

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 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 Pastor Mark Brady, Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Oaths of Office for the 2015-2016 Valdosta Youth Council.

Mayor John Gayle stated that at the September 24, 2015 City Council Meeting, the Mayor and Council approved a Resolution for the creation of a new Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) which is designed to inspire local 7th and 8th grade students to build leadership skills, learn about civic responsibility, gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare these youth for a lifetime of public and community service. Applications were received from 16 students from the following schools: Valdosta Middle School, J. L. Newbern Middle School, Highland Christian Academy, and St. John Catholic School. Those students who were selected by the Youth Advisory Board to participate in the 2015-2016 inaugural class of the VYC are as follows: (1) Margaret “Amelia” Barnett - Valdosta Middle School, (2) Rachel Carter - Valdosta Middle School, (3) James “Drew” Correll - Valdosta Middle School, (4) Jahmareé Council - Valdosta Middle School, (5) Dante’ Echols - J. L. Newbern Middle School, (6) Matthew Hall - Highland Christian Academy, (7) Charlesie Hammond - St. John Catholic School, (8) Jalith Harding - J. L. Newbern Middle School, (9) Russell Hunter - Valdosta Middle School, (10) Makayla Jackson - J. L. Newbern Middle School, (11) Nikerria “Keria” Jones - J. L. Newbern Middle School, (12) Erin Kelly - St. John Catholic School, (13) Zion Leggett - Valdosta Early College Academy, (14) Clara “Abbi” Long - Valdosta Middle School, (15) Taylor “Tay” Ramsey - J. L. Newbern Middle School, and (16) Christayanna “Christy” Williams - J. L. Newbern Middle School. The first meeting of the VYC was held on October 22, 2015, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers. The scheduled VYC Monthly Meetings will run through April, 2016 and the VYC members must complete a minimum of eight hours of community service during that time period. These students will operate much like the Valdosta City Council (guided by an Advisory Board) and will have an opportunity to grow as leaders and have an impact on our community. The Advisory Board members appointed by Mayor Gayle, who also serves as the head of the Board, are Valdosta Councilman Ben Norton, Lynn Orenstein of Valdosta Middle School, Jennifer Williams of J. L. Newbern Middle School, and City Staff members Teresa Bolden and Sementa Mathews. Mayor Gayle administered the Oath of Office to the 2015-2016 inaugural class of the Valdosta Youth Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 8, 2015 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2015-26, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF VALDOSTA GEORGIA MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES BENEFITS SYSTEMS (GMEBS) DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta Georgia Municipal Employees Benefits System (GMEBS) Defined Benefit Retirement Plan.

Mark Barber, Assistant City Manager, stated that in the past the City has adopted the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS) Master Defined Benefit Retirement Plan and the appropriate Adoption Agreement. Valdosta is one of 285 cities in Georgia in the GMEBS retirement system. The Retirement Plan is

administered by GMEBS for the 285 member cities. In order to protect the Plan’s tax-qualified status, restated Plan documents, which have been updated to reflect Master Plan amendments and to comply with changes in Federal tax law, are required to be filed with the IRS for an updated favorable determination letter no later than January 31, 2016. To ensure continued tax-qualified status for the City’s Plan, an Ordinance has been prepared for approval by the Mayor and Council for adoption of the restated documents. Mark Barber recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta Georgia Municipal Employees Benefits System (GMEBS) Defined Benefit Retirement Plan.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2015-26, an Ordinance amend the City of Valdosta Georgia Municipal Employees Benefits System (GMEBS) Defined Benefit Retirement Plan, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-14, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY LAND BANK TO CONVERT TO THE 2012 GEORGIA LAND BANK ACT

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank to convert to the 2012 Georgia Land Bank Act.

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Manager, stated that during the 2012 Georgia Legislative Session, Senate Bill 284 (the 2012 Georgia Land Bank Act) was passed and became law in July, 2012. This Act provides for improved operational, financial, and programmatic outcomes for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority (VLLBA). This legislation accomplishes the following three goals for the VLLBA: (1) authorizes and encourages regional collaboration in land banking; (2) provides land banks with self-financing mechanisms and increased access to funding sources; and (3) authorizes and encourages land banking to respond to locally determined priorities. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank to convert to the 2012 Georgia Land Bank Act. Vanassa Flucas recommended that Council approve the Resolution.

A MOTION by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2015-14, a Resolution authorizing the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank to convert to the 2012 Georgia Land Bank Act, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Mayor Gayle stated that he would like to move Agenda Item 5(d), Consideration of bids for stormwater, pedestrian, street, and utility improvements on South Troup Street, up on the Agenda in order to accommodate one of the Council members.

Consideration of bids for stormwater, pedestrian, street, and utility improvements on South Troup Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that South Troup Street is located in one of the City’s oldest neighborhoods. Many of the homes were built in the 1940s and 1950s. There are 75 lots within the Project limits. The roadway is classified as an urban collector and the Project extends from the north end at MLK, Jr. Drive to Griffin Avenue at the south end. Currently, the South Troup Street corridor has spottily-paved, open ditches that are used for both drainage conveyance and roadside parking. There are no sidewalks or bicycle lanes. As a result, vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles often compete for use of the street’s paved roadway surface. Pedestrians and cyclists use South Troup Street to access shops on MLK, Jr. Drive and East Hill Avenue. In addition, elementary school students walk along or cross South Troup Street to access Pinevale Elementary School which is located two blocks to the east of the corridor. On November 11, 2014, City Manager Larry Hanson, Councilwoman Sandra Tooley, Engineering Department Staff, and the Engineer of record, Bill Kent, P.E., held a public meeting to discuss the technical aspects of the Project. The meeting was well attended by both neighborhood residents and citizens. The project was warmly received at the time and remains anxiously anticipated today by the majority of residents. The Project is identified as an Enhancement Project in the City’s Master Transportation Plan. The purpose of the Project is to raise the quality of life within the neighborhood by building improvements that safely separate vehicle,

bicycle, and pedestrian movements along the corridor. The proposed improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle paths, curb and gutter, underground storm sewer and drainage inlets, new driveway aprons, and new water and sewer service connections. The Project is contained in the FY 2016 SPLOST Projects List and budgeted for \$1,600,000. If approved, construction will commence in early January, 2016. On October 13, 2015, three bids were received and opened. The Engineering estimate was \$1,448,841.28. The low base bid was submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,373,323.40. Concurrent with the base bid, Alternate bids 1 and 2 were also respectively bid. These two bid items were bid separately because the need for either Alternate item will ultimately be determined during construction. Alternate 1 is construction work to relocate an existing water main, if necessary, to avoid subgrade conflicts between the existing water main and the new stormwater system or if the existing water main is determined to be in too poor of condition. Alternate 2 is to relocate the traffic signal control box on the southeast corner of MLK, Jr. Drive and South Troup Street, and again if deemed necessary, to create sufficient space to accommodate the new sidewalk. The Alternate 1 bid was submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$21,375. The Alternate 2 bid was submitted in the amount of \$4,500. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low base bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,373,323.40 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$1,510,655.74 and Alternate bids 1 and 2 which total \$25,875 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$28,462.50 if deemed necessary. Councilman Wright stated that if Council approves Alternate bids 1 and 2 then the Engineering Department will not have to come back before Council. Pat Collins stated that was correct and that Alternate bids 1 and 2 would be done only if needed. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she was in agreement with that and it should cover everything that the need to do. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether the contingency would handle that amount. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they typically put a 10% contingency on a project because they have learned that when you go into a built out neighborhood and there is infrastructure in the ground there are a lot of unknowns. There are no sets of plans to show what is in the ground and there will be some things that they do not know about. The 10% contingency is available for the unknowns and that is why they had Alternate bids. Hopefully, one or both will not be needed and it is more of a precaution. Pat Collins stated that this is one of the oldest parts of town and there is a lot of infrastructure that is undocumented. Larry Hanson stated that there is a lot to this Project. It is part drainage and some areas will need to be piped. It will also be connecting to Dukes Bay Canal. They are trying to time it to minimize the disruption to the neighborhoods and that is why it is being awarded now. They will get all the materials ordered and the contractors will not work much in December. If they wait until January they can get a lot of the work done and finish it during the summer when school is out.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low base bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,373,323.40 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$1,510,655.74 for stormwater, pedestrian, street, and utility improvements on South Troup Street and Alternate bids 1 and 2 which total \$25,875 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$28,462.50, if deemed necessary.

Consideration of bids for replacement of a Street Sweeper (Bid No. 05-15-16).

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that the Public Works Department needs to replace an older Street Sweeper that has high usage hours and rising maintenance costs. The Street Sweeper is responsible for sweeping streets and curbing throughout the City and is a Mayor and Council approved budgeted item. The proposed Street Sweeper is a used machine that has been completely refurbished. Sealed bids were received on October 6, 2015 with the low bid submitted by Environmental Products of Georgia in the amount of \$125,000. It has been several years since the City has bought a Street Sweeper so comparison pricing is not available. Greg Brown recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Environmental Products of Georgia in the amount of \$125,000 and allow the Public Works Department to proceed with the purchase. Councilman Norton inquired as to the average savings of purchasing a refurbished Street Sweeper. Greg Brown stated that it would save the City approximately \$45,000. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether this would give the City two Street Sweepers or if it would replace the one we have. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we currently have two Street Sweepers and this will replace the older one.

A MOTION by Councilman Wright, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Environmental Products of Georgia in the amount of \$125,000 and allow the Public Works Department to proceed with the purchase of a Street Sweeper.

Consideration of bids to replace Taser units for the Police Department (Bid No. 07-15-15).

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that the Police Department needs to replace 48 old Taser units that are no longer supported by the manufacturer, Taser International, due to age. The purchase will provide the newest Tasers available as well as the needed accessories and match units already in the existing fleet. The purchase of the new Tasers and accessories will be a sole source purchase. Taser International is the industry standard and the Police Department already has some of the upgraded units in place. This will allow Officers to interchange accessories if the need arises and to share the same downloading software. Taser International has also offered a reduced price of \$45,428.28 for 48 units and holsters, 96 cartridges, and 48 battery packs. Funding is in the Council approved 2016 budget. Greg Brown recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Taser International in the amount of \$45,428.28 and allow the Police Department to proceed with the purchase. Councilman Vickers inquired as to how often the Police Department has to use Tasers. Chief Childress stated that each Agency decides the level of force when using these devices. The Valdosta Police Department has elected to use these devices when someone is actively resisting arrest and assaulting the Officer. They are not used a lot and the Officers follow the Department of Justice mandate which states that any time you use force on someone above putting handcuffs on then a Use of Force Report will be prepared. This Use of Force Report is then reviewed through the chain of command. In order to monitor these devices, you can also plug them into the Taser International computer software system and it will tell you how many times the unit was discharged and the date and time. You cannot tamper with these units and it is a way to monitor the use of the Tasers. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the devices could be sold as surplus. Chief Childress stated that they could not be sold as surplus and they are like firearms. Taser International does not want these units back and they want them destroyed so we have to send them something in writing stating that the units have been disposed of.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by Taser International in the amount of \$45,428.28 for 48 Taser units and holsters, 96 cartridges, and 48 battery packs to replace Taser units for the Police Department.

Consideration of bids for replacement of various HVAC equipment parts at the Department of Labor Building (Bid No. 08-15-16).

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that the Department of Labor (DOL) Building is owned by the City of Valdosta. The DOL pays rent each month and the City is responsible for the functionality of the entire building including the HVAC system. The building was built approximately 15 years ago. The current equipment has been having severe issues over the past couple of years and the repair and maintenance costs have been increasing. The time has come for the replacement of certain parts of the units. Due to the costs, nature of the problems, and availability of parts, it is better to replace the equipment parts. The State of Georgia provides convenience contracts for governmental agencies. One of these contracts covers all aspects of construction projects. A Project Manager approved by the State has been pre-selected to oversee construction services including determining the problem, writing the scope of work, pricing the project, and then project management in a turn-key fashion. The work is priced by using the National Joint Power Alliance which, due to the size and volume, results in aggressive and competitive pricing. This contract is used throughout many States due to ease and pricing. Johnson-Laux Construction will be the Project Manager for the Project with a proposed price of \$53,214.85. Approximately \$42,000 or 80% of this total will be awarded to local subcontractors who were asked to take part in the Project and agreed. The City was initially given an estimate of approximately \$100,000 before exploring other options such as this State Contract. Greg Brown recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Johnson-Laux Construction in the amount of \$53,214.85 for replacement of various HVAC equipment parts at the Department of Labor Building. Councilman Wright inquired as to where the contractor was located. Greg Brown stated that they were from Atlanta. Councilman Payton inquired as to who would stand behind the warranty of the unit. Greg Brown stated that the Project Manager would stand behind the warranty. This is just like we would do a bid but it is a State contract which we are able to utilize.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by Johnson-Laux Construction in the amount of \$53,214.85 for replacement of various HVAC equipment parts at the Department of Labor Building.

Consideration of a request to approve the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Policies and Procedures.

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Manager, stated that during the last program monitoring for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in June, 2015, it was noted that our CDBG Program was in need of a formally adopted Policies and Procedures Manual. The Neighborhood Development Division has operated under policies and procedures; however, these were informal and were not adopted. In order for our Program to meet requirements of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we were given until October 30, 2015 to have a comprehensive set of Program Policies and Procedures drafted by Staff and reviewed and approved by the Mayor and City Council. Once approved, the Policies and Procedures will then be submitted to HUD. These Policies and Procedures were provided to Council at the Work Session on October 6, 2015 for review and discussion. Vanassa Flucas recommended that Council approve the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Policies and Procedures. Councilman Vickers stated that he thought we already had Policies and Procedures governing the CDBG Block Grant. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we had an informal set of Policies & Procedures and HUD wanted formal Policies and Procedures adopted. Vanassa Flucas stated that this document is a work in progress and as HUD makes changes to the Programs and the requirements then we will be making changes to the Policies and Procedures as well.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Policies and Procedures.

Consideration of a request to declare 21 old handheld radios from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property.

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that the City of Valdosta Police Department currently has approximately 100, 800-MHz Motorola Handheld Radios which were replaced with new P-25 Motorola Radios using SPLOST VII funds. The older radios were initially purchased in 2001 and Motorola recommended the radios be replaced because they will no longer be supported in a few years and parts would not be available. In the past, the City has often sold surplus equipment to other governments and organizations who may continue to use the equipment, either in a law enforcement or non-law enforcement capacity, or in smaller jurisdictions where the demand on the surplus equipment may not be as high. The handheld radios are 15 years old, have some wear and tear to them based on their use, and parts will not be available in three years. The Police Department plans to sell the majority of the handheld radios to recoup some of the initial cost of the radios. The City of Lake Park Fire Department is requesting 15 radios since they do not have sufficient radios for each Firefighter. The Lake Park Police Department is requesting five radios for use by their Officers, and the Lowndes County Animal Control is requesting one radio for an Animal Control Officer who currently does not have an assigned radio. The remainder of the radios will be placed on GovDeals.com and the funding that is received will go into the City's General Fund. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that some of the smaller cities in our area do have a difficult time meeting their needs and the City of Valdosta has always tried to help them when we have surplus equipment. Chief Childress recommended that Council approve the request to declare 21 old, handheld radios from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to declare 21 old handheld radios from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that as part of the CDBG funding we will be hosting a Trash Amnesty Day which is part of the Make A Difference Day in the City. It will be held on Saturday, October 24, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in four specific locations. This will be for City residents and they will be required to show identification.

There are several slots available on the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees and Wednesday, October 28, 2015. Citizens are encouraged to apply.

There will be a Fall Electronics Recycling Event coming up on November 14, 2015 at Mathis Auditorium. This is a great service to citizens of our community and it keeps the equipment out of landfills.

The Police Department kicked off the Chaplain Program which was very well received, and the Fire Department will be kicking off a new Explorer Program for youth ages 14-20. There was a meeting today at Valdosta High School encouraging young people to sign up. This is a great way to get them involved in our public safety and services.

The paving at Five Points is taking place today and that area is looking much better.

The City won an award at the Georgia Institute of Community Housing Program at the University of Georgia in Athens for the Ashley House Project.

The Tax Millage Rate Hearings will be held on October 29, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. and then on November 5, 2015 at 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. here at City Hall in the Council Chambers.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Vickers inquired as to the status of the McAlister Development Project in the Brookwood area. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they are planning to come back with that Project. When Council approved the Planned Developments several years ago, a time limit was put in place and it is about to expire. They will be filing a new application to amend that and they want to move forward with the Project; however, they may try to break it up into phases due to market changes and the decline in student enrollment at Valdosta State University (VSU). Councilman Vickers stated that we need to look at ways to boost the VSU student enrollment. Larry Hanson stated that the interim VSU President, Dr. Cecil Staton, is doing some good things and the Board of Regents this year saw the wisdom to allow border counties in Florida to have in-state tuition. That was also expanded this spring to allow any resident of the State of Florida, South Carolina, or Alabama to come to VSU using in-state tuition. They are also doing a lot of marketing in the Jacksonville and Tallahassee areas. They feel this will help to grow the student population again by attracting adjacent out-of-state students with in-state tuition.

Councilman Yost thanked Councilman Norton, the City Manager, and other Staff who helped with a Force Main Project situation last week on Sherwood Drive. The contractor finished early with the Project and then that put the paving contractor behind; however, the road should be paved within the next day or two. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that was an interesting problem. That was supposed to be a 41-day Project and the contractor finished in 21 days. It is rarely a problem when a Project is completed early but the paving contractor had been set up to come in after 41 days. When the Project finished early the contractors were all very busy and had other Projects they were working on. Scruggs was able to adjust their schedule and they came in today and milled the street for resurfacing tomorrow. That was a timing issue but everyone worked very well to resolve the problem.

Councilwoman Tooley thanked the Mayor and Staff for all of their work on the Troup Street Project. The residents in that area will be glad that the Project is getting underway even though the physical activity will not start until January.

Councilman Payton inquired about the Trash Amnesty Day and whether citizens could bring televisions and computers to discard. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City would rather save those items for the Fall Electronics Recycling Event on November 14, 2015.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the October 22, 2015 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:18 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, November 5, 2015.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta