

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2008
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, and Robert Yost. Councilman James Wright was absent. The invocation was given by Mayor Fretti, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 6, 2008 Regular Meeting was approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for five mowers for the Parks and Recreation Department (Bid No. 41-07-08).

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Parks and Recreation Department is in need of several new mowers to assist with their duties which will replace older models that no longer operate and the cost of maintenance has escalated. These are Council-approved budget items for this fiscal year. Sealed bids were received on March 11, 2008 with the low bid meeting specifications submitted by Powerhouse Outdoor in the amount of \$39,966.10. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the low bid meeting specifications submitted by Powerhouse Outdoor in the amount of \$39,966.10 and allow the Parks and Recreation Department to proceed with the purchase.

A MOTION by Councilman Head, seconded by Councilman Eunice, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the low bid meeting specifications submitted by Powerhouse Outdoor in the amount of \$39,966.10 and allow the Parks and Recreation Department to proceed with the purchase of five mowers.

Consideration of bids for renovation of the McCranie Building for the new Police Department Crime Lab.

Ken Ricket, Ellis Ricket & Associates, stated that the McCranie Building located on Ashley Street near Alden Avenue was purchased several years ago by the City, and it was determined that the building would be a logical location for a Crime Lab Facility for the City Police Department. The City hired Ellis Ricket & Associates to work with the Police Department and prepare plans to renovate the building which was constructed in the 1960's. Bids were received on February 26, 2008 with the low bid submitted by International City Builders of Warner Robbins in the amount of \$2,485,000. Mr. Ricket stated that he had been asked whether a new building would have been less costly and noted that the City will be renovating approximately two-thirds of the McCranie Building. An elevator has been added, fire exits modified, and an additional stair added. For these renovations as bid, the City spent approximately \$125 per square foot. Ellis Ricket & Associates investigated a new facility under design in the Warner Robbins which is budgeted for \$180 per square foot; however, this particular facility does not have a lot of the features that the Valdosta Crime Lab will have. If these features were added to the Warner Robbins facility, the price for their new building would be \$191 per square foot. They also looked at some estimating standards that are used around the country and ran a cost based on mechanical, electrical, and plumbing on the McCranie Building relative to a building of the same size to determine what a building of that size would be as a new facility. The cost came out to \$190 per square foot and when you look at what the City will be spending for renovating the McCranie Building it is well worth it.

Steve Hart, Architect with Ellis Ricket & Associates, stated that he has been working with Police Chief Frank Simons on the renovation of the McCranie Building. The first floor will house evidence receiving and storage and crime lab functions which include an indoor firearms range, a ballistics lab with a ballistics water tank, a latent print lab, a trace evidence lab, and a narcotics lab. There is some space on the first floor that will not be renovated, and the second floor will house the offices for staff. Also, a new lobby and an elevator has been added on the south end for handicap access and a new free standing stair was added on the north end.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to why there was some space that would not be renovated at this time. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it was primarily for future growth and expansion. Police Chief Frank Simons stated that it would also hold down costs. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether some of the space would be available in the future for autopsies. Chief Simons stated that they have not planned for an autopsy room in the facility due to some limiting factors such as additional cost and the difficulty in procuring a Board Certified Pathologist. They had previously discussed the possibility of being able to contract with doctors who do that type of work but because the cost of the new Crime Lab was over the original amount they were looking at cost savings and they were also concerned about being able to staff it adequately at this point. There is an area for a future morgue and they are planning to have body coolers so that when they go to crime scenes they will have a place to secure the body. Councilman Yost inquired as to what other things they would need if the building was exactly the way they wanted it. Chief Simons stated that one of the areas that they had not planned on engaging at this point was DNA analysis. This changing technology takes specific scientific operators and equipment to perform the analyses. Councilman Head stated that there has been considerable conversation about a Medical Examiner and inquired as to whether anyone had looked at the space that would be needed and what the cost would be to hire a Medical Examiner. Chief Simons stated that the salary for a Medical Examiner would be approximately \$100,000. Councilman Head inquired as to whether this would be a full time staff person or on-call. Chief Simons stated that this would be dependent on how they approach it and who would be available to take the job. Councilman Head inquired about the cost of the equipment that a Medical Examiner would need. Chief Simons stated that there would be a concern about communicable diseases that could be present in a body being autopsied and that significantly increases the cost because a facility has to be able to handle the discharge from the autopsy and contain the airflow in the room. Councilman Head asked that in the future they look at and examine what would be involved to secure a Medical Examiner and equipment. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they discussed this issue at the Mayor and Council Retreat and it would take a combined effort from the City, County, and Coroner so that everyone understands the roles and responsibilities. There is approximately 5,500 square feet of unallocated space in the new facility and several conversations would need to take place before a decision is made in order to avoid conflict. Councilman Carroll inquired about the amount paid to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) to process crime scenes. Chief Simons stated that the City does not pay anything to them at the present time and the problem is getting the information back in a timely manner. Larry Hanson stated that in most cases the Valdosta Police collect the evidence and then send it to the lab and that is where the backlog occurs. Chief Simons stated there have been problems with getting autopsies due to the backlog in the crime lab. Councilman Carroll stated that if we build the Crime Lab and there are several counties around the area that have the same dilemma utilizing the GBI Crime Lab then we may start processing and handling some of their crimes. Chief Simons stated that we actually do that already with the current facility. We have processed firearms for some of the surrounding counties and have done some processing indirectly for local GBI Agents who may want something processed because of the ballistic fingerprint system that we have. If it should develop to the point that the Police Department is getting a large amount of requests or routine requests then it would be brought before Council to enter into an agreement. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether we have enough autopsy cases in order to justify having someone on staff versus contracting the service out. Chief Simons stated that this is almost like justifying insurance because you do not need it until you need it and when you need it there is no exception for it. Councilman Vickers inquired as to the number of times they needed autopsy services last year. Chief Simons stated that it was definitely over five times and any time they handle a dead body they classify it as either an attended death or an unattended death. An unattended death is when someone dies and you do not know why. It could be natural, accidental, homicide, or suicide. They are multiple unattended deaths each month and there have been many times when they thought a death was a suicide and had the family come back in a couple of weeks or even longer and said that the person did not commit suicide. Councilman Yost stated that he would like for the City to become a player in this business because of the backlog and the trouble with getting information needed to process a case. There will be others wanting this service because the City of Valdosta will be state-of-the-art. He would like to see what it would take to contract this out to an agency that wanted to come in and use our facilities and our expertise. Chief Simons stated that if a municipality would be using us on a regular basis then they should to share in some of the cost.

Councilman Head stated that in recent years there have been several deaths including the death of Councilman Wright's brother that warrant giving serious thought on how to accommodate the morgue and the Medical Examiner even if it is on an on-call basis. Chief Simons stated that he spoke with Capt. J. D. Yeager of the Sheriff's Department about the County's participation in the new Crime Lab and they are committed to the project and sharing of costs for operating the facility. They also discussed the fact that since the City is stepping up to the plate with the building the County will be expected to provide some of the equipment. Capt. Yeager assured Chief Simons that he has had conversations with the County Manager and others and he is confident that they can handle their share. Chief Simons has made commitments to Capt. Yeager that this will not be the City's or the County's Crime Lab but will be a joint operation. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether there would be additional requests for internal equipment or whether this includes all of the spectrometry equipment. Chief Simons stated that this bid is for renovation of the building and for basic lab setup in the building. Councilman Yost inquired as to the timeframe for construction. Chief Simons stated that it would start in approximately 30-60 days and should be completed within 210 days. Councilman Payton inquired as to the amount of input that Capt. Yeager had on the design of the building. Chief Simons stated that as the building was configured the County operators were brought in. The layout was changed on several occasions based on the County's recommendation and this has been a joint process. Councilman Payton inquired as to whether Chief Simons would recommend some type of written agreement with the County on this project. Chief Simons stated that he did not think the agencies would have difficulty working together. Councilman Head asked about operational funding for the Crime Lab once it is up and running and whether the County would pay part of that. Chief Simons stated that after discussions with Capt. J. D. Yeager they understand that there will be costs associated with the operation of the Crime Lab and that it will be jointly shared. Councilman Head stated that he would like to have something in writing that the County would pay half of the cost as opposed to a verbal commitment or handshake. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they could have a contract between agencies to avoid any problems. There is also a request before Congress for an earmark for \$500,000 for the Crime Lab and Congressman Kingston is very supportive of this project and believes that we have a very good chance of getting some Federal funding. Larry Hanson asked that Ellis Ricket & Associates provide Chief Simons with an estimate on the power consumption for a building of this size and some of the typical overhead.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Head, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the low bid submitted by International City Builders in the amount of \$2,485,000 plus a 10% contingency for renovation of the McCranie Building for the new Police Department Crime Lab.

Consideration of a request to purchase ten laptop computers for Mayor and Council with funds from the Mayor/Council Contingency Fund.

Steven Carter, Information Technology Manager, stated that current Council laptops have entered their fourth year of service and optimally retirement should occur within three to four years. The economic and productive value of hardware decreases substantially after four years of service and the cost to maintain mature assets can often rival the cost of replacement. The City Manager's Office is currently migrating to a new office productivity package and because of the close working relationship between the Council and the City Manager's Office, it is a natural progression to migrate as a unit to avoid capability issues. Steven Carter recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Dell in the amount of \$19,990.30 to replace current laptops and software. Councilman Eunice inquired as to whether the laptops would have the capability to utilize software for paperless meetings. Larry Hanson stated that the laptops would be prepared to do that but we were waiting for approval of the City's new software system. There will be an additional request to be brought before Council to purchase an additional server and the necessary software to go paperless. Several companies have been evaluated to determine which one has the best product for the least cost and features for the future. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether the current laptops would be recycled. Steven Carter stated that the laptops will be used as loaners and trainers for the new software to be purchased by the City. Councilman Eunice inquired about the timeframe for the purchase of these laptops. Steve Carter stated that there would be a two-week timeframe between the time that the order is placed and when the equipment arrives.

A MOTION by Councilman Head, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid Dell in the amount of \$19,990.30 to replace ten laptop computers for Mayor and Council with funds from the Mayor/Council Contingency Fund.

Consideration of a request to approve a contract with New World Systems, Inc. to provide a software system for the City of Valdosta.

Steven Carter, Information Technology Manager, stated that this project originated approximately two and a half years ago and has finally matured to the point that the City of Valdosta is ready to take a giant step in technical evolution of the City. A team of individuals composed of representatives from every City Department has spent a year determining requirements and evaluating potential solutions. After an extensive evaluation process which included more than ten vendors and hundreds of man-hours, the Valdosta Municipal Software Selection Team issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) on December 20, 2007. Five proposals were further scrutinized by a sub-committee composed of Councilman John Eunice, Larry Hanson, City Manager, Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, Chuck Dinkins, Accounting Manager, Cheryl Gallagher, Sr. Human Resources Specialist, and Steven Carter, Information Technology Manager. Through an objective independent scoring process, the top two clearly separated themselves from the rest of the field. Steven Carter recommended that Council accept the proposal of New World Systems, Inc. to supply an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system as outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP #13-07-08) in the amount of \$767,044.

A MOTION by Councilman Eunice, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a contract with New World Systems, Inc. in the amount of \$767,044 to provide a software system for the City of Valdosta.

Consideration of a request to approve the 2009 Group Work Camp Co-Sponsor Agreement.

Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta has committed to eliminate all substandard housing in the community by 2020. Richard Joyner, Rehabilitation Construction Coordinator, and Kelley Thomas, Community Development Coordinator, recently held a kickoff meeting for the fourth annual Southern Hospitality Work Camp which will be held June 22-28, 2008. The 2008 Camp will be a Challenge Camp and a national training site for the Group Work Camp Foundation, Inc. More than 350 youth, representing many denominations and states, will come together to repair more than 40 houses in one week. Each participant pays \$399 each to cover food and housing costs. All of the previous Work Camps have been a great success and to date, this effort has repaired 144 homes in our community. The project requires a \$19,000 monetary sponsorship to support the purchase of supplies for the repairs. One half of the funds (\$9,500) are proposed from the City and the remaining \$9,500 is provided by Lowe's Distribution Center. The Valdosta School System will house and feed the volunteers at the Valdosta Middle School, and the School System has already executed the 2009 Lodging Agreement with Group Work Camp Foundation, Inc. The City of Valdosta will conduct the overall project administration. The Group Work Camp Foundation requires the City of Valdosta to execute a Co-sponsor Agreement in order for the City to be considered for a 2009 site and to receive our priority dates for the event. Submitting the proposal at this time will assist in securing the volunteers necessary for the project. Staff is proposing that Group Work Camp Foundation approve our community for a June 21-27, 2009 date and is the date that the Valdosta City School System preferred. The Agreement is identical to the previous agreements that have been presented to the Mayor and City Council and have been previously reviewed and approved by the City Attorney. Mara Register recommended that Council approve the 2009 Group Work Camp Co-Sponsor Agreement. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether Lowe's has given thought to taking this project to a national level and into other communities. Mara Register stated that the City of Valdosta is facilitating conversations between the corporate headquarters of Lowe's Distribution Center and the National Headquarters of the Group Workcamp and they have invited Lowe's Corporate management to be in Valdosta this summer so that they can see first hand what a great program this is because Lowe's national slogan is "Let's Build Something Together."

A MOTION by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the 2009 Group Work Camp Co-Sponsor Agreement.

Consideration of the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this has been a long and deliberate process with the five smaller Cities and Lowndes County in reaching an agreement. The deadline for being out of compliance is March 31, 2008 so time is of the essence. We have agreed that because of the December 3, 2007 Agreement, we have to have two

agreements because we have agreed now that some services are going to be funded a certain way between December 3, 2007 and June 30, 2008 and then some of those things are going to change effective July 1, 2008 such as the Parks and Recreation Authority being created and the hotel/motel tax. Larry Hanson asked Council's consideration in approving the resolution and the appropriate set of forms to authorize the City, Lowndes County, and two other smaller Cities to submit this to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The term of this Agreement is from now to June 30, 2008; however, there were several areas of concern on these forms. The first concern was on the Tourism page where the County checked the box marked "Other" and the box that the City felt should be checked is the one marked "Service is provided Countywide" and the organization that is providing the service should be identified which is the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority. There was a lengthy debate about this and Joe Pritchard, County Manager, has submitted a letter stating that the County has agreed to check the box that reads "Service is provided Countywide" by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority; however, the County wants to continue to have discussions about what entities might be funded going forward from July 1, 2008. The City does not object to that but our position is that if there are other organizations funded then they need to be listed and we need to be sure that they are in compliance with the spirit and intent of House Bill 489. Another concern is that all the Agreements that support these need to be included as part of the packet and initially the County was reluctant to do that. The County has now agreed that all of the contracts and documents and agreements that support this will become part of the submittal. As things change over time and we have ten-year agreements we do not need to be searching in various places for all of the agreements and they should be part of the package so that it would be easy for anyone to find the Legislation that created the Conference Center & Tourism Authority. On the Building Inspection page, the County has agreed to leave the box marked "One or more cities will provide this service only within their incorporate boundaries, and the County will provide the service in unincorporated areas" as it is checked and continue discussions. The City does not believe that is the way the service is provided and the box marked "Other" should be checked and it should be listed that the service provider is the Valdosta-Lowndes County Building Inspections Department because they provide the service in Valdosta, Hahira, and unincorporated Lowndes County and in every jurisdiction except Lake Park. The City believes that the agreement should reflect who is actually providing the service and where the service is being provided. The County has asked for further discussions on this prior to July 1, 2008. On the E-911 page, the City wants the agreement attached. When E-911 was created, that was an agreement between the City and the County that called for an Oversight Board to be in place as well as an Advisory Board. That language is not reflected in this. For Parks and Recreation, the short-term form is fine where it states that the service is provided Countywide and provided by the City of Valdosta; however, for the form going forward that has not been seen by Council, the County checked the box marked "Other." The City believes that going forward from July 1, 2008 the service provider Countywide will be the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority so discussions will continue about that. The County has stated that they do not want their hands tied by Valdosta and two other Cities and they want flexibility should they decide they want to fund another entity. The City's position is that if the County wants to fund another entity then say it and put it into the agreement. If they want to change it in the future then they can negotiate those changes. House Bill 489 is not about loose language that allows you to do as you may choose but it is something that requires you to negotiate to insure that you are not duplicating a service, that you are not double taxing a set of residents, that it is not inefficient in the way it is being delivered, and that it is not provided for in the unincorporated area only; therefore, without knowing what the service is, who is going to provide it, and where it will be provided you cannot answer those questions.

Councilman Yost inquired about the Building Inspections Agreement and who they are contracted with. Larry Hanson stated that the City has an Intergovernmental Agreement between Dasher, Hahira, Valdosta, and Lowndes County. There is also an agreement between Valdosta and Lowndes County that created a joint Building Inspections Department, and there is another agreement that stating that the joint Department will provide building inspections services for Valdosta, Lowndes County, Hahira, and Dasher. Both of these need to be listed. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether Lowndes County was the local government or authority for E-911 and if the funding method was through general funds. Larry Hanson stated that was correct because Lowndes County is the service provider for E-911. The City wants to list the original agreement that created E-911 and that there is an Oversight Board and Advisory Board under Items 5 and 6. Councilman Yost inquired about Item 1 under the Parks and Recreation Service which states that Valdosta will be providing the service Countywide. Larry Hanson stated that this is from now until June 30, 2008 and after that time the City would like for it to state the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority;. The County, however, checked "Other" and listed on the back the Parks and Recreation Authority but stated that any organization may fund any entity. The City is not interested in other entity for Parks and Recreation and had agreed to fund a Countywide Authority. Larry Hanson stated that under

Water there was no debate but on the other forms when the County checked "Other" they did not provide a map or list the service providers; however, on the ones that tie the City's hands they included a detailed map and specific language about who serves what area. If this can be done on the ones that bind the City then it needs to be done on all of them. Councilman Yost inquired about the ending date under Water. Larry Hanson stated that this is the first set of forms and the second set of forms will indicate that the timeframe will be effective July 1, 2008 through 2016. There is no debate about Water and Sewer. Larry Hanson recommended that Council accept these forms and authorize the Mayor to sign the appropriate form with the four conditions to insure that we continue to negotiate in good faith and that it will be completed between now and the end of June. Larry Hanson suggested that Council include in the motion that the Tourism form be changed based on the County Manager's letter of today stating the County does acknowledge that the Conference Center is the only provider and that box should be checked.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Payton to approve the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement as presented, authorize the Mayor to sign the necessary forms with the exception of correcting the Tourism form to designate the appropriate provider, include the following four conditions, and continue to discuss the areas of difference prior to the adoption of the July 1, 2008 agreements: (1) Lowndes will agree to continue discussions regarding Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Building Inspections, and E-911 so that the forms accurately reflect the service provider, (2) If the "Other" box is checked, the information requested to justify checking that box, including a map and listing the other agreed upon service providers, will be included, (3) That any and all agreements that currently exist between the parties will be included in the overall agreement which includes the December 3, 2007 Settlement Agreement, the Building Inspections Agreement, the Conference Center & Tourism Authority Legislation, the Parks and Recreation Authority Legislation, the E-911 Agreement that includes the creation of an Oversight Board and the Advisory Board that have been in effect since E-911 was created, and any others, and (4) That in order for the Mayor and Council to certify the Agreement, it must meet the spirit and intent of House Bill 489 and list all service areas and service providers for agencies, departments, or other entities that are using public funds and the service they are providing and to whom. The motion was seconded by Councilman Vickers. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether the other Cities and the County would take action on what the City is voting on tonight and if there would have to be a majority of the Cities approving it. Larry Hanson stated that the County has already approved this and agreed to change the one form and Hahira had a Called Meeting this week and authorized the Mayor to sign the forms after they checked with the other Cities to make sure they agreed with the forms. Two out of the four smaller Cities would need to be in agreement. George Talley, City Attorney, stated that Lake Park would also be meeting this week. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0).

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

RESOLUTION NO. 2008-6, A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE FILING AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE 2008 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) GRANT REQUEST

Consideration of a request to approve the Projected Use of Funds and the Resolution authorizing filing and administration of the 2008 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Grant Request.

Kelley Thomas, Community Development Coordinator, stated that the City is required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to file an Annual Action Plan outlining the proposed use of CDBG funds. The proposed programs and activities to be carried out in Fiscal Year 2008 are as follows: (1) Housing: (a) First Time Home Buyer Education - \$10,000, (b) Acquisition and Relocation - \$70,000, and (c) Single Unit Residential Rehabilitation - \$295,492, (2) Clearance and Demolition - \$94,000, and (3) Program Administration - \$117,000. The total funds available for Fiscal Year 2008 are \$586,864. There continues to be a decrease in the funding for the Federal Program and they have been working with the Citizen Advisory Committee and Staff to diversify the resources. Kelley Thomas recommended that Council approve the Proposed Use of Funds and the Resolution authorizing filing and administration of the 2008 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Head, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Projected Use of Funds and to enact Resolution No. 2008-6, a Resolution authorizing the filing and administration of the 2008 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Grant Request, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book IV.

Consideration of a request to approve a concept for improvements on Lakeland Avenue from Forrest Street to Park Avenue.

Von Shipman, City Engineer, stated that the City School System is in the process of building a replacement for W.G. Nunn Elementary School located behind the existing school on Forrest Street. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of May, 2009 so that they would be able to move into the new facility and demolish the old facility in time for the start of school. During the process of developing plans for the new school, discussions regarding ingress and egress arose due to the congestion of Forrest Street. The new school will face Lakeland Avenue which is a very narrow street and has approximately 200 cars per day that travel on it. There are a couple of driveways that come out onto Lakeland Avenue but most of the properties face Park Avenue. In order to make this street safer and more convenient for the children to get to the new school, improvements are needed on Lakeland Avenue. Preliminary construction plans have been prepared by the City School System's Architect/Engineer to upgrade the section of Lakeland Avenue between Forrest and Park. A preliminary estimate indicates the cost of the improvements to be in the range of \$175,000 to \$200,000 which includes the installation of additional drainage infrastructure, curb, and gutter on the north side only, sidewalk on the north side only, and the resurfacing of this narrow street. To facilitate the flow of traffic to and from the new facility and to improve traffic conditions on Forrest Street, the concept to one-way this narrow section of Lakeland in the eastbound direction was formulated by the City Engineer and supported by the City School System during the initial planning stage of the project. An informal public comment meeting was held on January 17, 2008, and while all the property owners who abut the street were invited, only City Staff and Elected Officials attended this meeting. One property owner, Ms. Wanda Askew, expressed interest but was not in town at the time of the meeting. The City School System has formally asked for the City to make the improvements on Lakeland Avenue to accommodate this new facility. The City Engineer supports the improvements that will improve pedestrian and traffic safety while helping to reduce congestion on Forrest Street; however, the cost should be shared due to the fact the new school project is driving the required improvements. Von Shipman suggested the City School System pay a lump sum amount of \$60,000 to pay for the costs associated with the installation of sidewalk with curb and gutter adjacent to the school property and a portion of the drainage cost directly associated with school project. The City School System Architect/Engineer will also need to finalize the design of the improvements for the City to obtain bids through our normal process. A public hearing on the one-way issue will be held on April 10, 2008. Councilman Vickers inquired as to who would pay for the cost if this was a private development and why would the City School System not include the cost for this project in their overall budget. Von Shipman stated that at times when a new development goes in it generates traffic and the City ends up trying to make improvements. If there was a major developer coming in and the City saw a major impact to the street or intersection, then the City would, up front, negotiate and bring this information to Council. Councilman Vickers stated that this is a major change and noted that the City School System has a 1% sales tax that is split among the County School System. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that on a private development it would normally be paid by the developer unless the City felt that the road was substandard and it was something that the City needed to do. Even if the City did participate with a private development, which is done from time to time, it is different because there is income generation and growing the tax digest. The City School System is tax exempt so there is not a return on the investment for the City other than the value of educating the children. This project may fall into the range of \$150,000 and the City's participation could be limited to \$75,000 for upgrading the street and allowing the City School System to pay the remainder. In looking at SPLOST, they receive about the same amount of funding from the School SPLOST as the City receives from its SPLOST. Councilman Vickers stated that he would like for the City School System to be clear upfront as to what is expected of the City and they should pay for at least half of the cost. Larry Hanson stated that there was some frustration in the past when the City School System would get free land or land at a reduced price, such as on the Lakeland Highway which was well out of the area where the City has infrastructure, even though there is property in the City. This benefited the City School System but cost the City a lot to extend services and utilities. In this case it is hard to argue with the site of the school since they are rebuilding on a site they own and in an area where it needs to be. Councilman Vickers stated that he would look for guidance from the City Manager. Councilman Eunice stated that this project has not been bid yet and inquired as to when that would take place. Von Shipman stated that they are waiting on the final plans from the City School system and hope to have them in May and then put out for bid in June. The contract would come back before Council in July and work would begin in September. Councilman Eunice inquired as to whether Von Shipman had any confirmation from the City School System that they would pay the \$60,000. Von Shipman stated that at the request of the City Manager he spoke with Mr. William Aldrich of the City School System and he could not speak on behalf of the

School Board; however, Mr. Aldrich would advise the School Board as to Council's decision on the issue. Councilman Eunice stated that he would like to see the cost of the project split equally between the City and the City School System. Councilman Yost inquired as to where the City's funds would come from if there was an equal split. Von Shipman stated that it could be split up among multiple funds since there are sidewalks, drainage, paving, and resurfacing. Larry Hanson stated that he had discussed dedicating the City's portion to road because we would like to keep the position that this is what the City is investing in and not the parts of the project that are unique to the development that would have to be done anyway. Councilman Yost stated that they have been pushing to have a meeting with the City School Board for the past four or five years and this is exactly what they need to discuss with them on planning for the future, where they are looking for growth, and how they can work together as cooperating organizations to make these things happen. If the meetings had been held as previously discussed then there would not be that much discussion about this issue. The City will be in the same situation with J. L. Newbern Middle School and whether sidewalks should be extended to the school or not. This was discussed when that was happening but the City School System had gotten the property when there was no infrastructure and then the City had to pay to get it out there. If the City does not go ahead and make the improvements now then it may come before Council at a later date. Councilman Yost inquired as to whether improvements at the new W. G. Nunn Elementary School are dependent upon one-waying the street. Von Shipman stated that Lakeland Avenue was a very narrow street and is 20 feet in some places and less in others. This street was not meant to be a mover of traffic. For the street to accommodate two-way traffic it needs to be widened and that would be additional cost. Getting traffic away from Forrest Street seems to be the best course of action. There has not been any negative feedback on one-waying the street and when the public hearing is held then it can be formally decided if that is in the best interest. Councilman Head stated that he thought it was important that a meeting be held with the City School Board. The Board of Education probably has other plans for schools and there may be some other things that they would like the City to partner with them. When thinking about the impact of that school and neighborhood, Councilman Head stated that he could support splitting the cost with the City School System but for future projects they need to work together. Mayor Fretti stated that there were some very nice Oak trees on the north side of Lakeland Avenue which form a canopy and he hoped that could be preserved. Von Shipman stated that they may be able to save some of the trees. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether any thought was given to a redesign of using the existing entrance on Forrest Street and having a lot of parking where cars could be stacked. Von Shipman stated that the new design is conducive for stacking cars without it causing any problems to a major street. Mayor Fretti stated that once this street is constructed and improved to a one-way street, there are a few homes and apartments located along the entire corridor that may turn into Multi-Family Residential. Councilman Carroll inquired as to who initiated the conversation about the City paying for this project. Von Shipman stated that the City School System approached him about the project. At the beginning they had discussed ingress and egress issues and the problems on Forrest Street and the logistics of building a new school while the existing school is in operation. Von Shipman stated that he was concerned about the traffic on Forrest Street, the safety of the children getting to and from the school, the new school facing Lakeland Avenue, so they discussed the possibility of converting that into a one-way street. He received a letter from the City School System in mid-December formally requesting that the City make the improvements which were at that time being finalized. This could have been brought to Council earlier; however, they needed to discuss some of the issues and hold a public comment meeting about the one-waying of Lakeland Avenue. There is still plenty of time for negotiations, discussions, and completion of the road improvements by May, 2009. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the City School System had a contingency plan for funding this project if the City chose not to provide funds. Von Shipman stated that if Council chooses not to participate then the City School System would be in the position to make the improvements. Councilman Carroll stated that many of the Districts need a lot of improvements and the revenue sources are limited and he was not certain if he would approve a split on the costs for this project. Councilman Head asked whether the City School System is set on the position of the new building and the one-waying of Lakeland Avenue. Von Shipman stated that he liked the concept of one-waying Lakeland Avenue because of the congestion at Lakeland Avenue and Forrest Street is horrendous. Their goal is to get children to and from school in a safe and convenient manner. There is a tremendous amount of traffic on Forrest Street and citizens are now circumventing that road due to the school zone and using Deborah Drive and Pineview Drive. Councilman Head inquired as to whether Forrest Street would still be widened. Von Shipman stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation has indicated that it is scheduled to be widened but they did not have a date for authorization of funding. Larry Hanson stated that it is slated for 2010 and the money is committed based on the funding formula. Councilman Head inquired as to whether the City has ever participated with a School System on the funding of a project related to the construction of a school. Von Shipman stated that the City worked with Lowndes High School on the new entrance and traffic signal and they split the cost.

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he wanted to recommend that Council postpone the request for appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission. The City believes there is a requirement that an architect be on the Commission and the Historic Preservation Planner had a different view; however, if you read the City's policy, it states that there will be an architect on the Commission and in order for Valdosta to be a Certified Local Government with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources there must be an architect on the Commission. There is a caveat in the Legislation that states that if you are unable to find an architect to serve then you must prove that you attempted to place an architect on the Commission but were unable to find one. We believe that some additional efforts should be made to identify three architects and bring those to Council for one of the slots and move other names around for the second slot. All of the City's policies state that members on Boards, Commissions, and Authorities serve until their replacement is appointed so it would not hurt the Commission to wait one meeting to insure that every effort is made to find architects. Larry Hanson asked Council's consideration in postponing the appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Eunice, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to postpone the request for appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission until the first Council meeting in April.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Municipal Court parking lot is in the process of being completed and asphalt will be applied tomorrow. This will be a real asset for the Municipal Court. Also, the City has been working with some Downtown property owners to extend additional water services for the Roberts Building and the Toombs Street parking lot and the water main project has now been completed.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has notified the City of Valdosta that they have approved \$225,000 to assist the City in upgrading the Park Avenue drainage at One Mile Branch. The City had asked to consolidate three projects into one and this is one of the highest priority drainage projects. This project will help with the drainage issues in the Pin Oak Subdivision area as well as to insure that when the Forrest Street widening project is completed then adequate infrastructure will be in place to handle the additional drainage. The Georgia Department of Transportation has also advised that funds were approved to assist with a new sidewalk on Gordon Street which will run from Hightower Street to Melody Lane and will complete a network of sidewalks on that street.

Bids were opened today for the Scott Park renovation and those appear to be within budget. This should be on the Agenda for the next Council meeting.

Georgia Cities week will be held April 20-26, 2008 and the theme this year is "Living It Up Downtown" which is very appropriate with all of the activity, renovation, and revitalization that has been going on in Valdosta's Downtown area. There will also be a Job Shadow Day on April 23, 2008 and a group of students from J. L. Newbern Middle School will be shadowing all of the Department Heads and the City Manager. The students will then give a presentation at lunch to the entire group on what they have learned. Larry Hanson encouraged Council to attend the lunch.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) has recommended that governments go through a competitive process to review the audit services and it is time for the City to identify auditing firms that would be interested in auditing the City. After the review, current audit firm could be kept or a new one could be selected. The City has a formal policy of having an Audit Committee which consists of the Mayor, City Manager, and the Finance Director but they also like to have a Council member serve as well. The Committee would review the proposals and then bring a recommendation to Council. Larry Hanson asked Council's consideration in appointing a member of Council to serve on the Audit Committee and suggested that Councilman Carroll be appointed. Council members were in agreement to appoint Councilman Carroll to serve on the Audit Committee.

Mayor Fretti stated that there will be a press release about the City's participation in Earth Hour 08 which will be held on March 29, 2008. There will be 35 other cities from around the world participating in this even

between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. The City of Valdosta will turn down some non-essential lighting and energy components and will be on backup diesel generator power at the Water Treatment Plant. Mayor Fretti encouraged the community to participate in this energy saving effort.

Councilman Yost thanked all of the Department Heads and employees who assisted with the Elected Officials Tour of several Districts. This tour provided an opportunity for Council to see some of the problems and needs in other areas.

Councilman Head thanked Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, for her participation at the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce's Minority Business of the Year event. Ms. Register discussed the programs that are currently ongoing at the City as well as future programs relative to business and economic development in the community, particularly the south side of town. Also, Councilman Head stated that he received a telephone call this week from a concerned citizen who inquired as to whether there was something in place for citizens to file a complaint against a contractor when there is unethical business practices and behavior. Larry Hanson stated that there is an Appeals Board that is made up of representatives of the various trades and they hear complaints related to the quality of work.

Councilman Payton inquired as to whether it has been determined if Forrest Street will be widened to three or four lanes. Larry Hanson stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation has gone through some public comment meetings and the next step would be the design stage. There will probably be a five-lane section from Bemiss Road to Northside Drive, a four-lane section from Northside Drive Park Avenue, and a three-lane section from Park Avenue south. The Georgia Department of Transportation will not participate in a three-lane section so the City will be responsible for funding that section. Councilman Payton also inquired about the date for the Mayor and Council trip to Washington, D.C. Larry Hanson stated that he has provided some dates to Parker Greene and he will be following up with General Moseley and other key Staff members that would be meeting with them.

Councilman Head stated that consideration needs to be given to a traffic light at Forrest Street and Pineview Drive and also on Bemiss Road and Pineview Drive and that it should not wait until Forrest Street is widened. Von Shipman stated that he has made a recommendation to the City Manager to place a signal at Forrest Street and Pineview Drive this summer. Pineview Drive is a collector road and it is almost impossible to turn left from Pineview onto Bemiss Road during a busy time of the day so this has been identified as a potential signal location and is on the City's list for completion the early part of 2009.

Mayor Fretti stated that he and Larry Hanson participated in the Leadership Lowndes Legislative Day at the State Capitol today. They networked with the Legislative delegation and received updates on several Bills from the Georgia Municipal Association. They also received some indication from Senator Tim Golden that Jack Hill, who is over Appropriations, has a situation in his community with railroad switching which blocks a particular street and he is trying to get that into the budget. We are trying to add on our switchyard and get some allocation in the budget for the St. Augustine railroad switchyard relocation.

Councilman Vickers stated that there are a lot of drainage and sidewalk issues which have been identified throughout the years that have not been addressed and Council needs to be mindful of this and not let all the new developments take funds that have been allocated for some of the other projects.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Eunice, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the March 20, 2008 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:43 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, April 10, 2008.