

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 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, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Deidra White, Robert Yost, and James Wright. Councilman Tim Carroll was absent. The invocation was given by Sr. Pastor Curtis Jenkins, New Life Bible Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve a Lease Agreement and an Addendum to the Lease Agreement for Solar Arrays at the Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that Utilities Department has been working with the Valdosta-Lowndes Industrial Authority over the years to look for innovative ways to bring new industry to Valdosta and to promote jobs in our City and County. We have been approached by companies specializing in the development of renewable/sustainable energy projects proposing to develop and operate a solar photovoltaic facility in response to the Georgia Power Company Advanced Solar Initiative (GPASI) Program approved by the Georgia Public Service Commission. Georgia Power is currently accepting Request for Proposals for additional ways to diversify their portfolio on energy generation and the deadline to submit proposals is March 1, 2013. The requirements for the Georgia Power Program are as follows: (1) The proposed location must be adjacent to an existing Georgia Power Company electric distribution line or sub-station with adequate capacity to support the installation and operation of the proposed solar photovoltaic facility. (2) The proposed location should have a major load associated with electric transformer(s) currently located on the proposed site. (3) The proposed project should be designed not to exceed 1.0 Megawatts for each existing transformer or meter. (4) There must be an approved contract and long term land lease between the company developing the solar photovoltaic facility and the property owner stipulating provisions for the development and operation of a solar photovoltaic facility on the proposed site. The City of Valdosta's Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is unique in that it meets all these criteria. The Plant already has an existing small solar array on site which is connected to the Georgia Power Company electric distribution system and has 10-12 acres of available land to construct additional solar photovoltaic arrays to produce up to 2.0 Megawatts of electricity. The Utilities Department will not need this acreage for at least 30-years. The City of Valdosta was approached by three different firms who are interested in leasing land at the Mud Creek WWTP for development of two, 1.0 Megawatt solar arrays. The proposals were from Georgia based companies that design, engineer, and install solar photovoltaic facilities. Upon review of each proposal, Hannah Solar was selected to develop a proposed solar photovoltaic facility and submit the required design, engineering, and construction plans to Georgia Power Company under the provisions of the GPASI Program. Hannah Solar has extensive experience in the development of solar photovoltaic facilities throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States, and they designed, engineered, and constructed the solar photovoltaic facility currently in operation at the Mud Creek WWTP. Also, Hannah Solar offered the greatest revenue return to the Utilities Department for a 20-30 year lease of available acreage (\$30,000 annually for 10 years with rent increases at years 11, 16, 21, and 26 for two,1.0 Megawatt arrays). The City of Valdosta was prepared to enter into a Lease Agreement with Hannah Solar; however, we will not be able to enter into an Agreement at this time due to recent changes in the law. George Talley, City Attorney, stated that there has been a change in the law recently in this area and in order to offer a Lease Agreement to Hannah Solar the City will need to go through one of the City's Development Authorities. The Lease Agreement would be between the City and one of the Development Authorities and then the Development Authority would sub-lease it to Hannah Solar. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Hannah Solar currently has the Solar Grid on the site that was approved several years ago. This will generate revenue for the City and indirectly the WWTP will be operated partially by solar power. Henry Hicks stated that the Utilities

Department had two stated goals in order for any project to be considered as viable at Mud Creek. The first goal was that revenues from the proposed project would offset the Mud Creek electrical costs by at least 10% or approximately \$25,000 annually. These revenues could be in the form of lower electrical costs or property lease. The second goal was that it had to be a turnkey project and all costs associated with the development, construction, and long term maintenance of the proposed solar project would be fully covered by the selected company. All three firms met that those criteria and Hannah Solar had the best proposal on the Lease payments. Larry Hanson asked Henry Hicks to explain how the project would work and why they are located there. Henry Hicks stated that when they have a solar project, unless you are the developer of the project and sole owner you cannot directly take the energy to yourself. We are not doing that and we are contracting with another company. We do not get the direct benefit of that electricity and we have to pay Georgia Power; however, we are getting Lease money to offset those electric costs. The Mud Creek WWTP is unique in that during the day when it is generating power they do store power but we get the direct benefit that the solar array will help power the Plant during the day and when the solar panels are generating electricity. The electricity goes back onto the grid and when it is not generating electricity we still get power off of the grid. The direct benefit is that we have transformers available and a load available that we can get it directly off the solar arrays but we cannot purchase directly through those arrays. That has to be purchased through Georgia Power. If we were to do our own project, we could give ourselves electricity.

Councilwoman White inquired as to whether we would have room in the future to develop our own solar arrays at Mud Creek. Henry Hicks stated that this would be a 20-30 year Lease and we will not need the land for that period of time; however, we could at some point in the future if the funding was available to build a solar array. There are a lot of farmers building solar arrays and they have large covered buildings where the solar arrays are placed on top to help offset their electric bill.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the request as presented and authorize the City of Valdosta to enter into a Lease Agreement with one of the Development Authorities for Solar Arrays at the Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the deadline for applying for the City Government 101 Class is March 8, 2013 and Council members are encouraged to have citizens in their Districts apply.

The 2013 Farm Days will begin on May 4th and continue through October 19th at the Lowndes County Courthouse. This year they will take place every Saturday during the month of June. The partnership with the Healthy Living Task Force is going very well and they will again be able to take EBT debit and credit cards. We are looking forward to bringing citizens to the Downtown area for this event.

The Bird Supper is scheduled for February 27, 2013 at the Depot in Atlanta. Many of the Council members are planning to attend and hotel reservations have been made for this event.

The Twin Street Project has been completed and it is working very well. Citizens will be able to enter the Drury Inn property from the back way and not get into the Mall traffic and congestion.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, recognized members of the Lowndes Youth Leadership League who were in attendance at the Council Meeting. The group had a Local Government Day several weeks ago and they will be visiting the City Council Meetings as part of their requirements.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, introduced Renassa Small, the new Human Resources Director, who comes to the City of Valdosta from the State of Florida. The City has been without a Human Resources Director for approximately one year and we took our time to find the right person and the right professional. Renassa is that person and she joined our team last Monday. The Department Heads are happy to have her here and she is doing and will do great things for us. Renassa has a lot of experience in all areas of Human Resources from insurance, workers comp, hiring, discipline, and all the things that are necessary. There is no Department that is more important to the day-to-day operations of the City. Her work impacts all of our Departments and every employee of the City in some way so it was absolutely important to have the right person. Larry Hanson asked Renassa to introduce herself to the Mayor and Council.

Renassa Small, new Human Resources Director, stated that it was a pleasure meeting the Mayor and Council. She has over 18 years of experience in Human Resources which includes Human Resources management, payroll and benefits, labor relations, collective bargaining, and policy development and change. She is excited about having the opportunity to work the City Manager and his Executive Staff. She found the camaraderie between them exciting and very rare in a work environment. She is a big proponent of exemplary customer service and is looking forward to providing that type of customer service to the City of Valdosta and its citizens.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Yost thanked Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, and her Staff for touring his District this week to look at some areas that could possibly benefit from the Group Workcamp this summer. They also looked at some road improvements and trees that had been brought to his attention at a community meeting held at the Wood Valley Community Center several weeks ago. Also, Twin Street looks really good and provides an easy access to the hotel and the restaurant.

Councilman Norton stated that he wanted to recognize the City Staff, Lowndes County Staff, and Valdosta State University Staff for organizing the Parade of Champions to celebrate the success of the Valdosta State University athletic teams and their great contributions to our community.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

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 February 21, 2013 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:50 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, March 7, 2013.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta