

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2015**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor John Gayle called the regular meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 5:30 p.m. Council members present were: Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, Tim Carroll, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and James Wright. The invocation was given by Sr. Pastor Brett Jerrial, Azalea City Church of God, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the November 5, 2015 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2015-29, AN ORDINANCE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUNICIPAL COURT TECHNOLOGY FEE**

Consideration of an Ordinance for the establishment of a Municipal Court Technology Fee.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that over the last several years, the City of Valdosta's Municipal Court, in conjunction with Commander Eugene Bell of the Valdosta Police Department, Probation, and Tim Tanner, Attorney with Coleman Talley, LLP, have met with several software vendors who provide technological needs for Courts which include computer hardware, software, imaging, scanning, fax, communication, printing, and courtroom visual media. The City had previously set a goal to implement software enhancements to improve efficiency with records management. Based on the presentations of those vendors, the one that would best meet the needs of the City of Valdosta's Municipal Court is CourtWare Solutions, Inc. CourtWare currently provides services to Courts in Moultrie, Tifton, Thomasville, Cordele, and Albany in addition to many Courts in the Atlanta area. CourtWare currently works with VC3, the City's Information Technology Manager, in Courts in the Atlanta area. Regarding the cost of services, CourtWare would charge a base fee of \$3.50 per paid citation. Of that \$3.50, \$3.00 is for unlimited users of the software. The additional \$.50 is for access to NCIC/GCIC (used in streamlining running of Driver's histories). Not only would CourtWare best meet the needs of the Municipal Court, but their per fee citation charge was the most reasonable. The Municipal Court would also need to add a reasonable amount (between \$6.00 and \$10.00) on top of the \$3.50 for technology maintenance. CourtWare fees are assessed after a citation is paid. For example, if the Municipal Court's fine is \$112.00 and a technology fee of \$6.00 is added, the final fine would be \$118.00. Of the additional \$6.00, CourtWare would be paid its \$3.50 and the remaining \$2.50 would go into the Municipal Court's Technology Fund which would be maintained by the City of Valdosta. The software would be utilized at the Municipal Court and the Police Department. There would be no issue with integrating the new software with the City's existing software including the City-owned report writing software maintained by the Regional Commission. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the request to impose a Municipal Court Technology Fee in the amount of \$8.50 (\$3.50 would go to the vendor and \$5.00 would be retained by the City to pay for all the items mentioned above). There will be a lot of cost in the first year because all of the records will have to be scanned and converted into the new system from either the Police Department software or the AS400 that the Regional Commission maintains. Judge Vernita Bender researched similar cities around the State and they charge an average fee of \$10.00 so we are well below the average. There are some cities with technology fees as high as \$30.00 on every citation. We looked at the cost of Court and the cost of technology, and then we matched the fee to what we believe the costs are so that we are using this to reimburse technology costs of the Court. Judge Bender stated that the software company charges a \$3.00 licensing fee per citation. The \$3.00 fee is for unlimited users and will be shared between the Court and the Police Department. The total will be \$3.50 which goes directly to the vendor. They will install the software and provide training at no additional cost. The data conversion in the first year will be the most expensive part. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to who would maintain the special fund. Judge Bender stated that it would be maintained by the Finance Department and not Municipal Court. Larry Hanson stated that the funds can only be used for technology

needs of the Court. VC3 has also used this software in other communities that they represent so they will also be assisting in this process.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2015-29, an Ordinance for the establishment of a Municipal Court Technology Fee in the amount of \$8.50, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

### **BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES**

Consideration of a request to reimburse the Georgia Department of Transportation for water utilities relocation for the U. S. Highway 84/Clay Road/Hollywood Street Intersection Improvement Project as stipulated in a Contract Item Agreement with the City of Valdosta.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recently let a Project to improve the intersection on SR 38/US 84 at CR 439/Clay Road/CS 127/Hollywood Street. The Project includes road realignment, stormwater system construction, and paving among other improvements. Following a review of the GDOT plans in July, 2014, the Utilities Department identified several water utility conflicts within the Project limits. These conflicts include a six and a twelve inch water main and appurtenances, and an eight inch sewer main and appurtenances that will need to be adjusted or relocated in accordance with 23 CFR Part 645, Subpart A and O.C.G.A. 32-6-171. The City of Valdosta entered into a Contract Item Agreement with the GDOT in March, 2015 to have the water utilities relocation portion of the work included in the State Roadway Contract. Prior to the execution of the Agreement, the City provided GDOT with a non-binding, pre-let estimate for that portion of the work in the amount of \$40,458.25. Per the Agreement, the City is responsible for the cost of the work and up to 20% beyond the City's estimate, i.e. \$48,549.90. The actual bid cost to the City for the utilities relocation portion was to be determined after the opening of bids for the Project. Reames and Son Construction Company, Inc., as proposed contractor for the GDOT, was the unofficial low bidder on the Roadway Project let October 16, 2015. The adjustment and installation of water facilities belonging to the City of Valdosta in conflict with the Project has been included in the Highway Contract. Actual bid cost of the work is \$45,221.50 of which the City is responsible for 100% per the Contract Item Agreement. Contract award and Contract Item Agreement authorization cannot take place until reimbursement for all items included in the Roadway Contract has been paid to the GDOT. Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the request to reimburse the GDOT in the amount of \$45,221.50 plus a 10% contingency for water utilities relocation for the U. S. Highway 84/Clay Road/Hollywood Street Intersection Improvement Project as stipulated in a Contract Item Agreement with the City of Valdosta. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether this work has been completed. Henry Hicks stated that it has not yet been completed. The City will have to submit funds to the GDOT and then they will issue a Notice to Proceed to Reames and Son Construction.

A **MOTION** by Wright, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to reimburse the Georgia Department of Transportation in the amount of \$45,221.50 plus a 10% contingency for water utilities relocation for the U. S. Highway 84/Clay Road/Hollywood Street Intersection Improvement Project as stipulated in a Contract Item Agreement with the City of Valdosta.

### **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve the abandonment of a portion of the drainage and utility easement located in the North Crossing Subdivision.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that Valdosta Orthopedic Properties, LLC has formally requested that the City abandon a portion of the drainage and utility easement located at the rear of their property at 3527 North Valdosta Road. Valdosta Orthopedic owns Lots 2, 3, 5, and 7 on the plat dated September 19, 1994. It is their wish to privately maintain the storm drainage system between these lots. The drainage easement does not serve any other lots or property owners. The other portion of the easement will remain a City utility easement for the existing sewer main that serves these Lots, as well as Lot 6. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the request to abandon a portion of the drainage and utility easement located in the North Crossing Subdivision.

A **MOTION** by Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to approve the abandonment of a portion of the drainage and utility easement located in the North Crossing Subdivision.

Consideration of a request to approve the abandonment of a drainage easement in Jo-Ree Springs Subdivision.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the City was granted a 20-foot drainage easement along the rear boundary line of Lots 7 through 10, Block E, in Jo-Ree Springs Subdivision with the recording of the Subdivision plat in March 6, 1967. During this time, easements were obtained on plats at the rear of all Lots. The City never utilized this easement. On May 31, 1968, a revision plat was done changing this easement from a 20-foot easement to a 30-foot easement. On September 29, 2015, Council approved the abandonment of Lot 7, Block E of the Jo-Ree Springs Subdivision so that the property owner could utilize a portion of the easement for the purpose of constructing a garage at the back of his property. The neighbors to the west of Lot 7, Lots 1 through 6, Block E, have come forth asking that they also be granted the easement abandonment for the same purpose of land utilization. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the request to abandon a drainage easement for Lots 1-6, Block E, in Jo-Ree Springs Subdivision.

A **MOTION** by Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to abandon a drainage easement for Lots 1-6, Block E, in Jo-Ree Springs Subdivision.

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) met earlier today and Judge Vernita Bender was the guest speaker for the group. Judge Bender also swore in the new VYC Officers.

The Valdosta State University Football Team has advanced to the Playoffs and will be playing this Saturday at home at 12:00 p.m. at Bazemore-Hyder Stadium. Citizens are encouraged to attend and show their support.

The current edition of the Valdosta City Beat Newsletter is now available and it contains a lot of useful information about things going on in the City.

Georgia Power is continuing with the LED lighting installation. They have now replaced approximately 2,400 lights and anticipate completion by December 31, 2015.

The Christmas Tree Lighting Event is scheduled for Friday, December 4, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. The following day is the annual Christmas Day Open House and Parade Downtown and citizens are encouraged to attend.

At the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Board Meeting yesterday, Commissioner Camila Knowles presented the Adaptive Reuse Award to the City of Valdosta for the repurposing of an existing structure for affordable housing units. The Ashley House is a historic property located in Downtown Valdosta and was constructed in 1925 as the Ashley Hotel. It was designed to address redevelopment while preserving the historic and affordable housing aspects and continuing to invigorate the Downtown area. The building currently houses senior citizens in 61 newly renovated residential units with two commercial spaces on the bottom floor. It also incorporates a green space courtyard, a computer center, wellness room, and an arts and craft room. It is the first historical development to be certified as an EarthCraft multi-family building and an EarthCraft site in the State of Georgia. The City and the Main Street Office assisted the developer in making this happen by helping them get access to tax credits and low interest loans. It was recognized as one of the ten best projects in the State of Georgia.

Lowndes Co. Sheriff Chris Prine recently delivered 27 bicycles to the Fire Department to support a program that the Fire Department does each year. The Fire Department rehabilitates bicycles that have been collected by the Police Department and then gives them to children in the community before Christmas. The City of Valdosta thanked Sheriff Prine for working with Fire Chief Freddie Broom on this initiative.

Councilman Yost stated that the Land Bank Authority had a meeting on November 18, 2015 and they discussed the vote that Council took approximately one month ago to expand the Land Bank Authority. There will be three new positions to the Land Bank Authority with one being appointed by the County, one by the City, and one by the Land Bank Authority. They will bring this to Council in May/June of 2016 with an appointment in July. They will also be looking at the applicants who were not selected by the County or the City as those applicants could possibly be the Land Bank Authority's choice. Councilman Yost stated that he also attended the National League of Cities in Nashville, Tennessee several weeks ago and met some elected officials from Savannah. They have a very active Youth Council and they have been trying to get others in the State to become active. He would like to the Mayor and Council to budget some money next year for the Valdosta Youth Council to make one trip a year to visit the local legislative delegation and the State Capitol. Councilman Yost also stated that the LED lights that Georgia Power is installing in Wood Valley are too bright. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that if Councilman Yost will send the addresses to the Engineering Department then a Staff person will go out with Georgia Power at night to check them out. If they are too bright they can reduce the wattage of the bulb and make other adjustments.

Councilman Payton stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce will be hosting the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual EAGLE Award Ceremony on December 1, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. and Council is invited to attend.

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There were no citizens to be heard.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to adjourn the regular Council meeting and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the November 19, 2015 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:01 p.m. and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

Mayor Gayle reconvened the regular City Council meeting at 6:08 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of real estate in the Executive Session and no action was taken.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the November 19, 2015 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:08 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, December 10, 2015.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta