

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2011
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, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Robert Yost, and James Wright. Councilwoman Deidra White was absent. The invocation was given by Councilman James Wright, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON THE 2011 SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY GROUP WORKCAMP

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for Awards and Presentations.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) for the Special Presentation on the 2011 Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp.

Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, stated that the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp is truly a partnership between various community organizations, key City of Valdosta Departments, and many dedicated individuals. It is our pleasure to recognize individuals and organizations that are critical to the success of this endeavor. We also want to recognize the wonderful homeowners for their participation and to present a special video highlighting the 2011 Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp. This year's Workcamp was truly the best ever. Through the Workcamp, a total of 240 homes have been repaired and to date the City has hosted six Workcamps that have yielded a \$1.4 million economic investment in our community through capital improvements to housing stock, the value of volunteer housing, the spending in our community, and the value of their labor. This figure also represents the City's, Lowe's Distribution Center, and the Group Workcamp Foundation's investment in this effort. This year we were fortunate to host approximately 400 campers and staff the week of June 26 through July 2, 2011 and 34 houses were repaired. Over this summer, 42 camps will be held all over the country supported by more than 25,000 youth volunteers. Most important in our community is that this effort helps to stop the deterioration of valuable housing stock and places us closer to accomplishing our goal of eliminating all substandard housing by the year 2020. Based on our analysis of the City's efforts to eliminate substandard housing through our housing repair programs, Code Enforcement, and other neighborhood development efforts, we will be very close to reaching that goal as projected. Mara Register thanked the Mayor, Council members, and the City Manager for their support of this effort for without their vision and guidance they would not be here to celebrate another successful Workcamp. Mara Register also thanked the Public Works Department, the Police Department, and the Fire Department for their strong support. It is truly a great team at the City of Valdosta and this effort is a shining testament to that spirit of cooperation. Many individuals provided construction assistance and site coaching for the week of Workcamp and they ensured that the campers were safe, stayed well hydrated in the heat, and received the assistance they needed to be successful. We were fortunate to have dedicated City staff, Lowe's Distribution Center staff, Habitat for Humanity staff, and local general contractors willing to give of their time and talents in providing expertise to the campers so they could successfully complete their projects. Mara Register presented the following individuals with a Certificate of Appreciation from the City: Greg Battles (Lowe's Distribution Center), James Dean (City Marshal), Mike Eddington (Habitat for Humanity), Michael Jackson (General Contractor), Mike Meyer (City Marshal), Tom Meyer (City Marshal), and Michael Miller (General Contractor). Mara Register also recognized individuals from the Lowe's Retail store who support this effort with supplies and deliveries. Each year the campers get great enjoyment in spending their Wednesday afternoon floating down a lazy river or riding wild roller coasters. We are very thankful for the continued support of Wild Adventures in donating park passes for all of the campers and staff every year since 2005. Mara Register welcomed Greg Charbeneau, new Vice President and General Manager of Wild Adventures, to our community and presented him with a token of appreciation for this generous contribution. The City of Valdosta could not host the Workcamp without Lowe's Distribution Center. They have been on board in this endeavor since the Workcamp began in 2005. Their General Manager, Chris Lilly, always makes the effort to attend the opening and closing ceremonies as well as visit sites during the week to personally thank the campers. The City is eternally grateful for their significant

contribution and continued commitment to the Southern Hospitality Group Workcamp. Their partnership is truly making a significant difference in the lives of the citizens. Mara Register also recognized Debra Miller, Administrative Assistant for the City of Valdosta's Public Involvement Department, and Richard Joyner, Rehabilitation Construction Coordinator for the City of Valdosta's Neighborhood Development Department, for their incredible efforts. This Workcamp would not serve as the gold standard throughout the country for support and hospitality if it were not for these two individuals.

Delores Bivens, homeowner, stated that the Workcamp was a blessing received because it was something that she had wanted but was not able to do herself. She was able to meet many energetic young people who were very nice and pleasant. They were friendly and determined to make the repairs and it made her heart leap. Ms. Bivens thanked the Mayor and Council for their support and stated that she is enjoying her blessing.

Margaret Johnson, homeowner, stated that she was blessed to be one of the recipients to have her house repaired. It was in bad shape and she did not have the money to repair it. Her house is so beautiful now and to God be the glory. Ms. Johnson thanked the Mayor and Council, the City Manager, Mara Register, Lowe's Distribution Center, and Richard Joyner for choosing her to receive this blessing. The Workcamp was so wonderful and she had never seen so many kids who had never met each other before come together and work so well together. They did such a wonderful job on her house and she thanked everyone from the bottom of her heart.

Mayor Fretti inquired as to which Council Districts were concentrated on this year. Mara Register stated that they divided it among four of the Council Districts which included Councilman Vickers, Councilwoman White, Councilman Yost, and Councilman Wright. Mayor Fretti thanked everyone involved for their efforts in making this a successful Group Workcamp.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 7, 2011 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2011-26, AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A REFERENDUM AS PART OF THE NOVEMBER 8, 2011 GENERAL ELECTION

Consideration of an Ordinance to authorize a Referendum as part of the November 8, 2011 General Election asking voters to decide whether package sales of malt beverages, wine, and distilled spirits should be allowed by retailers on Sundays between 12:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. (Second Reading)

Larry H. Hanson, City Manager, stated that Governor Nathan Deal signed into law Senate Bill 10 on April 28, 2011 and it allows a municipal government to pass a resolution or ordinance calling for a referendum to permit package sales of alcoholic beverages to occur on Sunday between the hours of 12:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Council must pass a resolution or ordinance specifying the hours in which package sales will be allowed. This will be the second and final reading of the Ordinance. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether the hours could be changed. Larry Hanson stated that the hours could be changed but they can be no greater than the hours that are outlined in the Ordinance.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Payton to approve an Ordinance to authorize a Referendum as part of the November 8, 2011 General Election asking voters to decide whether package sales of malt beverages, wine, and distilled spirits should be allowed by retailers on Sundays between 12:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilman Carroll. The motion was adopted (5-1) with Councilman Yost voting in opposition to enact Ordinance No. 2011-26, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for a lift station for the Tucker Road Bridge.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that in 2010 we received information from Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) that they would be repairing/reconstructing the Tucker Road Bridge due to structural issues with the bridge. Due to the design, the existing gravity sewer main would need to be replaced with a lift station. The Utilities Department hired a local engineering firm to complete the design for the lift station. Subsequently the design was bid out and local construction firms have submitted bids. The Tucker Road lift station was designed by Lovell Engineering. The construction of the lift station was sent out for bid and the low bid was submitted by Radney Plumbing in the amount of \$204,865. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Radney Plumbing in the amount of \$204,865 plus a 10% contingency. Councilman Vickers inquired about the timeframe for this project. Henry Hicks stated that the lift station has to be in place before construction of the bridge can begin. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether the repair and reconstruction of the bridge caused the City to have to go from gravity sewer main to a lift station. Henry Hicks stated that the gravity feed was beside the bridge and in order to do construction on the bridge it has to be removed so that they could install the pilings. The force main for the lift station would be strapped onto the bridge. Mayor Fretti inquired as to whether we should entertain some type of compensation from the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) since they own the bridge and are repairing and replacing it and the City had to put in this lift station. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that in any DOT project the relocation of utilities is the responsibility of the local government and that is in all of their project agreements.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Vickers to approve the low bid submitted by Radney Plumbing in the amount of \$204,865 for a lift station for the Tucker Road Bridge. Councilman Payton seconded the motion. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the motion should include a 10% contingency. Councilman Vickers and Councilman Payton were in agreement with the 10% contingency. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0).

Consideration of a request to approve a contract for a Water and Sewer Rate Study for the City of Valdosta.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the City of Valdosta Utilities Department needs to undertake a formal financial water and wastewater rate study to determine the adequacy of its rates and fees with respect to planning for the long term needs of the Enterprise Fund. Based on the approved 20 and 30 year plans for rehabilitation of the water and sewer systems as well as significant costs associated with repayment of 2006 and 2008 GEFA loans, this study is necessary in order to maintain a financially stable utility. The study will also provide necessary guidance to staff and elected officials as to the adequacy and structure of all utility rates, as well as to regulatory agencies and financial agencies who rely on such information as well. The Utilities Department budgeted \$50,000 for a formal rate study this fiscal year. A Financial Water and Wastewater Rate Study Request for Proposal (RFP) was posted on April 18, 2011 and four proposals were received by firms specializing in rate studies prior to the deadline of May 18, 2011. A Selection Committee, consisting of Councilman Ben Norton, Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, Pat Collins, City Engineer, Jason Scarpace, Assistant Utilities Director, and Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, reviewed and ranked all of the proposals. Based upon the Committee's review and final ranking, Public Resources Management Group Inc. (PRMG) was selected by the Committee to perform the proposed study at a cost of \$49,952. Councilman Vickers inquired as to when the last rate study had been conducted. Henry Hicks stated that he could not locate any documents as to when the last rate study was done. Mayor Fretti stated that a rate study is normal when you have large capital improvement projects. Henry Hicks stated that we are about to go on a long-term capital plan and we need to develop a revenue stream that will support that capital plan. Without the rate study, financial institutions and government agencies will not lend money because they want to see your ability to pay those costs over that period. Larry Hanson stated that the City had to double the rates in the 1980's because of not keeping up along and along and the purpose of having a rate study is so that the City can look at changes that need to be made incrementally and reduce the impact on the users of the system. Henry Hicks stated that you can revisit the plan periodically to ensure that the revenue is adequate and adjustments can be made up or down. The study will look at all the rates and fees and services that we provide and may not be charging for. An important part of the rate study is that it will give you a legal basis for a defense if the City should ever be challenged. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the request to contract with Public Resources Management Group Inc. (PRMG) in the amount of \$49,952 for a Water and Sewer Rate Study for the City of Valdosta.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a contract with Public Resources Management Group Inc. (PRMG) in the amount of \$49,952 for a Water and Sewer Rate Study for the City of Valdosta.

Consideration of a request to appoint a Board of Ethics for investigation of an ethics complaint filed against Mayor John J. Fretti.

Councilman Alvin Payton stated that he had asked William Dan Holliman to serve as Chairman of the Board of Ethics. George Talley, City Attorney, stated that Mr. Holliman notified him that he appointed Dr. Mary Willis, Professor at Valdosta State University, to serve on the Board of Ethics.

Mayor Fretti stated that there are two seats to be appointed by the Mayor and Council. For the first seat, Mayor Fretti asked for all those in favor of Bette Bechtel to raise their hand. Bette Bechtel was appointed by acclamation to serve on the Board of Ethics. For the second seat, Mayor Fretti asked for all those in favor of Mickey Williamson to raise their hand. Mayor Fretti asked for all those in favor of Rodney Flucas to raise their hand. Mayor Fretti asked for all those in favor of Scott Orenstein to raise their hand. Scott Orenstein was appointed 5-1 to serve on the Board of Ethics.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated the Group Workcamp presentation was very inspiring and we are now up to 230 homes that have been renovated and improved over the past six years. Mara Register, Assistant to the City Manager, will be speaking to the Valdosta City School Board Monday night to thank them for their assistance with the Group Workcamp. The young people stay at Valdosta Middle School during the week and they are also fed there by staff of the School System. This is a great partnership and the program could not work without it. Larry Hanson also thanked Wild Adventures for providing an opportunity for these young people to visit their theme park on Wednesday afternoon which is over a \$10,000 donation. He also thanked the Valdosta Daily Times for the three front page stories they did this year. It is very inspiring for these young people to see their names and pictures in the newspaper and read about their work in the community.

Mark Barber, Deputy City Manager of Administration, and Teresa Bolden, City Clerk, have been very busy with the task of verifying the signatures on the School Consolidation Petitions at the Lowndes County Board of Elections and will be sparse over the next 40 days.

The Municipal Auditorium Steering Committee held its second meeting and Bob Goddard, Jr. was elected as Chairman and Lou McLendon was elected as the Vice Chairman of the Committee. The Library Board made a presentation and it was exciting to hear about their plans and dreams for the future. The Committee will be meeting in the future and the Mayor and Council are invited to attend. The Request for Qualifications to select a firm to help design and master plan the property has been sent out and there is a lot of interest in that.

The old gas station located next to the Crime Lab that the City acquired has now been completely renovated and that was done using prison labor. It will now be used by the Police Department and the Sheriff's Department for processing vehicles and collecting evidence. This will be a great asset to our law enforcement community going forward.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the Five Points Steering Committee Meeting dates would be posted on the City's website. Larry Hanson stated that they have just elected officers and are now working on a schedule for the meetings. Those dates will be posted on the website going forward.

Councilman Payton inquired about the Park Avenue street repairs. Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that they are currently installing the box culverts and there has been a slight delay due to problems with the original manufactured box culverts. The box culverts are pre-fabricated in Florida and they did not reach the appropriate strength so they had to be re-manufactured. They will be backfilling next week and it is anticipated that the project will be completed in August.

Councilman Vickers inquired about an update on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor Project. Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the City now has a contract with AT&T and the materials are being ordered. Once the materials are received they will begin work. The roadway will not have to be closed while they are doing the work.

Jordan Lamon, 1412 Sustella Avenue, stated that he was a graduate student at Valdosta State University and inquired about the Referendum on Sunday alcohol sales and what the next step would be. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the question will be on the ballot for the November 8, 2011 General Election and the registered voters of the City of Valdosta will have an opportunity to vote yes or no. Mr. Lamon thanked the Mayor and Council for bringing this up and allowing the residents to vote on it.

William Holliman, 2528 Muscogee Drive, stated that he would like to know the status of the sidewalk installation near J. L. Newbern Middle School. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation has notified the City that our application for the Safe Routes to School was approved and the project was funded. The Engineering Department can now complete the necessary design work and send the project out for bid. Mr. Holliman inquired as to whether the project would be started this year. Larry Hanson stated that the project would begin this year and encouraged Mr. Holliman to contact Pat Collins, City Engineer, so that he could provide that information to him.

Iris Debart, 209 Crawford Lane, stated that on July 11, 2011, he notified the City that there was a water main busted in the Crawford Lane area. Within an hour, City personnel came out and fixed the problem. Mr. Debart also called the City Engineer to complain about the asphalt in his driveway that was touched up 18 years ago and asked for someone to come out and assess it. He had made a makeshift dam to stop the water from running on his property and flooding it when it rains. City personnel came out while he was running an errand and Mr. Debart's sister told him that the gentleman stated that the bricks would have to be removed because they were on City property. The gentleman did not conduct any measurements as did the gentleman who later came out. Mr. Debart stated that he also spoke with Kevin Tolliver from the Engineering Department and he agreed to come out the following day. Mr. Tolliver did come out and measured it and stated that this particular street was 15 feet which means 7 ½ feet on each side so the bricks were not on City property. Mr. Debart stated that he did not appreciate how the first gentleman handled the situation. Mr. Tolliver was going to find out if the City had the right-of-way to maintain the ditch drainage which the City has neglected to do for the past 30 years but he has not heard back from him. Mr. Tolliver was also going to talk to someone in the asphalt department to see if they could come out and make a determination but he has not heard back from them. Mr. Scott came from the Water/Sewer Department and looked at the drainage and said they could do that. Mr. Debart stated that he pays his taxes and felt like he was not being treated like he should be treated. He presented a letter to the City Manager to review and asked for some resolution. Mr. Debart stated that if nothing could be done then he wanted the City to give him the courtesy, as a human being, as a tax paying citizen, and as a registered voter, to give him some feedback.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion to adjourn the Council meeting and enter into an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the July 21, 2011 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:34 p.m. and enter into Executive Session.

Mayor Fretti reconvened the regular City Council meeting at 6:55 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of personnel in the Executive Session and no action was taken.

Mayor Fretti entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the July 21, 2011 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:55 p.m. to meet again in regular session on Thursday, August 11, 2011.