

**CITY OF VERGAS  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
VERGAS EVENTS CENTER & ZOOM  
Wednesday, April 8, 2026**

The City Council of Vergas met at 1:30 PM, on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at the Vergas Event Center and on a Zoom for a hybrid special council hearing.

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

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

Present via Zoom: Editor Bob Williams of the Frazee-Vergas Forum.

Present in person: City Maintenance Operator Matthew Engebretson, and Citizens, Eileen Giese, Bryan Giese, Neil Strawhorn and Rick Nelson.

**Call to Order**

Mayor Julie Bruhn called the meeting to order at 1:33 PM.

**Yard Wast**

Bruhn turned the meeting over to Albright to present the yard waste committee's recommendations. Albright explained that he and Pinke had conducted an analysis of the city's yard waste facility operations following significant problems with brush disposal that culminated in a major fire on December 1st. The fire required five local fire departments to respond and resulted in damage to a county dumpster, with crews having to return multiple times to fully extinguish the blaze. Albright reported that the city attorney had researched the legal requirements for operating a yard waste facility. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency does not require special permits for such operations, only a generic form indicating the types of materials accepted. The site has been closed since the December fire, but with spring approaching, residents were requesting information about reopening plans.

The committee presented three options for consideration:

**Option 1: Continue Current Operations** - Maintain the existing system where Vergas property owners receive free permits while non-residents pay \$65 annually. Last year, over 300 permits were sold, generating approximately \$9,000 in revenue after administrative costs. This revenue helps fund equipment upgrades that are not otherwise budgeted. Albright noted that local businesses support keeping the site open as it brings people to town who may patronize local establishments.

**Option 2: Eliminate Woody Debris** - Continue accepting grass clippings and leaves but eliminate brush and woody debris to reduce fire risks and allow for proper composting. The committee questioned whether permit sales would remain at current levels without the woody debris option.

**Option 3: Residents Only** - Restrict use to Vergas residents only, similar to other communities. This would eliminate the permit revenue but reduce volume and management challenges.

Albright emphasized the service value to the broader community, noting that permits are sold to residents from throughout the area. Township officials had indicated that when the site was closed, illegal dumping in road ditches increased significantly.

City Maintenance Operator, Matthew Engebretson, shared his perspective, expressing support for keeping the site open given the substantial permit revenue. He suggested temporarily closing the site when brush piles become too large and recommended establishing specific operating dates from April through October. Engebretson described the challenges of managing large piles, particularly during burn bans when material accumulates to dangerous levels. He noted ongoing issues with illegal dumping of non-permitted materials, including mattresses, couches, and even vehicle parts. Stenger suggested operating the facility normally for one year while implementing stricter enforcement and better communication about violations. He recommended warning residents that

continued problems could force closure or restrictions. Lammers inquired about the possibility of creating two separate dumping areas to allow burning one pile while the other receives new material. The group discussed this concept but noted space limitations due to the county's recycling operations at the same location. The discussion addressed enforcement challenges, with cameras present but limited deterrent effect. Albright noted that most users comply with regulations, but a small percentage create significant problems. The group considered installing gates and limiting access hours, but cost estimates for proper fencing exceeded \$28,000, and alternative barrier options were discussed.

Public input came from Bryan Giese, who strongly supported keeping the facility open and emphasized the need for better enforcement of size restrictions and commercial dumping violations. He noted witnessing large stumps that clearly violated the 4-foot length and 6-inch diameter limits and suggested imposing penalties on violators. Neil Strawhorn inquired about residents' ability to burn brush on private property with burn permits, which was confirmed as still allowable. There was brief discussion about a previous incident involving allegations of commercial dumping, but details were limited.

After extensive discussion, Albright made a motion to keep the yard waste facility operating under the current fee structure with several modifications: posting hours of operation from 8 AM to 8 PM, maintaining the right to close the facility during burn bans or when piles become too large, keeping gate installation as a future option, and having Albright write an informational letter to accompany permits warning of potential changes if problems persist. The letter would also be posted on the city website, and the council would reevaluate the program in November.

Lammers clarified that permits could begin being sold immediately and that maintenance staff would open the facility on Monday morning, April 13th, at 8 AM.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to keep the yard waste facility open with the same fee structure as last year, posting hours from 8 AM to 8 PM, maintaining the right to close during burn bans or when piles become excessive, keeping gate installation as an option, having Albright write a warning letter to accompany permits and post on the website, and reevaluating the program in November. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Adjournment**

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The business for which the meeting was called was completed and adjourned at 2:20 PM.

Recorded by  
Deputy Clerk  
Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Julie Lammers, CMC  
Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer