

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010
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: Tim Carroll, Deidra White, Robert Yost, and James Wright. Mayor John Fretti and Councilman Sonny Vickers were absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Yost, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 7, 2010 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (4-0) of the Council.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Dr. Michael Noll, 2305 Glynnedale Drive, stated that he was concerned about the proposed Biomass Plant and distributed a Biomass Reader to Council members for review. Mr. Noll stated that he is the current President of a new grassroots organization in Valdosta called Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy (WACE) and their main emphasis is to educate the citizens in Valdosta and Lowndes County about the options that are available for truly renewable and clean energy sources. They also educate citizens in our community about the dangers that will result from the construction of the proposed Biomass incinerator. Mr. Noll stated that his mother, who lives in Germany, has had severe lung issues for years and used to live in an industrial area where they were within the legal limits of what is allowed in terms of air pollution. She recently spent three weeks in Intensive Care and her family persuaded her to move to another area in Germany where there was clean air. Since his mother's move to a place with clear air, her quality of life has greatly improved. Mr. Noll stated that he is the father of two children, Jonathan who is 11 years old, and, Sophia who is 9 years old, and they are active in sports and breathe in and out whatever is in the air. Mr. Noll stated that there are a variety of chemical compounds and particulate matter that will be released in the air should the Biomass incinerator be constructed. There will be 247 tons per year of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxide released into the air along with 135 tons per year of particulate matter of a larger variety, 113 tons of particulate matter (PM10), and 87 tons of particulate matter (PM 2.5) which is the finest, stays the longest in the air, and goes very deeply into the lungs of whoever happens to live in the neighborhood of the Biomass incinerator. There are also 60 tons per year of volatile organic compounds which is a large group of air pollutants. Mr. Noll stated that there are documents from the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society, the World Health Organization, the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, and Physicians for Social Responsibility and they all say that when you are dealing with a Biomass incinerator of the proportion that they are planning to build in our community we will have to pay the dire consequences when it comes to our children. There are elementary schools such as Moulton Branch, J. L. Lomax, and Southeast Elementary located nearby and anyone who is living within a one or two mile range will see an increase in new onset cases of asthma, exasperation of asthma, increased school absences, and elderly people with lung issues that will get worse over time. Mr. Noll stated that the citizens in our community should be asking whether this is the right thing to do. There is an argument that it creates jobs but we can create jobs in other fashions. For example, we could invest in solar energy or retrofitting and increasing energy efficiency and conservation can create just as many jobs. We would not have to trade a job for the health and well being of any member of this community. Mr. Noll stated that in the Biomass Reader, there is a Resolution that reads as follows: WACE urges the City of Valdosta, the Lowndes County Commission, and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority to support the implementation of the comprehensive programs for energy conservation, energy efficiency, resource reuse, and recycling and composting for Valdosta and Lowndes County; WACE insists that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority publicly address the concerns of our citizenry and institutions like the American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society, and the American Heart Association in regard to health risks associated with pollutants emitted by the proposed 40 MW Wiregrass Biomass, LLC, incinerator; WACE advises that the City of Valdosta, the Lowndes County Commission, and the Industrial Authority abandon plans to construct a biomass incinerator and instead invest in a large scale solar plant; and WACE urges the City of Valdosta, the Lowndes County Commission, and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority to respond publicly to the issues identified in this Resolution and to other concerns of the local community.

Consideration of bids for the Withlacoochee Waste Water Treatment Plant wet well cleaning.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the Withlacoochee Waste Water Treatment Plant and its influent lift station services approximately 75% of the City of Valdosta's sewage. The influent lift station wet well has not been cleaned in over 20 years due to the limited accessibility to the wet well as well as the difficulty of re-routing the influent flow around the wet well for the cleaning process to take place. The debris is being supported by deteriorated grating that could fail and damage the lift station pumps and force the lift station to shut down. In order to proceed with this work, the Utilities Department worked with a local contractor and the crew at the Withlacoochee Waste Water Treatment Plant to develop the drawings and specifications for this project. The scope of this project will entail the by-pass and wet well cleaning of the Withlacoochee influent lift station, the removal and replacement of several gates, and the removal of wet well items that are no longer needed and/or are a hazard to the lift station operators. This project was bid out twice due to a lack of response on the original submittals. The final bid was advertised on August 31, 2010 and proposals were received on September 27, 2010 from three companies that specialize in this work. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by NAPM in the amount of \$310,335 plus a 20% contingency for a total project cost of \$372,402. Mayor Pro Tem Payton inquired as to the Engineering cost. Henry Hicks stated that originally AEM had submitted a cost of \$350,000 just for this portion of the project and due to the confined space there is no easy access to the wet well. They will have to install a bypass pumping system so they can get in there to do the work; however, they will leave the piping and valve in place so if they ever need to use it again all they would have to do is to bring the pump back in and reconnect. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether the flooding in April, 2009 made this worse. Henry Hicks stated that the wet well is so full of debris that some of it is still washing out and periodically clogs the pumps. If those structures that are holding the debris back fail then all of that will cause the pumps to fail and we will be out of business. This work was actually planned prior to the flood. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether the funding for this project is coming from SPLOST. Henry Hicks stated that the funds are coming from SPLOST and it is part of the Withlacoochee rehabilitation work that was budgeted several years ago. They have already purchased the bar screens and those will be used in the new Treatment Plant.

A MOTION by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the bid submitted by NAPM in the amount of \$310,335 plus a 20% contingency for cleaning the wet well at the Withlacoochee Waste Water Treatment Plant.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that on October 30-31, 2010 there will be a walking tour, Paths to Paradise, at Sunset Hill Cemetery as part of the Sesquicentennial celebration. There will be portrayals of early Valdosta residents using vignettes written by the late Albert Pendleton.

The Valdosta Fire Department will be checking child car seats free of charge at the State Farm Office located at 510 North St. Augustine Road from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on October 23, 2010 to ensure they are properly installed.

The Electronic Recycling Event will be held on Saturday, November 6, 2010 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium. Since the program started in 2006, the City has collected over 118 tons of electronics that would have ended up in our landfill.

Also, Gary Turner, Public Works Department, was nominated at the City's Employee of the Month in October and he has also been nominated along with another City employee for the Chamber's World Class Employee Program. Gary is now a finalist in that Program and on Tuesday, November 9, 2010 there will be a breakfast at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. to name the winner. The City has reserved a table for ten and Mayor and Council are invited to attend.

The City is continuing to work with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and if all goes well the project worksheet will be submitted to them tomorrow. We are pleased with the progress that has been made and are hopeful that it will be sent to the Regional Office and FEMA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Councilman Wright stated that on Saturday, October 23, 2010, the students with the SOS Program will be spreading mulch on the Community Trail of Tranquility and the Mayor and Council are invited to attend.

Mayor Pro Tem Payton invited the Council to participate in the Chamber’s Business After Hours which will be held downtown tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Payton entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to adjourn the October 21, 2010 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:55 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, November 11, 2010.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta