CITY OF VERGAS

COUNCIL MINUTES

GOVERNMENT SERVICES BUILDING CENTER & ZOOM

Thursday, July 9, 2026

The City Council of Vergas met at 10:00 AM, on Thursday, July 9, 2026 at the Government Services Building and on a Zoom for a hybrid regular public hearing.

2026	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Julie Bruhn, Mayor	P	P	P	P/P	P	P	P					
Bruce Albright, Member	P	P	P	P/P	P	A	P					
Paul Pinke, Member	P	P	P	P/P	P	P	A					
Dean Haarstick, Member	P	P	P	P/P	P	P	P					
James Stenger, Member	P	P	P	P/P	P	P	P					
Julie Lammers, Clerk-Treasurer	P	P	P	P/P	P	P	P					
Mike Dufrane, Utilities Superintendent	P	A	A	A/A	P	A	P					
Kyle Theisen, Liquor Store Manager	P	A	A	A/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: Maintenance Operator Matthew Engebretson of the City of Vergas.

Call to Order

Mayor Julie Bruhn called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Event Center

Fridge

Council discussed the condition of the refrigerator at the Event Center. Due to its age and the increasing maintenance and repair needs, staff recommended replacement as the more cost-effective long-term option.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Haarstick to purchase a new fridge at the Event Center from Tweeton Refrigeration for $900. The motion passed unanimously.

Albright entered the meeting.

Looney Days Employee Work Request

Utilities Superintendent Mike DuFrane and Maintenance Operator Matthew Engebretson, appeared before the Council to discuss the scope of City employee involvement in the annual Looney Days community event. DuFrane affirmed that the tasks outlined in the submitted work request accurately reflect the work performed, but emphasized that the volume of work is substantial and spans multiple days—beginning as early as Thursday and not concluding until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. The primary concern raised by DuFrane was garbage management during the event, particularly on Saturday afternoon. He explained that by the time the main event programming is underway, City staff have already worked a full day or more, having started before sunrise to clean the park, move garbage receptacles, relocate picnic tables, and set up barricades. Once the street fair is in full swing—typically around 10:00 AM on Saturday—City equipment cannot safely navigate the crowds, leaving staff unable to effectively manage the growing volume of refuse. DuFrane noted that a 6-yard dumpster placed behind Wildfire Furs performed well in the prior year, and indicated that this practice was expected to continue. Stenger reinforced that the most critical cleanup period is from approximately 4:00 to 6:00 PM on Saturday, when the street empties after the street fair and garbage must be cleared before the next phase of events. He noted that the town's appearance during this window is a key concern. Both staff members and council members agreed that, by that hour, City employees have already exceeded a full day of work, making it unreasonable to expect them to continue. Bruhn cited previous years where one employee accumulated over $1,000 in overtime during the event, calling such expenditure unacceptable given that Looney Days is a Community Club event rather than a City-Governed function. She noted that other communities do not embed their City staff so extensively in community festival operations, with some opting to hire outside labor instead. The Council acknowledged the significant community benefit of the event and the value of the City's contribution, but agreed that a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities is necessary. Albright raised the question of whether the Community Club had ever considered reimbursing the City for labor costs, given that the event generates revenue for the organization. Stenger acknowledged the tension inherent in that approach, noting that the Community Club already donates substantially to the City, and that introducing financial transactions for labor could complicate the relationship. The discussion acknowledged that City staff contribute unique expertise and equipment that would be difficult and expensive to replicate. The Council reached a consensus that City staff would be

available from before sunrise until approximately 10:00 AM on Saturday and Sunday, covering the park cleanup, garbage can deployment, and equipment-dependent setup. After 10:00 AM on Saturday, garbage management on City streets would need to be handled by Community Club volunteers or other organized groups. DuFrane suggested that recruiting a youth organization—such as a school band or scout troop—in exchange for a small donation could be an effective solution.

Bruhn indicated that she would follow up with the Community Club co-chairs to communicate this expectation and proposed scheduling a meeting with the Community Club board to formally clarify the respective roles of the City and the Community Club in support of the event, as had been done in prior years.

DuFrane also noted, as an informational item, that the state had donated 50 traffic cones to the City—valued at approximately $750—which would be formally accepted by resolution at an upcoming regular meeting.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Haarstick, to authorize Bruhn to meet with the Community Club board to clarify City and Community Club roles for Looney Days. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel Committee

Liquor Store Manager

Stenger reported that the Personnel Committee conducted interviews with four candidates for the Liquor Store Manager position and recommended hiring Kerry Ingberg. The committee proposed placing her at Step 6 on the City's compensation scale, based on an evaluation of five criteria: skills and competency, education and training meeting minimum requirements, quality of accomplishments relative to other candidates, documented prior salary history, and labor market conditions.

Bruhn expressed concern that placing the candidate at Step 6 was too high given the criteria cited. She noted that meeting the minimum qualifications for the position simply establishes eligibility at the base step and does not warrant advancement. With respect to education and training, Bruhn observed that the candidate's completion of responsible alcohol service training is not meaningfully above what any member of the public could undertake, and therefore should not factor into step placement. She acknowledged that the candidate's experience in payroll, customer service, inventory management, and employee supervision—gained through prior work in staffing and at a local bar—represented legitimate experience meriting consideration, and indicated she could support placement at Step 4.

Lammers confirmed that the candidate had not been told a specific step during the interview process, though the pay scale was shared. She noted that the candidate expressed willingness to begin work the following Monday, was available to work all shifts seven days a week, and was described as detailed, dependable, and accurate. It was also noted that the candidate has computer skills consistent with those demonstrated by the prior manager, including data entry and Excel proficiency.

Stenger acknowledged the mayor's concerns but moved forward with the original recommendation of Step 6, noting that the candidate would still be taking a pay cut from her previous position, and that even at Step 6, her compensation would remain well below her prior salary. The broader context of difficulty recruiting qualified candidates from outside the area—due to the City's rural location and compensation scale benchmarked against communities of 500 or fewer—was acknowledged.

The Council also noted the importance of documenting the specific rationale for the step placement in the personnel file, given that hiring decisions are subject to public records requests.

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Haarstick, to hire Kerry Inberg as Liquor Store Manager at Step 6. Voting yes: Stenger, Haarstick and Albright. Voting no: Bruhn. Motion carried.

Lammers was directed to document the criteria supporting the step placement for the record.

Adjournment

Motion by Stenger, seconded by Haarstick, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The business for which the meeting was called for was completed and adjourned at 10:42 AM.

Recorded by
Deputy Clerk
Rachel Nustad (assisted by ClerkMinutes)

Julie Lammers, CMC
Vergas City Clerk-Treasurer