

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2014**  
**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, and James Wright. Councilman Robert Yost was absent. The invocation was given by Reverend John Manning of the St. Mark Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION FOR THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

Special Presentation for the Finance Department.

Mayor John Gayle stated that on August 4, 2014, Mr. Stephen J. Gauthier, Director of the Technical Services Center for the Government Finance Officers Association, notified him that the City of Valdosta has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. This Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by the City of Valdosta's Finance Department. We are very proud of the Finance Department and their efforts and would like to congratulate Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, and his Staff for a job well done.

Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, stated that over the last two months we have received notification that the City's Budget Division has been awarded the Distinguished Budget Award and the Accounting Division received the Excellence in Financial Reporting Award. The awards are presented by the Government Finance Officers Association of the U. S. and Canada. Both awards are granted based on extensive scrutiny by a three-person panel of judges. It is only a small percentage of local governments that win both awards. And even a smaller group that prepare their own documents. It is the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that we have received the Budget Award, and 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that we have received the financial reporting award. This is not an easy task to win these awards consecutively and if anything, the City of Valdosta is judged more rigorously each year. Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, recognized the following individuals for their dedicated efforts to the City of Valdosta: (1) Budgeting Office - Amy Burch Hall and Carolyn Sampson Burgess, (2) Accounting - Starr Page, Sandra Watley, Carla Gandy, Michael Turner, Vicky Taunton, Cynthia Hill, and Chuck Dinkins.

Mayor Gayle also recognized the new Valdosta Daily Times Reporter, Joe Adgie, as well as the Carl Vinson Institute of Government representatives Gordon Maner, Kitty Schollenberger, Jameson Dove, and Mara Register.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Valdosta City Council's Public Hearings for a millage rate increase that were held on July 24, 2014 at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., and August 7, 2014 at 5:00 p.m., and the Valdosta City Council Regular Meeting held on August 7, 2014 were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2014-19, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE SPEED LIMIT ORDINANCE**

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the Speed Limit Ordinance.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that on October 10, 2013, the Mayor and Council approved an updated Speed Limit Ordinance and transmitted the list of roadways to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

to amend the Speed Detections Device Permit issued to the City of Valdosta. There were several changes to speed limits on City streets as well as a change in the speed limit on I-75 within the City Limits of Valdosta from 70 miles per hour to 65 miles per hour. This change was made based on a Statewide GDOT policy from the State Traffic Engineer that authorized District Traffic Engineers to drop the speed to 65 mph within "urbanized interstate sections only." Given that I-75 within the City Limits is designated as "urbanized", the speed limit was dropped without the benefit of a Speed Spot Study. On July 15-16, 2014, the GDOT District Traffic Engineer authorized a Speed Spot Study based on recent guidance from the State Traffic Engineer. As previously discussed, speed limits are set based on the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile travelling speed recorded on the particular roadway segment. The results of this recent study, recorded the northbound 85<sup>th</sup> percentile as 77 mph and southbound at 76 mph. On August 4, 2014, Van Mason, District Traffic Engineer with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), sent a letter to Mayor John Gayle stating that GDOT was in the process of revising the existing speed limits on routes within the City of Valdosta to bring them into compliance with present regulations. The GDOT requested that the City of Valdosta increase the speed limit on I-75/SR401 within the City Limits of Valdosta to 70 miles per hour. They are requesting that the current Speed Limit Ordinance be revised to reflect this change. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to amend the Speed Limit Ordinance.

A **MOTION** made by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2014-19, an Ordinance to amend the Speed Limit Ordinance, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2014-16, A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE FILING OF AN APPLICATION FOR A DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REVOLVING LOAN FUND (DDRLF) WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (DCA) FOR REHABILITATION OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 206-208 NORTH PATTERSON STREET**

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for a Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for rehabilitation of property located at 206-208 North Patterson Street.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the building located at 206-208 North Patterson Street is owned by Salvagetti Properties, LLC. Built in 1915, this building was originally the Strand Theatre, which showed first-run movies. It was renamed the Alamo Theatre in 1923, but changed back to the Strand a few years later. The 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows that this building contained a mezzanine level balcony towards the front of the building and a performance stage with asbestos curtains, along with dressing rooms under the stage in the rear of the building. This building's use as a movie theater ended sometime in the 1940s, and it was subsequently converted for commercial retail use. Over the years, it has housed Duncan's Shoe Store, Vanity Fair Beauty Salon, Taylor's Bakery (1951), Robinson's clothing (1954), Darby's Shoes, Martha's Feminine Fashions (1969), and Cassie's (1980). In the 1970s, the building was remodeled into two separate storefronts which effectively closed off the entire mezzanine level. In addition, a metal façade was installed over the front of the building in effort to "modernize" the structure. In September, 2013, the front portion of the building's domed roof collapsed onto the ceiling of the ground floor commercial spaces. Temporary bracing was installed inside the building to stabilize it but has been left open to the elements. The property was purchased by Salvagetti Properties, LLC in May, 2014 with plans to rehabilitate it including restoring the original front façade. At this point, much of the interior of the building had been subjected to the elements for some time and has deteriorated beyond repair. There were also mold issues. Rehabilitation projects will include repairs throughout the structure, a new roof, replacement of all flooring and sub flooring, replacement of all walls, electrical, and plumbing. The project will also include building a kitchen and the purchase of equipment to facilitate Birdie's Market and act as a catering kitchen for Steel Magnolias (the owner's successful restaurant venture in Downtown Valdosta that was a DDRLF Project in 2011). The two buildings combined are 7,472 square feet in size. The planned project includes renovation and conversion of the first floor into Birdie's Market which will be a coffee, wine, cheese, and culinary and home décor retail store. The second floor will be converted into an event space that will be available for rental. It is the intent of the owner to maintain as much historical preservation both inside and outside as feasible. The applicant, Salvagetti Properties, LLC, is requesting support of a Resolution which will be submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for application to the Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF). The owner is requesting funds only for rehabilitation. The total project budget is projected at \$545,000, and the owner will provide 10% equity in the amount of \$54,500. If approved by the Mayor and City Council, the

Resolution and application will be submitted to DCA immediately. Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for a Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for rehabilitation of property located at 206-208 North Patterson Street. Councilman Payton inquired as to whether there would be any conflicts in zoning since they would have a wine and cheese shop and there is a church located on the corner. Matt Martin stated that as long as there is enough distance between the doors it would not create a conflict.

**A MOTION** made by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2014-16, a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for a Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for rehabilitation of property located at 206-208 North Patterson Street, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

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

Consideration of a contract for the City of Valdosta's external independent auditor.

Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, stated that one of the responsibilities of the Finance Department is to conduct a competitive process for the selection of the City's external independent auditor. The last procurement process was conducted in 2008. It is a recommended practice that governmental entities enter into multi-year agreements with such firms with a competitive selection process or simply a rotation of audit firms every three to five years. We believe that the competitive selection process is better suited for the City of Valdosta. The Purchasing Department disseminated 26 Requests for Proposals, with five submittals being returned. All five firms submitting a response were given the opportunity to meet before a Committee comprised of Mayor John Gayle, Councilman Tim Carroll, City Manager Larry Hanson, Deputy City Manager of Administration Mark Barber, and Financial Services Manager Chuck Dinkins. Based upon the firms' presentations, the Committee scored attributes such as experience, qualifications, staffing, and pricing. The presentations proved to be beneficial to the Committee as brief histories and philosophies of each firm were conveyed by the organization's representative(s) which was followed by questions from the Committee members. Properly performed audits play a vital role in the public sector by helping to preserve the integrity of the public finance functions and by maintaining citizen's confidence in their elected leaders, and to this point, due diligence was exercised in the final selection of the City of Valdosta's external auditor. Mark Barber recommended that Council approve the recommendation of the Committee and award the external audit contract to Henderson and Godbee, LLC for a term of three years beginning 2015 and running through 2017 with a one year renewable extension.

**A MOTION** made by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a contract with Henderson and Godbee, LLC for the City of Valdosta's external independent auditor beginning in 2015 and running through 2017 with a one year renewable extension.

### **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to declare three vehicles from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property and to dispose of those vehicles.

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that the City of Valdosta Police Department has three Ford Crown Victoria Police Sedans which the Department desires to declare as surplus property. Each patrol vehicle's age is 10 years or older, each has high mileage, and each needs to be replaced and removed from service. In the past, dead lined Police vehicles are often sold by government entities to other organizations who may continue to use those vehicles, either in a non-law enforcement capacity or in smaller jurisdictions where the demand on those Police vehicles is not as high. The Police Department is requesting that the vehicles be approved for surplus. The District Attorney's Office of the Southern Judicial Circuit, Valdosta City Schools, and the City of Morven have all contacted the City of Valdosta and expressed an interest in purchasing one vehicle each for use at their respective government organizations. Chief Childress recommended that Council approve the request to declare three vehicles from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property and to dispose of those vehicles. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that several months ago, the Valdosta City School System donated some trailers to the City of

Valdosta which are being utilized for the Utilities Department's construction project. All the City had to do was to relocate the trailers. This is an example where other governmental entities have excess surplus and we all work together to support one another.

A **MOTION** made by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a request to declare three vehicles from the Valdosta Police Department as surplus property and to dispose of those vehicles.

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

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the school transition time has gone well. All of the local elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as Valdosta State University, are back in session and citizens are getting acclimated again to the school zones.

Smoke testing is continuing this week and the City has been contacting residents in those areas that will be affected. We are doing a good job with educating the public to let citizens know what is going on and where the testing will occur in advance.

A Transportation Vision Plan Open House was held this week in Councilwoman Sandra Tooley's District. Councilwoman Tooley assisted in hosting this event and there will be one more opportunity for citizens to take advantage of providing comments to ensure the City is well represented in identifying the projects that need to be included in future Transportation Plans through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The Clay Road/East Hill/Hollywood Intersection Improvement Project has begun and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is hosting meeting for property owners who are interested. There are some right-of-way and construction easements that are needed so the GDOT is hosting the Open House and Detour Meeting today from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Lowndes County Civic Center. This is one of the necessary steps before the Project can be sent out for bid. We have been anxiously awaiting this Project which will realign Hollywood/Clay Road/U.S. 84 to make it a safe intersection and install a traffic signal.

There will be a Neighborhood Meeting tonight on the Island 23 and 24 Project in the City Hall Annex Building Multi-Purpose Room. The City is continuing to work on the Island Projects and get them completed.

The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and Valdosta State University (VSU) will be hosting an economic summit next Thursday, August 28, 2014 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the VSU Student Union. This will help us to understand how we look to others who are looking at us and to see things that we do not see when we live here. This will help us to have good and honest conversation about how to continue to improve our economic development efforts.

The City of Valdosta is making progress on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor Project. The last piece of right-of-way was received and the Georgia Department of Transportation is coordinating some utility relocation issues with AT&T. It is anticipated that we will put the Project out to bid in November, 2014. This Project will include the section from Ashley Street to Oak Street.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he and Pat Collins, City Engineer, met with Councilwoman Tooley and the Engineer for the Troup Street Project this week. They now have the concept plan for Troup Street Project and Councilwoman Tooley was pleased with the concept. The Engineer will now take that to 30% and there will be a neighborhood meeting in the fall. The goal is to be prepared at the Mayor/Council Retreat and discuss the plan, as well as the cost, and how it will be incorporated into the overall SPLOST project list.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there is a lot of interest now about participating in the "Ice Bucket Challenge" for ALS and someone challenged him and Fire Chief Freddie Broome so he decided to issue a challenge today to all Department Heads to participate as well. An "Ice Bucket" Challenge will be held tomorrow morning, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at Fire Station 1 and all Departments Heads will participate. The media has been invited and anyone else who would like to come out and watch the event is asked to donate \$5.00. This is our way of giving back to this cause and participating in such a worthy event.

Councilman Payton stated that he attended the Town Hall Meeting that Councilwoman Tooley hosted earlier this week and it was well attended. It was very spirited and informative. Councilman Payton also asked thanked Pat Collins, City Engineer, for the information that he provided as it relates to neighborhoods not having Internet access. This was something that he just assumed would happen within the City Limits.

Councilman Carroll stated that he and Councilman Payton attended the Economic Summit yesterday and he was surprised by a lot of what they learned. He was encouraged by some of the information and discouraged by some. Councilman Carroll thanked the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority for putting this together and for bringing the speakers to our community. Councilman Carroll stated that he is looking forward to progress in the near future so that we can embrace all of this information and work together with community partners to address our strengths and weaknesses.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that the Troup Street Project is coming along very well. There are a lot of things being done and she thanked the Engineering Department, the Public Works Department, and all of their Staff who worked on this Project. The citizens are happy to see the progress as well. Councilwoman Tooley also thanked the Council members for attending the meeting at the Mildred Hunter Center. They helped to answer a lot of questions. Councilwoman Tooley encouraged citizens to attend these meetings and to continue to give them ideas about things they would like to know about.

Councilman Wright inquired about the timeline for the annexed Island Project on Park Avenue/Dogwood Circle. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this was a Phase 2 Island and they had to move it up on the list because they have to pave the streets in that area and it was not going to good investment to pave it and then tear it up again to put utilities in and then re-pave. The City has already awarded the contract for the water/sewer and storm drainage and then the actual street paving will have to be sent out for bid. Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that Radney Plumbing was awarded the Project and rather than paving first they decided to put in some dry lines. As soon as that is completed a Notice to Proceed will be issued. It will take Radney Plumbing approximately 30 days to get the bonds to start the work and it will be the first of October before they actually begin. In the interim, the City will go ahead and put out a second bid for the paving portion of the Project. The paving should be completed about the same time they are finished putting in the dry lines. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the residents in that area are aware of the Project but they have not been formally notified with dates.

Mayor Gayle stated that October 7, 2014 is the date for the Work Session and October 9, 2014 is the Regular Council Meeting. The City Manager Larry Hanson, the City Clerk Teresa Bolden, and Mayor Gayle need to be out of town on October 9, 2014 and they do not like to miss Council Meetings. Mayor Gayle stated that he would like for Council to allow us to have the Work Session and Council Meeting on Tuesday night, October 7<sup>th</sup> and not have a Council Meeting on October 9<sup>th</sup>. We do not know yet what the Agenda Items will be for that Council Meeting and it might be that we would not need to have a Work Session; however, we could have the Work Session start a little early and then go right into the Council Meeting. Mayor Gayle asked if Council had any objections to the new schedule and entertained a motion.

**A MOTION** made by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the change of the October 9, 2014 Regular Council Meeting to be held in conjunction with the Work Session on October 7, 2014.

## **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

J. D. Rice, 501 Knob Hill, stated that he wanted to make Council aware of an incident that occurred this past Sunday, August 17, 2014 around 1:15 p.m. He was coming home from Church and had to stop at a local grocery store and upon leaving the store he saw two Valdosta Police Officers working very hard to get a car door open. He approached the scene where the Officers were at and a crowd had gathered around saying that they needed to call a locksmith, the Fire Department, or a relative with a key. It would have taken at least 30 minutes for the locksmith to arrive on the scene and the Fire Department could have gotten there in three or four minutes. If they had waited for a relative it could have taken 15 minutes or longer. The two Police Officers kept working and they finally got the back door unlocked. A mother had left an infant child in the car and it was over 90 degrees and with the heat index it had to be well over 100 degrees. Mr. Rice stated that he wanted to publicly thank those two Police Officers for their caring enough to get the car unlocked and rescue the infant.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the August 21, 2014 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:06 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, September 11, 2014.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta