

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Payton, Jr. 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, Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Mayor John Gayle and City Attorney George Talley were absent. Tim Tanner, Attorney with Coleman Talley, LLP, filled in for the City Attorney. The invocation was given by Pastor Lee Henderson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Oaths of Office for the 2016-2017 Valdosta Youth Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Payton stated that the Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) was created in September, 2015 by a Resolution that was approved by the Mayor and Council. The purpose of the VYC is to inspire local 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to build leadership skills, learn about civic responsibility, gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare these youth for a lifetime of public and community service. The inaugural VYC program year consisted of 14 youth who were successful in accomplishing several goals, which resulted in dozens of community service hours, an anti-bullying awareness campaign, and the adoption of a .6 portion North Lee Street. Now, in its second year, the VYC has grown to 22 students, grades 7 through 9, representing Valdosta Middle School, Valdosta High School, Valdosta Early College Academy, J. L. Newbern Middle School, Highland Christian Academy, and St. John Catholic School. The VYC members were selected by the Youth Advisory Board to participate in the 2016-2017 class. The scheduled VYC Monthly Meetings will run through May, 2017. The first meeting of the 2016-2017 VYC was held earlier today in the Council Chambers. This meeting included the induction of the 2016-2017 Officers by Municipal Court Judge Vernita Bender. The VYC members must complete a minimum of eight hours of community service during that the year. This group of exceptional youth will operate much like the Valdosta City Council (guided by the Advisory Board) and will have an opportunity to grow as leaders and continue their positive impact among their peers and within our community. The Advisory Board members appointed by Mayor John Gayle (who serves as the head of the Board) to serve for the 2016-2017 inaugural year are: Valdosta Councilman Alvin Payton, Jr., Lynn Orenstein of Valdosta Middle School, James White of J. L. Newbern Middle School, John Davis, St. John Catholic School, and City Staff members Teresa Bolden, Sementha Mathews, and Marcus McConico. Mayor Pro Tem Payton administered the Oath of Office to the following VYC members: (1) Amelia Barnett (9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta High School), (2) Jaida Brown (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta Middle School), (3) Drew Correll – President (9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta High School), (4) Will Gerber (7<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. John Catholic School), (5) Rachael Goss (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. John Catholic School), (6) Matthew Hall – Secretary (9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Highland Christian Academy), (7) Dalemetrius Huff (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, J. L. Newbern Middle School), (8) Kaightlyn Jowers (7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta Middle School), (9) Erin Kelly – Vice President (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. John Catholic School), (10) Deeya Patel (7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta Middle School), (11) Abbi Long (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta Middle School), (12) Sean Manning - Historian (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. John Catholic School), (13) Clancy Claire Perry - Parliamentarian (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. John Catholic School), (14) Zandayja Rollins (8<sup>th</sup> Grade, J. L. Newbern Middle School), and (15) Toni Salami (7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Valdosta Middle School). Mayor Pro Tem Payton, on behalf of the Mayor and Council and the City of Valdosta, thanked each of the VYC members for their extraordinary leadership and wished them much success.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the September 8, 2016 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2016-16, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GMEBS MASTER DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN**

Consideration of a Resolution to approve an amendment to the GMEBS Master Defined Benefit Retirement Plan.

Mark Barber, Assistant City Manager, stated that the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System (GMEBS) amended the GMEBS Master Defined Benefit Retirement Plan Document during their June 27, 2016 meeting to incorporate provisions requested by the Internal Revenue Service. The amendment requires GMEBS employers with individually designed Plans to separately adopt any amendments that are made to the Master Plan. The City of Valdosta does have an individually designed Plan and, therefore, the City must adopt a Resolution approving the Plan amendments. There is no change in the City's Plan structure in regard to payments, benefits, or calculations. The required amendments are necessary to meet Internal Revenue Service mandates for these types of pension Plans. Mark Barber recommended that Council adopt the Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Municipal Employees Benefit System setting forth amendments to the Master Plan in order to meet Internal Revenue Service regulations.

Councilman Vickers inquired about the individual plan. Mark Barber, Assistant City Manager stated that there is a Master Plan for all of the participants and if the City is offering a different early out Plan then you are considered to be in your own individual Plan at that point in time. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there are over 300 cities in this Plan and many have something unique to that City so that is why you are required to adopt this Resolution which is an IRS requirement. This is mandatory and there is no financial consequence to the Plan. Mark Barber stated that we have to do this every other year depending on the IRS changes.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2016-16, a Resolution to approve an amendment to the GMEBS Master Defined Benefit Retirement Plan, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

**BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Consideration of a request from Councilman Robert Yost, District 6, requesting the resignation of the City Appointees of the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton called on Councilman Robert Yost for comments. Councilman Yost stated that for quite some time he has shared his opinions regarding the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County and its Chief Executive Officer and Attorney. He has been very public and very consistent in his belief that changes need to be made in the hospital leadership and the members of the Authority should resign. He placed this issue on the Agenda at the Mayor and Council Retreat in March and it was discussed then. He has consistently brought the matter up and shared his concerns during Council comments since then. He has also shared information that he has received from various parties to support his position. He has been shocked by the number of people in the community who have reached out to him and told him that they support his position. Many of them have shared their own stories and experiences in dealing with the hospital. Some of you have shared with him that you hear the same things. We are all aware that the Hospital Authority was found to have violated the Georgia Open Meetings and Open Records Act. This is the fault of the Authority as well as its CEO and Attorney. The Hospital Authority also began providing only a "Summary of Actions" instead of Minutes of Meetings as required. In his opinion, this appears to be an attempt to prevent the full disclosure of all business and all discussion of items by the Authority in their public meetings. There is a widespread belief in this community that a change in leadership is needed at the hospital. This responsibility begins with the Mayor and Council and County Commission who appoint the Hospital Authority members. He has advocated in the past for term limits for appointees to all Boards, Commissions, and Authorities. He believed then and he believes now that people should serve in these volunteer appointments for the right reasons. They should serve for a limited time and then pass the torch of leadership to others. He believes that now is the time to start over and appoint new and fresh faces to the Hospital Authority. Many in this community have lost faith in the Authority. He has heard from many on the inside, many who are no longer associated with the hospital, many community leaders, many affected citizens, and many medical professionals. They consistently share serious concerns, share examples, share fear of retribution, and share anxiety about the hospital's future

success. Concerns range from the acquisition of Smith Northview, the price paid to acquire it, whether it was ever voted on by the Authority, concerns about the emergency room, concerns about the role of the Attorney in day-to-day operations, concerns about the management style of the CEO, concerns about outsourcing jobs such as collections, concerns about conflicts of interest among members of the Authority and its Attorney, professional work for the hospital alleged to have been performed by a member of the management team's family, and so on. He knows that many of you have also heard similar concerns and feels that everyone is looking the other way in hopes that these issues will somehow resolve themselves. That to him is false hope and he believes that one of the responsibilities of leadership is to address the difficult issues however uncomfortable they might be. Councilman Yost stated that his request is for the Mayor and Council to ask the City appointed members of the Hospital Authority to resign. He says that not to question the character of these members, but in the spirit that a clean slate can review all issues with an open mind and without the peer pressure of other members and staff. He would also like to point out that present members would be free to re-apply and that Council might choose to re-appoint some of them. That is the right of the members and the Council. Appointing new members can bring new ideas, a fresh perspective, and an openness to again become a community institution that citizens respect and trust. Asking members of a Board, Commission, or Authority to resign is not an unprecedented action by the City. In 1998, the City requested that members of the Tourism Commission resign. As one of those who served on that Commission and resigned at the request of the City, he knows this to be the case. He recognizes the importance of our hospital to the community. It is critical to our health care system, provides needed services to our citizens, is an important economic engine, and is a large and important employer. He values the hospital, its employees, its doctors, and the medical community. His goal here is to be sure that we have the leadership necessary on the Authority to manage the hospital in the future. To prepare for the future, he also believes that the City and County, with the necessary cooperation of the Legislative delegation, should propose legislation to change the way members of the Hospital Authority are appointed. The elected members of the City Council and County Commission answer to the citizens who vote them in office. The elected bodies should have the freedom to appoint individuals who they believe will best serve the community and the community's hospital. At the present time, it is the members of the Hospital Authority who control who is appointed to the Authority. This is part of the problem that has led to questions about potential conflicts of interest among the members themselves. The City appointed members are Johnny Langdale, who was appointed in 1994 and has served 21 years, Sam Allen who was appointed in 2009 and has served 7 years, Greg Powell who was appointed in 1994 and has served 22 years and Tim Dame who was appointed this year. Councilman Yost also stated that there is a law enforcement agency investigating the hospital and the Hospital Authority and they have found unethical behavior by the hospital and the Hospital Authority. He knows this because he was questioned for over two hours by the investigative agency. There is information about what should happen and what should not happen with any governing body. The City Council has regulations and as members of the Council they must adhere to those regulations. In 2014, as noted by the Wall Street Journal, 46% of more than 2,300 non-profit hospitals had at least one Trustee or Officer with business ties to that hospital either directly or through relatives. Also, at one time Lincoln Memorial Health Systems banned business contracts with Board Members. They did this in the 2000's. At the time, there were three Trustees of the hospital, a bank leader, a local attorney, and a real estate developer, who did business and faced giving up either their Board seats or their hospital business because of the conflict of interest. All three resigned from the Board because of the conflict of interest.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Yost for the City appointed members of the Hospital Authority to resign immediately from their current positions. Councilman Carroll seconded the motion. Councilman Carroll stated that it is clear, based on the comments by Councilman Yost, that this is not a personal issue. He thinks highly of all the members who serve on the Hospital Authority; however, we have had problems coming down the pipeline. We have seen it and we have had issues with the most recent being the potential for a medical college locating here. He has had several conversations with not only the Board Members of the Hospital Authority but also the South Georgia Medical Center Foundation and from those conversations, it became clear that many who serve on the Hospital Authority were not aware of the details of the medical college Memorandum of Understanding but were asked to vote. It is pretty indicative that any one of us who agreed to serve in this seat are prepared when they meet and knowledgeable of the issues that come before them. They can thus make a knowledgeable vote. There is some concern that if members are not prepared to vote on things such as that then they are not technically doing their job. The second thing that is of great concern is that he was told by someone on the South Georgia Medical Center Foundation that the contribution rate or the amount of funds coming in to that

Foundation that serves the hospital are running at about 25% of what it was four or five years ago. The Foundation, on this current trend, may well dry up. He asked the person why they thought this was the case and he was told that the confidence in the Authority and the individuals that contribute those types of funds such as \$10,000, \$15,000, \$50,000 \$100,000 or more do not have faith in the Hospital Authority. That is a great concern. When you look at the combination of all of it as well as the long list of information that Councilman Yost has presented, any rational and reasonable person would say that something needs to give. The only way that we will be able to bring change in the Hospital Authority and change for the good is to make this request. They can either do this or not and we cannot force them to resign; however, it should clearly send a message that the elected officials of the City of Valdosta recognize that there are issues and it is time to address them.

Councilman Vickers stated that he would like to make some observations. The request is for the City appointed members of the Hospital Authority to resign and he was told that the County has no intention of asking their appointed Hospital Authority members to resign. He was told that once again the City is instigating something and trying to drag them in it. We have one or two Council members who were privy to this information and none of this was gathered in public. This was all done privately behind closed doors. We do not know who shared this information with the Council members and it looks like this is unfair for all of these accusations against some of our upstanding citizens. They are lacking due process. This is one of the worst things he has ever seen in his 28 years. They have talked about some of the Board members serving 22 years and he has served 28 years. They have had some Board members at the hospital serving 30 years. One or two Council members have received this information and they have come and told the other Council members about it. They have not had the opportunity to hear it first hand from the individuals. He is not trying to cast any bad feelings toward the Council members, but they are Councilmen and you are asking us to act based on things that one or two have put together from what they have heard from the community. Since the article appeared in the newspaper, he has had a number of people who are in support of the Hospital Authority members. In the last 100 days, he spent 15 days on two different occasions in the hospital and the last time he was very sick. He was very happy with the care he received. He started going to the Cancer Center in 2007-2008 and he is still here. He has spoken with some of the Board members and asked the Chairman to address some of these issues with the City Council. There are some issues and accusations that have been made public and they need to come and address those issues. The Hospital Authority is like the City in that it is very complicated. You cannot just take out people and put new ones in there. Several years ago the citizens voted to take out all of the County Commissioners and the County Manager. It was chaos. He did speak with them about the issues with the hospital emergency room and they gave him an answer. He has talked to them about why your doctor cannot come to the hospital and one or two other things. They need to come and address these issues publicly and if any Council members have any specific thing that they would like for them to address then they should have the opportunity to present their side. He is in support of the hospital and for them to run the best facility that they possibly can. We need to work with this Board on the things that we think are wrong and give them an opportunity to address those issues. If they do not have them addressed by the time they come up for reappointment then they should not be reappointed. He supports the Board members and he is for working with the hospital to address the issues that need to be addressed.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton asked if there were any other comments from Council. Councilman Yost stated that he wanted to speak after everyone has had a chance to speak. Councilman Vickers stated that Councilman Yost has dominated this and everyone should have a chance to speak, get it on the table, and take a vote instead of going on and on and on because Councilman Yost will have a comment behind everybody. This is just not fair. Councilman Yost stated that he just said that he would rather everyone speak before he said a couple of words. Councilman Vickers stated that he just read three pages.

Councilman Norton stated that if an investigation was done behind closed doors he does not think it was done by this Council and inquired if it was done by an independent agency. Councilman Yost stated that was correct. Councilman Norton stated that they did not talk to him nor did he get any information from them about this Authority. Councilman Vickers stated that they knew about that and they did not. Councilman Norton stated that South Georgia Medical Center does give good care and his father who passed away 13 years ago received excellent care during the final years of his life. He appreciated the good work of the staff, nurses, and everyone at South Georgia Medical Center; however, in those 13 years the feeling toward the hospital has changed. His information comes from people who have called him on the telephone, talked to him on the street, or talked to him

at church. Doctors have called him on his personal cell phone as well as his home phone number. Nurses have spoken with him outside of these Council Chambers and the hospital and they are afraid to speak out about things that are not right at the hospital in their opinion. Somebody has to lead. Leaders lead for the greater good of the community and the region. The Council leads for the greater good of Valdosta and they take a lot of things into consideration as they lead. Decisions that they make are not always popular. They made a vote a couple of weeks ago that was not very popular but it was for the greater good. The Authority has a responsibility of leading for the greater good. He does not believe that we are seeing that from the Hospital Authority at this time. They should do what is on the floor right now and ask for the City appointed members to resign.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she disagreed. They should not vote to remove those people because she believes in fairness. If you cannot tell her about what someone is doing or bring it to her and let her read it for herself and get a proper understanding of what is going on, then it is like trying to hang someone without a trial. If you do not have the evidence in front of that person and allow that person to speak then you cannot say a person is guilty if you do not have the evidence for the person to be able to defend themselves. She disagrees with the idea. She is a leader of District 1 and District 1 does need some help. There are some people who live in District 1 who lost their jobs at the hospital but there is a reason for everything. You have to research things. Sometimes everything that is black and white is the black and white of how you want it to be black and white. Give her the top to the bottom of this story and let her read it and pick out what she thinks is wrong and right. That is her opinion. They have heard this since she has been on Council and to her it is like a one man band. No one is playing in the band except Councilman Yost. She does not have anything against him but she is still saying that if they gave Councilman Yost information then the entire Board should have received the same information.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton stated that he had some questions for Attorney Tim Tanner. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired about calling for the resignation of the City appointees on the Hospital Authority or any other Authority or Commission and asked if it would be enforceable if the request is approved by the majority vote of this Council. Attorney Tim Tanner stated that with respect to the Hospital Authority itself it would not be enforceable. It would be non-binding and it would be a request of this Council for those appointees to resign. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired as to what the process would be if there was a desire by the Mayor and Council to modify the current process for appointing Hospital Authority members or any other Authority or Commission members as well as implementing term limits mentioned by some Council members. Attorney Tanner stated that the process would be by a Constitutional Amendment or a local law Amendment and you would have to get with the State delegation to have it proposed and passed by the General Assembly. This is a very unique Authority and has been around since 1947. There are some special laws that have been enacted in 1964 and this process is just in respect to the Hospital Authority. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired as to what would be the process for replacing City appointees on the Hospital Authority or any other Authority or Commission who have resigned and only the County appointees were left so a quorum could not be reached. Currently, only the Hospital Authority submits recommendations to the Mayor and Council for approval. Attorney Tanner stated that the Hospital Authority is currently made up of eight members, four of which are appointed by the City and four appointed by the County. He did look on-line for their By-laws which govern their quorum requirements but did not find anything; however, if there was a mass resignation of four City appointees at one time it could potentially leave them without a quorum so they may have an inability to conduct business. He is not familiar with their exact By-laws and their operating procedures but they could have staggered resignations if they wanted to consider it in order to achieve their business at a meeting and to submit to the Mayor and Council additional appointees. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired as to how legal Counsel is selected if needed by an Authority or Commission. Attorney Tanner stated that with respect to the Hospital Authority, he would conclude that it would be up to their sole discretion. The members of the Hospital Authority would have the ability to appoint who they wish to be their legal Counsel. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired as to whether a Council member who abstains from a vote on this matter would be limited or precluded from a future vote on items concerning this entity. Attorney Tanner stated that it would not. Abstentions under the City's Charter and Ordinances are governed by Section 2.41. He would caution a Council member, however, that if they raise a conflict of interest in that it prevents them from making a fair and legal decision, they have to announce the reasons why they cannot achieve a fair and legal decision for the record in Council Chambers. The problem they might run into in the future is that if they have to come up and vote again then they would also

have to explain why their conflict now has been erased or no longer exists or their vote could possibly be challenged with respect to the subsequent vote.

Councilman Yost stated that he has had hundreds of former and current employees, doctors, nurses, and citizens of this City and County come to him and talk to him about this issue. He has not hidden anything from anybody and he has been talking about this since March. The reason that they do not know about the law enforcement investigation going on is because he was told not to tell anybody. He got permission to be able to speak about it at this Council Meeting and was asked not to reveal who they are or anything that they have found. Council knows as much as he does at this point about the law enforcement agency investigating this issue. As far as the Councilman serving 28 years, he has a group or body in his District that holds him accountable. They elect him and even re-elected him so they have held him accountable. The biggest problem with the Hospital Authority is that they have zero accountability to anyone. We have the right to ask them to resign and they do not have to resign. That is a problem that they cannot be held accountable for any of their actions so that when you hire your daughter and her company to do collections for the hospital, it was not done as is stated in their By-laws that they have to have a public meeting to discuss the issue. They have to advertise in the local organ which would be the Valdosta Daily Times and they have done none of that. He has their minutes and it highlights it. Their minutes are atrocious. Under the section entitled Financial Obligations it names the collection agency and not what the vote was or any of the discussion about it. Accountability is the biggest issue here and it is time that we put our big boy pants on and take a stand that we were elected to do. He appreciates everybody's support on this issue whether you are for it or against it.

Councilman Vickers called for the question. Mayor Pro Tem Payton asked all those in favor of calling for the question to say "Aye." The motion to call for the question was unanimous (6-0).

Mayor Pro Tem Payton asked all those in favor of the motion as presented to raise their right hand. Councilman Yost, Councilman Carroll, and Councilman Norton voted in favor of the request and Councilman Vickers, Councilwoman Tooley, and Councilwoman Miller-Cody voted against the request (3-3). Mayor Pro Tem Payton stated that this puts him in the position to break the tie vote. He has done a lot of personal research and has listened to the Council members and this is a tough decision; however, you have to vote what your conscious is telling you to vote toward. Mayor Pro Tem Payton stated that his vote would be in favor of the motion as stated by Councilman Yost and seconded by Councilman Carroll. The motion was adopted (4-3).

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

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that since the Hurricane event three weeks ago, the Public Works Department has been working diligently to get the tremendous amount of yard debris picked up. Effective tomorrow, they will have made one trip through the entire City and will be back on a regular schedule on Monday. They have had six claw trucks working and have had assistance from the City of Douglas and several private companies. They have been working nights, weekends, and 12 hour shifts. In three weeks, they picked up 2,718,673 lbs of yard debris which is approximately 1,400 tons. It has been remarkable what they have been able to do to work through this. No one really realized the challenge that the workers faced on major routes. Typically, one out of every ten piles would be a claw pile, but this time it has been nine out of every ten piles. The claw truck schedule had to be changed in order to avoid the dangers of rush hour and school traffic. We owe the employees a great debt of gratitude.

On September 17, 2016, a four year old girl saved her father's life when she found him unconscious in bed. She used his cell phone to call a friend who then called 911 and got the three of them together on the phone so the young girl could tell the 911 dispatcher what had happened. The Police arrived first on the scene and the EMS shortly thereafter. The girl was able to let them in the home and they were able to provide the medical help that her father needed. He survived due to the actions of his daughter. Police Chief Brian Childress presented her with an award for her courage and for doing what she did in a time of great stress.

Effective Monday, September 26, 2016, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs will be making an announcement about a new program, Underwater Georgia, which is intended to help up to 150,000 people in the

State of Georgia who are underwater on their home mortgages which means they owe more on their home than what it is worth. We will be preparing a Press Release and Council is encouraged to reach out to citizens in their Districts who may be able to benefit from this program.

There was a lot of good feedback on the Dumpster Art Project which was held on Saturday, September 17, 2016 in the Downtown area. This was a great idea of Sementha Mathews, Public Information Officer, and her Staff, Main Street, and the Turner Center for the Arts. Also, 700 young people at Dewar Elementary participated in the painting a dumpster this week. There is a dumpster located in the parking lot behind City Hall which was painted by Sarah Lowe of the Neighborhood Development Department and it looks very attractive.

The Fire Department will be participating in Fire Safety Month in October. They will be doing a lot of education in the community to keep citizens informed on how to keep them safe and what to do in case of a fire.

The Police and Fire Academies are going good and it is also time to start thinking about City Government 101 which will start next spring. The application has already been placed on the City's website and we have had three people sign up for it which tells us that citizens are going to the website and seeing the things we are putting out there so that is very encouraging.

The pilot Shuttle Program has been extended through December 31, 2016 and citizens are encouraged to use it so that we can build a track record and try to secure funding for the future.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the five Cities and Lowndes County were unable to reach an agreement during negotiations on the Service Delivery Strategy and the next step is mediation. The mediation will take place on September 28-29, 2016 at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center. The Attorneys are having a conference call to set the schedule and to commit to the issues that will be mediated. The Mayor and Council will be notified of the exact times and they are encouraged to attend. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the public could attend. Larry Hanson stated that the public would not be able to attend. Typically, the way mediation works is that you start out with the parties in a room together with a mediator. There is a discussion and then the parties are separated into different rooms. From that point on the mediator is going back and forth trying to help the sides to reach an agreement. The process is often slow and tedious but it is an interesting process. The goal of the mediator is to help the two parties reach an agreement. This particular mediator is an Attorney from Atlanta with a good reputation and all of the parties agreed on using him.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Carroll stated that he was very impressed with the Dumpster Art Project. He has had fun sharing it with his friends across the U. S. and they want more photos. Also, at a recent Council Meeting, the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) came before Council and asked them to consider adopting a Resolution establishing a City Center Art District. He attended their recent meeting last week to learn a little more about it and asked Mayor Gayle and the City Manager to draft the appropriate document and place it on the Agenda (possibly early October). Councilman Carroll asked Council's consideration in reviewing the document and reaching out to members of the PAAC if there were any questions. This will benefit the Downtown area and the art community. It will involve the school children and the Arts Center is doing some wonderful things with them. Unfortunately, art is a program that has been cut in school systems in the past. Councilman Carroll asked for Council's support.

Councilman Vickers commended the Public Works Department for the fine job they did in picking up all the debris after the storm. In his District, there is still a lot of leaves and pine straw in the streets and he would like to see the street sweeper in that area.

Councilman Yost thanked the Public Works Department for their efforts before and after the storm. Also, he thanked Council for the discussion and support but he also wanted to thank the hospital employees for what they do for this community on a daily basis. They are to be commended for the work they do and the atmosphere that they have had to work under.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that Public Works has done a great job but there are some places in District 1 that have not had the debris picked up yet. If you take a match and throw it in the pile it will start a fire; however, they will be back on schedule next week and she will be watching to make sure the piles get picked up.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton stated that beginning with the October 6, 2016 Council Meeting the Citizens to be Heard portion on the Agenda will be moved up and placed before the City Manager's comments.

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Roy Taylor, 2209 Bridlewood Drive, stated that he wanted to speak to Council about the hospital. He moved to Valdosta in 1975 and the hospital was very small at that time. He has watched it grow through the years and it has good leaders. He was in Atlanta in April and his wife had to go to the hospital. One of their friends recommended that they go to Piedmont Hospital. They went there and she was in the hospital for seven days. Every day they brought a new doctor in and they were not able to find what was wrong with her; however, they sent him a \$90,000 bill. They came back to Valdosta and she went to South Georgia Medical Center. Within five hours they found out she had a blood clot in her lungs. Then she had to go back to the hospital a month later and was treated for a spinal infection. Dr. Tidmore told them he had only seen three of those in 20 years of his practice. They did a tremendous job here but they ended up taking her to Emory. Care like that comes from the people who lead the hospital. He knows some good leaders on the Board and the last time he counted there were 2,700 employees at South Georgia Medical Center. The times that they were in the hospital he heard a couple of complaints but he had numerous compliments on how well the hospital was run. James McGahee was one of the best leaders at the hospital and there have been some excellent Board members.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Payton entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6 -0) to adjourn the September 22, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:33 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 6, 2016.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta