

# City of Vernon Center – Council Meeting Minutes

Date: December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## Attendance

**Council Present:** Dana Ziegler, Wendy Bennett, Adam Finney, Lisa Peterson

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

**Others Present:** Steven Shute, Peter Busse

## Call to Order

Mayor Ziegler opened the regular council meeting at 6:00 PM.

## Approve Agenda

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

## Consent Agenda

The consent agenda included the 11/13/2025 meeting minutes, bank reconciliations, savings and loan balances, November Cash Balance Investment Report, checks for the month showing \$78,848.32 in deposits and \$75,843.72 in checks, November expenditure and revenue guidelines, 20-23 Project Excel Spreadsheet, December & January calendar of events, BEC call log for November, November Fire Department Report, Fire Department PPE, and the 2026 Vernon Center Township Dumpsite Agreement.

- Motion: Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve the consent agenda; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

## Additional Bills

The council briefly discussed the amount given to the Vernon Center Relief Association. Clerk Hansen said she accidentally didn't pay them when the MMB transferred the funds to the City in March. The amount was for \$14,290.25. She said she received 2026's funds in November which totaled out to \$16,786.46 which is why the check the city wrote to the relief association is so high. Councilor Finney explained the money the city pays to the Vernon Center Relief Association goes straight into the special fund and is used for pension.

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

## Public Comment

None.

## **Infrastructure Project**

### **Punch List Items**

PW Supervisor Willette said the work at 103 Oak St N was done to correct the six feet of transit pipe that needed replaced. He is still waiting to hear from Engineer Knutson about the other punch list items. The council directed Clerk Hansen to reach out to Engineer Knutson and Engineer Maeder to see what other items need addressed.

### **Pay Application**

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve Pay Application AFP#1 for \$47,500 contingent upon receiving funds from Rural Development; seconded by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

### **MRWA #13**

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve requisition #13 for \$63,058.30; seconded by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

## **Public Works**

### **Supervisor Notes**

Councilor Finney asked if PW Supervisor Willette always put flags up on December 7<sup>th</sup>. PW Supervisor Willette said he has always put flags up on this date. He said ISO will be coming in January to do an audit, but said he would ask them to put off the water portion of the audit until spring. Mayor Ziegler asked if there were any questions for PW Supervisor Willette. The council had none.

### **WTP Filters Quote**

PW Supervisor Willette said this quote is from Rubin Construction to put in used filters. Mayor Ziegler asked if using used equipment meant the city would need to submit bids. The council instructed Clerk Hansen to reach out to Burkhardt & Burkhardt to clarify.

### **SSS Financing**

Clerk Hansen said that a resident who signed up for financing paid off their amount before it was certified to the county, leaving additional money in the SSS Fund. She also said the work done on another residence was \$6500 cheaper than the quote. Right now there is about \$17,000 in the fund after quotes, and there is one other resident who signed up just after the last city council meeting. Mayor Ziegler told Clerk Hansen not to accept any more applications for financing and ask the residents at 101 Oak St S to find a contractor to do the sewer work.

### **2025 I&I Report**

Clerk Hansen said she and PW Supervisor Willette sat down and put all the I&I Reduction done from residents and the city and put it on the form. This is for compliance with the MPCA.

### **102 Poplar St E – Water Billing Issue**

Peter Busse said he paid the city to shut off the water to 102 Poplar St E, but he didn't understand why he was still receiving a bill for water and asked for the council to clarify this. Councilor Peterson said it's in City Ordinance #93 to bill residents a minimum amount unless they are physically disconnected from the city's water system. Peter Busse said if he understood that he would still receive a bill for water, he wouldn't have paid to have city shut off the water to the house. Mayor Ziegler asked him if he wanted a refund. Peter Busse said he would.

- Motion: Councilor Peterson motioned to turn water back on at 102 Poplar St E and refund \$150; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried.

### **407 First St E – Water Rate Issue**

Clerk Hansen said she noticed a problem with 407 First St E's water rate in November. At first, the homeowners weren't concerned, but when the problem persisted into December, the homeowners requested a three-month profile of their water system to see if anything was actively leaking. PW Supervisor Willette asked Clerk Hansen to contact Dave Sinclair of Metering and Technology Solutions to see if anything different should be done with the new software installed this year. Dave Sinclair asked questions about the account, and he and Clerk Hansen found a number had not been transferred over correctly when the new meter was installed. He had her fix it. Clerk Hansen said she and PW Supervisor Willette arranged for the water survey on the property, and it didn't show any leaks and the numbers he had were different from what was on Banyon. She believes that the issue was in Banyon and it has been cleared up, but after doing some calculations thought it appropriate for the homeowners to be credited for water, they hadn't used which averaged out to \$84.97.

- Motion: Councilor Finney made a motion to approve a credit of \$84.97; seconded by Councilor Peterson. All approved. Motion carried.

### **Follow-Up From Previous Meeting**

#### **Cannabis Ordinance**

Clerk Hansen said she drafted a cannabis ordinance based on what the council wanted from the last meeting and had it sent to the city attorney. The city attorney reviewed it and said it was good to go. Mayor Ziegler directed Clerk Hansen to schedule a public hearing before the January meeting to discuss the ordinance.

#### **2026 Council Schedule**

Clerk Hansen said the schedule takes into account election days and potential election canvassing in November. Mayor Ziegler said he'd like to schedule City Council meetings by quarter, and schedule out the first quarter and they would plan out 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter's meeting at the march meeting. The first quarter of 2026 meetings were scheduled for Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 & Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 & Thursday March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

## **BEC Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Clerk Hansen said the county is required to have a hazard mitigation plan updated every five years so the area qualifies for FEMA assistance if needed. She's had two meetings with Blue Earth County, and a one-on-one with Emergency Management Director Eric Weller to go over the specific events the City of Vernon Center is at risk for.

- Motion: Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-33; seconded by Councilor Bennett. All approved. Motion carried.

## **Cathy Kietzer – July 4 Celebration**

Clerk Hansen said Cathy Kietzer wasn't able to come in person to the meeting tonight due to concerns about the weather, but she wanted to know what the council felt like doing for a July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. She said in years past, whenever July 4<sup>th</sup> landed on a weekend the turnout wasn't as good. She wanted to know what the council thought and to have Clerk Hansen get back to her. The council informed Clerk Hansen to contact Cathy Kietzer and let her know that if she wants to plan a July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, then it will be up to her. The council wants her to decide what she thinks is best.

## **2026 Budget**

The proposed tax levy for 2026 was set at 6.4% increase from 2025. Councilor Peterson said both city hall and public work's new laptops and the labor to set them up could be taken out of savings and removed from the budget. This dropped the City Hall Laptop fund from \$5,475.00 to \$475.00 Clerk Hansen said with her home life's chaotic schedule, she would prefer not to attend clerk's institute. The councilor lowered the clerk's training and instruction line to \$600.00 and the clerk's travel expenses to \$1,000.00. The council lowered the Future Projects transfer line to \$55,000.00. The tax levy was dropped to a 1% increase from 2025.

- Motion: Councilor Peterson made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-34 adopting the final tax levy; seconded by Councilor Bennett. Motion carried.

## **Next Meeting**

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## **Adjournment**

- Motion: Councilor Bennett motioned to adjourn; seconded by Councilor Finney. All approved. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.