

City of Vergas Planning Commission Minutes
Monday, July 27, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Government Services Building and Zoom

The City of Vergas Planning Commission held a regular hybrid meeting on Monday, July 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	P	A	P					
Bruce Albright, Liaison	P	P	P	P	P	P	A					
Dave Johnston, Member	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Rebecca Hasse, Member	P	P	P	A	A	P	P					
Jim Courneya, Member	P	A	P	P	P	P	P					
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	A	A	A	P	P	P					

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

Call to Order

Chair Ohman called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Agenda Additions or Deletions

Lammers requested the addition of a construction permit application for 415 Dianne Avenue.

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

Minutes

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Johnston, to approve the minutes from the June 22, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Status of Council Recommendations

None.

Permits

Active Construction Permits

Did not review.

Construction Permit Applications

Clerk Approved

351 S Pelican Ave – Lammers reported that she had administratively approved a permit for shingling the garage at 351 S Pelican Avenue. No further action was required.

Needing Approval

410 Scharf Ave E. – Lammers presented an application from the church at 410 Scharf Ave E. to install a 6x6 patio area and a 34x5 sidewalk. The project was described as connecting two existing in-place sidewalks with a route running parallel to Scharf Avenue along the back of the right-of-way, also incorporating a small bench area. The purpose is to provide pedestrian access to the church's book nook. To remain within the 25% impervious surface allowance, the existing book nook structure will be removed. The Commission confirmed that because no new building is being constructed, county review is not required. The project was confirmed to comply with city zoning requirements.

Motion by Ohman, seconded by Johnston, to approve the construction permit for 410 Scharf Ave E. for the 6x6 patio area and 34x5 sidewalk. The motion passed unanimously.

415 Dianne Ave – Lammers presented an application for a 40×56 house and garage combination with a 24×30 driveway pad on a vacant lot at 415 Dianne Avenue, located between two existing properties. Key details included: setback of 50 feet from the road (approximately 30 feet from road right-of-way), a 10-foot setback from the nearest property line, 170 feet from the rear property line, and a total impervious surface of 2,960 square feet (14.8% of the lot). All setback and coverage requirements were confirmed to be met.

Motion by Courneya, seconded by Johnston, to approve the construction permit for 415 Dianne Avenue. The motion passed unanimously.

Grade and Fill Permits

660 W Glenn St – Create Building Pad for 1,600 Sq. Ft.

Lammers presented a grade and fill permit application for 660 W Glenn Street. The applicant intends to create a building pad for a future 1,600 square foot home. The grading area will be 100 feet in length by 50 feet in width, with black dirt, sand, and gravel to be brought in.

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Courneya, to approve the grade and fill permit for 660 W Glenn Street. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Nuisance Properties

Lammers provided a status update on nuisance properties. Two vehicles that had been added to the nuisance list the prior month were confirmed as resolved.

- **130 Elm Street East** — Lammers reported that despite a commitment from the property owner to clean up the property by the prior week, the site remains non-compliant and has reportedly worsened. Garbage containers have been left out for over a week, and additional items including furniture and a stair lift have been pushed to the garage area. The property is a rental owned by BJ Holdings LLC, registered to Bruce Johnson of Fargo, ND, who has not responded to any correspondence. The Commission noted that without owner engagement, the violations will likely continue. The Commission agreed to refer the matter to the City Attorney.

Motion by Hasse, seconded by Johnston, to refer the nuisance property at 130 Elm Street East to the City Attorney. The motion passed unanimously.

- **101 E Mill Street** — Reported issues include cars, boats, and garbage. The Commission agreed to send a second notice letter.
- **160 S 1st Avenue** — This property was previously discussed, with the owner appearing at the June meeting. Issues include accumulated wood, appliances, and miscellaneous items in the yard. The Commission acknowledged that the owner uses some items for his business (including a cast iron stove for welding/casting work) and has expressed a willingness to cooperate. The consensus was that while working equipment such as tractors may be acceptable, miscellaneous debris, old appliances, and partial equipment must be cleaned up. Ohman volunteered to speak with the owner directly before the next meeting with the intent to provide specific, actionable direction. The second notice letter was tabled pending that conversation.
- **170 1st Avenue** — Reported for unlicensed vehicles. Ohman agreed to follow up as part of his conversation with the property owner. Letter tabled pending discussion.
- **339 E Frazee Avenue** — Reported for trash throughout the yard. DuFrane noted he had driven by earlier that day and the property appeared to have been cleaned up, likely in preparation for an upcoming event. The Commission agreed to remove this property from the active list.
- **340 Unit Avenue** — The Commission noted the property was previously removed from the nuisance list on May 18, 2026 and confirmed no further action is needed.
- **840 E Scharf Avenue** — The property owner has been planning to build on the rear lot and has a large quantity of lumber/rafters stored in the yard, along with a camper. The owner indicated the materials will remain until construction begins, but offered to have her sons move the lumber to the east side of the house if requested. A neighboring resident has continued to raise concerns. The Commission agreed that moving the materials to the side yard would likely satisfy neighbor

complaints. Lammers agreed to contact the owner and request the lumber be relocated to the east side of the house before the next meeting. Regarding the camper, it was noted that placement and occupancy restrictions are governed by the subdivision's covenants rather than city ordinance, and is a matter for the HOA or covenant holders.

- **390 S Pelican Avenue** — Previously reported for unlicensed vehicles. Lammers confirmed all vehicles have since been licensed. Removed from the list.
- **219 Frazee Avenue East** — Previously reported for an unlicensed vehicle. The vehicle has been removed. Resolved.
- **431 Lake Street West** — Reported for unlicensed vehicles and a camper. The owner called and indicated he would license his vehicles and would move the camper farther back on the property if required. The property was described as containing a school bus, multiple boats, and trailers largely hidden behind brush at the far end of West Lake Street. The Commission agreed to send a second notice letter.
- **306 Frazee Avenue East** — The owner received a permit for a fence, which has not yet been installed. The owner stated accumulated wood will be removed when conditions allow for burning, all vehicles have been licensed, and a dozer on the property cannot be economically moved (estimated \$2,000 to relocate). The fence, once erected, would screen the dozer from view. The Commission agreed to allow one additional month for the fence to be installed before taking further action.
- **201 Hill Street** — Reported for demolition derby vehicles. The owner previously attended a meeting and asked specifically what he needed to do to come into compliance. He stated he keeps only four vehicles outside the garage and brings them out only when working on them. The Commission discussed the unique nature of demo derby vehicles in a small-town context and noted the owner's neighbor on the same dead-end street also keeps demo cars and has no objection. No decision was reached on a course of action; the matter was carried forward for continued discussion.

The Commission made a broad motion to formalize the various property-specific actions discussed.

Motion by Ohman, seconded by Johnston, to send second notice letters to 101 E Mill Street and 431 Lake Street West; to table action on 160 S 1st Avenue and 170 1st Avenue pending direct staff outreach; to contact the owner of 840 E Scharf Avenue regarding relocation of lumber; to allow one additional month for fence installation at 306 Frazee Avenue East; and to remove 339 E Frazee Avenue from the nuisance list. The motion passed unanimously.

City Ordinance Update

§ 91.06 Kennels

Lammers presented research on how neighboring municipalities regulate dog limits, compiled in response to a prior Commission request. The current Vergas ordinance classifies the keeping of three or more dogs as a kennel and declares it a nuisance. The research showed a range of approaches: Otter Tail County has no formal limit; Battle Lake mirrors the current Vergas ordinance; Pelican Rapids allows up to four dogs per dwelling; Lake Park allows up to three dogs over six months of age but permits more by special council permit; Hawley allows four dogs and requires a kennel license for four or more; Detroit Lakes limits households to two dogs unless animals are spayed/neutered; and Perham uses a threshold of three or more.

The context for the review was noted: multiple residents have requested permission to keep four dogs, and the City is currently aware of households licensing only three of four dogs they own. Lammers also noted that one resident trains service/assistance dogs, creating a particular need for flexibility.

The Commission favored the Lake Park model (§ 9.1.23), which maintains the three-dog limit but allows more than three dogs by special permit approved by the council on a case-by-case basis. Ohman formally recommended the Commission adopt language consistent with Lake Park § 9.1.23 as an addition to the current ordinance. Lammers confirmed she would incorporate this direction into the ordinance update currently underway.

Camper Ordinance

Lammers introduced the need to establish a clear City policy on campers, noting she has received complaints from residents on both sides — those wishing to keep campers on their property and those objecting to neighbors doing so. She also noted one pending application from a resident wishing to use a camper on their lot for the season while planning to build within the next year or two.

Key reference points discussed included the County Ordinance, which allows campers within 1,000 feet of a lake for up to 14 days, and the need to distinguish between camper storage and occupied camping. Commission members expressed broad support for a

flexible approach that accommodates short-term use, citing the town's active event calendar (e.g., Looney Days) and the common situation of family members visiting and staying in campers. The Commission was not in favor of prohibiting camper use outright.

Concerns raised included: the need to prevent campers from being used as long-term dwellings on vacant lots (which would suppress property tax value compared to home construction); ensuring proper waste disposal; and clarity on what constitutes a "camper" given that some are used as storage sheds. The Commission agreed that a 14-day occupancy limit, modeled on county ordinance language, was a reasonable starting point. The distinction between storing an unoccupied camper on one's property versus actively camping in it was noted as an important element to address in the ordinance. Lammers indicated she would draft ordinance language reflecting a 14-day limit on occupied camping for inclusion in the broader ordinance update.

New Business

None.

Adjournment

Motion by Ohman, seconded by Hasse, to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorded by Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Secretary,

Julie Lammers, CMC

Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer

Council Recommendations

- Recommend to City Council to send the nuisance property at 130 Elm Street East to the Attorney for further action.

Follow Up Actions

- Ohman: Go talk to property owner at 160 S 1st Avenue about cleaning up the yard before the next meeting.
- Lammers: Ask the property owner of 840 E. Scharf Avenue to move the building materials to the side yard.
- Lammers: Change the dog ordinance to adopt section 91.23 from Lake Park, allowing for more than 3 dogs with a special permit.
- Lammers: Draft an ordinance regarding campers, allowing them to be occupied for up to 14 days, similar to the County Ordinance.