

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2014
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, Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and James Wright. Councilman Alvin Payton, Jr. was absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Mark Brady, Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Mayor Gayle recognized students from Von Shipman's Government 101 Class at Valdosta State University who were in attendance at the Council Meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 10, 2014 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the repair of a stormwater ditch located on Mill Pond Road.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that heavy rains have caused the erosion of the slopes of a ditch which is located between 903 Millpond Road and 909 Millpond Road. The ditch receives stormwater from Jerry Jones Drive and Millpond Road and it flows south to its outlet into Joree Mill Pond. The length of the ditch is 350 feet and the total width is 20 feet. The ditch is entirely within a stormwater easement of the City of Valdosta. The ditch is adjacent to two homes, 903 and 909 Mill Pond Road. Recent heavy rains and tree trimming along the banks have caused the slopes to experience erosion. No apparent damage to the homes in this area has been experienced to date. This construction will extend the life of the ditch and prevent home structure damage for many years. Plans were prepared by the City Engineering Department. Bids were received on April 7, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. Environmental Audit and Assessment Inc. submitted the low bid in the amount of \$76,457. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Environmental Audit and Assessment Inc. in the amount of \$76,457 plus a 10% contingency of \$7,645.70 to handle any unforeseen issues during construction for a total of \$84,102.70. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether they did any research further up the drainage ditch behind the houses to see if there were any other repairs needed. Pat Collins stated that they did look at the entire area and they felt that the project from the roadway back needed repairs. Mayor Gayle inquired as to whether some of the drainage ditch was underground. Pat Collins stated that was correct and part of it was underground. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether they were just making repairs just to the drainage ditch area beside the house. Pat Collins stated that they would be lining the entire ditch with concrete and it would still be an open ditch.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Carroll to approve the low bid submitted by Environmental Audit and Assessment Inc. in the amount of \$76,457 plus a 10% contingency of \$7,645.70 to handle any unforeseen circumstances for the repair of a stormwater ditch located on Mill Pond Road. Councilman Norton seconded the motion. Councilwoman Tooley asked that when the contractor provides an invoice that the invoice should indicate exactly what type of work they did. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that since this is a competitive bid process and they have bid a unit price that calls exactly for those types of things and this is how they are always done for non-emergency situations. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0).

Consideration of bids for construction of the Force Main, Pump Stations, Headworks and Equalization Basin Project.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that due to historical problems with flooding at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant along with major inflow and infiltration issues associated the 54-inch gravity sewer main to this facility, Parsons was awarded a contract for the 30% design for construction of a series of new Pump

Station, a 6.2 mile Force Main, a new Headworks structure, and a 6.0 million gallon flow Equalization Basin Project in September, 2009. Based upon the 30% design, the estimated construction cost was \$32,000,000 for this Project. The 100% design for this Project was awarded to Parsons in August, 2012 following Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) denial of the City's final appeal for the relocation of the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. This Project was advertised for bids in January, 2014 and mandatory pre-bid and site visits were held on January 8-9, 2014. Bids were opened on March 3, 2014. Following review of all required documents associated with each bid, the Design Engineer, Parsons, submitted their recommendation for award on March 24, 2014. Immediately following this, negotiations began with the low bidder, Garney Construction, to finalize the scope and price for this Project. After three meetings, the final scope and contract amount has been agreed upon. On April 10, 2014, the City authorized a Resolution to finalize the \$36,781,448 loan with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) for the funding of this Project. Concluding scope and price negotiations with Garney Construction, the Utilities Department is recommending awarding the contract for construction of the Project to Garney Construction in the amount currently estimated at \$32,344,000. Upon approval and subsequent signatures to this contract, a formal Notice to Proceed will be issued with construction estimated to start at the beginning of June, 2014, with Project completion expected within 18 months of the Notice to Proceed. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the bid of Garney Construction in the amount currently estimated at \$32,344,000 plus a contingency of \$1,696,448 (approximately 5%). Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the City would pay back the \$36 million loan with SPLOST funds. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it would be paid using SPLOST funds. Mayor Gayle stated that they might not draw all of the \$36 million but they have approval on that amount. Henry Hicks stated that the contractor will have 30 days to mobilize once the contract has been signed. They expect to start working on June 1, 2014 and will have 18 months to complete the Project; however, they think they will be well ahead of that timeframe.

Councilman Wright inquired as to whether Garney Construction was a local contractor. Henry Hicks stated that they only had two large, national companies that bid on all three projects. There was one small company that bid on just the Force Main Project. Garney Construction and Layne Civil Engineering were the two main contractors that bid on this and they did speak with local underground contractors. Councilman Wright inquired as to whether we could do something to encourage them to use local contractors. Henry Hicks stated that they broke this Project out into three separate bid packages and would have probably gotten bid pricing if they had done it all into one lump sum. The three bid packages included the Force Main Project, two large Lift Stations and two small Lift Stations, and the Head Works and EQ Basin and they thought this would allow local contractors who were capable to participate at least in doing the Force Main Project and the Lift Stations. When they had the pre-bid conference, they recommended that they contact the local contractors to see if they could get them to participate. They also reminded them of the Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) Program and because this is Federal money it has disadvantaged business requirements for minority business and women-owned businesses. There is a goal of 4% on each of the groups and they may have a few local contractors who will be working as subs on this Project. Councilman Wright inquired as to whether we could put some type of incentive in our Request for Proposal to encourage these contractors to use local people. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they had a Federal requirement to meet with this loan because they ran advertisements in the newspaper requesting input from minority and small contractors. Councilman Wright stated that he was aware of that but he just wanted to have something in place to keep the money here in Valdosta whether it was local or minority. Larry Hanson stated that this is a very complex job and the pump stations are 40 feet underground with 6½ miles of 42 inch and 30 inch pipe that are often very deep underground. There will also be borings underneath I-75 and a 6 million gallon Equalization Basin built and there are not many contractors who perform that type of work. They do have the Federal requirement that they must meet. Henry Hicks stated that at every pre-bid meeting they always encouraged them to use the VSEB contractors but they cannot dictate to them.

Councilman Yost stated that he was very excited about this Project and what it will do for the City in the long run; however, he wanted to make sure that they could draw down \$36 million. They had budgeted approximately \$32 million and it has come in at \$32,344,000 plus a contingency of approximately \$1.5 million and he wanted to make sure they could use the entire \$36 million if needed. Larry Hanson stated that was correct. Councilman Carroll stated that the original number they were working on was based on cost projections from three years ago and obviously a lot of things have gone up. Henry Hicks stated that they did the Engineering Estimate at the 30% design and it was \$32 million three years. They are still below what they would expect and are very pleased with the pricing.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid of Garney Construction in the amount currently estimated at \$32,344,000 plus a contingency of \$1,696,448 (approximately 5%) for construction of the Force Main, Pump Stations, Headworks and Equalization Basin Project.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this week is National Community Development Week and we have been having different activities throughout the week including the Mayor issuing a Proclamation and having a tour of projects that have been funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This CDBG Program has been around for over 40 years and we have done many good housing projects in our community in recent years with this funding. This is something to celebrate because it has assisted us in reaching our goal to eliminate substandard housing by 2020.

The City Government 101 Class is in its third week and everyone in the Class is very engaged. They visited the Water Plant on Monday night, April 21st and heard from Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, Pat Collins, City Engineer, and John Whitehead, Deputy City Manager of Operations. The Class is going very well and we are now at the midpoint. Council members are encouraged to attend a session to see this group of citizens learning about their government and becoming ambassadors for their local government.

There was a Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) training program today on Small Business Money Matters which was held at the City Hall Annex Building from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The City is constantly doing programs such as this to outreach and involve contractors in the work of the City.

There are 15 vacancies coming up on various Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees. This includes some key appointments such as the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Hospital Authority, the Parks and Recreation Authority, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Airport Authority. The deadline to apply is April 30, 2014 and citizens are encouraged to submit applications for consideration of an appointment.

The City of Valdosta will be hosting an all-day Federal Training Workshop on June 5, 2014 for Section 106, Historic Preservation. It will be held in the City Hall Annex Building's Multi-Purpose Room and will be taught by the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Park Service. There will be attendees from all of Georgia and north Florida.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that tonight was an important night in awarding the bid Force Main Project which we have been working on diligently. On Tuesday, May 6, 2014, we will open up the Request for Proposals for the relocation of the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. This will be a potential \$20 million Project and a Committee has been formed that will include Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, John Whitehead, Deputy City Manager of Operations, David Frost, Assistant Utilities Director, and Mayor John Gayle. They will review the Proposals, make a recommendation, and then negotiate with the selected vendor. These are combinations of engineers and contractors so you are designing and building simultaneously which will expedite the process. The goal is to bring this to before the Mayor and Council at the first Council Meeting in June and award that contract so that the Project can begin as soon as possible.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant was once again been threatened by flooding due to recent heavy rains. He thanked the City workers who tolled in some difficult circumstances this month and during the recent week when we received heavy rainfall. Historically, if you look back, our City has approximately four inches of rain for the entire month of April and we have had ten inches of rain through the third week of April. It has been an extremely wet month following a very cold winter with a high water table and we have had some challenges. Our City employees worked on their Good Friday Holiday 15 hours each day during that weekend to deal with these issues. We are very appreciative of the work done by those employees who give their all in challenging circumstances.

Councilman Yost thanked Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, and his Staff for all their hard work during this past month and for their efforts to keep the City from having some catastrophic problems with our water and sewer. They have been working around the City and have done a great job in keeping us afloat. Councilman Yost also thanked the representatives of the Madison County, Florida government who gave a recent interview thanking the City of Valdosta for keeping them informed about our problems with overflows. They had positive remarks about the meetings they have had with us for well over a year and this speaks very highly of our Staff. Councilman Yost thanked the City Staff for all their hard work all the time and especially in the last month.

Councilman Wright inquired as to whose term was expiring on the Hospital Authority. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Hospital Authority is different in the selection process in that the Hospital Authority submits three names to us and we are required to select one of them. People would need to contact the Hospital Authority directly if they were interested in being considered but they have already submitted their letter to us with the three names. The seat that is expiring belongs to Sam Allen. Councilman Wright stated that these are very important and they play a vital role in our community.

Councilman Vickers stated that he was at a Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) Meeting and they presented a list of the grants that they were working on for the District. The City of Valdosta's CDBG was not on the list. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether we were doing the grant applications in-house or whether the SGRC was doing our grants now. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that since 2003 Valdosta has been known as an Entitlement Community so we get an automatic designation and we do not have to apply each year and compete with others. The only thing we have to determine is how to allocate the funds that are committed to housing.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that as a new City Council person she has been working with the City Staff this week and they were very helpful. They were very busy and there was a lot going on but they worked very well to respond to her questions. The City workers are to be commended for their efforts.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Roy E. Taylor, Sr., 2209 Bridlewood Drive, stated that President John F. Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." Mr. Taylor stated that he wanted to recognize a young man that he saw 39 year ago when he first moved to Valdosta. This young man was out running for exercise and he worked with the Parks and Recreation Department. He did a tremendous job there and progressed on through the City and is now the City Manager. There have been some very large cities in Georgia that have tried to steal him away from us but he turned them down because he loves Valdosta. He has hired good people in the City and he hired a good Police Chief. There was an incident the other day at his business establishment and within a few days they had the person in jail. His grandson also had a break-in at his house they had the person arrested within 30 minutes. Mr. Taylor stated that there is a saying that he tells people and that is, "In Valdosta, if you do a crime then you will get the time." Mr. Taylor thanked the City Manager again for a job well done and for hiring good people.

Carlton Wayne Holly, Chair of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce for 2014, stated that he wanted to thank the Mayor and City Manager personally for meeting with the Chamber Board this past Tuesday, April 22, 2014 to give them an update on the Force Main and Wastewater Treatment Plant improvements. The Chamber Board has kept abreast of the City's progress via the City's website but they appreciated the accessibility of the Mayor and City Manager in meeting with them. It is a very difficult issue and it is clear to the Chamber Board that the City is doing everything it should and can to deal with this challenge. Much is due to things beyond the City's control. The Chamber wants to do everything they can do to inform their members about the City's progress in this area and to underscore their support for the City's efforts.

Willie Rayford, 1200 Old Lake Park Road, stated that he has a serious problem on his hands and it pertained to painting the Multi-Purpose Room at Mathis City Auditorium. To give them some background on how this came about, he was on the SPLOST Committee with Larry Hanson, City Manager, Mayor John Gayle, and several others. He asked the City Manager if there was any work in the City of Valdosta. Mr. Hanson indicated that there was some work and advised him to go speak with Kyle Lovan, Mathis Facilities Supervisor, who had

gotten the job about five or six months ago. Mr. Rayford stated that he spoke with Mr. Lovan and told him that Mr. Hanson had sent him out there. They started communicating and as a result of that Mr. Lovan told him to put in a bid along with others in order to get the job. There were several of them who submitted bids. Mr. Rayford received the lowest bid which was \$4,800 and Mr. Lovan called him back and told him that he had the job. Every time they set up a meeting to go out and paint the building there was a problem. The first time Mr. Lovan told him that Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, said to wait until SPLOST passed. Mr. Rayford stated that he waited. This was way back in October, 2013. Then SPLOST passed. Mr. Rayford stated that he had a copy of the bid if the Mayor and Council wanted to review it. This was also submitted to John Whitehead, Deputy City Manager of Operations, around October, 2013. To make a long story short, this was the third time that he was supposed to have painted the Mathis Auditorium Multi-Purpose Room. Every time something came up and he could not paint it. That really disturbed him and he spoke with several of the Councilmen. Some of them returned his phone call and some did not. Mr. Rayford stated that he was here tonight to find out why he could not paint Mathis Auditorium. He received the bid, he was promised by Mr. Lovan several times to paint the building and he does not know what the problem is. He spoke with Larry Hanson, City Manager, about a month ago as he was advised to do so by Councilman Vickers. Mr. Rayford stated that Mr. Hanson told him at that time to wait until we got the first SPLOST check in. The City received the first SPLOST check last month and he did not know why he could not paint the building. He was here tonight to get an answer. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we would respond to Mr. Rayford as per our policy. Mayor Gayle stated that this was the first time he had heard about the situation and he would look into it and get back to Mr. Rayford the first of next week.

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 April 24, 2014 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:17 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, May 8, 2014.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta