

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2016
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, Alvin Payton, Jr., Sandra Tooley, and Robert Yost. Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody was absent and Councilman Joseph "Sonny" Vickers arrived late at 5:45 p.m. The invocation was given by Pastor Wayne Hughes, Abundant Life Church of God, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Consideration of the August, 2016 Employee of the Month Award (Lt. Robert Mercer, Sgt. Shelly Miller, and Firefighter Austin Williams - Valdosta Fire Department).

Fire Chief Freddie Broome stated that Robert Mercer began his employment with the Valdosta Fire Department in June, 2005 and presently holds the position of Lieutenant. Lt. Mercer manages the daily operations at the company level, supervises up to three employees, and leads emergency incidents. Shelley Miller began his employment with the Valdosta Fire Department in November, 2009 and presently holds the position of Sergeant. Sgt. Miller is responsible for driving the fire apparatus to and from emergency incidents and providing fire, rescue, and Hazmat services. Austin Williams began his employment with the Valdosta Fire Department in December, 2015 and presently holds the position of Firefighter. Firefighter Williams is responsible for responding to emergency incidents and providing fire, rescue, and Hazmat services. On July 4, 2016, Engine 6 responded to a cardiac arrest call in the Lowe's parking lot. Upon arriving on scene, Lt. Mercer, Sgt. Miller, and Firefighter Williams began CPR and utilized an AED. Once EMS arrived, the patient had a pulse, was breathing on her own, and was transported to the Emergency Room. The chain of survival protocol begins with basic life support measures on the scene of an emergency which was provided by Lt. Mercer, Sgt. Miller, and Firefighter Williams. Immediate implementation of CPR while awaiting the arrival of EMS is critical in the survival rate of patients. The quick actions and teamwork of Lt. Mercer, Sgt. Miller, and Firefighter Williams were instrumental in stabilizing the patient. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated Lt. Robert Mercer, Sgt. Shelley Miller, and Firefighter Austin Williams as Employees of the Month.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON THE 2016 SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY GROUP WORKCAMP

Special Presentation on the 2016 Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp.

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Manager, stated that this year the Group Workcamp was held June 26 - July 2, 2016. During that time, Staff gathered memories to share with the Mayor and Council and the public. This is also a time to express heartfelt thanks and appreciation and to acknowledge those individuals who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the event so successful. Each year, the City of Valdosta is looked upon as the "camp to attend" across the nation which is due in part to the efforts of our Staff, Co-Sponsors, and our community as a whole. The Group Workcamp is a partnership between various community organizations, key City of Valdosta Departments, and many dedicated employees. Through the Workcamp, a total of 301 homes have been repaired over the past ten years. To date, the City has hosted ten Workcamps that have yielded more than \$2 million in economic investment in our community through capital improvements to housing stock, the value of volunteer housing, the spending in our community, and the value of their labor. This figure also represents the City of Valdosta's, Lowe's Distribution Center, and Group Care Foundation's investment in this effort. We were very fortunate to be able to host approximately 207 campers and redshirt Staff in Valdosta this year and repair 19 homes. Even at minimum wage, these campers' labor of love is valued at \$71,700. Even more impressive is the fact that these campers paid \$400 each just for the privilege of attending the Group Workcamp in addition to travel expenses to get to Valdosta. There were campers from nine different states including Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana, which truly speaks volumes for their commitment to this program. In addition, these campers collected nearly 573 cans of food for the Second Harvest Food Bank which was another selfless act of kindness that they have shared with our

community. Camps such as the one in Valdosta have been taking place all around the country and are supported by more than 25,000 youth volunteers. The most important thing to our community is the effort to help stop deterioration of valuable housing stock and to place us closer to accomplishing our goal to eliminate substandard housing in our community by the year 2020.

Vanassa Flucas thanked Mayor John Gayle, the City Council, and the City Administration for their support because without their vision and guidance we would not be here to celebrate another successful Group Workcamp. Others her were instrumental in the success of the Group Workcamp included the following: (1) the Public Works Department, (2) the Police Department, (3) the Fire Department, (4) the City Marshals, (5) Main Street, and (6) other City Departments. Richard Joyner, Rehabilitation Construction Coordinator, was also instrumental in making the Group Workcamp a success. He begins in January of each year to meet with homeowners and conduct assessments of the homes that need repairs. Vanassa Flucas stated that the City of Valdosta could not host the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp without the assistance of Lowe's Regional Distribution Center who has been on-board since it began in 2005. The City of Valdosta is eternally grateful for their significant contribution and continued commitment. This partnership has truly made a difference in the lives of our citizens and we look forward to many more wonderful years of working with Lowe's. The Lowe's Retail Store also supports the Group Workcamp with supplies, deliveries, and lots of patience. Many other individuals and organizations provide construction assistance and site coaching for the Workcamp and they ensured that the campers were safe and stayed well-hydrated. The City of Valdosta is also very fortunate to have Habitat for Humanity Staff who were willing to give of their time and talents and provide expertise for the campers. The Second Harvest Food Bank provided pallets of water for the campers and Wild Adventures donated park passes for all the campers and Staff. The Valdosta Middle School donated the use of their gymnasium to ensure that the campers are housed and fed each year. Georgia Power made sure that each site is protected from potential electrical accidents by covering power lines in the areas where campers are using ladders and scaffolding, and this year, Mr. B's Market, Pepsi, and Sam's Bar-B-Que provided ribs, baked beans, and drinks for the campers. Vanassa Flucas recognized individuals and organizations that were critical to the success of this endeavor as well as the wonderful homeowners for their participation.

Tommy Overtree, 722 Old Clyattville Road, stated that he is one of the homeowners that had his house repaired. Mr. Overtree thanked the Mayor and Council, and everyone involved because he could have never had his house painted and he hopes the Group Workcamp could be continued for others. It has been a blessing to him.

Ernestine Davis stated that she appreciated what the campers did for her. For the young ones to take time out of their schedule to help others was very impressive. They were so well behaved and it was awesome to see them work together even though they did not know each other.

Willie B. Knight thanked everyone who participated and it has been a blessing to have his home repaired. It was like he has a brand new home and he could not thank everyone enough.

Vanassa Flucas stated that they had a special video presentation highlighting the 2016 Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp which was truly the best yet.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 21, 2016 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to start a Small Business Seed Loan Program and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Valdosta State University's Small Business Development Center for Technical Assistance.

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Manager, stated that in May, 2016 the Annual Action Plan (AAP) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program was approved by Mayor and Council for the Federal Fiscal Year 2016. In the AAP, an Economic Development activity was created to provide Small

Business Seed Loans to applicants within the City of Valdosta. These loans will provide the necessary start-up or continuing business capital needed by some of the local small businesses that may be unable to access traditional lending resources. This activity has a current funding level of \$50,000 per fiscal year with the potential maximum individual small business loan award being \$10,000. In order for a small business to qualify for funding, it must be owned by a person who is low to moderate income based. The owner must reside or the business must be located within the City of Valdosta, and the small business must commit to creating a job or jobs to others in the low to moderate income population of the City of Valdosta. The Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) Program, along with the Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center (VSU SBDC), will work with potential loan applicants to ensure their businesses are in the best possible position to benefit from the assistance of this Loan Program. VSU SBDC will provide the technical assistance needed for an applicant to complete a business plan, create cash flow projections for their business plan, marketing research, and best/proper small business practices (including counseling on legal/professional financial services and credit worthiness). Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether they should add that they must have a City of Valdosta business license. Vanassa Flucas stated that it would be on the required checklist and VSU will ensure that they have all of the items lined up before they apply for any type of business plan.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the start of a Small Business Seed Loan Program and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Valdosta State University's Small Business Development Center for Technical Assistance.

Consideration of a request to abandon a utility easement on Emerson Way.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that ASA Engineering & Surveying, representative for the property owner Jack Wynn, has requested that all rights to a 20' utility easement between lots 28 and 29 on Emerson Way be released to Mr. Wynn for the purpose of combining the lots for the construction of a home. The easement does not contain any utilities within its boundaries; however, there is an ambiguity in an easement shown on lots 28 and 29 on the plat and re-plat of Walden Woods. The City's contention is that a utility easement does exist along that property line by virtue of the label and leaders shown on the plat regardless of missing line work and given the fact that the subsequent revised plat of Lots 27 and 28 clearly shows a 20' utility easement centered on the property line. The obvious intent of the developer to grant a utility easement to the City is clearly conveyed when the two plats are considered together; however, the lots were sold subject to the first plat. The revised plat cannot serve to automatically remove any ambiguity created by the missing line work on the original plat, but it only serves to highlight the original intent of the developer. The existence of the easement does not prevent the combining of the lots; however, the utility easement needs to be shown on the combination plat to reconcile the two public records. Due to the easement not being in use, it is the recommendation of the Engineering Department to have Council abandon the City's interest in the easement and authorize the execution of a Quit-Claim Deed in favor of the Mr. Wynn. This action will clear up any potential cloud on the Deed and Title for Mr. Wynn and any subsequent property owners.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the abandonment of a utility easement on Emerson Way.

Consideration of a Joint Funding Agreement (JFA) with the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a Flood Inundation Map for a portion of the Withlacoochee River.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that in 2009 and 2013 multiple communities throughout the Suwannee basin, including Valdosta and Lowndes County, experienced significant flooding. As a result, the City has worked with various local, State, and Federal agencies to better understand the regional flooding issues and to seek solutions. A couple of activities that have been completed include: (1) working with the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a flood tracking chart for the Little River and Withlacoochee River watersheds, (2) partnering with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on the flooding analysis study, and (3) acquiring Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) for Greater Lowndes County which also provided 1 foot contours for our community. Through partnerships that have been developed and the recent completion of LIDAR, our community has an opportunity to have the USGS develop a Flood Inundation Map for a portion of the Withlacoochee River to provide a resource that will provide a number of benefits such as more accurate flood warning, emergency management response, future development decisions, and online access 24/7 for staff, citizens, and the media to use, specifically in the area

impacted the most during the 2009 and 2013 floods. The proposed project area is approximately 14 square miles with 60% in unincorporated Lowndes, 39% in the City of Valdosta, and 1% in the City of Remerton. The total Project cost is \$135,000 and is a 60/40 cost-share. The local cost is \$80,000 and USGS will provide \$55,000. On July 26, 2016, the Lowndes County Commission voted to partner on the Project and provide \$40,000 so the City's portion will also be \$40,000. If approved, the Project would start in October, 2016 and end August, 2017. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the Joint Funding Agreement (JFA) with the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a Flood Inundation Map for a portion of the Withlacoochee River and to share the cost of \$40,000 for the Project.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Joint Funding Agreement (JFA) with the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a Flood Inundation Map for a portion of the Withlacoochee River and share the \$40,000 cost for the Project.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated the Fire Department is advertising for the third annual Citizens Fire Academy. The deadline to apply is August 12, 2016 and interested citizens are encouraged to apply. The class will meet every Tuesday night for eight weeks beginning August 30, 2016 and the class size is limited to 25.

The Valdosta Daily Times recently wrote an article on mosquito protection and prevention. The City's Metro Channel 17 and social media have a video running that is an interview with the South Georgia Health District to educate citizens and keep them informed about mosquito protection. There have already been 50 cases of the Zika virus in Georgia and that is an eighth of the number of cases reported in Florida.

The City of Valdosta is now taking applications from students in the 7th and 8th grades for the 2016-2017 Valdosta Youth Council. Mayor Gayle recommended this Program last year and they had a very successful first year.

The Police Department is advertising for the 24th session of the Citizens Police Academy which will begin September 15, 2016. This Program has similar goals to the Fire Academy and citizens are encouraged to participate. It is a great learning experience for our citizens.

The deadline to apply for vacancies on Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees is Wednesday, August 17, 2016. There are ten slots to be filled and citizens are encouraged to apply.

The Valdosta City Schools, the Lowndes County Schools, and Valdosta State University started back last week. The City does a lot in advance to prepare for the new school year such as having the flashers in school zones checked and tested, examine sidewalks in the school areas, paint crosswalks that have faded over time, and trim limbs that might obstruct someone's view.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he testified yesterday before a Georgia House Committee that met in Warner Robins on military installations in Georgia. They are having five meetings and the one yesterday was focused on Robbins Air Force Base and Moody Air Force Base. It went very well and we were able to create a better awareness among members of the Georgia House about military installations and their value and benefit to our communities and to our State.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this was the City's tenth Group Workcamp and we have now helped to bring over 200 homes up to higher standards. It has been a very successful Program and we could not do it without the help of all the Sponsors and the City employees. It is really uplifting every year to visit the sites and to hear the stories from the homeowners. He thanked everyone for their support and for improving the quality of life for the residents of our City.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Vickers stated that it was very uplifting to see so many young people volunteering for the Group Workcamp because it is hard work.

Councilman Yost thanked the participants in the Group Workcamp as well as City employees for their support and dedication. He also asked that the Hospital Authority hold a meeting where they ask for the resignation of their Attorney, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and the four members of the Authority who are appointed by the City. We have been told that the City's appointees are the ones who cause the problems but they all need to resign including the County appointees.

Councilwoman Tooley stated the citizens in her District are very appreciative of the Group Workcamp and hope that it will continue in the future.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Doug Robinson, 921 Lausanne Drive, stated that he has a new issue in his neighborhood. There is a family who has moved into the neighborhood and they are making the area bad. On Saturday night, a young man was yelling obscenities at him and his family so he called the Police. The young man had violated his probation and when he saw the Police coming he took off running. The homeowners are getting fed up with it. He has taken over the Neighborhood Watch Program and he has to get a petition written up so they can get a sign installed. Councilman Vickers inquired as to what Mr. Robinson would like for Council to do about his situation. Mr. Robinson stated that Councilwoman Miller-Cody is over his District and he has only seen one issue taken care of. The homeowners are tired of all the loud music and cursing at night. Councilman Vickers stated that in his area they have guys sitting around under a tree on private property. Someone called him complaining about them sitting under the tree but we cannot go and tell them they have to leave from under the tree because that is private property. He understands Mr. Robinson's dilemma but is not sure what Council can do. Mayor Gayle stated that Police Chief Brian Childress has spoken to Mr. Robinson and tried to help and we will continue to assist him with his problem. Mr. Robinson stated that he cannot even sit on his front porch or patio without smelling marijuana. He does not want them making comments to his wife and daughter either.

Thomas Mobley, 1305 Bethune Street, stated that he has a problem with a drainage ditch. The entire neighborhood drains into one ditch which is right at his back door. The ditch does not drain, it is overgrown, and it is filled with dirt and debris. When it rains the water just sits there because it is not properly elevated. Mr. Mobley asked if someone could come out and check the elevation because the water from several streets drains into this ditch. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Councilwoman Miller-Cody did make them aware of that issue several days ago and they will be sending someone out. Emily Davenport, Assistant City Engineer, will be in contact so that the issue can be resolved.

Rev. Willie C. Simons, 303 Hampton Lane, stated that he has brought up the drainage ditch issue that Mr. Mobley mentioned in the past. If the Stormwater Division needs more people then they need to cut some people's salaries. Cleaning out the drainage ditches twice a year is not sufficient. They have the same problem over and over again. The City needs to stop being reactive and become proactive. Rev. Simons inquired as to what they need to do to get more personnel involved in cleaning out the drainage ditches. He has taken pictures and sent to the Mayor and Public Works and asked that the problem be addressed. He asked that the drainage ditches be maintained more than twice a year. The City needs a plan that will be functional and efficient.

ADJOURNMENT

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 11, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:38 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, August 25, 2016.