

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**  
**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: Tim Carroll, Ben Norton, Deidra White, Robert Yost, and James Wright. Councilmen Joseph "Sonny" Vickers and Alvin Payton, Jr. were absent. The invocation was given by Mark Brady, Senior Pastor of Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**SEPTEMBER, 2012 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD**

Consideration of the September, 2012 Employee of the Month Award (Randal Mize, Utilities Department). This was postponed at the September 6, 2012 Regular Council Meeting until the September 20, 2012 Regular Council Meeting.

Jason Scarpace, Assistant Director of Utilities, stated that Randal Mize began his employment with the City of Valdosta Utilities Department in August, 2009 as an Electronic System Technician which is the position he currently holds. Randy has several job duties which include performing visual and electronic inspections, calibrations of control systems, and data collection systems for complex electronic systems installed at the City's Water Treatment facilities. Randy also maintains records of repairs and updates of the control systems for various Plants. Randy distinguishes himself as an outstanding and dedicated maintenance professional and always ensures safe and reliable water and wastewater processes continue throughout the City of Valdosta. Recently, the Country Club lift station needed power restored when the main disconnection failed. Randy quickly configured temporary and safe work during this 18-hour day until the new disconnect and wiring could be installed. Randy is also involved in guiding the conversion of the Water Plant's end of lifecycle computer server based control system. The new system will have a cost savings for the City of approximately \$15,000 in hardware. This change will also eliminate contracted server support to allow for in-house maintenance and future upgrades. In addition, the Utilities Department began using the new Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) program and Randy made several helpful suggestions which improved the System's implementation. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominates Randall Mize as Employee of the Month.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION'S CHAMPION OF GEORGIA CITIES AWARD**

Special presentation of the Georgia Municipal Association's Champion of Georgia Cities Award.

Mayor John Gayle stated that at the close of each Legislative session, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) recognizes individual Legislators that have given of their time and promoted cities in Georgia. We are very fortunate to have one of our own to receive this Award. Mayor Gayle asked Marcia Rubensohn, Deputy Director of Governmental Relations with the Georgia Municipal Association, to present the Award.

Ms. Rubensohn stated that it was a pleasure to be here today to present the Georgia Municipal Association's Champion of Georgia Cities Award to Senator Tim Golden. Not only did Senator Golden always give City Officials, City Managers, and City Staff access to his office and give them the time they needed to explain their positions, he was the key sponsor of two very important pieces of legislation for GMA. He ensured the financial solvency and strong future of a GMA Municipal Retirement System, and he shepherded a Land Bank Bill through the Legislature. This Land Bank Bill is critical to redevelopment and in this economic time, Senator Golden did his part to ensure redevelopment in Valdosta and across the State. Ms. Rubensohn stated that it was an honor to present this Award to Senator Golden and they look forward to working with him in future.

Mayor Gayle stated that we are proud to have Senator Tim Golden, a native Valdostan, as our Legislator, and we appreciate the work that he does because he always has the cities at heart. Mayor Gayle recognized Jay Shaw, Vice Chairman and Board Member of the Georgia Department of Transportation, and his wife, Libby Shaw,

Representative Jason Shaw, Mayor Richard Barr from the City of Adel, Mayor Sandy Sherrill from the City of Lake Park, Mayor Curtis Pickels from the City of Quitman, and Representative Ellis Black. Mayor Gayle asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to make some comments about Senator Tim Golden.

Mayor Curtis Pickels, City of Quitman, stated when Senator Golden always has time for you. He works for you, Valdosta, and South Georgia, and he is very much appreciated.

Mayor Richard Barr, City of Adel, stated that they appreciate Senator Golden and he has been a very good friend to them for many years. They have called on him from time to time for help and he has never failed to come forward and assist them. Mayor Barr thanked Senator Golden for his support.

Jay Shaw, Vice Chairman and Board Member of the Georgia Department of Transportation, stated that he and Senator Golden served together for 18 years. Senator Golden has been a workaholic not only for South Georgia but for all of Georgia. Mr. Shaw also thanked Marcia Rubensohn and GMA for presenting this Award to Senator Golden.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Senator Golden has been a friend of cities throughout his political career which spans 22 years and includes four terms in the House and seven terms in the Senate. Most importantly, he has been a friend of citizens and businesses and much of his success has been a result of that focus. He could give numerous examples of legislation that Senator Golden has supported as well as legislation that he has helped defeat that has benefited this community. We know of his success in helping Valdosta State University, Wiregrass Technical College, South Georgia Medical Center, and many other worthwhile community events. He has also worked tirelessly for small businesses and has been recognized many times for this. Local governments, as well as local businesses, are affected by legislation considered by the General Assembly. Senator Golden has stood up against potentially harmful legislation and he has supported good and progressive legislation. This past session he was particularly helpful in making amendments to Senate Bill 402 which allows private equity investments for retirement plans and Senate Bill 284 which expands the ability of Land Bank Authorities to address issues such as delinquent property, tax burdened properties, and other similar issues that can have a detrimental effect on neighborhoods and communities. Valdosta and Lowndes County have a model Land Bank Authority and our own Mara Register is often called on to teach other communities how to implement one. Senator Golden agreed early on to sponsor that legislation and introduced the Bill. More importantly, he worked hard to bring all the parties to the table to ensure that there were no surprises or problems. They all supported it because they saw the benefit of a public-private partnership that could occur when non-productive properties are made available through the work of a Land Bank Authority and become opportunities for economic development and job creation. Senator Golden has brought the experience, the common sense, the respect and trust, and the willingness to invest the time it takes to make good things happen. He has the support and respect of the Lt. Governor and the Governor and that is a tremendous asset for him and our community. He is also a team player and we are blessed to have a Legislative delegation that works so well together. We are particularly proud that GMA would honor Senator Golden with this award and we are glad that members of the delegation as well as the other Mayors are here to show their appreciation. Senator Golden has been a great friend as well as an effective Legislator for our citizens, our City, and for all cities and we appreciate that.

Senator Golden thanked Marcia Rubensohn and GMA for the Award. They put a lot of work into that Bill and he appreciated all of their efforts. He also thanked Tom Gehl, Director of Governmental Relations, and Lamar Norton, Executive Director of GMA, for their work on Senate Bill 402. Senator Golden stated that he appreciated the delegation, Representative Ellis Black, Representative Amy Carter, and Representative Jason Shaw and he has enjoyed working with such a great team. Also, Jay Shaw has been instrumental as Vice Chair for the Georgia Department and he is so pleased to be able to work with him in that position. Senator Golden also thanked the Mayor and Council and the Mayors of the smaller cities for their support and the sacrifices they make because it is not easy. Mayor Barr and Mayor Pickels go back a long way and he appreciated their support. Senator Golden stated that they have a heavy heart tonight because Valdosta lost Larry Colson a few days ago. He is the Godfather

to Larry's son, Hunter, and he asked for prayers for the Colson family. Senator Golden stated that he appreciated the job that Larry Hanson does and not just for the City business. He has known him for a long time and Larry gives you a balanced view. Larry does a great job and is the best City Manager in the State of Georgia. Also, Mara Register made many trips to Atlanta to testify on the Land Bank Bill and she did a great job. We should be proud of this community and what we have done with Land Banks because they are important to communities. Senator Golden stated that he was very grateful for the GMA Award and he appreciated everyone's support.

Mayor Gayle recognized Representative Glenn Baker, from Jonesboro, who arrived late but was in attendance for the GMA Award presentation to Senator Golden. Mayor Gayle also recognized the Senior students from Valwood's Governmental Class who were in attendance at the Council Meeting.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 6, 2012 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (5-0) of the Council.

### ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 2012-17, A RESOLUTION ASKING CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO WORK IN THE SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE TO APPROVE A COMPREHENSIVE AND BALANCED DEFICIT REDUCTION PLAN IN ORDER TO AVOID POTENTIAL SEQUESTRATION**

Consideration of a Resolution asking Congressional leaders and the President of the United States to work in the spirit of compromise to approve a comprehensive and balanced deficit reduction plan in order to avoid potential sequestration.

Mayor John Gayle stated that like all of you and most Americans, our country must get its fiscal affairs in order or the consequences will be severe. He believes that we all have reservations about some of the suggestions in the Simpson-Bowles Commission Report as well as all other plans that have been suggested. Last week while in Washington, D. C., they had the opportunity to meet with Congressmen Bishop, Kingston, Scott, and Senator Chambliss' and Senator Isakson's Staff. In those meetings they discussed this subject at length. All agree that action is necessary by year's end, particularly in our meeting with Senator Chambliss since he is a member of the Gang of Six that has worked in a bi-partisan way to get the Federal government to address the deficit and avoid the fiscal cliff. In the meetings they discussed the pros and cons of specific recommendations. For instance, he personally liked the deduction of interest on home mortgages and as a municipal official he likes the benefits of municipal bonds that are tax free to investors as they reduce the cost of borrowing thus saving all taxpayers money. Under Simpson-Bowles, both of these would be eliminated. Mayor Gayle stated that he did not like that but he knows that something has to be done. This Resolution that we are about to read does not endorse any plan. It only encourages our elected officials in Washington to work together to find a solution. We know that if something does not happen the consequences for Moody, our nation's entire military, along with many other worthy programs could be severe. The point of this Resolution is to ask Congress and the White House to work together in a bi-partisan way to address the deficit, get the Federal government's expenditures in line with its revenues, and certainly to avoid the fiscal cliff that awaits this country if nothing is done by year's end. This Resolution is not intended to be political but will send a message to our Federal government leaders that the issues are critical and need to be addressed, not ignored, and compromise will be necessary to find a balanced solution. If the cities and counties of America speak up and speak for the citizens we represent then perhaps we can be a voice for action in Washington. Mayor Gayle stated that we have drafted a Resolution that we plan to send to Senators Chambliss and Isakson and he asked Larry Hanson, City Manager, to read it as this time.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Resolution reads as follows:

**WHEREAS**, the current annual deficit is estimated to be \$1.3 trillion at the end of Fiscal Year 2012, and the national debt stands at over \$16 trillion dollars as of June 2012; and

**WHEREAS**, the growth of the annual deficit and the national debt continues to dominate the debate in Congress on all federal spending and tax policy matters; and

**WHEREAS**, a Congressional Budget Office report issued in May of 2012 warns that failing to change current federal tax and spending policies puts the country on a course leading to another recession in 2013; and

**WHEREAS**, the private sector depends on the stability of the nation's economic policy to guide its investment and growth plans; and

**WHEREAS**, with the national unemployment rate above 8 percent, job creation must remain the top priority for federal policymakers; and

**WHEREAS**, the future economic health of the nation depends on Congress being able to reach a balanced deficit reduction agreement; and

**WHEREAS**, last year's debt ceiling agreement includes a draconian, indiscriminate, and arbitrary budget sequestration that would devastate both domestic investment and national defense programs; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, also known as the Simpson-Bowles Commission, issued a comprehensive report in December of 2010 that calls for spending reductions, entitlement reforms, and tax policy changes; and

**WHEREAS**, although we may not agree with all the specific provisions contained in the Simpson-Bowles recommendations, the Mayor and Council of the City of Valdosta believe that the Commission did a commendable job of working together on a balanced approach to deficit reduction which combines spending cuts with new revenue;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Valdosta calls on leaders in Congress to return immediately to the negotiating table in order to reach a comprehensive, balanced deficit reduction agreement, in the spirit of the Simpson-Bowles Commission, that will foster long-term economic growth and prevent the implementation of a draconian budget sequestration that ignores the nation's priorities and harms the nation's economy.

Mayor Gayle asked for any comments from Council. Councilman Wright inquired as to who put this Resolution on the Agenda. Mayor Gayle stated that Senator Chambliss had asked them to consider doing this and they felt it was a good idea. It is not political in any way and we are not saying that we support or do not support some things that are in there, but we are asking that our Congressmen and leaders of this country get together and be willing to do the work that they are paid to do and save us from some of these problems that we are going to have if this sequestration comes about. Councilman Wright inquired as to whether this was a new precedent that we are going to set so that when we have problems we are going to send out Resolutions. Mayor Gayle stated that they did set a precedent last year when Council voted on the School Consolidation issue. Councilman Wright stated that he remembered people coming before Council and they were told that we could not take a stance on issues; however, now it seems like we are. If we do this then we cannot turn around the next time and say we do not want to do it when it is something unfavorable. Mayor Gayle stated that this particular issue is non-partisan and we are not really taking a stand on any one particular issue. We are just asking our Congressmen to do their jobs.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to approve the Resolution asking Congressional leaders and the President of the United States to work in the spirit of compromise to approve a comprehensive and balanced deficit reduction plan in order to avoid potential sequestration. The motion was seconded by Councilman Yost. The motion was adopted (4-0-1) with Councilman Wright abstaining to enact Resolution No. 2012-17, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve emergency repairs to the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Jason Scarpate, Assistant Director of Utilities, stated that the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Facility is over 30-years old and requires immediate repairs on numerous treatment systems and associated equipment to continue functioning. The bottom third of this facility is prone to flooding with the Presidentially-declared disaster flood occurring in 2009. Since that flood, the flood plain has been revised and the bottom one half of the Plant is in the 100 year flood plain. Preventive maintenance on equipment must be performed and numerous replacements of existing worn out equipment will be required in order to meet permit requirements until a new facility can be funded, designed, and constructed in the future. The influent pump station has three pumps to handle flows entering the Plant for its sewer collection service area which encompasses approximately 70% of the City. The majority of the time two of these pumps are constantly in service. On August 16, 2012, the dry well portion of the influent pump station flooded due to a failed pump gasket and severe vibration damage to the volute on one of the pumps. As a result, the influent pumps stopped functioning and the entire treatment process was rendered inoperable which resulted in a major sewer spill of approximately 5 million gallons. Godwin Pumps was contacted to immediately begin an emergency bypass pump operation at the Plant. Bypass pumping was operable within 24 hours. North American Pipeline Management, Inc. (NAPM) and specialized local vendors were also contacted to initiate emergency repairs on the damaged equipment within the flooded station. NAPM was utilized as they were very familiar with this pump station and they were the bidder on the wet well cleaning and bypass pumping project last year. More recently, NAPM was again the low bidder to perform bypass pumping and the replacement of a 20-inch valve at the influent pump station planned for beginning of September. The Agenda item for this work was to be brought before Council for approval at the last Council Meeting in August but was not done due to the total failure of the influent pump station and the need to immediately begin emergency repairs. The estimated cost of all repairs to pumps, motors, and associated equipment at the influent pump station is approximately \$615,634. This includes the repair of the 20-inch valve as well as replacement of all three impellers previously purchased for these pumps. A 20% contingency is being requested should additional work be necessary that has not been discovered as yet. A breakdown of costs incurred to date with estimated costs for all remaining repairs by specified vendors has been provided to the Mayor and Council. Jason Scarpate recommended that Council approve the request to authorize ongoing emergency repairs at the Withlacoochee Influent Pump Station in the amount of \$615,634 plus a 20% contingency. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether most of these repairs were embedded in the current plan for upgrades. Jason Scarpate stated that this was not so much an upgrade but ongoing maintenance. The valve and impellers that will be replaced are more of an operations and maintenance issue. It failed beforehand so they would have to replace it. Larry Hanson stated that part of this work was out for bid so it was expected to have to do a good bit of this. The emergency accelerated it and added some additional work. Councilman Yost inquired as to why the spill occurred. Jason Scarpate stated that this pump station is set up differently than the typical lift stations in the system because it has a wet well and a dry well. The pumps and motors are in the dry well side and a seal failed on the dry well side which was caused by something getting into the pump. That caused it to pump into the dry well instead of out of the dry well and up to the head works. The dry well is where they have motors and all of the electrical components. It filled up both sides of the wet well and the dry well. Larry Hanson stated that was at a time of very low volume so the pumps are only working when they are needed. Only one or two of the pumps was actually working based on the demand that it had so when there was an operational issue and one pump stopped working the wet well filled up so quickly that the others could not start. That is what triggered the spill. This was a rare occurrence and has not happened before. Jason Scarpate stated that the wet wells even at the Mud Creek Treatment Plant are submersible so you do not have that issue of having water getting into the dry well side. Councilman Yost inquired about the timeframe for this work. Jason Scarpate stated that the work has already started. Larry Hanson stated that they had to start working on it because of the emergency so they have three temporary pumps there that have been there since the night after the spill. We are paying for part of that and work is now underway and will continue. The temporary pumps will stay in place until the work is completed. The temporary pumps have as much capacity as the regular pumps but we are renting them. Council Yost stated that it is tough to see that amount flow out of our system and into the backyards of homes in his District and then into the creeks. Getting this fixed is very important so that we do not have these breakdowns in the future. It is also important for everyone to understand that some of this could have been taken care of a long time ago if we were allowed to do some things but we were applying for funding from FEMA and they totally let us down. The people who paid for that are the people of this City and especially people in his District. We need to get this fixed as soon as possible and then start work on a new Plant as soon as we have funding available in order to correct the overflow and discharge problems that we have had. Councilman Yost thanked the Staff for getting out there to clean up because it takes a lot of time when you have a spill of that magnitude.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the request as presented for emergency repairs to the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant in the amount of \$615,634 plus a 20% contingency to handle any unforeseen circumstances.

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

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that a Memorandum was sent to the Mayor and Council earlier this week regarding the upcoming Mayor/Council District tour. The tour is scheduled for Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup> beginning at 8:00 a.m. with a breakfast at the City Hall Annex Building. Each Council member has been asked to submit two or three projects that they would like to have reviewed on the tour in order for us to make it more efficient.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that October is Community Planning Month and we are planning many activities in observance of that. Mayor Gayle was at Moody Air Force Base today and participated in a joint program regarding the planning that we do with Moody and others in the community. City Staff has planned activities to share with the community and to show the importance of planning in many of the things that we do. Some of those activities include the following: (1) a lunch and learn entitled "Traffic and Tribulations" which is scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup> at the City Hall Annex where Kevin Tolliver, Traffic Manager, will answer questions and suggest some routes to travel in Valdosta, (2) a tour of the landfill on October 12<sup>th</sup> so people will gain an understanding of how that works and where the garbage goes, (3) a tour of the Historical Society which will be narrated by Emily Foster, Special Projects/Historical Planner, (4) a tour of the Traffic Management Center on October 17<sup>th</sup>, and (5) another lunch and learn on October 18<sup>th</sup> at the Annex Building where citizens can learn about the Five Points Re-development Project.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta's Fire Department participated in the Wounded Warrior Project recently and each station raised a minimum of \$250. As a result of that, they were presented with an award for their fundraising efforts and their support. The funds that are raised are used to purchase supplies for those who have served our country and have been harmed in the line of duty. This is something that the Firemen did on their own time and out of their own pockets. This says something about the caliber of people that we have in our City and their efforts are very much appreciated.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we had a major storm event earlier and had a number of trees down throughout the City, particularly in the Brookwood North area. There were also several places without power, including Valdosta State University, and there were a lot of traffic signals out. Power has now been restored but citizens are encouraged to be safe and cautious as they travel throughout this section of the City.

### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilwoman White stated that while Mayor Gayle was attending the event at Moody Air Force Base she stood in for him with the Valdosta Shriners. They held a Law Enforcement Day and provided free lunch for everyone in the Sheriff's Department, the City Police Officers, the Firemen, EMTs, and Georgia State Troopers. They did a great job and it was a very nice service. Councilwoman White stated that it was an unexpected pleasure that she got to go and she wanted to recognize the Shriners for their service to our community.

Councilman Yost thanked the Legislative delegation who was in attendance at the Council Meeting tonight. They do a great job for the citizens of this community and the surrounding areas. We appreciate all that they do for us.

Councilman Carroll stated that we would be remiss if we did not give kudos to two members of this group, Larry Hanson and Councilwoman White, who were asked to go along with Staff members of the Georgia Municipal Association and represent all of the cities in the State of Georgia regarding important issues at the Federal level. Councilman Carroll stated that he was very proud of them and thanked GMA for recognizing the talent that we have in Valdosta. He also thanked Mayor Gayle for his participation as well. Mayor Gayle stated that he appreciated the opportunity to attend as this was his first trip to Washington, D.C. They had very good meetings.

Bobby Stephenson, 4140 Cedric Lane, stated that he is the teacher of the group of Government students from Valwood and thanked Mayor Gayle for recognizing them. He asked if the Mayor and Council could discuss the importance of citizens coming to the Council Meetings to discuss their concerns and participating in the democratic process in general. He also asked if they could give the students some tips on how they could be more active in the community as young people.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it was important for the students to be here tonight and hear that Resolution read because their future and the future of their children are at stake here based upon the fiscal affairs of our country. The students should be engaged in that conversation and understand those issues because we do have some difficult issues we must face as a country. Educating yourself is the first step in being an effective citizen and the fact that you are here tonight speaks of your interest. Larry Hanson stated that he was very proud to see young people here who are taking government and leadership very seriously. We encourage people to be involved and we do a lot of outreach in the City. We have a lot of Boards, Commissions, and Authorities where we allow citizens an opportunity to apply to serve and they have very important roles. They serve on the Industrial Authority, the Conference Center and Tourism Authority, the Airport Authority, the Parks and Recreation Authority, and they help shape our future. They help the elected officials make good decisions about our future quality of life, aviation, and the type of industry we recruit. Those are great opportunities for citizens to influence the future of their community. There are many others that are equally important and we have approximately 20 Boards, Commissions, and Authorities that are opportunities for people of all ages to serve. We always encourage citizens to visit our website and E-mail our elected officials or any Staff member of the City so it is not always necessary to attend a Council Meeting. The Mayor and Council meet twice monthly and elected officials do listen to your concerns because their eyes and ears cannot be everywhere. We recognize the importance of trying to meet the needs of all the constituents of the community whether it is young, old, teenagers, or low income, and we try to address multiple issues. We have to balance many of those issues and it is difficult to meet all the needs particularly at a given time; however, we do commit ourselves to do the best we can. Larry Hanson thanked the students for attending and encouraged them to educate themselves not only about issues that affect the City but issues that affect the County, State, and our nation because you never know where you will be living or the position you might be in. One day this community, or wherever you are, will be handed off to your generation and it is important that you be prepared to lead it and carry on the many good things that have been done and the shoulders that we stand on of those who have gone before us.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the September 20, 2012 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:19 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, October 11, 2012.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta