

**CITY OF VERGAS  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
VERGAS EVENTS CENTER & ZOOM  
Tuesday, November 18, 2025**

The City Council of Vergas met at 6:30 pm, on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at the Vergas Event Center and on a Zoom for a hybrid regular public hearing.

<b>2025</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
Dwight Lundgren, Mayor	P/P	P	P/P	P	P	P	P <sup>7/2</sup>					
Julie Bruhn, Mayor								P	P/P	P	P	
Bruce Albright, Member	P/P	P	P/P	P	P	P	P/A/A	P	P/P	P	P	
Paul Pinke, Member	P/P	P	P/P	A	P	A	P/P/P	P	P/P	P	P	
Dean Haarstick, Member	P/A	P	P/P	P	P	P	P/P/P	P	P/P	P	P	
James Stenger, Member	P/P	P	P/P	P	P	P	P/P/P	P	P/P	P	P	
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P/P	P	P/P	P	P	P	P/P/P	P	P/P	P	P	
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P/A	P	P/A	P	P	P	P/P/P	P	P/P	P	P	
Kyle Theisen, Liquor Store Manager	P/A	P	P/P	P	P	P	A/P/A	A	A/A	P	A	

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

Also present: Attorney Karen Skoyles, Engineer Blaine Green and Funding Specialist Ryan Zemek of Widseth, Editor Bob Williams of the Frazee-Vergas Forum; and Citizens, Marcia Huddleston, Paul Sonnenberg and Deb Sonnenberg.

**Call to Order**

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

**Citizens' Concerns**

None.

**Agenda Additions and Deletions**

Mayor Bruhn noted several additions to the agenda. Three items were added to the consent agenda: a change order for solar with no change in price, the 2026 liquor store license and Sunday license for Billys Corner Bar, and the energy and resiliency advisory board. Two committee reports were added under item 6: the Vergas CDH fire board and the liquor store committee. Additionally, two new numbered items were added: #7 - West Lake Street road improvement, and #8 - sales tax resolution.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve the revised agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve the consent agenda with the noted additions. The motion passed unanimously.

**Street Closing Request**

Mayor Bruhn explained the street closure was for Small Town Christmas on November 29, 2025, from 1-6 PM, closing Main Street from First to Railway Avenue. She noted the city notifies the county of the closure, and signage will be placed at Linden to direct traffic, though Highway 17 will remain open.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve the street closing request for Small Town Christmas. The motion passed unanimously.

**Committee Reports**

**1. Planning Commission**

Albright reported on the October 27th Planning Commission meeting regarding a conditional use permit for Paul and Deb Sonnenberg. A hearing was held, and after reviewing the requirements, the Commission determined the applicants had met all necessary conditions and recommended approval to the Council. Albright clarified that contrary to what he stated at the hearing, conditional use permits run with the land, not with the applicant. He verified this information with the League of Minnesota Cities. He also noted that the one-year expiration date on the permit template should be removed as conditional use permits do not expire. Albright added that should the permit conditions be violated, the Council would have the right to revoke the permit. The applicants were present at the meeting. Albright explained their request would allow them to conduct bookkeeping in Vergas rather than in Perham, requiring an auto dealer's license. The applicants had met with neighbors who had questions and with the developer to address concerns.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve the conditional use permit with the stipulations noted on the sample, correcting the one-year expiration, and noting the right to revoke should conditions be violated. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2. Personnel**

Lammers reported that the personnel committee met to discuss the new Minnesota family and medical leave requirement. The program covers all employees including council members, planning commission members, full-time and part-time staff. Lammers explained two options: 1) Going through DEED at a cost of \$0.88 per hundred dollars of payroll 2) Using ShelterPoint through the city's health insurance at a cost of \$0.59 per hundred dollars. The total cost would be \$1,795 annually. The state requires employers to pay at least 50% of the cost (\$897.57). The personnel committee recommended the city go with ShelterPoint and pay 50% of the cost.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to adopt the personnel committee's recommendation regarding the Minnesota Medical Leave Act and going with the \$0.59 rate through the insurance carrier. The motion passed unanimously.

## **3. CDH Fire Board**

Mayor Bruhn reported that the CDH Fire Board did not increase their budget, so there would be no impact on the city's budget. Lammers was appointed as the new treasurer for the fire board. The board scheduled their annual meeting for February 2nd and their audit meeting for January 26th. The board is discussing revamping their parking lot and requested quotes for the cost of the project.

## **4. Liquor Store Committee**

Stenger reported that the liquor store committee met to discuss a request from Step Up Boutique for new signage. The committee recommended approval of interior signage on the wall inside the building, with the condition that the business remove other non-wall signage to reduce clutter and restore the walls if they ended their lease. The committee did not approve signage for the side of the door as it would detract from the liquor store business. Stenger noted that Step Up Boutique already has two signs on their business, more than other Main Street businesses. The committee was open to revisiting a modified proposal that included liquor store signage. Similarly, temporary window clings were not approved due to safety concerns and because they appeared to advertise only the boutique.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Stenger, to approve only the signs inside on the wall inside the building with the recommendation provided by the liquor store committee, with the other two sign proposals requiring further review. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee also addressed a request for holiday decorations. The committee recommended against allowing drilling into the brick of the municipal building. Instead, they suggested installing permanent hooks on the front pillars for decoration attachment points.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to establish a policy prohibiting drilling in the wood, stucco, and brick of the liquor store building regarding Christmas decorations. The motion passed unanimously.

## **West Lake Street Road Improvement**

Ryan Zemek from Widseth presented information about the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) application to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for West Lake Street. The city had applied in 2023 but wasn't funded. Based on feedback from MNDOT, the application was revised to better quantify the improvements and impact on Vergas residents. Albright identified two errors in the application: an incorrect construction year (listed as 2024) and an incorrect response about right-of-way acquisition. Zemek explained that including right-of-way acquisition in the grant application would create significant legal requirements, suggesting the city handle that separately. Lammers noted that the average daily traffic count of 100 vehicles seemed low, estimating it was closer to 250-300 vehicles per day, with higher counts in summer months. The road is used as a cutoff route to avoid going through Vergas. Albright mentioned that he had met with an application reviewer at a recent funding workshop. He requested time to review the application further before submission, as the deadline is December 12th. Zemek agreed to coordinate with Lammers to arrange a meeting with Albright to finalize the application.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to approve the resolution to apply for the Local Road Improvement Program. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Sales Tax Resolution**

Lammers presented a resolution for a 0.5% sales tax to fund the Long Lake Park master plan. The resolution would request permission from the state to bring the sales tax proposal to voters in the November election. If approved, collection could begin the following February. The resolution proposes a 0.5% tax on all retail sales for five years to raise \$1.2 million for park improvements. Lammers noted she would update the supporting document to change "playground upgrades, trail improvements, and picnic shelter" to "restroom facility and accessible features." Albright asked about the possibility of combining the sales tax revenue with grants, and Lammers confirmed that the tax would terminate once the specified projects were completed, even if that occurred before the five-year period ended.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright, to approve the general sales tax resolution of 0.5 percent for Park improvements. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff Reports**

#### **A. Utilities Superintendent Report**

DuFrane provided his written report in the council packet. There were no questions from the council.

#### **B. Clerk-Treasurer Report**

Lammers provided her written report and additional documentation. She requested permission to sell a sit-to-stand desk she no longer uses for \$150, as she now has two monitors on a stand. She would advertise it in the newsletter or on Facebook.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke, to approve selling the sit-to-stand desk for \$150. The motion passed unanimously.

Lammers reported that the city received a security grant for panic buttons for employees and cameras inside the office, in back, and at the city shop over the water tower. This was a 50/50 matching grant up to \$10,000. The panic buttons will connect to the sheriff's department.

#### **2026 General Fund Budget**

Mayor Bruhn reminded council members that the final approval of the 2026 general fund budget would take place at the next meeting.

#### **Information & Announcements**

Mayor Bruhn announced that the 2026 Board of Review date had been set for April 8th at 1:00 PM. Lammers distributed performance review forms for the Utility Superintendent and herself to council members, asking them to return completed forms in sealed envelopes by December 1st. Mayor Bruhn noted that she and Stenger would use the input for evaluations.

#### **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 7:10 PM.

Recorded by  
Deputy Clerk  
Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Julie Lammers, CMC  
Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer