

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 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., and Councilman Robert Yost. Councilwoman Deidra White and Councilman James Wright were absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Mark Brady, Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION OF THE NOVEMBER, 2013 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, presented the November, 2013 Employee of the Month Award (Charlie Marsh, Utilities Department).

Charlie Marsh began his employment with the City of Valdosta's Utilities Department in October, 1992 as a Laborer. In June, 2000, Charlie was promoted to Maintenance Helper which is the position he currently holds. Working as the Maintenance Helper at the Water Treatment Plant, Charlie maintains and repairs all equipment used in the operation of the Plant including troubleshooting and calibrating electronic equipment. He also directs activities of the laborer crews to ensure work is completed properly and safely. At the Water Plant, Charlie takes great pride in the Program Maintenance Inspections (PMI). With Charlie's efforts ensuring the Sodium Hypochlorite Generation System is working properly, which in turn saves the City money, a good supply of Hypochlorite is used to treat the water for all citizens. Recently, Charlie was temporarily assigned to the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant as an Operator to help with the belt press operations. The solids inventory at the Plant was building up due to one belt press being out of service and awaiting the delivery of a new one. The Plant needed to run the belt press for two shifts versus a single shift as was the procedure. Charlie had the necessary experience to make this happen. His willingness to be readily available for work at any time saved the City from Plant violations. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated Charlie Marsh as Employee of the Month.

Mayor Gayle recognized the students from Von Shipman's Valdosta State University Political Science Class.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 10, 2013 Regular Meeting and the October 17, 2013 Special Called Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (5-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2013-23, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 27.85 acres from Estate Agricultural (E-A) [County] to Wholesale Light Industrial (M-1) [City] as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority (File No. VA-2013-14). The property is located at 1253 New Statenville Highway. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission reviewed this request at their October Regular Meeting and recommended approval (6-0 vote).

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority is requesting to rezone 27.85 acres from Estate Agricultural (E-A) [County] to Wholesale Light Industrial (M-1) [City]. This request is running concurrently with the annexation request File No. VA-2013-15. The property is located at 1253 New Statenville Highway which is along the south side of the road and approximately 1,200 feet east of the intersection with Clay Road. The applicant is proposing to annex the property into the City for purposes

of expanding the adjacent Miller Business Park. The property is currently located within a Suburban Area (SA) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan; however, upon annexation, the property will be assigned an Industrial Activity Center (IAC) designation which is eligible to have M-1 zoning. The existing Miller Business Park property was acquired by the Industrial Authority and annexed into the City in 2009. It has been master planned for light industrial development in accordance with M-1 zoning, and the infrastructure (streets, utilities, and drainage) has already been installed. The Industrial Authority is now in the process of acquiring the subject property for the purposes of expanding the existing Business Park. This expansion is relatively minor in that it equates to only about 8% of the total land area of the Park; however, it would rationalize the existing boundaries and offer a little more flexibility in locating new business industries in the eastern portion of the Park. The Planning Commission received a telephone call from a representative of the adjacent property owner to the east who expressed some concern about buffering along the road. The concern was discussed at the Planning Commission Meeting but no action was taken in the form of a recommendation. There was no one at the Meeting to explain their concern; however, since that time, there has been additional conversations with the Deloach family and the Industrial Authority. At the Work Session, Council was presented with some language about a possible condition of approval for the rezoning. Matt Martin stated that he had an additional telephone call with Fred Deloach, III today and they discussed some things that could be done to tweak the language. Currently, Staff and the applicant are recommending the condition of approval to be as follows: Approval of M-1 zoning subject to a minimum 30 foot wide dense vegetative buffer along the New Statenville Highway right-of-way line, consisting of either natural forest or planted Evergreen trees, in addition to any other landscape requirements by the City at the time of development. Within the buffer area, there shall be no buildings or impervious surface other than a maximum of one access drive connecting to New Statenville Highway. Any planted trees shall be in staggered rows so as to create a dense tree canopy which inhibits view from the highway. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their October 28, 2013 meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (6-0 vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Carroll to rezone 27.85 acres from Estate Agricultural (E-A) [County] to Wholesale Light Industrial (M-1) [City] as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority with the following condition: Approval of M-1 zoning subject to a minimum 30 foot wide dense vegetative buffer along the New Statenville Highway right-of-way line, consisting of either natural forest or planted Evergreen trees, in addition to any other landscape requirements by the City at the time of development. Within the buffer area, there shall be no buildings or impervious surface other than a maximum of one access drive connecting to New Statenville Highway. Any planted trees shall be in staggered rows so as to create a dense tree canopy which inhibits view from the highway. Councilman Norton seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2013-23, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XII.

ORDINANCE NO. 2013-24, AN ORDINANCE TO EXTEND THE CITY LIMITS, VOTING DISTRICT 3

Consideration of an Ordinance to annex 27.85 acres into the City of Valdosta as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority (File No. VA-2013-15). The property is located at 1253 New Statenville Highway. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission reviewed this request at their October Regular Meeting and recommended approval (6-0 vote).

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority is requesting to annex 27.85 acres into the City of Valdosta. This request is running concurrently with the rezoning request File No. VA-2013-14. In the County, the property is currently zoned Estate Agricultural (E-A) and the applicant is requesting Wholesale Light Industrial (M-1) zoning upon annexation into the City. The property is located at 1253 New Statenville Highway along the south side of the road and approximately 1,200 feet east of the intersection with Clay Road. The applicant is proposing to annex the property into the City for purposes of expanding the adjacent Miller Business Park. The property is currently located within a Suburban Area (SA) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan; however, upon annexation the

property will be assigned an Industrial Activity Center (IAC) designation instead. The existing Miller Business Park property was acquired by the Industrial Authority and annexed into the City in 2009. It has been master planned for light industrial development, in accordance with M-1 zoning, and the infrastructure (streets, utilities, drainage) has already been installed. The Industrial Authority is now in the process of acquiring the subject property for the purposes of expanding the existing Business Park. This expansion is relatively minor in that it equates to only about 8% of the total land area of the Park; however, it would rationalize the existing boundaries and offer a little more flexibility in locating new business industries in the eastern portion of the Park. Notification of this proposed annexation has been officially given to Lowndes County in accordance with State law. The Lowndes County Commission reviewed this at their regular meeting on October 22, 2013 and no objections were raised against this annexation. Staff found the annexation request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their October 28, 2013 meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and recommended approval (6-0 vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2013-23, an Ordinance to annex 27.85 acres into the City of Valdosta as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XII.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-10, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ELIMINATION OF TWO AT-GRADE RAILWAY CROSSINGS ON FLOYD STREET AND SOUTH HOLIDAY STREET

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the elimination of two at-grade railway crossings on Floyd Street and South Holiday Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the Federal Railroad Administration has a goal of consolidating 25% of at-grade railroad-street crossings and recommends that there be no more than one grade crossing per quarter mile. Norfolk Southern Corporation is seeking to eliminate redundant grade crossings to meet this goal and has established a program with incentives to assist in this consolidation process. O.C.G.A. 32-6-193.1 provides for the elimination of grade crossings and Norfolk Southern Corporation and representatives of the City of Valdosta have surveyed railroad crossings within the City and have identified two locations which would be appropriate for elimination: (1) Floyd Street, and (2) South Holiday Street. It appears these at-grade crossing eliminations at Floyd Street and South Holiday Street would not adversely impact the traveling public yet be in the best interest of the safety, health, and welfare of City inhabitants. Previously a vehicle fatality occurred at the Floyd Street crossing. Administration has reached agreement with Norfolk Southern to recommend closing crossings at Floyd Street and South Holiday Street in exchange for the deed to Olympic Park plus \$15,000 from Norfolk Southern and a \$15,000 match from the Georgia Department of Transportation. On October 24, 2009, Bryan Almand of Almand & Company, conducted an appraisal of the Olympic Park property and the market land value of the Park was \$86,000. Norfolk Southern Corporation has agreed to pay a monetary incentive payment of \$15,000 to the City and shall convey title of approximately 1.921 acres known as Olympic Park, located on South Patterson Street and South Toombs Street between the Norfolk Southern and CSX Railroad right-of-ways, for elimination of said at-grade crossings. The Georgia Department of Transportation, under 23 USC §130, can match the monetary incentive payment from Norfolk Southern Corporation with an incentive payment of \$7,500 per crossing permanently eliminated and has agreed to match an additional \$15,000. The funds received from Norfolk Southern and the Georgia Department of Transportation will be used to make the closing of the crossings more attractive than what would otherwise have been done by Norfolk Southern. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve a Resolution authorizing the negotiated property transfer and monetary incentives from Norfolk Southern and the Georgia Department of Transportation and authorize Staff to proceed with the necessary transactions for the two closures with the following conditions: (1) the Floyd Street crossing will not be closed until the Hill Avenue Overpass Project is complete, and (2) a 90-day notice will be given to the residents who live on South Holiday.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Resolution No. 2013-10, a Resolution authorizing the elimination of two at-grade railway crossings on Floyd Street and South Holiday Street with the following conditions: (1) the Floyd Street crossing will not be closed until the Hill Avenue Overpass Project is complete, and (2) a 90-day notice will be given to the residents who live on South Holiday, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-11, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF AN APPLICATION FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT REVOLVING LOAN FUND (DDRLF) FOR THE ACQUISITION OF 121 NORTH PATTERSON STREET BY AGF HOLDINGS, LLC

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) for the acquisition of 121 North Patterson Street by AGF Holdings, LLC.

Matt Martin, Planning and Zoning Administrator, stated that the business, AGF Holdings, is proposing to acquire the building located at 121 North Patterson Street and move its office, Pro Service Staffing, from its current rental location on Hill Avenue to Downtown. The building is in good structural condition and has had active commercial uses on the ground level and residential on the third floor. The second floor is undeveloped but would be suited for three apartments. The total building size is 13,500 square feet. The applicant is seeking a Revolving Loan Fund which is a pass-through funding source that comes through the City and then the City enters into an Agreement. The funding amount is \$226,000 and the applicant is requesting support of the Initial Project Assessment (IPA) which will be submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to the Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF). If approved, the Central Valdosta Development Authority (CVDA) will also submit a Resolution of support. Matt Martin recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) for the acquisition of 121 North Patterson Street by AGF Holdings, LLC.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Resolution No. 2013-11, a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF) for the acquisition of 121 North Patterson Street by AGF Holdings, LLC, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the Sidewalk Installation Project on Lamar Street and North Oak Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that sidewalks were needed in various locations within the City Limits of Valdosta. The Sidewalk Project was advertised and sealed bids were received on Thursday, August 22, 2013. The low bid was submitted by James Warren & Associates; however, they did not acknowledge the addendums and their bid was rejected. The next lowest bid was submitted by The Scruggs Company. After reviewing all of the line items on the sidewalk bids and the unit prices on the Engineering estimate, there were a combination of factors such as changing market prices, bidders work load, unidentified risks, and low estimates that contributed to the bids being higher than what was originally estimated. Council was then asked to reject the bids and authorize the Engineering Department to re-bid the Sidewalk Project. The Engineering Department re-advertised the Sidewalk Project and sealed bids were received on Thursday, October 10, 2013 for the construction of sidewalks along the following locations: (1) Lamar Street - Gordon Street to Mary Street, and (2) North Oak Street - Georgia Avenue to West Alden Avenue. The low bid was submitted by James Warren & Associates in the amount of \$291,436.25, and the Engineering Department's estimate was \$268,354.23. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by James Warren & Associates in the amount of \$291,436.25 plus a 10% contingency (\$29,143.63) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$320,579.88.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the low bid submitted by James Warren & Associates in the amount of \$291,436.25 plus a 10% contingency (\$29,143.63) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$320,579.88 for the Sidewalk Installation Project on Lamar Street and North Oak Street.

Consideration of bids for the Utilities Extension Project for annexed Island 27.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that Council previously approved contracts with three local engineers to design water and sewer improvements for property in former unincorporated islands that were annexed into the City in 2006. Island 27 includes the following streets: Bemiss Road, Tomlinson Road, Heirs Street, Hamm Street, Highland Heights Drive, 1st Street, 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Gard Street, and Highland Heights Lane. Sealed bids were received on April 18, 2013. The low bid was submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,098,843.20 and the Engineering Department estimate was \$1,262,577.00. This Project had been placed on hold until approval of SPLOST funding. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,098,843.20 plus a 10% contingency (\$109,884.32) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,208,727.52. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether this was the last Island to receive water and sewer. Pat Collins stated that it was not the last Island and there are two more Islands that will be out for bid by the end of the year. There are also some Phase II Islands that still need water and sewer but many of those are single connections.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$1,098,843.20 plus a 10% contingency (\$109,884.32) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,208,727.52 for the Utilities Extension Project for annexed Island 27.

Consideration of bids for the Utilities Extension Project annexed Island 35B.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that Council approved contracts with three local engineers to design water and sewer improvements to serve the property in former unincorporated islands that were annexed into the City in 2006. Island 35B includes the following streets: Betty Jo Drive, Thea Lane, Simpson Place, Briggs Street, Jadan Place, and Walmar Place. Sealed bids were received on September 26, 2013. The low bid was submitted by Radney Plumbing, Inc. in the amount of \$1,256,940.05, and the Engineering Department's estimate was \$1,220,746.25. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Radney Plumbing, Inc. in the amount of \$1,256,940.05 plus a 10% contingency (\$125,694.01) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,382,634.06.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Radney Plumbing, Inc. in the amount of \$1,256,940.05 plus a 10% contingency (\$125,694.01) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,382,634.06 for the Utilities Extension Project annexed Island 35B.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of appointments to the Central Valdosta Development Authority/ Downtown Development Authority.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Central Valdosta Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority has the following three members whose terms will expire on December 31, 2013: (1) Baha Zeidan (CEO, Azalea Health Innovations), Inc., (2) Rodney Flucas (Self Employed - Asset Management), and (3) Gino Fina Self Employed, Valdosta Shared Office Space. Mr. Zeidan and Mr. Flucas have not expressed an interest in being reappointed and Mr. Fina recently resigned due to an employment conflict. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants applying for these positions are as follows: (1) Mikki Hudson - Restaurant Owner (Jessie's Eats and Treats), (2) Rhett Holmes - Owner of Development Company (IDP Housing), and (3) Michael Cooper - Business Owner (ASA Engineering & Surveying, Inc.). Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the applicants for the Central Valdosta Development Authority.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the appointments of Mikki Hudson, Rhett Holmes, and Michael Cooper to the Central Valdosta Development Authority/ Downtown Development Authority for a term of two years.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority has a member, Robert F. "Rob" Evans (Architect with IPG Incorporated), whose term will expire on December 31, 2013. Mr. Evans has expressed an interest in being re-appointed to this Authority and was the only applicant to submit an application for this appointment. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the applicant for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the re-appointment of Rob Evans to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority for a term of three years.

Consideration of appointments to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee has the following two members whose slots are currently vacant: (1) Earl Wetherington, and (2) Commander Bernard Robinson. Mr. Wetherington is deceased and Commander Robinson did not express an interest in being reappointed. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants applying for these positions are as follows: (1) William A. Branham - Founder/Chairman/CEO (21st Century Telecom, Inc.), and (2) William M. Tucker, Jr. - Retired Medical Technologist (South Georgia Medical Center). Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the appointments of the applicants to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the appointments of William A. Branham and William M. Tucker, Jr. to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee and serve at the pleasure of the Committee.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta Tree Commission.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Tree Commission has a member, Artie Marshall, who recently resigned. Ms. Marshall's term will expire on September 6, 2014. Mr. Robert H. Harrison (Retired) has expressed an interest in being appointed to this Commission and was the only applicant to submit an application for this appointment. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the appointment of the applicant to the Valdosta Tree Commission.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the appointment of Robert H. Harrison to fill the unexpired term of Artie Marshall on the Valdosta Tree Commission.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta Housing Authority.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Housing Authority has a member, Robert Jenkins, whose term will expire on December 31, 2013. Mr. Jenkins has expressed an interest in being re-appointed to this Authority and was the only applicant to submit an application for this appointment. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The Mayor makes the appointments to the Valdosta Housing Authority according to their By-Laws.

Mayor Gayle stated that he was re-appointing Robert Jenkins to the Valdosta Housing Authority for a term of five years.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the opening of the Gornto Road Extension Project was very successful and he has received a lot of positive feedback from citizens and users of the roadway. It is very attractive and functional and a wise use of SPLOST revenues. It also shows the benefit of comprehensive planning.

There will be an Electronics Recycling Event on Saturday, November 9, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium. This event has been very successful in the past and citizens are encouraged to participate.

The City is currently in the planning stages for the new Force Main Project and the relocation of the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plan. Currently, temporary improvements are being made at the Plant are being done in such a way that they can be used as part of the new Plant. Council had previously authorized \$2.5 million for short term improvements that would help the Plant remain in compliance until the new Plant is on-line and operational. The short term improvements include the following: (1) New automatic bar screens have been installed and are operating well. They will help keep rags and debris out of the Plant. (2) A set of manual bar screens have been installed and are operating well. (3) The new return activated sludge lines have been installed in front of the bar screens and this is helping to get existing rags out of the downstream treatment process. (4) New air blowers that have been installed and the piping is complete and operating well. (5) New blowers for aeration basins have been installed and are operational. (6) New piping to the aeration basins has been installed. (7) Improvements have been made to the secondary clarifier number No. 4 and digester number No. 1. (8) Some of the old primary clarifiers are being drained so that they can be used for surge tanks in order to serve as temporary storage basins if there are high flows the Plant cannot handle. This will also help keep us in compliance and prevent any overflows. (9) A new belt press will be delivered next week and this will be the final improvement. It is anticipated that all of the short-term improvements will be completed by the end of the year.

Make A Difference Day was held on October 26, 2013 and it was very successful. This year's event focused on the neighborhood bordered by Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Dasher Lane, Wisenbaker Lane, Griffin Avenue, and South Patterson Street. There were approximately 70 volunteers who spent 207 volunteer hours collecting approximately 4,000 lbs (2 tons) of junk, litter, and debris.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, recognized Sementha Mathews, Public Information Officer, for receiving two awards from the Toastmasters. She earned the status of Advanced Leader Silver which is the highest award in the Toastmasters Leadership Program and she was also recognized as a Distinguished Toastmaster which is the greatest honor that can be earned by a member of the Toastmasters organization.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City has been looking for an Urban Forestry Supervisor for quite a while and our Engineering Department has now filled that position. We are pleased to have Kevin Jenkins as our new Urban Forestry Supervisor. Kevin will oversee all of the Arbor Division responsibilities. He will be responsible for inspecting, planting, pruning, removal of trees, landscape plan review, site inspections, oversee the Codes as it relates to construction activity and tree removal, and he will work closely with our Tree Commission and community to educate the public on our Tree and Landscape Ordinance. He will also be our liaison in activities such as Arbor Day and Earth Day. He is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist with ten years of experience. Kevin is originally from Florida and had eight years of experience with the City of Tampa before moving to Helena, Montana for two years. He is aware of Valdosta's legacy as being Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for 27 consecutive years and we are excited to have Kevin and his family as part of our community.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, thanked the citizens of Valdosta, Lowndes County, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Dasher for their confidence in our governments and our community. We had nearly 70% approval rating for SPLOST VII and we are prepared to carry out the work of those projects that have been approved by the voters.

Councilman Vickers asked Mayor Gayle to explain to the Valdosta State University students in attendance about the Work Session. Mayor Gayle stated that the reason why Council passes through the Agenda Items so quickly without a lot of discussion is because there is a Work Session on Tuesday night where all of the Agenda Items are discussed and all of the questions that Council members may have are answered. This makes for a brief and more stream-lined Council Meeting.

Councilman Yost thanked the SPLOST Committee for their hard work and support during the past through months. Suzan Prince, Chairman of the SPLOST Committee, was at every event and did a great job. Councilman Yost also thanked the citizens who went to the poles and voted. There are 58,000 registered voters and only 5,000 voted.

Councilman Vickers inquired about the status of the City's wells. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we have had good success in rehabbing some of the wells that are now over 20 years old. There is one new well on line and we are getting ready to do the testing and preparation for a second well. Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that they are currently in the process of doing the second test well and they have rehabbed five wells with excellent results. There will be two more to do and those will be rehabbed at a later date. Larry Hanson stated that in the 1990's, the City acquired 280 acres and the Water Treatment Plant sits on 30 acres and Freedom Park is located on the other 250 acres. The wells are spread out over a large tract in the event that there is a water quality problem in one area. The wells that were rehabbed have reached their life expectancy and there was surface water infiltration in one of them. We are currently approaching 4 billion gallons of water in the City and it all comes from that well field and the Water Treatment Plant. It cost the City of Valdosta \$20 million to build the Plant and then another \$20 million was spent on it around 2003 to take it from a 15 million gallon a day Plant to a 22.5 million gallon a day Plant. It can ultimately be designed for a 45 million gallon a day Plant.

Councilman Payton stated that he was delighted to be re-elected to serve another four years to a position that he takes very seriously. He looks forward to working with the Department Heads, the Mayor, fellow Council members, and the citizens. Hats off to those 290 people who did show up to vote!

Mayor Gayle stated that the population of the County, which includes Valdosta and the four other municipalities, is 110,000 with only 58,000 registered voters in the County. That means that 52,000 people do not have enough interest to even register to vote and of the 58,000 registered voters, we had 15% of those that showed up at the polls. In a couple of the races, such as the Mayor of Hahira's race, there was a five vote difference so every vote counts.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Joe Johnson, 615 West Street, stated that he was born and raised in Valdosta and Lowndes County. He has picked cotton, cropped tobacco, and also taught school. He does not complain but he is 77 years old. He receives a small check and the City is taking 5% (\$35) of it on the water bill. There is a \$10 late fee and a \$25 reconnection fee. Sometimes older people tend to forget to pay their bill and a late fee will be charged to them plus the reconnection fee. Those people 75 years and older can hardly get a job. No one wants to hire a person who is 75 years old much less 77 years old. Mr. Johnson asked Council to think about it. If the City is going to charge \$25 for a reconnection fee then there is no reason why the City should charge \$10 for a late fee. Council decides what is good for the citizens and they are the City fathers so citizens come to them for help. Most of the Council members are 65 and older and they need to think about it. Mr. Johnson stated that he was not complaining about the water bill because sometimes it is only \$2.00, but then you have the sanitation fee that is \$19, the sewer which is \$14, and then you have the water bill which is \$2.35. If you are 77 years old and tend to forget then you have to pay \$35 when it is late anyway, so why charge the \$35 if the City is are going to reconnect it. The person who does the reconnection is still on the City's payroll. The City needs to cut one or the other. Council members are the City fathers and the leaders and make up everything that happens in this City. Mr. Johnson asked Council to consider his request.

Sidney Blanton, 151 Blanton Drive, stated that he was one of the 5,000 citizens who voted along with his wife. He voted for SPLOST with some serious reservations. He talked to the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners last month and told them that all he wanted was for them to tell the citizens what they are doing

with the SPLOST money. He asked them not to come up with something like infrastructure. He could read to you the first SPLOST and the one that just passed and it looks about the same all the way through. He has seen the Wastewater Treatment Plant under water and waded into the tobacco field near the Plant to crop tobacco so he could have told the City that the area would flood. When you have a project such as the Gornto Road Extension Project, it is very nice; however, it turns into a two lane residential driveway down Gornto Road. Mr. Blanton asked that the City put down what it cost and that once or twice a year the City should put something in the newspaper that shows the percentage for total completion of each project and what it cost. Everyone needs to thank Mike Hill because it was his article in the newspaper that convinced him to vote for SPLOST. Mr. Blanton stated that he has lived in Valdosta for 67 years and really only got interested in what is going on in the City the last 25 years. He asked that Council just tell the citizens what they are doing with the money. The Water Treatment Plant needs to be the first priority for SPLOST funds. We also need to have an open government. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that every government is required to run an ad in the newspaper once a year in December about the SPLOST projects, the status, and what has been spent.

Caroline Singletary, 4871 Gary Lane, stated that she is very concerned about the Sabal Trail proposed pipeline. There was a route through the City of Valdosta but that was just a Trojan proposal because they are moving all of that to the outskirts of Lowndes County. There are homes and families out there and there is absolutely no reason to run this pipeline through their property. Ms. Singletary stated that she reached out to Sabal Trail and asked them for a detailed copy of the maps so she could find some other property owners in order to get together. At the meeting, there were more of the Sabal Trail representatives than property owners and as soon as they tried to talk to someone they just spirited people away. As land owners they could not figure out what was going on. The Sabal Trail representatives will not respond. Ms. Singletary stated that she approached her neighbor and he did not even know the pipeline was coming through Lowndes County. They have only notified her since she is an impacted person. If you do not have the pipeline coming through your land then you would not know anything about it. They are being told to just sign a piece of paper and if you do then they will let you have some input on how this is going to run through your land; however, if you do not sign the paper then they will take you to Court for eminent domain. You will have no input and that is wrong. That is extortion and that is not the way to do anybody in Lowndes County. You can actually go to their website and file an E-comment that says we do not want this coming through our County and if it does come through keep it on right-of-ways. They could run it down I-75 if they wanted to. You can also go on their website and voice your strong concerns besides just listing a generic concern. She has asked for them to stop the meetings that they have planned because there are too many people who do not know about it. She does not have the knowledge or political clout and they have all the money. If the City does not help these residents then they will not have any resources. Ms. Singletary stated that she went to the Lowndes County Commission Office and basically that is what they said. She asked them not to give up because they have not even tried yet. She thought she had found something in the eminent domain statute that will actually let you go on and file something under the environmental portion that will allow you to have a say about what is going on. There is a lot that you can do and as leaders of our community. If the City does not stand up and help them then who else do they have to go to. Ms. Singletary asked Council to look at that and let them know the pipeline is not welcome in our County. We are not getting anything out of this and the City of Valdosta is not being compensated for this. The residents need some support from the leadership to help stop this. She was told that if she did not sign the paper she would not have a voice as to what happens on her property and they will just take it. Sabal has said that they are looking at alternate routes and the residents offered several suggestions but there was no response. She was told yesterday that it was coming through her land and Sabal is pre-filing. They said they were open to alternate routes but obviously they are not and they are not acting in good faith. Ms. Singletary asked for Council's help with this situation. Mayor Gayle asked Ms. Singletary if she had voiced her concerns at the Lowndes County Commission Meeting because the pipeline is not coming through the City Limits. Ms. Singletary stated that she had voiced her concerns. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it has been very confusing because initially there was more than one company and more than one route being considered. One of the routes was a significant portion of the County but they abandoned that route. He was not aware that any of it was coming in the City Limits but that does not mean as a community we all do not have an interest in this.

John Quarterman, Quarterman Road, stated that when he started cropping tobacco in Lowndes County he was under the age of 18 and at that time he could not vote. It is refreshing to learn that now underage people can actually register to vote in the County. Mr. Quarterman stated that he wanted to address the Council about LED lighting. He read an interesting article in Forbes where the writer looked up under the Energy Information Agency

and the Department of Energy and if all the incandescent lighting was changed to LED lighting then the country would save 18% of the total energy used in this country. That is the same number that is supplied by all of the 100 remaining nuclear power plants. Georgia Tech did a study about three years ago saying that a combination of efficiency and conservation would save enough electricity in Georgia that there would be no need for any new power plants at all. If you combine the two, we would not need the new power plant on the Savannah River and Georgia Power could also shut down some of the coal plants and they do not need any natural gas. The users of lighting that make the most difference are not the individuals with their houses but it is the big buildings run by companies and organizations such as governments. This is an opportunity for the City of Valdosta to continue their precedent of leading the way such as the solar panels at the Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. This does not have to be done all at once and there are actually grants available from various sources to assist with that. If we added solar panels on traffic lights think of all the money the City would save for a one time investment part of which you could get from elsewhere. This is the opposite of what Ms. Singletary has to deal with regarding the pipeline. We have a situation where a pipeline company based in Houston and Florida Power and Light want to pay a one-time fee for right-of-way from which they will profit on-going forever. That does not seem right. What do we get in Georgia for this pipeline? There will be a 100 foot wide gash through our wetlands including crossing the Withlacoochee River downstream from the Wastewater Treatment Plant. It does affect Valdosta for several reasons. Valdosta is the County seat of Lowndes County and anything that happens in Lowndes County affects Valdosta. There are a number of people with major businesses inside the City Limits who own land that the pipeline will cross. You do not know that the pipeline isn't going through Valdosta. He spoke with Spectra and NextEra (parent company of Florida Power and Light) and these are the companies that really make up Sabal Trail Transmission. They have to file two routes which include a preferred route and an alternate route. Their alternate route is the one that comes right through the middle of Valdosta. They also said that Federal Energy & Regulatory Commission (FERC) can choose the alternate route so you do not know that pipeline isn't coming right through Valdosta. Even if it is not it still affects Valdosta. Another thing that Valdosta could do as an organization, not only individuals, but we could file as an intervener which gives legal standing and means that FERC has to listen to them. It is something worth thinking about. We do not need this pipeline and it is no benefit to Georgia. Florida may be growing faster but if you change lights to LEDs for efficiency and conservation and then add solar panels there is no need for this pipeline at all.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the November 7, 2013 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:31 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, November 21, 2013.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta