

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2009
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor John Fretti called the regular meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 5:30 p.m. Council members present were: Sonny Vickers, Tim Carroll, Alvin Payton, Jr., Willie Head, Jr., John Eunice, Robert Yost, and James Wright. The invocation was given by Councilman Robert Yost, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

PRESENTATION OF THE OCTOBER, 2009 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Consideration of the October Employee of the Month Award (Michael Meyer, Community Development Department). Mayor and Council postponed this presentation at the October 8, 2009 regular meeting until the October 22, 2009 regular meeting.

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for the October, 2009 Employee of the Month Award.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Head, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the October, 2009 Employee of the Month Award.

Mayor Fretti presented the October, 2009 Employee of the Month Award to Michael Meyer (Community Development Department).

Michael Meyer began his career with the City of Valdosta in October, 2003 as a Maintenance Technician with the Parks and Recreation Department. In February, 2007, he received a promotion when he was hired for the position of City Marshal in the Community Protection Division of the Community Development Department. As a City Marshal, Mr. Meyer is responsible for ensuring compliance with the City's Code of Ordinances as it relates to the area of Zoning, Housing, Sanitation, Property Maintenance, and Occupational Tax Certificates. The majority of the work is performed in the field and often under adverse conditions. The goal of a City Marshal is to educate citizens in their understanding of the City's ordinances to achieve compliance and to provide assistance to citizens in any way possible. Such was the case in late August of this year when Mr. Meyer encountered an elderly couple whose van had run out of gas in downtown Valdosta. While running out of gas may be just a major inconvenience to most people, it was exceptionally traumatic to this older couple and it was clear they were in need of help to deal with the situation. After reassuring the couple that everything would be okay and providing them with a comfortable place to wait, Michael set out with a gas can to the nearest station. Upon returning, he not only put the gas in the van for them, but cranked the vehicle and checked it out to be sure there were no other problems before sending the couple on their way. Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "The care of human life and happiness is the first and only object of good government." By taking the time to assist this couple Michael not only did a good deed but took an action which left a positive impression of the City. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated Michael Meyer as Employee of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 8, 2009 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that he was on WJEM radio station and they take call ins from the citizens. There are people in the community who are concerned about elected officials being on radio stations where they refer to our Executive Commander-in-Chief as a clown. The members of our armed forces have to carry out orders from that man and it would behoove us to be careful when we are in the eyes of the public to criticize our Executive Commander-in-Chief. We in Valdosta can continue to down the Executive Commander-

in-Chief which is our right under our constitution but when our government officials, both City and County, are in the company where people use the word "racist" and out rightly down the Executive Commander-in-Chief, it does not look good on our City. Council has no control over the media and a couple of days ago there were two cartoons in the Valdosta Daily Times that concerned him. Both soldiers were painted as black and they carried an M-16 rifle and the President was in between the two. One soldier said he watched Fox News and the President was pointing toward the other one saying shoot him. That was not in good taste. When we repeatedly see and hear our elected officials being in the company who carry this on, it cannot be in the best interest of the City. Mr. Rhynes stated that as a veteran he took offense to that because he spent 21 years defending this country against domestic and foreign enemies. It hurts him to see such done in this day and time considering the fact that those troops and the Wing, Base, and Squadron Commanders have enough trouble keeping unity in their squadron. Since we are the home of Moody Air Force Base this is not good.

Travis Downs, 1210 Thomwall Street, stated that he is the Assistant Band Director at Valdosta Middle School, and the Percussion Ensemble has been selected to the most prestigious band and orchestra clinic in the world. This is a conference that is held annually in Chicago and 30 performing groups are selected from audition tapes. Mr. Downs stated that he spent a year preparing the audition tape and they found out in April that they are the one and only Middle School Percussion Ensemble in the United States that was selected to play at this conference which will be held on December 18, 2009. They will fly out on December 15, 2009 and the students will have an opportunity to do some history, museums, sight-seeing, and partake in some of the Conference. Mr. Downs stated that they have two concerts coming up on November 19th which will be a joint concert with Valdosta State University at Whitehead Auditorium and on December 8th which will be the send off concert at the Valdosta Performing Arts Center. Both of the concerts are free to the public. The Ensemble consists of 20, seventh and eighth graders and they have spent six to eight hours a week practicing. They will perform a 45 minute concert for over 900 Band Directors and educators from around the world. The students will have an opportunity to mingle with professional musicians and will have a great experience. Out of 63 years of this Conference they are only the second Middle School group to be selected. Mayor Fretti inquired about the fundraising. Mr. Downs stated that it has gone well but they are approximately \$4,000 short which would cover the charter bus while in Chicago and they are trying to purchase jackets for all the students. Mayor Fretti congratulated Mr. Downs and the students on behalf of the City of Valdosta and wished them the best of luck with the Conference. Councilman Head stated that David Waller with the Valdosta City Schools Foundation could possibly help with the fundraising.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT AND SIGN AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY, THE CITY OF VALDOSTA, AND LOWNDES COUNTY TO USE SPLOST FUNDS FOR HANGARS AT THE AIRPORT POSTPONED

Consideration of a Resolution to accept and sign an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority, the City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County to use SPLOST funds for hangars at the Airport.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there was a lengthy conference call yesterday and at the conclusion the parties have requested that the City postpone any action on this until the first meeting in November. They do not have all the documents needed for approval and the Airport Authority was hopeful that they would be prepared in time for this meeting. Mayor Fretti stated that there is a great need for hangars at the Valdosta Regional Airport and there is a waiting list for the hangars. The discussion now is how to borrow that money efficiently for the least amount of interest and years and that is the hold up on the documents.

A MOTION by Councilman Head, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to postpone the Resolution to accept and sign an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority, the City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County to use SPLOST funds for hangars at the Airport until the first Council meeting in November.

Consideration of bids for sewer camera and accessories for the Water and Sewer Department (Bid No. 08-08-10).

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that the Water and Sewer Department is on need of a sewer camera system to assist with their duties. This camera will be used to inspect pipes throughout the City so that damage or future problems can be detected. This is a Council approved-budget item. Sealed bids were received on October 13, 2009 with the low bid meeting specifications submitted by Environmental Products in the amount of \$98,583.28. Funds in the amount of \$100,000 were budgeted for this purchase in the Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund. Greg Brown recommended that Council approve the low bid meeting specification submitted by Environmental Products in the amount of \$98,583.28 and allow the Water and Sewer Department to proceed with the purchase.

A MOTION by Councilman Eunice, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Environmental Products in the amount of \$98,583.28 and allow the Water and Sewer Department to proceed with the purchase.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve a deed between the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority for property located at Webster and Troup Streets.

Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, stated that the property, which consists of .62 acres, is located at the southwest corner of Webster Street and Troup Street and is owned by the City of Valdosta. This property is zoned for residential development and is suitable for in-fill housing development. The property reverted back to the City some years ago from Habitat for Humanity. The Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority approved a request at their meeting on October 5, 2009 to seek the deed to this property from the City of Valdosta at the next scheduled meeting. The Authority proposes to place the property up for bid based on the previous process that has been successful in order to meet the three disposition priorities in the Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County. This Agreement requires the property is disposed to either: (1) a non-profit organization developing affordable housing, (2) a for-profit entity developing affordable housing, or (3) an economic development project creating jobs. The third priority is not suitable in this situation due to the zoning of the property and the surrounding residential neighborhood. In reviewing this with the City Manager, he suggested that when this is put out for bid that they ask a minimum of the fair market value that is listed in the Tax Assessor's records. Mara Register recommended that Council approve the request for a deed between the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority for the property located at southwest corner of Webster Street and Troup Street for the purpose of sale by the Land Bank Authority to facilitate the development of affordable housing on the property. Mayor Fretti inquired about the bidding process. Mara Register stated that the parcel will be advertised in the newspaper and sealed bids will be submitted. These bids will be opened by the Land Bank Authority. They will also request what the intention of the property is because of the three priorities for disposition of property in the Intergovernmental Agreement. This will ensure that the Land Bank will get a good price as far as the bid and that the intentions of the bidder meet the disposition priorities. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether they have always had a sufficient amount of bids. Mara Register stated that she was pleased with the sale they did have and they made approximately \$10,000 which enabled them to acquire more property. At the last Land Bank Authority meeting, they approved for Mara Register to approach a dozen property owners to start putting some properties together and assembling properties to re-subdivide to put back out for bid for affordable housing. These are vacant lots. Mayor Fretti inquired about the members of the Land Bank Authority. Mara Register stated that the members include Councilman James Wright, Chairman Frank Moorman, Burke Sherwood, County Commissioner Joyce Evans, and herself as the Staff person. Councilman Head inquired as to whether there were provisions where the bid process could be by-passed if there was an economic project that would create a number of jobs as in the case of Ernest Usher and then sell to him at fair market value. Mara Register stated that she had proposed Mr. Usher's project to the Land Bank Authority and they were unanimous in their consensus that they felt it was appropriate to continue to use the bid process so that everyone had an opportunity to bid for the property. Councilman Head stated that he was concerned that with the process you could have someone else who wins the bid and would do something that would not bring about the economic impact. He felt that the jobs would be more of an economic stimulus than the one affordable house that would be placed on the property. Mara Register stated that the Land Bank Authority has the discretion as long as it meets

one of these three dispositions to look at the situation as to job creation versus affordable housing. In this situation the property would not lend itself for affordable housing because of its close proximity to a railroad track. This is why it would fit better as an economic development project. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Land Bank Authority will analyze all of the bids and take the best one. Councilman Head inquired as to when the Land Bank Authority would meet again. Mara Register stated that there is not a scheduled meeting and they are waiting on word from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on the NSP application because the Land Bank Authority will be the major conduit for that funding. They should meet again by the end of the year. Councilman Head stated that Mr. Usher's project is in his District and should provide quite an economic stimulus to that area. Mara Register stated that Mr. Usher has a viable project but there is a concern about availability of water and sewer. They want to make sure that they are not putting a burden on Mr. Usher. Councilman Payton inquired as to what Mr. Usher's project was. Mara Register stated that it was a combination of a for-profit business side that he and his wife would be involved in that would have some job creation and a non-profit component to provide youth services.

A MOTION by Councilman Head, seconded by Councilman Eunice, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a deed between the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority for property located at Webster and Troup Streets.

Consideration of a request to approve Phase 2 of the Storm Water Master Plan.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, City Engineer, stated that the City hired Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM) to provide a new Storm Water Master Plan that takes into account both storm water quality and quantity issues. The first phase of the project is nearing completion. The consultant collected data, established a bench network throughout the City, and is in the process of defining the level of service through the establishment of a Committee with members representing the entire community. The Consultant presented the tasks involved in the second phase of the project at the October 6th Work Session. This is the main component of the overall project that will thoroughly evaluate, estimate and rank the improvement projects for construction. Early out projects will be identified that will allow construction to begin on some projects in the early part of 2010. The final report time line is August, 2010. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve Phase 2 of the Storm Water Master Plan Update Project in the amount of \$642,365. Councilman Wright inquired as to whether the Storm Water Committee would be working on this project. Henry Hicks stated that was correct. They have finalized the Committee and will be setting up a meeting to discuss this and to set priorities.

A MOTION by Councilman Head, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve Phase 2 of the Storm Water Master Plan.

Consideration of a request to apply for the Georgia Transportation Enhancement GATEway Grant Program.

Anne-Marie Wolff, Planning and Zoning Administrator, stated that the State of Georgia is accepting applications for the Georgia Transportation Enhancement GATEway Grant Program. Funding for the grant program comes from contributory value fees paid by outdoor advertising companies to the Department of Transportation for vegetation removal at outdoor advertising signs. The program offers a maximum \$50,000 grant with no required match. The grant funds may be used only for landscape plant material and its installation for roadside enhancement and beautification projects along state routes in Georgia. Grant recipients are required to provide perpetual maintenance of the beautification project. The Grant requires that a State highway be used, and a site near the intersection of Madison Highway and Airport Road has been selected for the project. The City already maintains this State highway so it would not be any significant additional responsibilities for the Public Works Department. The County received this Grant last year and used it to beautify Exit 13. The City will have two years to install the landscaping and then the continued maintenance occurs from that point forward. This is not a huge grant but it will help to achieve one of the Mayor and Council goals to improve the City's Gateways. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether the City owns the property or if it is right-of-way for the Georgia Department of Transportation. Anne-Marie Wolff stated that it is in the right-of-way and the City would enter into a Maintenance Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation. Mayor Fretti inquired about the design. Anne-Marie Wolff stated that John Whitehead, Deputy City Manager of Operations, and Stacy Griffin, City Arborist, will be working on the design plans. Anne-Marie Wolff recommended that Council approve submission of a Georgia

Transportation Enhancement GATEway Grant Application and authorize the Mayor to sign any related documents.

Councilman Eunice inquired as to how the City of Columbus paid for their gateway project. Anne-Marie Wolff stated that this particular Grant was not available when they first started their project and they used some State funding; however, the majority of their funding came from private contributions. They also have a Foundation that raises funding for the gateways and work with the Keep Columbus Beautiful organization as well. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the City had budgeted money for gateways. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there is \$500,000 in SPLOST and we are currently working with The LPA Group on designing the West Hill Avenue corridor and Madison Highway. Whatever is done with this new project will be compatible with these two projects. Councilman Head inquired about the number of gateway projects and the priority of those projects. Anne-Marie Wolff stated that the gateway plan that was written several years ago has 16 gateways but it can be expanded. Councilman Head inquired as to how many of those gateways have been completed. Mayor Fretti stated that the plan was prepared before any funding or budgeting was put aside so they have not approached any of the gateways. The Chamber has recently established a Gateway Committee and Von Shipman and Anne-Marie Wolff are the City's representatives on this Committee. Larry Hanson stated that the Five Points island was a gateway project and the crepe myrtles that were planted the entire length of North Valdosta Road was a gateway improvement project. The nice welcome signs placed in five locations were improving gateways. This new funding will take it to the next level. Councilman Head stated that he would like to review the list of 16 gateway projects and the priority. Councilman Wright stated that he remembered approving the gateway plan but not the specific projects. Larry Hanson stated that most of the gateway projects are in the Transportation Plan and the ones that were placed in the short-term plan was West Hill Avenue and Madison Highway. Mayor Fretti stated that he would like to have some input from Council on the list of 16 gateway projects. Councilman Head inquired as to whether the Airport Authority has been informed about the gateway project. Larry Hanson stated that this is not on Airport property and is on a State route but he would notify them about the project if they have not been informed already.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to apply for the Georgia Transportation Enhancement GATEway Grant Program.

Anne-Marie Wolff, Planning and Zoning Administrator, stated that the Southern Georgia Regional Commission has prepared a Comprehensive Plan which was adopted in 2006. Since that time there has been no formal update and they are proposing a minor update to ensure that it remains a viable tool for making decisions. The Greater Lowndes Growth Advisory meets every other month and they have reviewed each section for an update and provided feedback. The Issues and Opportunities section is an update on the challenges and strengths that we have as a community from 2006 to 2009. The Goals and Policies were revised to reflect those changes in the Issues and Opportunities. The Report of Accomplishments shows what has been completed in the community in the past couple of years. The Short Term Work Program shows what we plan on completing through 2014. Anne-Marie Wolff asked that the Mayor and Council review the document and it will be brought before Council with a Resolution for adoption in the near future. There are also updates to the Future Development Map. In the Land Development Regulations there are tighter regulations for approving zonings and rezonings based on their depiction on the Future Development Map so it is very important that the areas are depicted accurately to show growth over the next 15-20 years.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there will be an Electronics Recycling Event on November 7, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium. These events in the past have been very successful with keeping the electronics out of the landfills.

The Valdosta-Lowndes County Metropolitan Planning Organization has approved a list of projects and the Georgia Department of Transportation has approved these projects as part of the short-term work program. It is now official that the Jerry Jones widening project will take place in 2012 and the DOT has budgeted \$5 million for that project. The overpass on Hill Avenue, which is also called a grade separation, has \$9.3 million budgeted for that and it is expected to take place in 2011. The Tucker Road Bridge over the Dukes Bay project should take place in 2010 and they have budgeted \$742,000 for that project. The DOT has programmed the U.S. 84/Hill Avenue at Clay/Hollywood intersection misalignment at a cost \$1,352,000 between 2010 and 2013.

The City of Valdosta held a Health Fair at Mathis Auditorium today with over 250 employees participating. There were 20 health related vendors who passed out information to the employees and the Human Resources did a great job in organizing the event.

The Deep South Solid Waste Authority has a grant program and the City of Valdosta was the first organization to apply for and receive the grant in the amount of approximately \$50,000. The City will focus on litter and provide public education, materials, signage, and receptacles. John Whitehead has created some new litter signs that say: Valdosta – A City without Limits, Please Don't Litter, Make Valdosta Glitter.

The Census 2010 Kickoff Event will be held on November 10, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the Conference Center and invited Council to attend and help start educating the public about the Census.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Vickers inquired about the Hill Avenue overpass and whether the DOT now has the funding. Larry Hanson stated that the DOT has now budgeted \$9.3 million for the project which is an estimated cost. They have completed the design and they will purchase whatever right-of-way they need next year.

Council Payton inquired as to whether there was any discussion about the widening of Forrest Street. Larry Hanson stated that Forrest Street is not on the short term list. Von Shipman stated that if a project does not get funded then it has to start back over with environmental review which is the case of Forrest Street. Councilman Head inquired about the four-laning of Forrest Street. Von Shipman stated that they have not received any final design. The City of Valdosta had indicated five lanes from Bemiss Road to Northside Drive, four lanes from Northside Drive to Park Avenue, and then three lanes from Park Avenue to Hill Avenue. Larry Hanson stated that the DOT will fund the four lane and five lane section but they will not fund the three lane section.

Councilman Wright inquired about the Safe Routes to School Grant in order to place sidewalks from Forrest Street to J. L. Newbern Middle School but there are not sidewalks on Forrest Street near Valdosta High School. This creates a safety hazard in this area and the one of the reasons they have not done anything is because they were waiting on the widening of Forrest Street. Councilman Wright stated that he would like for something to be done while we are waiting for the road widening. Larry Hanson stated that he felt something would happen with the Transportation Tax this year in the General Assembly and see what happens because it could give us the resources that are needed. Right now there are two bad choices: (1) We could build a sidewalk now 30 or 40 feet off the road in anticipation of the future widening of where it would be, or (2) we could build a sidewalk knowing that it would be torn out in a couple of years. Councilman Wright suggested that Council meet with the Valdosta City School Board and work with them on the situation. Mayor Fretti stated that they could possibly place some type of crushed gravel path to encourage them to stay off the shoulder of the road.

Mayor Fretti stated that the Brownsfield Steering Committee needs a Councilman member to serve on it for several years. An E-mail was sent out and Councilman Carroll was the only member who replied and expressed an interest in serving. Councilman Vickers made a motion to nominate Councilman Carroll to serve on the Brownsfield Steering Committee. There being no other nominations, Councilman Carroll was appointed by acclamation to serve on the Brownsfield Steering Committee.

Councilman Wright stated that Mr. Downs was doing a great job with the band program at the Valdosta Middle School and asked Council's consideration in providing some monetary support. Mayor Fretti stated that Larry Hanson would look at some possible funding for the program.

Councilman Yost inquired about the Grand Opening for the Crime Lab. Larry Hanson stated that there are a few minor things that needed to be completed and they anticipate setting a date within the next two weeks. Councilman Yost inquired about a plaque for the Crime Lab like the one that was unveiled at the Wood Valley Community Center. Larry Hanson stated that he would ask Chief Simons about the plaque.

Councilman Head stated that he would like for Council to have a joint meeting with the Valdosta City Schools Board of Education. Larry Hanson stated that he has e-mailed Dr. Cason about a meeting but has not

received a response. Councilman Head inquired about the master plan for the Bray land purchase. Larry Hanson stated that he spoke with Eric Hahn, Director of Parks and Recreation, and he has briefed the Parks and Recreation Authority that the City is now ready to start the master plan for that site. An assessment of the well field site has been completed and it appears that the property would have some future water but there would be a limited number of wells on a corner. We can now proceed and with master planning the entire site.

Councilman Payton inquired about the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park is proceeding ahead of schedule. Von Shipman stated that the granite has been cut and it should be installed soon. Councilman Payton inquired about the McKey Tennis Center. Von Shipman stated that a meeting is scheduled for next week with Cauthan Construction and they will fast track the contract documents. Larry Hanson stated that he spoke with Rob Evans last week about the gazebo and he was putting something together. That was really never part of the plan but it will be a nice amenity to the Tennis Center.

Councilman Head suggested that Channel 17 interview Von Shipman about ongoing City projects and provide an update. This will give the community an idea of what is going on with projects.

Councilman Carroll stated that Channel 17 interviewed Von Shipman recently about the Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor project and it showed the construction work. Councilman Carroll also stated that the Selection Committee for a new Conference Center & Tourism Authority Director has interviewed candidates and made an offer to a candidate from Garland, Texas. He will be in town on October 28th for the Conference Center & Tourism Authority to make an official decision to hire him.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the October 22, 2009 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:47 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, November 5, 2009.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta