

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2013
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor John Gayle 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, Alvin Payton, Jr., Deidra White, and Robert Yost. Councilman James Wright was absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Willie Flowers, All Nations Deliverance Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag which was led by Boy Scout Troop 415 of Park Avenue United Methodist Church.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 7, 2013 Regular Meeting was approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve a Section 125 Cafeteria Plan for the City of Valdosta.

Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Operations, stated that the City of Valdosta offers supplemental insurance products which are paid for by the employee. The menu of policies that are offered under the IRS Section 125 allows employees to purchase these policies with pre-tax dollars which reduces the cost of the premium through favorable tax consequences. These products supplement the City's medical, life, and disability plans, and they are extremely popular among City employees. Currently employees are purchasing coverage in eight areas which include the following: short term disability, cancer, accidental injury, universal life, term life, critical illness, vision, and hospital indemnity. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was placed and then closed on October 22, 2013. In addition to the public advertisement, proposals were mailed to 21 companies who had expressed interest in providing these products to the City. At the closing, the City had received responses from the eleven following companies: (1) Colonial Life (Joey Grubbs, Jim Snow), (2) Lincoln Financial Group (Painter and Troutman), (3) AFLAC (Glenn Sturgis), (4) AFLAC (John Harmeling), (5) AFLAC (Rusty Parker, Tim Golden), (6) Partners Benefit Group (Guy Whidby, Jason Shaw), (7) Group Insurance Associates (Charles Deaton), (8) American Fidelity (Darren Parker), (9) Humana (Thomas James), (10) Assurant (David Horrah), and (11) Allstate (Taylor Insurance). Each of the eight policies offered were evaluated on attributes specific to the coverage by a Committee consisting of Councilman Tim Carroll, Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, Chuck Dinkins, Financial Services Manager, and Larry Hanson, City Manager. The method of evaluation was listed in the RFP so vendors understood what the City would be using as grading criteria. A score of 1-5 was issued to each of the required criterion, and then weighted based upon the number of employees that currently hold that type of coverage. Other areas evaluated were (1) plan implementation, (2) enrollment process, (3) financial rating, (4) references, and (5) communication with employees. Once applying the evaluation criterion, the top three scores went to Taylor Insurance (9.391), Partners Benefit Group (8.796), Colonial Insurance (8.665). There were two vendor proposals that were considered non-responsive. Lincoln Financial Group only proposed vision coverage, and Humana did not include product pricing. The Committee's recommendation was to award the 125 Cafeteria Plan to Allstate as represented by Taylor Insurance with a three-year contract and an option of two, one-year renewals.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Committee's recommendation to award the 125 Cafeteria Plan to Allstate as represented by Taylor Insurance with a three-year contract and an option of two, one-year renewals.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting will be held on December 4, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. There will be a youth group from Moody Air Force Base participating in the event and Council is encouraged to attend.

The Holiday Open House will be held on December 7, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be many activities scheduled throughout the day including three opportunities to have breakfast with Santa at the Blue Café. There will also be a children's play area with bounce houses and other activities culminating with the Annual Christmas Parade which will begin at 5:00 p.m.

The Shop with a Cop Program will be held on December 16, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at Wal-Mart located on Inner Perimeter Road and the Shop with a Firefighter will be held on December 10, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at Wal-Mart located on Norman Drive.

The Public Information Officer, Sementha Mathews, has sent out several Press Releases this week and one of them was to inform citizens that the Williams Street Project is 70% complete and resurfacing of that Project will begin next week.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, asked Police Chief Brian Childress to brief Council about the new 12-hour shifts at the Police Department. Police Chief Brian Childress stated that approximately three months ago, he spoke with the Commanders and Officers about putting in 12-hour shifts for the Officers. The current configuration that they are working is six days on and three days off with 8 ½ hour shifts. They wanted to go to a Panama schedule which will be two days on and three days off, three days on and then two days off which would give them a three-day weekend every over weekend. They looked at the cost analysis and manpower to see what effect this would have and they were able to work it out. This will actually increase the manpower on the road. The other benefit is that the morale of the Officers will increase since they will now have more time to spend with their families on the weekends. They started the new shifts on October 20, 2013 and it will run it through December 25, 2013. To date, the response has been incredible and they have even received some calls from the Officers' wives thanking Chief Childress for allowing the Officers to be home with them on the weekends. Chief Childress also spoke with the Judges and they are willing to work with them and will try not to subpoena the Officers when they are working the night shift. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that a lot of work has gone into this and he thanked Chief Childress for his work as well.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Finance Department has once again been recognized for our Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2012 with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This is the highest form of recognition in Governmental Accounting and Finance Reporting and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a Government and its management. This is the 27th consecutive year that the City has won this National Award.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, asked Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, to brief Council on the approved Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) loan for \$36.7 million that we sent out a Press Release on last week. Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration stated that on June 30, 2013, the City of Valdosta owed \$46,898,872 which is the principal outstanding with GEFA. In October, 2013, Council approved a refinance of \$9.5 million through GEFA and the City went from a loan that we were paying 4.12% interest to 2.4% which is a saving of over \$2 million. This is not an additional loan and the City merely picked up the balance of the original loan. For the Force Main Project, that loan was approved at 1.4% for \$36,781,448. On December 30, 2013, the City will pay approximately \$70,000 in principal off on the original debt which will leave the total at \$93,202,333. With GEFA, it is not debt to us until we draw it down and use it. We went through the rest of the SPLOST VII term through June 30, 2013, so other than the Force Main Project we will pay \$17.3 million of the principal down on the Non-Force Main Projects. On the Force Main Project, the City plans to pay back the amount that is drawn down. The expenses on Utilities Projects are generally low at first and then ebb up. The City is going to collect that money and instead of drawing down GEFA payments we will pay it from SPLOST and not draw it down. There is a possibility that the \$36 million is really high but we have it and it is available for us to use. On June 30, 2020, that leaves us with \$39 million. Councilman Payton inquired as to whether the \$39 million would be at the 1.4% interest rate. Larry Hanson stated that we would be paying that amount off so it would be a combination of the 4.12% and the 2.14% money. Councilman Carroll inquired about the amount of debt the City would owe because a recent article in the Valdosta Daily Times stated that the City owed \$98 million. Larry Hanson stated that the City would be at \$93 million at the highest at the end of this year and it will be paid down to \$39 million by 2020. Councilman Vickers inquired as to what would be used to pay the loan down. Larry Hanson stated that it would be paid using a combination of ways that the City uses to pay for debt.

Councilman Yost stated that at the last Council meeting they were still waiting on the election results and he thanked the constituents of his District for re-electing him and having the confidence in him to serve the next four years. He also thanked the community for their support and those citizens who helped him with his campaign.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Timothy Brown stated that he has a radio ministry that is aired on WGOV and WJEM. He wanted to speak to Council to try and get closure and to stand up for Kendrick Johnson. There are so many rumors and so many people with new information who refuse to step up. The last time he was before Council he tried to see the former Mayor and his request was refused. Mr. Brown stated that he was still a voter in the City and a Minister. He has spent \$6,000 out of his own pocket feeding the homeless and putting them in rooms. He has some people who will say some good things about him and some people who will say some bad things; however, he can back everything up that he is saying. Mr. Brown stated that he called the Governor, the President, and the Senator and some people in the Police Department told him that they did not care who he called. Mr. Brown stated that he joined the military when he was 17 years old and served his country well and he was still a citizen.

Carl Onyeka, member of the Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful Board, stated that he wanted to provide the Mayor and Council with an update on several events sponsored by Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful. On October 5, 2013, they completed three projects within the City and the County which was the Rivers Alive Project. They cleaned seven sites and collected 2,200 pounds of trash and waste from the rivers. On October 26, 2013, they had the Make A Difference Day event. They cleaned up two sites and collected 38,460 pounds of trash and waste within the City and the County. One of the sites was the residence of a Veteran who needed some assistance from his local citizens. On November 9, 2013, they had the Fall Electronics Recycling event and they hosted 13 shows funded by a grant from the Deep South Solid Waste Authority. They made presentations at local schools to educate students on recycling and helping the environment. On January 4, 2014, they will hold the Bring One for the Chipper event along with the City’s Arbor Division. They will have three sites located at Home Depot, Mathis Auditorium, and Wal-Mart on Inner Perimeter Road where citizens can bring their Christmas trees for recycling. From December 26, 2013 through January 3, 2014, they will have two additional sites located at the Valdosta YMCA and the City of Hahira (corner of Lawson Street and North Lowndes Street). Mr. Oneyka stated that the members of KLVB appreciate the opportunity to serve the citizens in our community and he felt like it was his obligation to provide the Mayor and Council with an update on the work that is being done in our community.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the November 21, 2013 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:03 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, December 5, 2013.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta