

September/October 2008

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## CITY OF VALDOSTA APPOINTMENTS

In accordance with the City of Valdosta's new Appointment Policy and to provide an opportunity for qualified citizens to be made aware of opportunities to serve on various boards, commissions, authorities and committees, the City announces the following openings:

- Central Valdosta Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority (3)
- Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful Board (2)
- Valdosta Housing Authority (3)
- Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals (3)
- Valdosta Tree Commission (3)
- Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority (1)
- Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority (2)

The closing date for submitting the General Board Application and Code of Ethics form to the Clerk of Council is Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2008, at 5 p.m. (See story on Page 3 for more information.)



[www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com)

## VPD Receives International Recognition

The Valdosta Police Department was recognized in July 2008 as an internationally accredited law enforcement agency by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and became the first agency ever to be awarded Flagship status twice by the international accrediting organization. Mayor John J. Fretti, City Manager Larry Hanson, Police Chief Frank Simons, and Capt. Bernard Robinson received the award on behalf of the department at a ceremony in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.



(from left) City Manager Larry Hanson, Mayor John J. Fretti, Police Chief Frank Simons, and Capt. Bernard Robinson

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety also recently awarded the VPD and the Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (H.E.A.T) Unit with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of their outstanding highway safety contributions and accomplishments, and for its public education efforts to save lives on Georgia roadways. Since 2005, accidents and fatalities in the City of Valdosta have been reduced. There were ten fatalities in 2005, three in 2006, one in 2007, and none to date in 2008. The total number of crashes last year was 1,939 compared to 1,949 crashes in 1993.

Congratulations to all the men and women of the VPD!

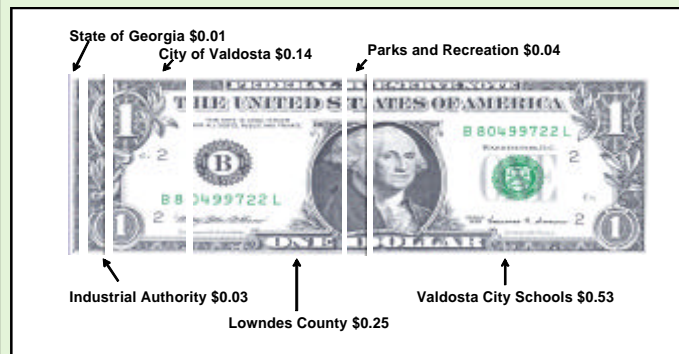
## The City of Valdosta Lowers Millage Rate Again

*Citizens see reduction for the 8th time in 15 years*

The Valdosta City Council adopted a decreased millage rate for the citizens of Valdosta of 4.112 mills from last year's 4.178 mills at the City Council meeting, on

Aug. 7, 2008. It is the 8th time the City's millage rate has been lowered in the last 15 years.

The City of Valdosta rolled back the \$22.7 million in reassessment value for the 2008 tax year, and citizens residing in the City of Valdosta should



experience a reduction or no increase in taxes paid to the City of Valdosta. However, a City of Valdosta property owner also pays taxes to the following entities: Valdosta City Schools, the State of Georgia and Lowndes County. Included in the Lowndes County millage is 1 mill which is assessed to all county residents to fund the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority and 1.25 mills assessed to fund the newly created Recreation Authority.

## Sampling to Participate in Citizens Survey

A sampling of Valdosta citizens will be called upon in Fall 2008 to participate in the National Citizen Survey, facilitated by the International City/County Management Assoc. (ICMA).

City officials want to know how citizens feel about local quality of life, quality of service delivery, speed of community growth, personal and public safety, and public trust. Citizens will have the opportunity to answer a variety of general questions in a confidential manner that will provide City leaders with information about the livability of our community while also comparing the data to other communities across America.

"The survey results will allow the City to more accurately gauge how we are performing in the eyes of our citizens," said Assistant to the City Manager Mara Register. "City leaders may then use the collected data to revise existing programs, determine the need for new programs, and use the data as a tool for short and long term planning."

A random sample of citizens will be selected from a list of city addresses provided by the U.S. Postal Service and based on the zip codes inside the City. Citizens selected to participate will first receive a pre-notification postcard informing them of the survey.

Similar citizen surveys have been facilitated by ICMA in over 400 other communities, including other Georgia cities like Savannah. Individual survey responses from citizens are strictly confidential and maintained by ICMA.

"The National Citizen Survey is the latest in a long series of initiatives created to further public trust and confidence in local government and improve the management of local government services," said City Manager Larry Hanson. "Public participation is the key to good local government. The City of Valdosta fully expects the results of this citizen survey to improve the way the City serves its citizens and to continue to move us forward as a community."

Call the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548 for more information.

## City Celebrates National Community Planning Month

How do you get to work or school? Where do you live? Where do you shop? Many citizens do not realize that these decisions are all impacted by planning.



October has been designated National Community Planning Month by the American Planning Association, and Valdosta Mayor John J. Fretti has signed

a proclamation highlighting the role of planners in our community and declaring October Community Planning Month in Valdosta as well. This year's theme is "Green Communities," acknowledging the vital role planners play in creating sustainable and environmentally-friendly communities.

The month-long celebration includes a variety of events for citizens, City staff, and elected officials such as Traffic Management Center tours, Water Plant tours, neighborhood and river clean-up events, round table discussions, and many other activities during the month. The Historic Preservation Commission and the Valdosta Heritage Foundation will host a reception at the historic Roberts' House on Thursday, Oct. 30, from 5 to 9 p.m. for citizens to learn about the unique historic resources of our community and the redevelopment of this 1890's home.

Planning is the process of envisioning, mapping or otherwise conceiving how a community will look, grow, and define itself.

To learn more about the events occurring here in Valdosta or to subscribe to the Community Planning electronic newsletter, contact the City of Valdosta Planning and Zoning Office at (229) 259-3563 or visit their webpage on the City's web site at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).

## City Hosts Electronic Recycling Event, Nov. 1

If you're wondering what to do with that out-dated computer or the television that hasn't worked in years, then you'll be pleased to know that the City of Valdosta Public Works Department and Atlanta Recycling Solutions will host an Electronic Recycling Event on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2008, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This bi-annual event is designed to encourage Valdosta citizens to discard used or unwanted electronic equipment in a convenient and environmentally responsible manner and to keep electronics out of the landfill. The event will be held in the Wal-Mart Supercenter side parking lot, at 340 Norman Drive.



The following is a list of electronics that will be accepted: computer monitors, central processing units (CPUs), laptops, disk drives, floppy drives, test equipment, modems, circuit boards, typewriters, CD ROMs, cables, eight-tracks, televisions (\$10 charge), a computer mouse, video machines, stereos, video cassette recorders (VCRs), cell phones, CB radios, record players, scanners, speakers, keyboards, can openers, camcorders and cameras.

The items that will not be accepted at the event are: vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washers, dryers, gas-powered equipment, and non-electronic equipment.

For information, contact the Public Works Department at (229) 671-3640.

## VFD Receives Structural Collapse Vehicle for Georgia Search and Rescue Team



The Valdosta Fire Department recently received a custom-built structural collapse vehicle for the Georgia Search and Rescue (GSAR) Task Force 2 that serves Valdosta and Southwest Georgia. The vehicle, valued at \$450,000 and equipped with \$650,000 of urban search and rescue equipment, was wholly funded by a \$1.1 million GEMA grant awarded in fall 2006.

GEMA awarded the VFD an additional \$175,000 for the training of Task Force 2, made up of fire department personnel from across the Southwest region. In the event of a local, regional, state, or national disaster or terrorism incident, a team of 28-35 trained personnel will be deployed to assist in urban search and rescue. The vehicle is a permanent asset of the VFD.

## City Seeks More Community Involvement Through New Board Appointment Policy

A new City policy establishing the procedures concerning the notification, announcement, and selection for appointments to boards, commissions, authorities, and advisory committees meets the City's goal of ensuring all citizens are aware of opportunities to serve in the City.

Through the new policy, the City seeks to provide a professional and structured process through which citizens may seek appointments, seeks qualified individuals who have a willingness and desire to serve, and ensures diversity in the make-up of the entities.

"Good government depends on the interest and involvement of citizens," said Valdosta Mayor John J. Fretti. "This new policy will foster renewed interest in serving the community and will meet the City's goals to have skill, diversity, and quality with its appointments."

In the new policy, the Clerk of Council is the official keeper of the records and will be responsible for keeping track of all vacancies on boards, commissions, authorities, and committees in the City. The Clerk of Council will also be responsible for the notification and announcement of pending vacancies within 60 days prior to a vacancy occurring via ads, public service announcements, City web site, Channel 96, and any other available means.

"For some time, many of the boards, commissions and authorities have struggled to provide the required

three names for each slot for consideration by the Mayor and the Council. By developing a comprehensive policy and bringing this function in-house through the Clerk of Council's office, we believe that improvements will result," said City Manager Larry Hanson.

Applications must be submitted by those seeking appointment or reappointment to a board, commission, authority, and advisory committee and will be retained for three years by the Clerk of Council once appointments have been made. Appointments are for one term, and any reappointment of an applicant for a subsequent term is at the discretion of the Mayor and the City Council. The policy limits anyone from serving in more than two City appointed positions at any one time.

The City Manager will present to the Mayor and the City Council the applications received during the application period at a work session of the first meeting of the month during the months of February, May, August, and November or as vacancies occur. The Mayor and the City Council will evaluate the credentials of persons applying for the appointments and appoint individuals to serve.

Citizens can view the policy and get an application by visiting the City's web site at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com). For more information, contact Teresa Bolden, Clerk of Council, at (229) 259-3500.

## City Welcomes Hicks

The City of Valdosta welcomes **Henry K. Hicks** as the new Director of Utilities, effective Oct. 13, 2008. Hicks



New Utilities Director Henry Hicks begins his City duties on Oct. 13.

comes to the City after serving for 17 years as the Water and Sewer Director for the City of Ocala, Fla, and brings with him over a quarter of a century of experience in

the operation and management of water and waste water treatment facilities in both the private and public sectors, as well as several impressive local, state and national awards.

In his new position, Hicks will supervise over 100 department employees, providing services to over 19,000 water customers, 17,700 sewer customers, and 17,800 stormwater customers in the City limits and some areas immediately adjacent to the City.

"The City is pleased with the arrival of Henry Hicks as our Director of Utilities," said City Manager Larry Hanson. "His professional experience and customer-oriented attitude will allow him and the Utilities Department to continue the significant progress the City of Valdosta has made in planning, developing and constructing new systems and facilities to support the continued growth of our community."

## City Council Wrap Up

The Valdosta City Council acted on a number of important items in their summer council meetings. Among others, the Council approved:

- Establishment of the 2008 Tax Millage Rate, which was lowered for the 8th time in 15 years
- A Transportation Master Plan for the City of Valdosta
- Federal Aviation Administration's Grant Agreement and Resolution for Taxiway A rehabilitation, grooving of Runway 35, and associated work at Valdosta Regional Airport
- Revisions to City of Valdosta's Personnel Policies & Procedures
- Scott Park renovations which include new playground structures and picnic shelters
- An amendment to the City of Valdosta Zoning Ordinance for animal foster care provider provisions
- Amendments to the Alcohol Ordinance, Interfering with Officers and Employees Ordinance, and Sign Regulations Ordinance
- A new Panhandling/Solicitation Ordinance
- A Hospitality District within the corporate limits of the City of Valdosta
- Renaming of the recreational facility on Gornto Road to the Wood Valley Community Center and bids for improvements to the facility
- Creation of a joint Capital Projects Coordinating Committee with the Valdosta Board of Education
- The 2009 Local Road Assistance Program (LARP) list for resurfacing streets in the City of Valdosta
- Authorization for a feasibility study and preliminary design for an office facility for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority
- Extension of the no on-street parking hours around Valdosta State University
- Construction of a right in/right out driveway at Perimeter Road to improve safety and reduce congestion at Valdosta High School

City Council meetings are held on the first and third Thursday following the first Sunday of each month. The meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. on the second floor of City Hall and are open to the public. Minutes of all Council meetings may be found at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com).

## Mission

To be known by our customers and others for high quality municipal services.



## Purpose

To provide public services that meet or exceed the expectations of citizens.

To improve the quality of life in the community by a sincere commitment to the ideals of public service.

To be creative and innovative in our approach to the needs of citizens, recognizing the trust and confidence that our citizens place in us as caretakers of governmental services.

To be efficient and effective and use wisely the public resources we are entrusted to manage.

**Quality Service by Quality People**

## City Ordinance Limits Three People per Dwelling Unit

A City of Valdosta ordinance, designed to protect the integrity and value of city neighborhoods, limits the number of unrelated people living together in one house to three people.

Houses in established neighborhoods are typically zoned "Single Family Dwelling" to allow for single family use only. The City's Zoning Ordinance defines a "family" as three or less persons occupying a dwelling unit unless all members are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Therefore, a Single Family Dwelling only permits a unit of three unrelated people.

Immigration issues and large student populations in many

communities have prompted the need for legislation regarding this issue. Since establishing the Planning and Zoning Division in 2006, the City is enforcing all its zoning ordinances while also working with a consultant to update the Land Development Regulations.

"The City of Valdosta will do everything in our power to enforce the city's policies fairly, uniformly, and without bias towards any person or persons," said City Manager Larry Hanson. "The City will investigate all complaints and will defend the integrity of our neighborhood investments."

Upon receiving a complaint, a City Marshal will visit the site and provide

the tenants with a copy of the ordinance and a suspense date to come into compliance. The leasing agent or owner of the property will also be notified. Tenants who allow matters to remain unresolved after the grace period are summoned to court for a final solution of the case. Violators of the City ordinance may be punished by a fine up to \$500 or imprisonment for up to 90 days.

If you would like more information or would like a City Marshal to investigate a complaint, contact the Community Protection Division at (229) 259-3554.

# City Briefs

## City Trick or Treat Hours

The Valdosta Police Department has announced the hours for the City's annual trick-or-treating activities for Friday, Oct. 31, from 6 to 9 p.m. The VPD encourages everyone to enjoy this activity while taking some safety precautions.

- Only approach homes that have their porch lights on.
- Walk in pairs, never alone.
- Walk on sidewalks, not in the roads.
- Be accompanied by an adult.
- Wear clothing that can be seen at night or clothing with reflective tape.
- Carry flashlights.
- Only take treats from house residents, not from strangers standing on the street.
- Do not eat anything before allowing an adult to inspect the treats first.

For more information, please contact the VPD at (229) 242-2606.

## Drive Safely Through the City

August, September and October are the three highest months for traffic crashes each year, followed closely behind by November and December. With school back in session and the influx of new drivers on the road, motorists and pedestrians alike are advised to pay careful attention to their surroundings and minimize distractions while driving, such as loud noises, the use of cell phones while driving, and other things that interfere with our concentration on the road.

## National Make a Difference Day

Make a Difference Day, sponsored by the City of Valdosta and Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful, will take place on Saturday, Oct. 25, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Volunteers should meet at Bailey's Custom Meats at 8:30 a.m. to help clean up the City neighborhood bordered by Bunche Drive, Partridge Place, Clay Road and Lake Park Road. For more information, call KLVB at 671-2497.

## Recycle Old Phone Books

City of Valdosta residents can place their old phone books in their blue recycling bins to be recycled.

Businesses with large numbers of phone books should call (229) 671-2497 to make special pick-up arrangements.

## Rhythm at Noon Concert Series Oct. 20-24

The Main Street Office will host the Rhythm at Noon Concert Series in Downtown Valdosta, beginning Monday, Oct. 20 through Friday, Oct. 24, featuring a different live band each day from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the Lowndes County Courthouse lawn.

The concert series is free and open to the public. For more information, please call the Main Street Office at (229) 259-3577.

## Students Learn Lessons in Court

The Valdosta Municipal Court hosts mock trials and school-aged tours to educate local students on the court system and to remind them of the consequences of poor decisions.

To schedule a tour for your school, please contact the Public Information Office at (229) 259-3548.

## Fire Prevention Week

National Fire Prevention Week is Oct 5-11, and includes a host of activities sponsored by the VFD, including the Junior Fire Marshals Parade on Saturday, Oct. 11. Call the VFD at (229) 333-1835 for more information.

## Metro Valdosta Channel 96

Tune into Metro Valdosta Channel 96 for your local City Government news. *In Focus Valdosta*, a local news magazine that highlights what's happening in the City, airs several times a week, along with other informative shows. Visit the City's web site at [www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com) for the programming schedule or call (229) 671-3615 for more information.



You Can Buy Your Own Home!

Meetings held once monthly, Call (229) 245-1330 for date and location 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Valdosta, GA 31601

Homebuyer Education Workshops

Topics:  
How Much Home Can You Afford?  
Mortgage Loan Process  
First Mortgage Options  
Down Payment Assistance  
Responsible Homeownership

Call Habitat for Humanity to Register

FREE to the Public!  
Lunch Included

Sponsored by:  
Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
City of Valdosta  
Valdosta-Lowndes County Habitat for Humanity

## The Truth about Snakes

Many residents dislike snakes; however, of the more than 50 species found in Georgia, only 6 are poisonous. These include the Copperhead, Cottonmouth, Eastern Coral Snake, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake, Pygmy Rattlesnake, and Timber Rattlesnake. Food sources for these land-dwelling and aquatic snakes vary from rodents, birds, lizards, frogs, and fish, etc. If your house is near a stream, a swamp, or the woods, snakes will most likely show up from time to time.

So, what can you do?

- Control rodents and other food sources.
- Get rid of debris piles.
- Keep firewood/lumber stacked off the ground and away from walls.
- Plant shrubs at least four feet away from your home foundation.
- Keep pond/stream banks neat, but do not strip away all vegetation or your soil will wash away.

For more information, contact the Stormwater Division at (229) 259-3592.

## City Hall Displays the Old and New



The display shown above is located on the first floor of City Hall and provided by the Lowndes County Museum.

A new display case in City Hall features a letter by Valdosta's first mayor, Reuben T. Roberds, written on Feb. 25, 1864, in Fredericksburg, Va., to his wife describing the wounds he received at the Battle of Knoxville. The display also features paper money issued by the State of Georgia during the Civil War.

The collection of historic items is part of a revolving display provided by the Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum. As the City of Valdosta prepares for its 150th birthday and the 100th birthday of City Hall in 2010, City officials hope that City Hall will showcase an increasing number of the collections contained at the Lowndes County Museum that reveal the City's rich history.

The City also recently moved a large display case from Mathis Auditorium, which now proudly showcases the City's latest awards and accolades.

Both of these new display cases are accessible to the public on the first floor of City Hall. Citizens with special needs may use City Hall's handicap accessibility entrance on the north side of the building to view these cases.

## Congratulations, Valdosta!

From TitleTown to Best Place to Retire in the South, the City of Valdosta has received a number of accolades recently.



Here are a few:

- TitleTown U.S.A., by E.S.P.N.
- Named as one of the "Ten Great Small Towns to Operate a Business and Retire," by Southern Business & Development magazine.
- Chosen by Relocate-America in 2008 as one of the top 100 places to live.
- Chosen as "One of the 11 Great Places to Retire in the South" by Retirement Lifestyles Magazine.
- Selected to participate in the WaterFirst Community Program by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for its commitment to excellence in the management and stewardship of its water resources.
- Ranked recently as one of the nation's top five Advance Manufacturing Location Sites.



### City Council

John J. Fretti	Mayor
James R. Wright	Councilman, District 1
Willie T. Head, Jr.	Councilman, District 2
	Mayor Pro-Tem
Joseph Vickers	Councilman, District 3
Alvin Payton, Jr.	Councilman, District 4
Tim Carroll	Councilman, District 5
Robert Yost	Councilman, District 6
John A. Eunice	Councilman, At Large

### Editorial Staff

Larry H. Hanson	City Manager
Sementa Mathews	Public Information Officer
Mark Stapleton	Student Intern

*City Beat* is a bimonthly newsletter for the citizens of Valdosta and is written and published by the City of Valdosta Public Information Office. For more information, contact Sementa Mathews at (229) 259-3548.

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