

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2011**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor John Fretti called the regular meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 5:30 p.m. Council members present were: Sonny Vickers, Tim Carroll, Alvin Payton, Jr., Ben Norton, and James Wright. Councilwoman Deidra White and Councilman Robert Yost were absent. The invocation was given by Councilman James Wright, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for the Awards and Presentations.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) for the Awards and Presentations.

Emily Foster, Historic Preservation Planner, stated that as part of our City's observance of National Preservation Month in May, Valdosta Preservation Awards will be presented at the Council Meeting. In 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission initiated an annual awards program to recognize property owners who go above and beyond the regulations set forth by the City to protect buildings within the Valdosta Historic District. At the beginning of each year, the City asks for nominations to this awards program from the community and from these nominations, outstanding projects, organizations, and individuals that have contributed to historic preservation are selected to receive a Valdosta Preservation Award. The winners are presented with an official award certificate and beginning this year they will also be presented with a Preservation Awards Banner which can be proudly displayed on the property owners' historic building. These awards provide positive reinforcement of the Historic District Design Review process, promote goodwill within the community, and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of local citizens in the preservation and restoration of our historic buildings. Emily Foster introduced Harry Hamm, Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission, who will assist in presentation of the awards.

Harry Hamm, Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission, stated that the first award was the Award of Outstanding Achievement in restoring or rehabilitating a historic building. The brick commercial building at 101-103 South Patterson Street was built circa 1900. This Neoclassical two-part commercial block building originally held a gentlemen's furnishings store and a shop selling stoves and crockery. Later, this building became a hardware store, doctors' offices, and the Valdosta Detective Bureau, as well as other shops and small eateries. The building became vacant in the 1990s, and due to years of neglect, severely deteriorated. Randy Crews purchased the building in 2005 and subsequently began its rehabilitation. As the building was condemned due to structural failures and environmental hazards, the rehabilitation work was intense. Structural repairs, including interior floor replacement and a new roof, were necessary, as was the upgrade of all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. The original masonry walls were cleaned and restored, both inside and out. A historically appropriate storefront was reconstructed, providing character and practicality. The rehabilitation was completed in 2009. Today, 101-103 South Patterson Street serves the professional offices of Crews Engineering, Inc., and is home to the Golden Leaf Cigar Café. Randy Crews of Crews Engineering, Inc. is commended for the historic rehabilitation of the 101-103 South Patterson Street Building, and is presented with a 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards Outstanding Achievement Award.

The second award for Outstanding Achievement Award is also for restoring or rehabilitating a historic building. The Briggs-Smith Building, located at 117-119 North Patterson Street, was constructed circa 1865, and is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, extant downtown commercial buildings. This two-story, brick building has held numerous businesses over its lifetime, including a dry goods and hardware store, insurance company, the Bank of Valdosta, a bakery, and Corn's Barber and Beauty Shop. This building also reputedly included a bath house early in its history, which is said to have served John Henry "Doc" Holliday. In late 2007, Pat Sullivan and Chris Williams purchased the Briggs-Smith building and embarked on an extensive interior restoration of the second floor for use as the corporate office for their company, ClientTell, Inc. As work progressed, Sullivan and Williams uncovered and restored the original skylights and south-facing window openings which is a rare find and provides a

unique view into this building's past. Original transoms, doors, wood floors and ceilings were retained during the rehabilitation, as well. The rehabilitation of the interior first floor space was also completed and serves as a community art gallery. The building's exterior was cleaned and repainted, and the storefront restored. The Briggs-Smith building's rehabilitation also received Historic Preservation tax incentives through both the Georgia Historic Preservation Division and the National Park Service. Pat Sullivan and Chris Williams of ClientTell, Inc. are commended for the historic rehabilitation of the 117-119 North Patterson Street Building and are presented with a 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards Outstanding Achievement Award.

The third award being presented is the Excellence Award for compatible new construction in the Historic District, and is the first time it is being given in the award program's history. The "Old Southern Stationery" building located at 311 North Patterson Street is a modern-era commercial structure, built in the early 1960s. This building served the Southern Stationery store for a number of years, as well as the Diana clothing store. In 2009, this building underwent an extensive renovation, which completely altered its exterior appearance. The resulting design provides the illusion of several smaller shops, instead of one large building, which is consistent with Downtown Valdosta's heritage and character. In addition, the renovated exterior's architectural details reflect traditional design and scale. Jimmy Cone and Richard Miller with CMA Architectural Services, Inc. and Todd Wilson with Wilson Design & Construction, Inc. led this building's transformation. Building owners Howard Dasher, Laura Dasher Cregger, and Mary Lorena Dasher Barclay are commended for compatible construction in the Historic District with regard to the 311 North Patterson Street Building renovation, and are presented with a 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards Excellence Award.

The fourth award being presented is the Stewardship Award, which recognizes the long term care, maintenance, and overall preservation of a historic building. The 'Dosta Theatre, which is located at 122 North Ashley Street, was built in 1940 by the Martin Theatre Company. Although Downtown Valdosta boasted three movie theaters in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, The 'Dosta is the only remaining theater today. Featuring the Art Moderne architectural style, the building functioned as a movie theater until the mid-1970s. After its closing, the 'Dosta sat vacant for nearly a decade, where it fell into disrepair. In 1992, Theatre Guild Valdosta acquired the building, renaming it "The 'Dosta Playhouse" and began its restoration. Theatre Guild Valdosta adaptively reused The 'Dosta to serve live theater instead of movies. Through the efforts of many community volunteers, the building's interior was renovated and the lobby and restrooms were remodeled. Aided by a Georgia Historic Preservation Fund grant, the 'Dosta's façade was restored to its original appearance. Additionally, Theatre Guild Valdosta recently completed a marquee restoration project, including electrical work that re-lit the historic neon and iconic "spinning ball". Not only has Theatre Guild Valdosta restored The 'Dosta Theatre, but also the Enterprise Stock Company building next door, where Theatre Guild Valdosta's offices and production studios are located. The 'Dosta Theatre was an integral part of the Valdosta entertainment experience for over 30 years. Through Theatre Guild Valdosta's efforts, the 'Dosta Theatre was not only restored to its original grandeur and placed on the National Register of Historic Places, but also has been carefully maintained for two decades. Theatre Guild Valdosta continues to partner with downtown businesses in promoting plays, which regularly draw visitors and residents alike to downtown Valdosta. Theatre Guild Valdosta is commended for their dedication to the preservation of the 'Dosta Playhouse, and is presented with the 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards Stewardship Award.

The final 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards presentation is the Lifetime Achievement Award. This exceptional award recognizes a person from our community who has dedicated many years of his or her life to historic preservation and impacted preservation efforts in the City of Valdosta. This person has had significant and sustained accomplishments related to the preservation of our community's architectural and cultural heritage, which may include the following: (1) the restoration of historic buildings, (2) the designation of historic properties, (3) leadership or significant contribution to a community-based preservation organization, (4) a sustained record of leadership of, or contributions to, historic preservation, or (5) significant accomplishments or a sustained series of accomplishments that advance the preservation ethic within our community. Mr. Harold M. Bennett is recognized for meeting all of these criteria. Arriving in Valdosta in 1947, Harold worked for the Langdale Company. Always having an interest in history and architecture, it wasn't until he retired in 1978, that he was able to become a preservationist full time. Harold's list of preservation-related accomplishments in our community is truly remarkable and includes: (1) the rehabilitation of several historic buildings, including the Mission Revival buildings at 110-112 Webster Street, the Lloyd Greer-designed house at 108 Brookwood Place, the Queen Anne

Cottage at 1003 N. Patterson Street, and the Prairie Style house at 411 N. Ashley Street, (2) the detailed and thorough restoration of the Valdosta City Hall following a fire in 1987 which earned two prestigious awards, (3) assisting in the restoration of Valdosta's Carnegie Library for use as the Lowndes County Historical Museum, (4) being a founding member of the Valdosta Heritage Foundation, which named him "Preservationist of the Century" in 2000, (5) promoting and supporting the restoration of the J.T. Roberts House, recognizing the significance of this landmark to our community, (6) promoting the history and architectural heritage of Valdosta through heritage tourism efforts, such as a Lloyd Greer tour of homes and historical plays in Sunset Hill Cemetery, and (7) most notably, serving on the Valdosta City Council from 1980 to 1984 where he introduced and helped pass a Historic Preservation Ordinance in the City which established the Historic District and Historic Preservation Commission. For his dedication, commitment, and numerous contributions to historic preservation, which have impacted and benefited the City of Valdosta, Harold M. Bennett is commended for his efforts and presented with the 2011 Valdosta Preservation Awards Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mayor Fretti thanked Mr. Bennett for all of his contributions to the City of Valdosta throughout the years and presented him with the first ever Lifetime Achievement Award from the Historic Preservation Commission and a cut glass sculpture recognizing Mr. Bennett for all of his accomplishments in historic preservation to display proudly in his home. Mr. Bennett stated that he was glad this happened to him in his lifetime and he enjoyed working for the City of Valdosta in the past and forever. He worked religiously, made sacrifices, and did everything he could for this community. This is a great community and the finest one in Georgia. Mr. Bennett also stated that he was glad that they were going to restore the Roberts House for everyone in this community to enjoy in the future.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the May 5, 2011 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (5-0) of the Council.

Mayor Fretti stated that this is the portion of the City Council Agenda where we normally have Citizens to be Heard. Over the last several weeks and months, individual members of Council came to him and the City Manager and displayed a desire to relocate Citizens to be Heard elsewhere on the Agenda. Over that period of time, every Council member came to either him or Larry Hanson, City Manager, and displayed those same desires. Mayor Fretti and the Larry Hanson met and administratively and executively decided that since Council felt that way the Citizens to be Heard portion would be relocated at another place on the Agenda.

### **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

#### **ORDINANCE NO. 2011-14, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF VALDOSTA'S CHARTER TO RE-DEFINE CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS AS REQUIRED FOR RE-APPORTIONMENT BASED UPON THE 2010 CENSUS**

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta's Charter to re-define City Council Districts as required for re-apportionment based upon the 2010 Census.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that following each Census, every governmental entity in the United States is required to go through reapportionment to adjust districts based on population changes over the prior decade. The Mayor and Council recently met with the State Re-apportionment Office in Atlanta to create new Council Districts as required following each Census. A map has been prepared that complies with all requirements and following approval by Mayor and Council, amendment of the City Charter, and approval of the Justice Department, it will become effective for the 2011 municipal elections as required by law. The Home Rule Act provides that not only must there be two readings at consecutive regular Council Meetings there must be two adoptions for the Charter change to be effective. An ad must appear once a week for three weeks within a period of 60 days immediately preceding its final adoption. The ad will run beginning Saturday, May 14, 2011 and then run again on May 21st and then May 28th. The Ordinance will be on the Agenda for the May 19<sup>th</sup> and also for the June 9<sup>th</sup> City Council Meetings. A copy of the Ordinance will be sent to the Clerk of Superior Court as provided in the law to be available for inspection in her office. Upon final passage, a package will be sent to the Justice

Department in Washington, D.C. and they will have 60 days to review it. The changes that are made will become effective with the election and the qualifying for that election in September, 2011. A copy will also be sent to the Secretary of State for their records. The property descriptions for the districts have been received and are included in the Ordinance. Larry Hanson stated that a community grows in a way that cannot be planned over the course of a decade and our community grew in a unique way. District 4 had a substantial gain in population over the past decade. There are several requirements that the Justice Department has for reapportionment. One of those is that the Districts must be within 5% population of one another. There must also be a deviation no greater than 10% from the largest to the smallest. In addition, this City is required to have three majority minority Districts. The new Census established a population for Valdosta of 54,518 and when divided by the six Districts, an ideal value of a District is 9,086. The goal is to get within 5% of that number for each District. They had to make a great number of changes because District 4 had a population of 12,345 so it was almost 3,300 people above the ideal value. They knew they would have to remove 3,000 people from that District. District 2 was 1,100 people below the ideal number, District 5 was 1,046 people below the ideal number, and District 6 was 812 below the ideal number. Through the process and changes that they made, they were able to make shifts in the District lines so that the end result was that all of the Districts as proposed are well within compliance. The map has the ideal value of 9,086 and the smallest District would be District 3 with 8,805 so it is only 281 people below the ideal number which is 3%. The largest District would be District 5 which would be 9,396 and is 3.4% above the ideal value. The Districts are well within the range of 5% to one another, 10% largest to smallest, and the three majority minority Districts were maintained. District 1 would have a minority population of 83%, District 2 would have 70%, and District 3 would have 74%. District 1 basically had no changes, District 3 had very little change, and District 4 had the majority of the changes with taking some away and giving that to Districts 5, 6, and 2. Council worked extremely well together and it was a very fluid and friendly conversation which is not always the case. The Reapportionment Office in Atlanta usually schedules an entire day for cities and counties to visit them because it is very political and often very adversarial. Larry Hanson applauded the Council for working together in a spirit of cooperation and recommended that Council approve the Ordinance. Mayor Fretti stated that it would be prudent to mention that Council also paid attention to the Board of Education Districts. Larry Hanson stated that in the Charter of the Valdosta City School Board, their Districts mirror the Districts of the Mayor and Council and they have six Districts, but in addition, they also have two At Large seats that divide the City east and west and then one City-wide At Large seat. One of the responsibilities that they had in redistricting was that they could not move any elected official out of their District. They had to not only ensure that each member of the Mayor and Council remained within their District, but they also had to make sure the six School Board members remained in their Districts and that two of the three At Large members remained within the combination of the three Districts that they represent. George Talley, City Attorney, stated that this is the third time that he has been involved in redistricting and was the smoothest and quickest of any and he Council commended Council for their efforts.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2011-14, an Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta's Charter to re-define City Council Districts as required for re-apportionment based upon the 2010 Census, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XII.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2011-8, A RESOLUTION FOR THE CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND ADMINISTERED BY THE GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITIES AUTHORITY (GEFA) FOR THE MUD CREEK TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT**

Consideration of a Resolution for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) for the Mud Creek Treatment Plant Project.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the City of Valdosta began the process of applying for funding for critical improvements and expansion to the aging Mud Creek Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) in 2008. The project goals included the rehabilitation of existing Plant infrastructure at the end of its useful life, and the expansion of the Plant beyond 2025 to meet the population growth in the area in order to meet more stringent effluent permit limits set by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The wastewater improvements were reviewed at the Mud Creek WPCP in 2008 for the rehabilitation/expansion and it was determined that the facility was eligible for funding under Title II of the Clean Water Act (CWA). In support of utilizing Georgia Facilities Authority (GEFA) funding for the expansion of the project, treatment alternatives for the liquid and

biosolids processes were evaluated at Mud Creek and the overall lowest capital financing for the project was estimated as \$47.5 million. Staff requested and obtained approval from Council to move forward with the process of acquiring GEFA loans by providing a Facilities Planning and Environmental Review Documents. City leaders favored pursuing financing options such as the proposed GEFA loan at 3% financing. The City also desired to preserve the right to borrow the maximum amount allowed by GEFA, which was \$25 million at 3%. The first loan from GEFA (Phase I) was \$22.5 million with a second loan for the remaining difference. The total Phase I loan amount included \$10 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and \$12.5 million from State Revolving Funds (SRF). The \$10 million of ARRA money included 40 percent principal forgiveness. The City is now ready for Council action on the remaining difference to complete the project. In 2009, the construction of the liquids expansion was underway. The biosolids handling and outfall portions of the project, which were not included in the original Mud Creek WPCP work, were added to this project. A guaranteed maximum price (GMP) for construction and engineering services in the amount of \$5,173,180 for the biosolids and outfall projects at Mud Creek was approved by Council. This request is for the approval of Phase II of the GEFA Loan for \$1.2 million for ARRA money and \$17.3 million of non-ARRA money for a total of \$18.5 million to complete this project. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the Resolution.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Resolution No. 2011-8, a Resolution for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund administered by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) for the Mud Creek Treatment Plant Project, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve the Request for Proposal to complete the City of Valdosta's Analysis of Impediments.

Sabrina Riley-Randolph, Neighborhood Development Coordinator, stated that the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement grantees to initiate an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice during each three to five year period of a community's Consolidated Plan. The City completed and HUD approved the current Consolidated Plan in 2009. The previous Analysis of Impediments was completed in 2006. The Request for Proposal (RFP) to complete the City's Analysis of Impediments was issued in March, 2011 with a response date for interested consultants on April 6, 2011. Six firms responded and a committee comprised of Councilman James Wright, Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, and Sabrina Riley-Randolph reviewed and ranked the proposals. Staff simultaneously completed the HUD required cost comparison analysis of like size communities and the cost of the Analysis of Impediments that for those communities over the past two years. The Review Committee ranked J-QUAD Planning Group as the top proposer and negotiated with the firm to reach the cost of \$22,680. Staff felt that this cost is appropriate for the work to be done to complete the Analysis of Impediments. Three communities provided outstanding references for J-QUAD pertaining to previous/current work completed for their jurisdictions. Funding for completion of the Plan will be derived from current Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Administrative funds, current CDBG-R Administrative funds, and Federal FY 2011 Administrative funds. It is anticipated, upon approval of the proposed contract for service, that the consultant will begin work immediately and complete the plan by December, 2011. Sabrina Riley-Randolph recommended that Council approve the Request for Proposal for J-QUAD Planning Group to complete the City of Valdosta's Analysis of Impediments at a cost of \$22,680. Councilman Payton inquired as to whether there were any local firms involved. Councilman Wright stated that the nearest firm was located in Atlanta but J-QUAD and one other firm stood out above the rest in terms of the services they would provide. Councilman Payton inquired as to where J-QUAD Planning Group was located. Sabrina Riley-Randolph stated they were out of Texas. Councilman Wright stated that their proposal was outstanding and they provided an outline of the services as well as a timeline.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the Request for Proposal for J-QUAD Planning Group to complete the City of Valdosta's Analysis of Impediments at a cost of \$22,680.

Consideration of a request to approve a Change Order for installation of utilities in the annexed Island 35A.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that this was an owner-initiated Change Order in the amount of \$144,788.27 plus a 10% contingency prior to entering into a contract with Standard Contractors for water and sewer installation in Island 35A. Island 35A is comprised of the following streets in the Five Points area: Pine Point, Smithbriar, Greenfield, Evergreen, and Castle Creek. On April 10, 2010, Council unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$597,835 plus a 10% contingency (\$657,618.50) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for water and sewer installation in Island 35A. Over the past year since Council's initial approval, the contract with Standard Contractors has been pending due to obtaining the necessary easements to construct the project. In April, 2011, the remaining easements were obtained. During the 13 months since the bid was approved and the contractor was ready to perform the work, both fuel and material prices have increased significantly. In addition, based on previous experiences retrofitting existing neighborhoods with water and sewer, Staff recommended adding \$77,844 to the contract for sod to restore lawns and grass areas where the pipe is being installed. An additional \$875 has also been added for increasing the depth of manholes and other minor value engineering changes. The justification for the Change Order is that the contractor was delayed for 13 months while the City obtained the necessary easements, which was not the fault of the contractor. Given the past court mandate and recent requests from property owners for water and sewer service to the area, time is of the essence. Rebidding the project will add at least 60 days to the schedule and there is no guarantee that new bids will result in a lower price. In fact, new labor bid prices are likely to increase from the initial bid which is based on April, 2010 labor prices. The City Attorney has reviewed this request and has given his approval. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve an owner-initiated Change Order in the amount of \$144,788.27 plus a 10% contingency for a total amount of \$159,267.10. Councilman Carroll stated that he would like for notification to be sent to all of the residents that would be affected by this in order to let them know that construction will begin and to provide them with as explanation as to why there was a delay.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve a Change Order submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$144,788.27 plus a 10% contingency for a total amount of \$159,267.10 for installation of utilities in the annexed Island 35A.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the deadline for the Third Annual City of Valdosta Photo Contest is May 20, 2011. This is a fun opportunity for the citizens to take photos and submit them based upon the beauty of our community. Applications are available at City Hall and on the City's website.

The deadline for the Energy Efficiency Conservation Strategies survey has been extended to June 24, 2011. The City received a grant and we are working to become more energy efficient. Conducting this survey will help us to identify strategies in order to achieve even more savings. Residents are encouraged to go to [www.energyvaldosta.com](http://www.energyvaldosta.com) and complete the survey in order to gauge the interest in the ideas from the community at large.

Art After Dark will be held on Friday, May 20, 2011 from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. in Downtown Valdosta, and the second Farm Days will take place on Saturday, May 21, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Farm Days has been a tremendous success and has grown in just one event from 16 vendors to 24 vendors.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, congratulated Sementha Mathews for being selected as the Woman of the Year by the Valdosta Junior Women's Club. This is a tremendous achievement and we appreciate all that Sementha does for our City.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, thanked the citizens of the Valdosta for their water conservation efforts during the unusual high consumption rates in May due to the heat and drought conditions. Consumption dropped by 3 to 4 million gallons and flow has returned to a more normal rate. Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, is in the process of rehabbing one of the wells that is now over 20 years and will be rehabbing all of the wells over the next year to ensure they can continue to do their job.

Councilman Vickers inquired about the status of the water tank on Savannah Avenue. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that when the budget is presented to Council this year there will be funds for the restoration of the Savannah Avenue water tank. The water tank on Fry Street is slated to be replaced next year and that design is nearing completion. The City is in final negotiations with the property owner to acquire the necessary additional property to construct it. Councilman Vickers stated that he was concerned about the Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor Project and the effect that it has had on Stevenson Funeral Home. They have a tremendous amount of traffic for funerals and Councilman Vickers inquired as to when the street work would be completed. Larry Hanson stated that the power lines were relocated this week and the contractor will now be able to finish some minimal storm drainage work by tomorrow. The paving will take place next week and the street will be reopened for traffic in approximately one week. Staff has been in contact with all of the property owners on the street to keep them fully informed. Construction has been a challenge due to infrastructure in the ground being anywhere from 30 to 100 years old and a lot of that was not shown on any plans or as-builts.

Councilman Norton stated that he was glad that the Historical Society has decided to proceed with restoration of the Roberts House and hoped that the citizens of Valdosta would rally behind this effort and not wait to be called upon to volunteer their services. This will be quite an undertaking but the house has been a grand old lady of our City. Councilman Norton also commended Staff for their efforts in organizing the Farm Days event. It was very well received by the citizens and the vendors.

Councilman Carroll stated that he echoed Councilman Norton's comments regarding the Roberts House because it is a great gem for us to save. Councilman Carroll thanked Larry Hanson, City Manager, for attending and participating in an Economic Summit sponsored by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and the Metro One Series earlier this week and asked him to share some information with the Mayor and Council. Larry Hanson stated that the Summit brought a lot of the community leaders together and the Valdosta State University Business School did a very good study comparing Lowndes County to peer communities that share similarities such as a college, university, or military base and were on or near an Interstate. There were approximately 14 counties from various states that Valdosta and Lowndes County were compared to. Overall, in some areas the report card was favorable and in other areas it pointed out challenges and opportunities that we have for improvement. The attendees were divided into groups and worked on some exercises to address the community's strengths and weaknesses and ways to address challenges. One of the things they will be doing is to gather additional information from communities to find out things they have done in more detail to achieve some of the successes so that we can have some benchmarks. One of the areas we were low in was private sector per capita income and average weekly wages. We have to look at the jobs we are creating and the wages that are paid because sometimes that is a reflection of what we have become as a community. We have a university with a lot of college students working part time jobs and we also have a lot of retail jobs that are not always the highest paying jobs so you begin to look at factors that cause your ranking to be what it is. Then you look at ways to improve and diversify and offset that because those are necessary and important jobs. These jobs drive our sales tax and it is important to have those jobs for our 13,000 students at our college and university. We have a lot of strengths and there was a consensus of cooperation in continuing to meet and look for ways to be better than we are.

## **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Ken Klanicki, 2208 Jerry Jones Drive, stated that he has been troubled by what he has seen and heard at the Council Meetings this year and felt compelled to come forward. At a Council Meeting several weeks ago, Councilman Payton filled in for the Mayor and did very well. It went very smooth and there were citizens who were heard and were polite, respectful, and concise; however, at the last Council Meeting what he saw was very troubling. There was one citizen who came forward and spoke for 13 ½ minutes which was 8 ½ minutes too long. The citizen demanded answers be forthcoming from all the Council members. There are policies that are in place that are written in English and are very clear. Mr. Klanicki stated that he watched with dismay as the clock was paused and he hoped that would not happen again. He watched as this citizen asked a rhetorical question that he wanted answered yes or no. He watched as Councilman Wright, Councilman Yost, Councilwoman White, Mayor Pro Tem Payton, Councilman Norton, and Councilman Carroll violated the policy. Mr. Klanicki stated that he spoke with Councilman Vickers last week and told him that he was the hero of that meeting because he was late arriving. He wanted to believe that if Councilman Vickers had gone eyeball to eyeball with that individual then the gentleman would have blinked first. Mr. Klanicki stated that he expressed the hope two weeks ago that the Mayor

and Council could start to move forward and that they would all be in these chairs until the end of the year. He has seen personal acrimony between Council members and he knows that some have lot with the Mayor. There have been times that he has been in this room and the tension was almost palpable. Mr. Klanicki asked the Mayor and Council, both present and not, to try to proceed with the City's business because as they succeed we all succeed. As Yogi Berra said, "It is not over until it's over."

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that he has been coming to the Council Meetings for a long time and has seen policy violated over and over again. Mayor and Council will respond to some people and not to others so that is nothing new. We all know that some people do not abide by the policy and he has record of that on tape where the Mayor and Council responded to some and not others. We are not all ignorant or blind. Mr. Rhynes stated that he listened to the Mayor attentively as he spoke about moving the Citizens to be Heard portion of the Council Meeting to the end of the Agenda. The Mayor stated that Council got together and decided to move it to the end. Mr. Rhynes stated that he had no problem with that and would find other means to get it out to the people. He did not hear the Mayor say much about the citizens input into that decision. Mr. Rhynes stated that he thought the citizens should have been asked. As long as this suppress, control, and abate citizens is in force he did not want to see any of them back up here. Mr. Rhynes stated that this was not personal. The 1860 Charter that he had removed from City Hall said "to suppress, control, and abate slaves and free people of color and all nuances arriving from hogs, dogs, and other animals, stray and at large, in this City." That is why he was arrested. When those lines were mentioned, that is when he stepped up and stood behind Brother Floyd Rose. He served his country honorably for 20 years and received six commendation metals; however, to see people and elected officials get on a radio station and they don't have to criticize, but just being there and giving support was something he will never accept. He served in the Vietnam era and in Okinawa, Japan, and he watched those guys come back. We have had 43 white male Presidents and some denied black people their constitutional and human rights at every level and they respected them. That is the least they could give to America's first black President. Mr. Rhynes stated that he would not back down from that. If nobody else says it then it does not matter too much to him. He was brought over there to Brooks County nine miles west. His history goes too deep and his grandmother told him too much about the week of terror in 1918 for him to forget. Through all that he knows there is not a hateful bone in him, but there is one thing that he loves and wants on his tombstone and that is that he stood for truth, that he loved his fellow human beings, and that he treated his neighbor and children like he wanted to be treated. When we came here tonight there were 54 people in this room. When the awards and achievements were over, 21 people left and he did not hear anyone ask them to stay. Pretty soon the Mayor and Council will decide to push that to the back of the meeting too. Let's be fair about it. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth and that the truth shall set and make you free." That is what he wants to do which is to always stand for truth and justice until he can stand no longer and when he can stand no longer then he is willing to die on behalf of those same principles.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

**A MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the May 19, 2011 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:36 p.m. and enter into Executive Session.

Mayor Fretti reconvened the regular City Council meeting at 6:43 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of real estate in the Executive Session and no action was taken.

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the May 19, 2011 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:44 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, June 9, 2011.