

CITY OF VERGAS  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
VERGAS EVENTS CENTER & ZOOM

The City Council of Vergas met at 6:30 pm, on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at the Vergas Event Center and on Zoom for a hybrid regular council meeting with the following members present: Mayor Julie Bruhn; Council Members: Dean Haarstick, Paul Pinke, Bruce Albright and Natalie Fischer. Absent: none. Also present: Clerk/Treasurer Julie Lammers; Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane; Liquor Store Manager Kyle Theisen, Editor Bob Williams of the Frazee-Vergas Forum; City Engineer Blaine Greene and Citizens: Dwight Lundgren, James Stenger, Andrew Kinneberg and Rachel Kinneberg.

**Call to Order**

Mayor Julie Bruhn called the meeting to order.

**Citizens' Concerns**

None.

**Agenda Additions and Deletions**

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Haarstick to approve the following consent agenda:

- A. Council Minutes of the November 12, 2024 meeting
  - B. Bills paid between Council meetings and Council bills totaling \$101,929.62
  - C. Liquor Store bills for November 2024 totaling \$56,689.72
  - D. Late water/sewer bills
  - E. 2024 Investment Schedule/Bond Schedule
  - F. General Fund Special Revenue Money Market Account
  - G. 2024 Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Balances
  - H. 2025 Licenses
    1. Cigarette
      - a. Lakes Community Co-op
      - b. Olson Oil
    2. Liquor on-sale
      - a. Billy's Corner Bar
      - b. Skal
  - I. Tax Abatement Hearings for parcels: 82000990249000 and 82000990244000 on January 14, 2025 at 6:15 pm.
  - J. Employee Training
    1. MN Rural Water Conference – March 4-6, 2025 in St Cloud (Utilities Superintendent )
    2. MN Clerks and Finance Officers – March 17 -21, 2025 in Brooklyn Center (Clerk-Treasurer)
    3. Clerks Advanced Academy- (Clerk-Treasurer)
    4. LMC, Loss Control Workshop March 26, 2025 in Alexandria (Utilities Superintendent, Maintenance Operator, Clerk-Treasurer)
    5. League of MN Cities Annual Conference June 25-27, 2025 in Duluth (Mayor, Council & Clerk-Treasurer)
    6. Municipal Beverage Association (MMBA) April 20 - 23, 2205 Alexandria (Liquor Store Manager)
    7. 16th Annual Operator Expo, (MN Rural Water) August 20, 2025 (Utilities Superintendent and Maintenance Operator)
    8. Minnesota Clerks and Finance Officers Region 1 Meetings, various dates, (Clerk-Treasurer)
  - K. 2025 Elections
    1. Resolution 2024-015 Polling Place Designation
  - L. Energy Grant
    1. Update
    2. Resolution
  - M. Committee Reports - requiring no Council Action
    1. EDA/HRA
  - N. Comp Plan Progress 2024
  - O. Certify Mowing Invoice to Taxes - Parcel 82000990130000
- Motion passed unanimously.

**2019 Street Project Asphalt on Scharf Ave**

Andrew Kinneberg stated when being assessed for the asphalt for the 2019 Street Project, KLJ Engineering figured his footage incorrectly. Current city engineer Blaine Green also figured the amount of asphalt for this project and stated the assessment amount is incorrectly figured. Attorney Tom Winters stated during the assessment procedure a hearing was held, and property owners had a chance to dispute the assessment amount. The city has no obligation to refigure the amount assessed and recommends no change be made as it can set a precedent for all projects to be reviewed. Albright stated the city can take this into consideration when the next phase of Scharf is asphalted or when the cul-de-sac on their property is abandoned.

### **Otter Tail Lakes Country Assn**

Haarstick reviewed the city membership of the Otter Tail Lakes Country Association, which he holds a seat on the board.

### **Committee Reports**

#### CDH-Vergas Fire Board

Bruhn reviewed CDH-Vergas Fire Board meeting minutes of November 25, 2024 (minutes available at the Vergas City Clerk's Office). Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright to approve the increase in 2025 rates of 4%. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Water/Sewer Committee

Fischer reviewed the Water/Sewer Committee meeting minutes of November 20, 2024 (minutes available at the Vergas City Clerk's Office) Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to get quotes for fencing around water plant and apply for MN Health Department grant for \$10,000.00. DuFrane questioned if we wanted the fence to go around all of the City property or if they would like the fence around the water plant and water tower. DuFrane questioned if we wanted to use the tree line for a fence or have a completed fence. Albright stated a tree line will not keep people out of the water plant area so we can not use a fence around the whole area. Two estimates are needed on a project this size. Albright asked DuFrane to get multiply bids for the project: around the water plant and water tower and around the whole parcel. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to raise the water rate by \$3.00 for the base rate and the sewer rate by 25 cent per 1,000 gallons of usage. Motion passed unanimously. Discussed a control panel by the pump on County road 4 needs to be replaced due to terminals getting burnt. DuFrane will be getting quotes for pumps and control panels. DuFrane provided a quote for a submersible pump from MN Pump Works for \$13,819.40, this is located in the park. This pump was replaced in 2012. DuFrane will get another quote for this pump.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to approve the 2025 water and sewer budgets. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Park Board

Lammers reviewed the park board meeting minutes of November 27, 2024 (minutes available at the Vergas City Clerk's Office). Lammers requested the Council allow her to look into a sales tax for the Long Lake Trail Improvements. The sales tax moratorium ends June 1, 2025 and the state is changing the criteria on how Cities can require a sales tax. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke for Lammers to look into a sales tax for Vergas Long Lake Trail. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Pinke, seconded by Haarstick to transfer \$15,000 to the park money market account for capital outlay projects. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Event Center

Pinke reviewed the event center meeting minutes of November 26, 2024 (minutes available at the Vergas City Clerk's Office). The stove top which was purchased has 4 burners with only 2 burners having controls, the other 2 burners are either only on or off. The council sent the discussion back to the event center committee to discuss the stove top after they have used the stove top. Event Center committee is still in need of a member in 2025. Discussed adding a \$125 fee to all bar rentals as the Lion's needed a permit which cost \$125 when they were doing the bar. This is another revenue making item for the Event Center. The council discussed if the renter or the bar would pay this fee. The council asked the committee to review this fee amount and consider if City, Community Club and Lion's could be exempt from this fee. Those who are doing our bars have catering licenses. May want to look at \$50 or something. For those bars that do events throughout the year maybe want to have a per year fee. Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to table further discussion with the event center considering the things we discussed tonight. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Streets/Sidewalk/Yard Waste

Motion by Fischer, seconded by Pinke to approve installing 3 lights for \$110.56 in the Sunny Oaks Division. Motion passed unanimously. Winters stated he is collaborating with Engineer Green on the right-of-way for E Lake Street by the end of the year. Engineer Green reviewed the extension of Scharf Avenue and stated the pond is not the size stated on the plans and there is some erosion. No recommendation to accept until it is built according to the design. The utilities are good but will

need to be evaluated for tracer wires.

### **2025 General Fund Budget**

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to adopt the 2025 Fee Schedule. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Pinke, seconded by Albright to approve the 2025 Employee PayScale. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Fischer, seconded by Haarstick to approve the presented General Fund Budget which dropped from a 9.9% to a 6.97%. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Staff Reports**

#### Liquor Store Manager

Theisen presented a proposal from JH Signs to remove awnings, strip, and recover with cool vinyl material. He is still waiting for 2 more quotes which he hopes to have at the January meeting.

#### Utilities Superintendent

DuFrane asked Green to explain the Lead and Copper reporting to the State of MN. Widseth has a contract with the MN Department of Public Health and there was a technical glitch when data was submitted, and more data has been entered in. Next step is to get on a PPL list for funding to identify the 70 unidentified lines. DuFrane questioned why 1/3 of the project is not complete and they are looking for more money to complete the project they were supposed to complete. Green stated the timeline made it exceedingly difficult to complete, they truly did their best effort to complete the project. DuFrane stated he feels Widseth should complete this project for no additional payment, he feels Widseth failed. Albright questioned if they only received 60% of funds they were allocated, as they were only paid for the items that were completed and Green stated he was correct. It was reported to the State that 125 lines were unidentified but in reality, there are 55 unidentified lines. Green stated they have not found any lead or galvanized lines in Vergas. Bruhn asked DuFrane and Green to have a conversation regarding reporting and bring it back to water and sewer committee if there are still concerns.

Motion by Albright, seconded by Pinke to allow DuFrane to attend MN Warn Training in St Cloud on December 17, 2024 (no cost other than travel expense) and for both DuFrane and Engebretson to attend MRWA training in Elbow Lake on January 30, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.

#### Clerk-Treasurer Report

The written report was provided by Lammers. Otter Tail County will be bringing the agreement to the County Commissioners on December 17 for them to oversee Lake shore Management permits. If this is approved, we may need a special council meeting for this to go into effect on January 1, 2025.

### **2024 Mayor State of Address**

Bruhn reviewed 2024 accomplishments. The 2024 State Address can be found on the City webpage and a copy is available at the City Clerk's office.

### **Information & Announcements**

Lammers invited Council members to consider training for the board of review. Currently Albright is our only trained member. The city will hold the local board of review on April 9, 2025.

### **Adjournment**

The business for which the meeting was called having been completed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Vergas Clerk-Treasurer  
Julie Lammers, CMC