

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 PM Thursday, March 19, 2015**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

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

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**Special Presentation of the Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Award from the Georgia Accreditation Program by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP)**

Mayor Gayle stated that the Valdosta Police Department (VPD) would make a special presentation and asked Chief Brian Childress to come forth for the presentation. Chief Childress thanked Mayor Gayle and asked the Mayor, the Valdosta Police Command Staff, and other VPD officers and staff present to stand with him. This is a special presentation to Mayor and Council and our community. The Valdosta Police Department is internationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. This is a voluntary program and the Valdosta Police Department has been certified since 1999. The state version of accreditation is called state certification and requires a department to meet over 100 standards, standards which are considered best practices in law enforcement. In December of 2014, an assessor from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police evaluated our police department for its 5<sup>th</sup> certification. At the conclusion of that evaluation we were advised that no issues identified and VPD was in compliance with all applicable state certification standards. Even though Mr. Hanson has already made Mayor and Council aware of this, it is with great pride that I present this re-certifications plaque to Mayor and Council and our community.

Mayor Gayle thanked Chief Childress and stated that he was honored to accept the award and he appreciated the dedication and excellent representation from the Valdosta Police Department.

Chief Childress asked Captain Bobbi McGraw to step forward and presented her with a Certificate of Excellence from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police for her role as Certification Manager and her commitment to excellence and her effortless dedication to state certification.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mayor Gayle asked if there were any additions or deletions to the March 5, 2015, minutes. Councilman Tim Carroll commented that under Agenda Item 4, items 4a - 4i should be listed under a Consent Agenda.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the March 5, 2015, Council minutes with the change to agenda item 4.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2015-5 Consideration of an Ordinance to revise the City of Valdosta's Radar Permit.**

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that there were several items identified by the Police and Engineering departments that needed to be revised or corrected on the Radar Permit. These items include correcting and updating school names, and updating city limits to show correct locations. Recent work on the East Hill overpass required us to make some sign adjustments and some street corrections like changing a street to a drive, etc. One of the things that caught my attention on this permit and will require changing and bringing back before Council is an area near WG Nunn Elementary School along Park Avenue. We will have to perform an engineering technical investigation to look at extending the school zones because of exits that are now being used. This will also include looking at the Safe Walk to School Project and sidewalks. In fact, we should probably look at the whole corridor. In addition, Scintilla Academy, the new charter school, will open its doors this fall and should also be included in

the investigation. My recommendation is to adopt what we have here tonight which again addresses minor changes such as street names, school names, and updating city limits. Councilman Wright asked if there would be a speed change or reductions during school hours. Larry Hanson, City Manager, asked Councilman Wright if he was inquiring about the two issues just addressed by the City Engineer. Mayor Gayle stated the permit corrects some street names, time changes, and gives the Valdosta Police authority to run radar on those streets. Mr. Hanson stated that the City is required by Georgia Department of Transportation to renew the permit every few years. Pat is asking to approve this document tonight but we know that we want to make at least two additional changes. One change deals with the new WG Nunn School built several years ago and a road currently being used for egress that is not included in the current school zone. The change also includes the new charter school for which a school zone will need to be established. These permits are not annually so it is best to try and get everything cleaned up now. Pat Collins stated that it's really a collaboration of efforts being that the City will investigate and turn the information over to the Department of Transportation for approval. Councilman Payton asked if it would be looking too far ahead if the new Valdosta High School was considered in the next change. Larry Hanson stated that the open date for the new high school is slated for 2018 so there is no rush and in two years if we need to make a change or revision to the permit, we have to option to do so.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Norton was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance 2015-5 to revise the City's Radar Permit, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

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

### **Consideration of a Request for Bids for the Sugar Creek Sewer Main Repair**

Henry Hicks, Director of Utilities, stated that sewer systems are typically built using gravity when possible and are located at the lowest points of the sewer collection system. Sugar Creek is one of those low areas and has a 30-inch large main that runs along the edge of the creek. When originally placed, the main was located several feet from the edge of the creek; however, a 2013 inspection revealed an exposed line, something we knew had to be corrected rather quickly. In 2014 we contracted with Lovell Engineering for a design and to determine the scope of work for repair of the line. We also submitted an application to Norfolk Southern Railroad for permission to perform work on their right-of-way. In December 2014, a mandatory Pre-bid meeting was held and on February 17, 2015; four bids were received. Our recommendation is to award the contract Garney Construction, the lowest and responsible bidder. Mayor Gayle asked if the 105 listed under Administrative Comments should have been 10% contingency. Mr. Hanson stated that the 105 should definitely be a 10% contingency. Mayor Gayle asked if Council had questions. Councilman Payton stated that he had no questions but would like to comment on the difference in amount of the bids. He then asked where the high bidder James Warren and Associates was from. Mr. Hanson stated that the company was local. Mayor Gayle stated that James Warren and Associates is currently works on a job for the City. Mr. Hicks stated that Garney Construction is already working on the Force Main Project which he feels contributed to their lower bid being that they already personnel working in that area. Mr. Hanson stated that the high bidder is a small contractor who actually has a couple of jobs so he's probably maxed out, but his thinking is to submit a high bid in hopes that no one else bids on the project. Then there is a large contractor who is mobilized and already has their overhead covered, therefore the City gets the benefit of receiving a decent low bid.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Wright was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request as presented with a 10% contingency.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

### **Consideration of an Amendment to the Design Build Contract with Parsons Engineering for an EPD Required Watershed Assessment and Associated Antidegradation Analysis for the New Withlacoochee Wastewater Plant.**

Henry Hicks, Director of Utilities, stated that the Withlacoochee Plant is currently renewing its discharge permit. Construction of a new plant requires that a Waste Load Allocation be approved by the Environmental Protection Division (EPD). During the Withlacoochee Design/Build project, the City requested a new waste load allocation which we felt might help expedite the construction process. Currently we operate on an 8MGD seasonal

permit but applied for a 12 MGD yearly permit. During the summer we get pretty close to that top mark and figuring in the new growth in the city we expect to exceed that mark in the not too distant future. The new plant is actually designed for 12MGD. EDP approved and issued the requested permit in May, 2014. The permit is valid for a year from the date of approval; however, as part of the approval process we are required to undergo an Antidegradation review and a Watershed Assessment Analysis by May 27, 2015. We have one year to begin the process or start all over again and starting over would only delay the construction of the new plant. We are ready to proceed and are requesting to amend the contract with Parsons to assist with the renewal of the existing permit. Parsons performed all background work on the Design/Build and Force Main and are extremely knowledgeable. They have all of the necessary information and can everything done within the designated time frame. The cost to perform this work is \$353,072. Additionally, we have sent in a request to wave the Antidegradation portion of the requirement because we are already in compliance with that requirement. We have not heard back yet but if approved that will save us \$30,000.

Mr. Hanson stated the funding source shown is SPLOST 7 and that means that funds designated for Water and Sewer on SPLOST 7 would be used to pay for this. Councilman Carroll asked how long into the future will the increase carry. Mr. Hicks replied that this should be good for about ten years into the future. The plant has the capacity to treat 12 million average daily flows, a peak daily of 18 million and peak hourly of 32 million gallons. Once the base work is done it should be easy to renew the permit for a larger amount in the future.

Mr. Hanson stated that what is more important to know is that two-thirds of the City is served by this plant and one-third is served by the Mud Creek Plant; a plant that essentially doubled in size a few years ago so it has plenty of capacity. The average daily flow is about 6 to 7 million in a 12MGD plant so that gives almost 100% excess capacity. You can't overbuild because of operational costs and we're just trying to right size but be prepared for future expansions as well. Councilman Wright asked what MGD meant. Mr. Hanson answered million gallons a day. Councilman Wright asked what NPDES stood for. Mr. Hicks stated that was short for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Tim Carroll, seconded by Councilman Ben Norton was unanimously adopted to approve the request as presented.

### **City Manager's Report**

City Manager, Larry Hanson, stated that the Azalea Festival was a very successful event and the City had a large presence there. Sementha has an information booth each year and this year there were volunteers from Public Works, Engineering, Human Resources, and the Valdosta Police Department. Thousands of people stopped by and signed up for E-News and picked up larvicide tablets. We are always looking for ways to reach out and connect with the community and this was an excellent opportunity to do that.

Mr. Hanson also made Mayor and Council aware that the first new gateway sign is under construction. Some of the landscaping has already begun on North Valdosta Road. Two of the columns are already anchored and the sign will go up in the next few days. Once the landscaping is completed we will plan a ribbon cutting ceremony. As you recall there have been about ten major gateway sites identified, this is the first one and it is primarily funded with the DOT Gateway Grant. It's been designed so that it can be replicated at all major entry ways into the city over a period of time as funding becomes available.

Mr. Hanson informed Council that the Valdosta Police Academy is taking applications and their classes will begin on Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> for eight weeks. Slots are still available so if you know of anyone who might be interested, please make them aware.

Mr. Hanson reminded everyone of the Spring Recycling Event scheduled for Saturday, April 11. This has become an extremely popular program. It's a ways for citizens to dispose of old TVs, computer terminals, 8 track tapes, and other assorted items. This keeps items like this from ending up in the landfill. Again, the event will take place at Mathis Auditorium Saturday, April 11 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Mr. Hanson discussed the LIDAR Project. You might know that we've been anxiously awaiting the LIDAR which means Light Detection and Ranging. The radar was taken of drainage basin to help us begin to find ways to address some of the drainage issues we are experiencing. Aerial Photography was accomplished this week.

The flyover was completed and the City paid for all of Lowndes County. We will be reimbursed by a grant that Emily Davenport was able to get. In the fall a flyover will be conducted over several adjacent counties. This will be a real asset in multiple ways and we are looking forward to getting the benefit of this. We will schedule a meeting in a couple of weeks to look at and get some of the information.

Mr. Hanson stated that the Red Cross will recognize two city employees as well as a young man that recently came before Council with a Hero Award at a banquet on April 11, 2015. Two of our Valdosta Police officers, Donald Richman and Eric Wagoner, will be presented with an award for their heroic action in saving a suicidal gentleman from a self-inflicted gun wound and saving his life. Najee Harris, the 14 year old who was recognized in October 2014 for rescuing his elderly neighbors from a fire will also receive the award.

Finally, I wanted to remind everyone that Government 101 begins on April 6 at 5:30 pm in Council Chambers. You should have all received an email copy of the program and we invite you to attend and share comments at any session. Tomorrow I will send you the class membership list. We have 25 members for this year's class and five on a waiting list for the 2016 class. Government 101 has become a popular and meaningful program that helps educate citizens about their city.

### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Carroll stated that he wanted to thank Mayor Gayle, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Hicks, Ms. Davenport, and Ms. Mathews. Most citizens already have certain perceptions, but when staff responds in a positive and timely manner, take time to sit down with them and educate them about the various components of city government, they go away much happier and with a new sense of pride in what their city does. Local governments are unique; I think we have some new ambassadors in the city as a result the meeting that took place this week. I really want to thank all of you for your quick response in taking care of our citizens and their concerns.

Councilman Vickers asked if the City had received the grant funding from the Department of Transportation for closing Floyd and Holiday Streets. Mr. Hanson and Mr. Collins stated that the grant had been received. Councilman Vickers asked how the funds would be used. Mr. Collins stated that some of the funds had already been used for landscaping. Mr. Hanson stated that the funds were placed in a designated account to be used to beautify and make the closures as attractive as possible. Councilman Vickers asked if he and Councilwoman Tooley might be involved in the decision making about how the funds would be spent. Mr. Hanson said he didn't see that as an issue and that the primary use of the funds was to be used to barricade the railroad tracks and the rest would be used for landscaping.

Councilman Payton gave an update on the LDR stating that three meetings had been held, all of which were very productive. The Committee utilized the suggestion from Council and reached out to some community business owners members for their input. There is another meeting scheduled for April 5 and we hope to have recommendations to you by the first council meeting in May.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Gayle Green residing at 2824 Fawnwood Circle in Valdosta, Georgia stated that she was there to represent the two younger owners of Miller Hardware, Richard and Jonathan. About two to three weeks ago, they had a plumbing problem and contacted Larry Hanson who immediately contacted Mr. Henry Hicks, and a representative was sent out. We are extremely appreciative of the City's response and more importantly the consideration to our property and sidewalks. As a previous construction manager I was pretty impressed with the process and the professional way the work was completed. I just wanted to acknowledge staff and say thank you.

Gracie Bacon of 708 Holly Drive, Valdosta, Georgia, complained about a junk yard in her neighborhood. Ms. Bacon stated that this has been an ongoing problem in her neighborhood for the last five or six years, and she needs help. She states that she has called and written to Council, previously talked to the Mayor and recently had City Marshal Mike Meyers out to take pictures of the junk from her backyard. There is an old camper in the yard that has been moved to the center of my neighbor's yard so that it is not visible from the front. This gentleman is painting cars, repairing cars, and selling junk to people from old cars. I've called and emailed and only received a response from Mr. Norton and Mr. Tooley. No one else from the City has responded until this week. There are fumes from the paint and vehicles that are affecting the health of elderly and sick neighbors. Other neighbors are

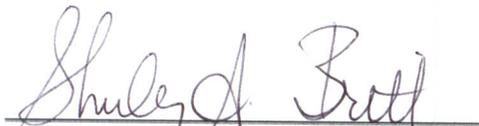
afraid of him and no one cares about us; the citizens on Holly drive are not protected. I've put up a privacy fence to try and get some kind of privacy. People are living in vehicles and using the bathroom outside. There have to be some ordinances that address this issue. I can't sit on the porch in my own yard; please help me find a solution. I'm sure you already have my number.

Mayor Gayle stated that although he did not receive a message from Ms. Bacon, he recognized the problem in her neighborhood. I apologize if no one has contacted you; you're correct and I sympathize with you because the gentleman located on the corner of your street has a really big mess in his yard. Someone from the City will be in touch with you on tomorrow. Larry Hanson, City Manager, also commented that the City Marshal's office and Valdosta Police are both working on this issue and Ms. Bacon is aware of this. We're working to try and get this issue resolved. Councilman Vickers asked where the property was located and was made aware that the property was located on Lee Street right past Parkwood in District 2.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the March 19, 2015, meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:09 pm to meet again in regular session on Thursday, April 9, 2015.

  
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Associate City Clerk, City of Valdosta

  
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Mayor, City of Valdosta