

City of Vernon Center – Council Meeting Minutes

Date: January 6th, 2026

Attendance

Council Present: Dana Ziegler, Wendy Bennett, Adam Finney

Staff Present: Clerk Kara Hansen, Public Works Supervisor Mark Willette

Others Present: Tamara Dicks, Jarett Milbrett, and Denise Fritschman

Public Hearing

Mayor Ziegler opened the public hearing at 6:00 PM.

Councilor Bennett asked if there was any engagement from the public about Ordinance #97.

Clerk Hansen said she was not contacted about questions or concerns about the ordinance.

Councilor Finney asked for clarification about the fuel surcharge. Mayor Ziegler said it was to offset the fuel the city was charged by LJP. Clerk Hansen said the 2% water rate raise is recommended by Burkhardt & Burkhardt.

Mayor Ziegler closed the Public Hearing at 6:02 PM

- Councilor Bennett made a motion to close the Public Hearing; 2nd by Councilor Finny. All approved. Motion carried.

Call to Order

Mayor Ziegler opened the regular council meeting at 6:02 PM.

Approve Agenda

Mayor Ziegler asked to add Fire Department Pumpers to Additional Bills item E. PW Supervisor Willette wanted to add Snow Removal to Public Works item C, and 103 First St E to Public Works item D.

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the agenda with the additions; seconded by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda included the 12/9/2025 meeting minutes, bank reconciliations, savings and loan balances, December Cash Balance Investment Report, checks for the month showing \$244,918.75 in deposits and \$33,880.37 in checks, December expenditure and revenue guidelines, 20-23 Project Excel Spreadsheet, January & February calendar of events, December Fire Department Report, and the SSS Financing Report and Resolution 2026-02, Resolution 2026-03, Resolution 2026-04, and Resolution 2026-05.

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the consent agenda; 2nd by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

Additional Bills

Additional Bills

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the additional bills; seconded by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

FD EMT Travel Expenses

Clerk Hansen said this is for travel for her to attend Emergency Medical Technician school and for the test she took in Rochester to earn her National Registry certificate.

- Motion: Councilor Bennett made a motion to approve the travel expenses for EMT school and testing in the amount of \$1,057.00; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

Final Clerk Travel for 2025

Clerk Hansen said these are the final travel expenses for errands she ran on behalf of the city in the 2nd half of 2025.

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the clerk's travel expenses for the last half of 2025 in the amount of \$117.60; seconded by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

Northland Trust Invoice

Clerk Hansen said a motion is needed for this item as it's an approval for a loan payment.

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve the Northland Trust Bond Payment of \$85,025.00; 2nd by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

Fire Department Pumpers

Mayor Ziegler said both Fire Department pumpers failed their tests to be class A pumpers, but they are still functional as pumpers. Chief Jesse Kietzer received an \$1800.00 quote to fix the new pumper, and another quote for \$10,500.00 to repair the old pumper. Clerk Hansen said there is enough money in the 402 Savings Fund to cover the cost, but the amount to fix the trucks exceeds the 2026 budget. Mayor Ziegler said once the invoices for the trucks come in, the City will do a transfer from savings.

- Motion: Councilor Bennett made a motion to approve the quotes to fix the two fire department pumpers; 2nd by Mayor Ziegler. All approved. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Infrastructure Project

Filter Project & Discussion

Clerk Hansen she reached out to Burkhardt & Burkhardt for advice and the City must bid out for a project even if it's for used equipment. Mayor Ziegler said he wanted to wait to look at the filter project after the well project wrapped up.

Public Works

Supervisor Notes

PW Supervisor Willette said the lights on Charlie's Hill were damage and Luke's Electric was able to repair them. He said there have been challenges doing his computer work because he's unable to work at the WWTP because of the project. He spoke to Engineer Knutson about wrapping it up so he could have his office back. He told the council he would like a blurb put in the next newsletter about residents checking for galvanized pipes as MDH recognizes galvanized pipes as being lead pipes. He double checked that 205 Park Ave N's sewer lateral was compliant.

MPCA Schedule of Compliance

Clerk Hansen said she received this notice from the MPCA stating the City has met its compliance for I&I and the city will not need to submit I&I reports for the immediate future.

Snow Removal

PW Supervisor Willette said he is still having trouble with cars parked on City streets for snow removal. Mayor Ziegler reviewed Ordinance #91 and said the ordinance gives the city authority to tow vehicles in city streets at 1 AM after a snow event that results in snow accumulation of 2 inches until snow removal duties are completed curb-to-curb. He advised PW Supervisor Willette to tow vehicles that impede snow removal if a snow event hits 2 inch of accumulation.

103 First St E

PW Supervisor Willette said he contacted CMR Plumbing who replaced their sewer lateral service and performed inside plumbing repairs to make sure the house was plumbed according to the Minnesota Building Code. CMR Plumbing verified that the plumbing in the house met the Minnesota Building Code standard. PW Supervisor Willette said there is a sump pump issue as the foundation of the house isn't in good shape, which means water is pumped to the outside. The sump pump does not have a hose leading away from the house and water is pooling in the yard which collects in the basement which is pumped out to the yard. He said this would likely be fixed if the home owners attach a hose to the sump pump and allow water to drain to the storm sewer. He said he will contact the homeowner's daughter and let her know about it.

Follow-up From Previous Meeting

Clerk Hansen said she has been steadily working on the new ADA compliance requirements for cities under 50,000 for population. The city does not need to be compliant until April 2027. She

is researching different formats to place the ordinances, agendas, and minutes and has changed the layout of the minutes to better accommodate this change. She says she will be looking for workshops and classes to take so she better understands how to best accomplish this, and Burkhardt & Burkhardt are willing to help her.

Cannabis Ordinance

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve Ordinance #97 An Ordinance Pertaining to Regulations Regarding Cannabis Businesses; seconded by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

Resolution 2026-01

- Motion: Councilor Bennett made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-01 setting the fee schedule for the City of Vernon Center for 2026; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

Citizen Concern 2025-08

Clerk Hansen said the citizen who submitted this concern on 12/30/2025. They were frustrated the SSS Financing program had ended before the 12/31/2025 deadline. The citizen wants the council to reconsider her application and put her on the list for the remaining funds. Mayor Ziegler said the city notified residents that the program would be open until 12/31/2025, and they should honor their word. Clerk Hansen said she didn't know if there would be enough money in the SSS Financing Fund to cover the work to be done as she is still waiting on one quote. Mayor Ziegler said they can approve the resident's application for financing and they can work out the details at a later meeting if there isn't enough in the fund after the quotes are turned into the City.

- Councilor Bennett made a motion to accept the Citizen Concern form 2025-08 for SSS Financing; 2nd by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 12th, 2026

Adjourn

- Motion: Councilor Bennett motioned to adjourn; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:39 PM.

Kara Hansen, Clerk-Treasurer

Dana Ziegler, Mayor

Date approved