

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 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. Tim Tanner, Attorney with Coleman-Talley, LLP filled in for George Talley, City Attorney, who was absent. Mayor Gayle arrived late at 5:44 p.m. The invocation was given by Stephen Johnson, Freedom Outpost, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Presentation by Georgia Power.

Jason Manley, Vice President of the Southern Region, Georgia Power, stated that last month we had Hurricane Hermine come through our area. There were many outages as the eye came over Valdosta; however, we had a pretty good infrastructure with the Southern Company and 850 of his closest friends came to our area to help with the task of getting electricity restored and the lights back on. Mr. Manley thanked the City of Valdosta for their partnership with Georgia Power. With that many people and trucks coming to town, you have to have some where to park them all. They created a staging area at Five Points and had a feeding tent for the workers from Alabama Power who came here to help. Mr. Manley stated that it takes a lot of partnerships to pull off something like this and the City of Valdosta was a key partner in helping to get the lights back on. He thanked the Mayor and Council and the City of Valdosta for their partnership and support.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-18, A RESOLUTION TO UPDATE THE GREATER LOWNDES 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Consideration of a Resolution to update the Greater Lowndes 2030 Comprehensive Plan (File No. VA-2016-14). The Planning Commission reviewed this at their September Regular Meeting and recommended approval (8-0 Vote). This request was postponed at the October 6, 2016 Regular Council Meeting until a later date.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan is a shared long-range planning document for Lowndes County and all five of its cities. The current Plan was adopted in 2006 and has since undergone periodic amendments. State law requires that the City of Valdosta complete a full update of the Comprehensive Plan every ten years. Beginning in January, 2016, the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) and the Staff Planners of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) hosted a series of public hearings and workshops to discuss and revise various portions of the Comprehensive Plan. This included the incorporation of community goals and policies from the 2014 Common Community Vision process with the goals and policies of the current Comprehensive Plan. This also included the incorporation of elements from the MPO long-range Transportation Plan, the City’s HUD Consolidated Plan for housing, as well as other local master plans and community planning efforts. This process is now complete and a copy of the full 2016 Plan Update (about 170 pages) can be found on the SGRC website. Because this is a joint Comprehensive Plan, most of the Plan’s tenets are shared and considered among all six local governments; however, the City of Valdosta still maintains custody of its own Future Development Map (Character Areas) and its own five-year Community Work Program (CWP). In July, the City Council voted to formally transmit the Plan Update to the SGRC and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review and comment. DCA performed their official review

and responded in August stating that it was compliant with all of the State’s minimum planning standards, and gave clearance to our local governments to proceed with formal adoption. The Plan must now be adopted individually by each of the six local governments before the October 30, 2016 deadline in order to maintain the City’s Qualified Local Government (QLG) status which keeps us eligible for State funding and permitting. Going forward, in an effort to maintain the Comprehensive Plan as a “living document”, the CWP will be revised and revisited each year to keep it up-to-date and make adjustments to Character Areas and other elements of the Plan as appropriate. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) held one last joint public hearing at their regular meeting on September 26, 2016 to consider the final draft of the Plan Update. The Planning Commission recommended approval to each of their member local governments (8-0 vote). Councilman Yost inquired as to why this request was postponed at the last Council Meeting. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the County had postponed it as well until next week. It is a big document and a big change and you do this once every ten years so you want to be sure it is done correctly. There is nothing in this document that the City has any concern about. Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the deadline to adopt the Plan is October 30, 2016 and since the City and County had two meetings in October they had the liberty to postpone it. Smaller units of government only had one meeting in October.

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2016-18, a Resolution to update the Greater Lowndes 2030 Comprehensive Plan, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of a request to approve an Option for Right-of-Way Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for roadway improvements throughout the Downtown area.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has requested to purchase 231 square feet of right-of-way from the City at the southwest corner of Hill Avenue and Oak Street (Municipal Court). The right-of-way is needed for their intersection upgrades throughout the Downtown area. The City of Valdosta has nothing located within the area that will be affected by the purchase. The traffic signal control box located on the corner belongs to GDOT already. The Fair Market Value of the area has been determined to be \$3,400. GDOT has requested that the City execute the Option for Right-of-Way so that the purchase can be turned over to their attorneys for closing. This request is very much like the GDOT purchase of right-of-way at the Five Points entrance last year, except the City will not have to remove anything from the area. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Right-of-Way Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for roadway improvements throughout the Downtown area. Councilman Vickers inquired as to what type of work GDOT would be doing. Pat Collins stated that GDOT would be putting up the mast arm type traffic light similar to what has been installed on Ashley Street.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Right-of-Way Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for roadway improvements throughout the Downtown area.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, commended the City on the Southside on Troup Street Project that he had complained about. He also wanted to commend the City on several other Projects that were started around town. He has been to all of the Kendrick Johnson cases; however, he went to the Kendrick Johnson case where they are trying to get legal fees from the family, and Judge Richard Porter, III, goes to sleep without exception in every case. This is being documented and registered to the judicial qualification by a civil rights organization. The manner in which certain attorneys are allowed to act in the Courtroom is a disgrace and you will see the rest of the story. This has nothing to do with the Mayor and Council except that it happened in the City and

we think that you need to know about it. In addition to that, WALB TV recorded the only real video footage because Judge Richard Porter would not allow the other news media to record, especially WSB out of Atlanta. The footage that WALB took has never been published and they should have it on the tape showing him sleeping in the Courtroom. Citizens are making note of it and writing down the times. Mr. Rhynes stated that citizens are also talking about the unfair citations on the Southside and there are other properties that look three times worse and those people are not cited.

John Robinson, 3227 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he wanted to speak about communication. Mr. Robinson asked that the Council, City Manager, and his Staff set up some type of communication between the churches and local organizations in the City as far as the progress of all the construction that is taking place. There might be something wrong with the communication as it is right now because somehow they do not get all the information they need when they need it. He would also like to have a response to his request in writing if possible. Mr. Robinson commended the City for the Troup Street Project and stated that everything seems to be coming along pretty good. He would like to have an update on the Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) Program and any new hotels and other activities going on in the City to be included in the report as well.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it was a pleasure having Jason Manley, Vice President of the Southern Region, Georgia Power, in attendance tonight. Georgia Power is a great partner and he came here to compliment us but they also work very well with us. We work together with Georgia Power all the time whether it is in a storm event out of necessity or whether it is on a project such as having all our street lights converted to LED. Georgia Power has always been a good partner for the City and we work very well together. They assign an Account Manager to be our sole point of contact so we can work through any issues we might have. We too appreciate the partnership and all that Georgia Power does in working with us.

The Neighborhood Development Division sponsored the 2016 Affordable Housing Summit and Town Hall Meeting on October 8, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Mildred Hunter Center. There were over 20 organizations participating in the event and they provided information to citizens regarding affordable housing, homeless prevention resources, and much more. Councilwoman Tooley and Councilwoman Miller-Cody sent very complimentary E-mails to the Staff, Vanassa Flucas and Sarah Lowe, for all of their hard work in planning and carrying out the event. That was very much appreciated and the event was very well received.

There are currently 12 opportunities to serve on various Boards, Commissions, and Authorities and Council is encouraged to reach out to citizens and have them submit an application. The deadline to apply is November 2, 2016 and the appointments will be made at the November 10, 2016 City Council Meeting.

The Azalea City Yard Showcase will take place on Saturday, November 19, 2016 and it will be a neighborhood cleanup and yard competition. The area will encompass East Force Street to East Jane Street and citizens are encouraged to take good care of their properties. They will recognize and award those residents who are taking care of the properties with a Best in Show and Most Improved Yard. This Showcase has been a passion of Councilwoman Miller-Cody and we are looking forward to participating in this event.

The Bulk Trash Amnesty Day will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and is part of Make A Difference Day. They will be using a portion of our HUD and any resident of the City can bring their unwanted household items and dispose of them at no cost. They must have a utility account so they will need to bring a copy of their water bill and a photo ID. They are allowed one drop off. Zone 1 is the Greater Pleasant Temple Baptist Church on Cherry Street, Zone 2 is the Scott Park parking lot, Zone 3 is the City Hall Annex parking lot, and Zone 4 is the Public Works Department.

The Fall Electronics Recycling Event will be held on Saturday, November 14, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium. Any citizen can bring their old electronic products that they no longer have a use for and get rid of them. Last year they collected over 30,000 lbs. of electronic debris and since 2006, the City has saved 278 tons of electronics from going into the landfill.

The new Wastewater Treatment Plant was written up in a national magazine as a model example of taking something that was a devastating event and a Presidential-declared disaster flood and through a very innovative design build method using Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), the problem was resolved in a quick time to build what we built. It says a lot about our community and how we responded to that and to be written up in a national engineering publication is noteworthy.

The Deep South Solid Waste Authority recently met in Adel and there were approximately 42 officials from the seven-member governments in attendance. There was a presentation on the history and what they do. It is a great thing for us to have a regional landfill and it has benefited our City.

There was a dinner held last night for the Georgia Department of Transportation Board in Valdosta and it is a great opportunity for us to be able to host Boards like this. They have been here since Tuesday and it gives them a chance to visit our community and see our needs first hand. We were very pleased with some of the commitments they made to Valdosta and Lowndes County on some of the future projects.

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority has decided to host their Board Meeting in Valdosta on November 9-10, 2016. On November 10, they will take the entire 22 member Board on a tour of the new Wastewater Treatment Plant so they can see it and share our story as an example to other cities and counties. GEFA has been a great resource and they can help other communities with major capital projects.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they would need to have a brief Executive Session on a real estate matter and no action is expected to be taken.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carroll stated that each week many of us receive the E-mail newsletter from Sementha Mathews, Public Information Officer, and it has a lot of great information. There is a lot going on in the City and she is to be commended on preparing the publication and sending it out.

Mayor Gayle stated that he was involved tonight in a very special event at the Boys and Girls Club. The Valdosta City Schools 21st Century Community Learning Center has over 600 students who attend the Valdosta Boys and Girls Club every day. The ages range from kindergarten to 6th grade and then 7th grade to seniors in high school. Mayor Gayle stated that he spoke to the kindergarten through the 6th grade students and told them how much we needed them to become good citizens in our community. Mayor Gayle also thanked Mayor Pro Tem Payton for filling in for him while he was at this event.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that the Grass Committee met and did not have many changes. She will be bringing their comments for the Mayor to review. Also, she has her two children in attendance at the Council Meeting so they can see what is being done. They help her a lot at the South Street Community Care House and after school they help with chores and cleaning up. They also help others in the community who are in need. They are her star students and they are doing real good.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton commended Sementha Mathews, Public Information Officer, and Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Manager, for the outstanding job they did this morning on the Chris Beckham Radio Show. Also, there was a Valdosta Youth Council Meeting at 4:00 p.m. which went very well. It is very rewarding to see young people involved in the process. We are planting some good seeds for them to be great community leaders in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Payton entertained a motion to adjourn the regular Council meeting and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the October 20, 2016 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:00 p.m. and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

Mayor Gayle reconvened the regular City Council meeting at 6:22 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of real estate in the Executive Session and no action would need to be taken.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the October 20, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:23 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, November 10, 2016.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta