

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2012
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., Robert Yost, Deidra White, and James Wright. The invocation was given by Reverend Reginald Benjamin, Lighthouse Christian Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION OF THE JUNE, 2012 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Fire Chief J. D. Rice presented the June, 2012 Employee of the Month Award (Ronald Shoemake, Marcus Haynes, and Casey Jones, Fire Department).

Ronald Shoemake began his employment with the City of Valdosta Fire Department on October 11, 2004 as a Firefighter. He was assigned as the Acting Sergeant on January 3, 2008 and received a promotion to Sergeant on July 14, 2008. He was then promoted to Lieutenant on May 17, 2010 which is the position he currently holds. His duties include responding to emergency alarms and as the commanding officer of Engine Company #1 for A-Shift. Lt. Shoemake assumes command of all incidents when his crew is the first to arrive on the scene. Marcus Haynes began his employment with the City of Valdosta Fire Department on June 11, 2007 as a Firefighter. He was promoted to Sergeant on May 17, 2010 which is the position he currently holds. His duties include driving the fire truck to and from emergency scenes, determining the correct amount of water each hose line will need to extinguish a fire, and making sure all equipment is working in a safe and efficient manner. Casey Jones was hired on November 16, 2009 as a Firefighter which is the position he currently holds. His duties include firefighting, assisting with building inspections for pre-fire planning surveys, and assisting with preventive maintenance on fire equipment and apparatus. On December 2, 2011, Engine #1 responded to a code blue incident at the Bank of America building located on South Patterson Street. Once on scene, Lt. Tyler Shoemake, Sgt. Marcus Haynes, and Firefighter Casey Jones were led upstairs to a female patient who was unresponsive and co-workers were administering CPR. The Engine #1 crew assessed the patient and could not find a pulse. Sgt. Haynes positioned the AED (Automatic Deliberator) and Firefighter Jones performed chest compressions while Lt. Shoemake administered oxygen and maintained the patient's airway. Emergency medical care was applied including the AED, chest compressions, and oxygen through what's known as an AMBU bag. Once the South Georgia Medical Center EMS personnel arrived, they administered medication and attached monitoring pads. The patient regained a pulse and was attempting to breath though it was very labored. The Engine #1 crew assisted EMS personnel with loading the patient into the ambulance which Sgt. Haynes drove to SGMC. Engine Company #1 proceeded to the EMS training station to download cardiac information from the AED. That information was passed on to Emergency Room personnel at the hospital as part of the patient assessment and care to be used in the treatment process. A few days later, the patient's breathing tube was removed and she was sitting up and talking. She has since been released from the hospital, returned home, and is doing fine. Because of the extensive nature of emergencies that the firefighters are expected to face, they must be well trained and they must remain calm and be ready to make an instant decision on how to proceed. This type of judgment was demonstrated by the crew of Engine #1 and with the characteristics of selflessness and personal courage. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated Lt. Ronald Shoemake, Sgt. Marcus Haynes, and Firefighter Casey Jones as Employees of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 24, 2012 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

Consideration of a request to approve a bid to pipe a portion of ditch located between East Savannah Avenue and CSX Railroad tracks.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the stormwater ditch in front of the 200 block of South Fry Street overflows into adjacent residential lots during medium to heavy rains. The Engineering Department is proposing to pipe 323 feet of the ditch along South Fry Street which also has limited shoulder. The portion of ditch to be piped is located between East Savannah Avenue and CSX railroad tracks. This was a Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) project and there was 11.3% VSEB participation. Bids were solicited and opened on May 24, 2012. There were five bids submitted; however, two did not acknowledge the addendum and were not considered. Of the three remaining bids, the low bid was submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$53,542. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$53,542 plus a 10% contingency (\$5,354.20) for a total amount of \$58,896.20.

A MOTION by Councilman Wright, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$53,542 plus a 10% contingency to pipe a portion of ditch located between East Savannah Avenue and the CSX Railroad tracks.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to abandon a portion of the easement located on Smithbriar Drive at North Oak Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that this is a vacant parcel of land located on Smithbriar Drive at North Oak Street. On the south side of the road, the City has a drainage easement and it can only be used for drainage and not roadway improvements. The easement is 25 feet wide on the back and 40 feet wide on the front. The City Staff has looked at the parcel and they recommend that only a 10 foot easement is needed. The advantage in abandoning the easement is that it makes the lot more buildable and it puts the additional land that we would be abandoning back on the tax rolls. The City Attorney has reviewed the easement and supports the abandonment and retention of a 10 foot easement along that road right-of-way. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the request to abandon a portion of the easement located on Smithbriar Drive at North Oak Street.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to abandon a portion of the easement located on Smithbriar Drive at North Oak Street.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia Municipal Association Annual Convention will be held on June 23-26, 2012 in Savannah. Council members attending the Convention will need to complete a Travel Request.

There will be a SPLOST organizational meeting on Monday, June 11, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. A timeline has been forwarded to the Mayor and Council for review.

The State has contacted Valdosta State University about the new Health Sciences Building and work is scheduled to begin in August.

The Stormwater Division found a blockage in a line on North Ashley Street between Mary Street and Force Street which has been repaired and will help with stormwater flow in that area. There was also a culvert and sewer line repaired near Valdosta State University's north campus.

The Engineering Department was recently praised by the residents of the Westover Subdivision for handling an erosion problem and undermining of the street near Fieldcrest in a very timely manner. The Sanitation Department has also received some praise from citizens for the good job they have been doing.

Mayor Gayle spent time with Cadets from the Air Force Academy yesterday here at City Hall. The Cadets visit Valdosta to learn about the relationship the City has with Moody Air Force Base.

Councilman Vickers stated that the City Council had nothing to do with the T-SPLOST. This is something that the State legislators are placing on the voters for July 31, 2012. Each Council person has to make up his/her own mind as to whether they are going to support it or not. This is not a City election and their hands are clean. The Council does not have anything to do with bringing the vote to the public. The argument should be taken up with the State Representatives and the Governor and not with City Council.

Councilman Yost inquired about a situation on Gornito Road regarding safety concerns near the Wood Valley Community Center and whether the Engineering Department had responded to the citizen. Pat Collins stated that he had not responded to the citizen yet but wanted to follow up with Councilman Yost. Councilman Yost thanked Council for allowing him to share his stance on T-SPLOST. He is against T-SPLOST but not against SPLOST which is totally different.

Councilman Carroll stated that he always enjoys the Employee of the Month presentations and the one this month was over the top. It was especially nice to have the woman that the Firemen saved join us at the Council Meeting. Councilman Carroll stated that he has received five or six comments from citizens praising the Sanitation Department and the workers for the fine job they are doing. Councilman Carroll stated that he would not be attending the Budget Hearing next week and thanked the City Manager for sending out summaries to the Mayor and Council. Councilman Carroll also thanked the City Manager for providing detailed information on SPLOST and the impact that it has on the City's water and sewer infrastructure projects and keeping costs down. There would be a negative impact if we did not have that available in regards to our current needs.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Nolen Cox, 1009 Cherry Creek Drive, stated that he wanted to comment about the T-SPLOST. He had sent an E-mail to the Mayor and Council and asked them to take a position on T-SPLOST either for or against it. As representatives of the City they have that authority. The Mayor and Council took a position on school consolidation and a valid referendum is a valid referendum. Mr. Cox stated that Council needs to consider the fact that you cannot take money out of the private sector from businesses and people's pockets and put it in the public sector and have a gain because to get the money you had to take it away from something over here. There are some things that are appropriate for the City to do but not to build roads that do not need to be built. We have three SPLOSTs in Valdosta right now and each one of them pulls in excess of \$25 million a year out of the private sector and puts it in the public sector. This will be the fourth SPLOST and those combined will be \$100 million a year for ten years which is \$1 billion that will come out of the private business sector that is not being circulated and will go into the public sector and be spent. There is a subtraction effect when you pull that money out of the economy. You cannot pull \$100 million a year out of this economy and send it somewhere else and have a multiplier effect because it is just not economically possible. Mr. Cox stated that Winston Churchill once said that if a person believes that government can tax the people and improve society and the economy that is like a man standing in a bucket trying to lift himself up. If you look at Europe, socialism is going bankrupt. Tax and spend is yesteryear. It doesn't work. It worked for a long period of time they thought. America is already bankrupt because we owe more than we earn. The City has no bonuses to give away and no money to give away and yet we are proposing another SPLOST that will take another \$25 million per year out of this County and send approximately 40% of it somewhere else. It does not make sense how Council can represent the people and not understand that you are going to tax a penny of every dollar that is spent for the next ten years in this County. It will be a penny on anything and everything in this County for T-SPLOST.

Tina Folsom stated that she is running for Probate Court Judge in Lowndes County and asked for Council's consideration when they go to the polls in July. This election will be decided on July 31, 2012 on a Republican ballot. Ms. Folsom stated that she is the only licensed attorney running for this position. The Legislature changed the law in 2009 to say that if the population exceeded 90,000 that the office should have a licensed attorney in that position unless you were grandfathered in.

Roy Taylor, 2209 Bridlewood Drive, stated that he wanted to tell them the difference between T-SPLOST and SPLOST. The SPLOST tax is one of the fairest taxes we have and even the welfare recipients pay their part of it; however, they draw from it too. The T-SPLOST tax is not a fair tax. They built a cement wall all the way up I-75 past Atlanta and they call it the Great Wall of China. When you take a penny off the gasoline tax and put it on

groceries you are taking it out of his sister's mouth who is on limited income, social security, and no welfare. O'Neal's Restaurant serves lunch for \$9.50 a meal and instead of running the meal up \$.10 on the dollar he will eat that \$.10. If he serves enough meals he will lose one employee because he cannot raise his price. There are lots of small businesses in our community that will be affected. Mayor Gayle sat around that same table many mornings and he was against that tax; however, he has a right to change his mind which he has done. He should represent the people who pay his salary and if he does not want to do that he should go to Atlanta and join the Chamber of Commerce. The T-SPLOST was conceived in Atlanta by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and they want to tell us what to do. The Atlanta Legislators are threatening our own South Georgia Legislators by saying that if we do not cooperate we will not get any more money. Mr. Taylor asked Council to think about it. There are people in the Transportation Department who cannot take care of the dollars they get. We are number seven in the nation today with the best roads in the nation so certainly anybody can make a good decision. Mr. Taylor asked that Council make a decision to go against this. The Chamber of Commerce sent out a survey and they received 71% of the replies against T-SPLOST. Mr. Taylor presented Mayor Gayle with a pair of flip flops. Mayor Gayle thanked Mr. Taylor and stated that he was going to the beach the first of July and would wear them with pride.

Joseph Williams, 310 West Street, stated that Council cannot come to an agreement with our own citizens and our own County in LOST negotiation and we cannot expect to get a fair representation in Atlanta when we are being told up front that we are going to lose \$90 million from the beginning. There are a lot of citizens against the T-SPLOST. Mr. Williams also stated that he would like to see a memorial established in honor of Molly Huckaby who died in an African bombing many years ago. She was not just working at the Embassy but was also a CIA Agent. He has been before Council several times asking that something be done and it would be nice if the City recognized one of the first citizens of the U. S. to die in the war on terrorism.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle adjourned the June 7, 2012 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:09 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, June 21, 2012.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta