raised by a community member that Vergas has seen an increase in visible nuisance conditions this year. Members were encouraged to conduct informal observations and submit photographic documentation to the Clerk-Treasurer prior to the May meeting to support the upcoming inspection tour process.

Nuisance Properties

No additional items were raised beyond those discussed under agenda item 7A and item 5A above.

New Business

Interim Use Permit - Mark Sand & Gravel

The Commission considered the Interim Use Permit application for Mark Sand & Gravel. The existing permit remains valid until June 1, 2026. Staff noted that the Commission is legally required to act within 60 days of the application receipt date of approximately March 30, 2026, establishing a deadline of approximately May 29, 2026. The Commission discussed tabling the matter pending receipt of a site analysis from the City Engineer, Blaine Green of Widseth Engineering, which has been commissioned and is anticipated to be delivered in advance of the May meeting. It was agreed that proceeding without the engineering report would undermine the purpose of having it completed.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Courneya, to table the Mark Sand & Gravel interim use permit pending receipt of Widseth Engineering's Site Analysis Report. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission then addressed the need to reschedule the May meeting due to a conflict with the regular meeting date. May 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM was proposed and agreed upon.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Johnston, to schedule the next Planning Commission meeting for Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Motion by Albright, seconded by Ohman, to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 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: Solicit at least one external bid for removal of the garage at 350 Pelican Avenue, to compare with City staff/equipment costs, and ensure proper handling of potential hazardous materials (e.g., animal carcasses, asbestos).
- Planning Commission members: Locate the specific City Ordinance(s) regarding placement and duration of campers/RVs on residential property, especially as relates to lakeshore management and dwelling limits, and report findings at the next meeting.
- Planning Commission members: Conduct annual inspection tours of nuisance properties in May ensuring no more than two members are present at any site to comply with open meeting laws.
- Planning Commission members: Submit reports on nuisance properties to Lammers at least one week before the May meeting for agenda preparation.
- Planning Commission: Review and await the city engineer's (Widseth Engineering) analysis/report on the Mark Sand and Gravel pit before issuing the Interim Use Permit; table decision until after receipt of the report (by May 29).