

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2017
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, Alvin Payton, Jr., Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Ben Norton was absent. The invocation was given by Associate Pastor Jeff Williams, New Covenant Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag which was led by Cub Scout Troop 429 of the Azalea City Church of God.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Oaths of Office for the 2017-2018 Valdosta Youth Council.

Mayor John Gayle stated that the Valdosta Youth Council was created in September, 2015 by a Resolution approved by the Mayor and City Council to inspire local 7th and 8th grade students to build leadership skills, learn about civic responsibility, gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare these youth for a lifetime of public and community service. The inaugural VYC program year consisted of 14 youth who were successful in accomplishing several goals which resulted in dozens of community service hours, an anti-bullying awareness campaign, and the adoption of a .6 portion North Lee Street. Now in its third year, the VYC has grown to 22 students in grades 7th - 9th representing Valdosta Middle School, Valdosta High School, J. L. Newbern Middle School, St. John Catholic School, Valwood, and Classical Conversations (Home School) who were selected by the Youth Advisory Board to participate in the 2017-2018 class. The first meeting of the VYC was held on September 21, 2017 from 4:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers and featured the induction of 2017-2018 VYC Officers by Valdosta Municipal Court Judge Vernita Bender. The scheduled VYC Monthly Meetings will run through May, 2018, and the VYC members must also each complete a minimum of eight hours of community service during that time period. This group of exceptional youth will operate much like the Valdosta City Council (guided by the Advisory Board) and will have an opportunity to grow as leaders and continue their positive impact among their peers and within our community. The Advisory Board members appointed by Mayor John Gayle (who serves as the head of the board) to serve for 2017-2018 are as follows: Valdosta Councilman Alvin Payton, Jr., James White, Assistant Principal at J.L. Newbern Middle School, Laurie Wallace, Guidance Counselor at St. John Catholic School, and City Staff members Teresa Bolden, Sementha Mathews, and Marcus McConico. The City of Valdosta applauds these extraordinary youth and wishes the Valdosta Youth Council another successful year. Mayor John Gayle asked that the following VYC members to come forward as he called their name for administering the Oath of Office: Juan Angel (Valdosta Middle School), Joseph Butters (Classical Conversations), Ella Dampier (St. John Catholic School), Emily Dinkins (St. John Catholic School), Will Gerber (St. John Catholic School), Daniel Holcombe (St. John Catholic School), Dalemetrius Huff (Valdosta High School), Paris Jackson (J. L. Newbern Middle School), Nikerria Jones (J. L. Newbern Middle School), Kaightlyn Jowers (Valdosta Middle School), Isabel Kassum (St. John Catholic School), Erin Kelly (Valdosta High School), Cristalynn Lee (J. L. Newbern Middle School), Abbi Long (Valdosta High School), Sean Manning (Valdosta High School), Nevin Miller (St. John Catholic School), Catriona Moore (St. John Catholic School), Clancy Claire Perry (Valwood), Zandayja Rollins (Valdosta High School), Toni Salami (Valdosta Middle School), Shadasia Solomon (J. L. Newbern Middle School), Kiara Thomas (Valdosta Middle School), and Zachary Williams (Valdosta Middle School).

Special Presentation by the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Freddie Broome stated that the Georgia State Firefighters Association (GSFA), which was founded in 1952, is the largest and oldest fire service organization in the State of Georgia with over 3,500 members. GSFA serves all Firefighters across the State and provides its members with an active network and resources for information, communication, and representation on the State and National level. The GSFA recently recognized Lieutenant John Herpin of the Valdosta Fire Department for being selected as a recipient of the 2017 Life Saving Valor Award. This Award is presented to fire personnel who have performed a meritorious act that resulted in a life-saving event. Lt. Herpin was presented this Award during the 2017 Georgia Fire Service Conference Awards

Ceremony which was held on August 26, 2017 in Athens, Georgia. Chief Broome stated that the City of Valdosta is honored to have brave Firefighters like Lt. Herpin and all the members of the Valdosta Fire Department who accepted the call for duty to protect and serve our community. It is a great honor for our City, Community, and Department knowing that Lt. Herpin was selected as a recipient of this year's Valor Award. On the night of the incident, Valdosta fire units were dispatched to a residential structure fire and were advised that a child was unaccounted for. Leading his crew (Sergeant Isaac Harris, Firefighter Nicholas Bishop, Firefighter Jamie Sapp), Lt. Herpin entered the residence filled with heavy smoke. He located the boy and passed him through a window so the EMT's could treat him until EMS arrived. The boy has since made a full recovery. Lt. Herpin was honored and humbled to have been selected for the Award and the recognition. On the night of April 20, 2017, Lt. Herpin and his crew were able to accomplish what every Firefighter dreams of and that is to save the life of a child from a fire. The crew effectively handled the fire attack and Lt. Herpin was able to find and remove the child from the structure. He could not have made the decisions he made that night without trusting their ability to handle the fire attack. He owes his life and his abilities to those that have trained him and as a member of FLAMES, the core values are C.O.D. (Courage, Obligation and Diligence). Chief Broome stated that the City of Valdosta and GSFA were proud to recognize Lt. John Herpin as recipient of the GSFA Life Saving Valor Award.

Consideration of the September, 2017 Employee of the Month Award (Jeffrey Talley, Fire Department).

Fire Chief Freddie Broome stated that Jeffrey Talley began his employment with the City of Valdosta Fire Department January, 2000 as a Firefighter and presently holds the position of Lieutenant. Lt. Talley is responsible for managing the daily operations at the company level which involves supervising two to three employees. He is responsible for taking command during emergency incidents and upholding the City and Fire Department's mission, vision, and core values. The Valdosta Fire Department recently had several fires where Firefighters were assigned to conduct search and rescue operations for family's pets. On one particular incident, a dog was rescued and required oxygen due to being overwhelmed by smoke. The good news is the dog survived; however, after having several pet related incidents, Lt. Talley noticed a service the Fire Department was not currently providing and saw an opportunity to better serve the citizens of Valdosta. Lt. Talley came across a company called Invisible Fence and found an initiative that they are currently working on which is to provide, free of charge, oxygen masks for emergency rescue on pets that have been involved in a fire. It has been estimated that between 40,000 and 150,000 pets die each year in fires with most succumbing to smoke inhalation. In the past, when Firefighters came upon a stricken animal in a residential fire, after rescuing the animal and moving it to fresh air outside the structure, Firefighters had to improvise in an attempt to save the life of the animal. Knowing how important household pets are to the citizens of the City of Valdosta, Lt. Talley took the initiative to research this unique option for our community pets. With the addition of the pet mask, the Valdosta Fire Department will be able to deliver additional lifesaving services in our community. It is for these reasons and many others that the Employee Relations Committee nominated Lt. Jeffrey Talley as Employee of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 24, 2017 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for sidewalks on Pineview Drive and Chattooga Drive.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that in May, 2016, Mayor John Gayle requested additional Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) funds for safety improvements to construct sidewalks in Valdosta. Griffin Avenue was selected because it is used by many pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. The State of Georgia LMIG Off-System Safety Improvement Program assists local governments to construct pedestrian safety features on local streets. The Program guidelines require a 30 % match from the prospective local government. In June, 2016, the State Local Grants Administrator committed up to \$300,000 or 70% of the Project, whichever is less. The Griffin Avenue sidewalk was identified as the first Project. This work was completed in April, 2017. Martin Luther King, Jr. pedestrian improvements between South Lee Street and South Fry Street were awarded in August, 2017. That work has not begun at this time. The Pineview and Chattooga Project is the third Project for the City

within the LMIG Program. That work consists of installing sidewalks in the area of the Pineview-Chattooga intersection to achieve connectivity in an area which experiences a large quantity of school children traffic. This Project would provide safe and convenient access to a large and dense group of pedestrian users. Funding for the work is from the State's Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant Program and local SPLOST VII funds. Bids were received at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 13, 2017 with the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$23,626.75 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$ 25,989.43. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors plus a 10% contingency to handle any foreseen circumstances. Councilman Payton stated that the Performance Bond was not checked on the documents that Council received and inquired as to whether that was a requirement. Pat Collins stated that the contractor met all the requirements and he has a Performance Bond. Councilman Payton also inquired about the significant differences in the bid amounts submitted by the three contractors. Pat Collins stated that they always check to make sure there are no errors in the math. He also spoke with the contractor about the low bid and the contractor was confident about the bid he submitted. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the bid Bond is for \$25,000 and up and inquired as to whether the contractor was required to submit one since his bid was less than \$25,000. Pat Collins stated that the contractor is not and that is why they have that; however, it was the fact that the 10% contingency increased the amount to over \$25,000. Councilman Vickers inquired about the timeline for the installation of the sidewalks. Pat Collins stated that the contractor will have 90 days once they get started. One of the critical things driving this was that we did not use all of the LMIG funds so we are paying \$.30 on the dollar and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (GDOT) has agreed to this Sidewalk Project. Councilman Vickers asked when this would be completed. Pat Collins stated that it would be under contract by December, 2017 and the Project will begin after that date but it should still be on schedule.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$23,626.75 plus a 10% contingency for a total of \$25,989.43 for sidewalks on Pineview Drive and Chattooga Drive.

Consideration of a request to approve a Change Order with Standard Contractors for water and sewer extension to Annexed Island 71.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the City Ordinance for annexation and subsequent Court documents state that the City will install and pay for water and sewer mains to serve all properties in annexed islands. The contract to provide water and sewer infrastructure to three annexed islands (57, 71, and 90) was approved by Council in May, 2017 with the total estimated funds being \$1,568,279.57 lump sum awarded to Standard Contractors, Inc. On July 31, 2017, the contractor and his licensed land surveyor met with the Engineering Department. The contractor supplied plats and descriptions obtained from Lowndes County records. These documents provided evidence that the Linzie Drive pavement is not located within the City right-of-way in several locations. This has resulted in public streets being located on private property unbeknownst to the residents and City Staff. The concern was immediately presented to the City Attorney and after review he determined that Linzie Drive should be relocated into the City right-of-way in keeping with City policy. The contractor reviewed current conditions and provided a recommendation for removing and installing pavement, providing storm drainage, clearing trees, removing and replacing fences, and other related items. On September 6, 2017, a meeting was held with Standard Contractors to discuss the recommendations and the quote for the 29 additional items. The quote provided a list of items and unit prices; however, the final total was accepted as a lump sum and any overages in the quantities will be absorbed by the contractor. Change Order No. 1 for the Project was provided in the amount of \$388,510.00 with no contingency. Funding for the annexed island projects has been through Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) loans. The City has recently requested additional GEFA funding and these funds will be used for this Project. Linzie Drive is Annexed Island 71 and was determined to be outside of the City right-of-way in several locations during layout for the Water and Sewer Extension Project. Since the new Water and Sewer Project will significantly impact the existing pavement, Staff is requesting to realign the road so that all work performed is located within the right-of-way, which will remove any conflicts on private property. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the Change Order No. 1 issued by Standard Contractors in the amount of \$388,510.00 with no contingency.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a Change Order with Standard Contractors in the amount of \$388,510.00 with no contingency for water and sewer extension to Annexed Island 71.

Delores Perry, 1503 East Park Avenue, stated that she was concerned about the water on several streets. She drives a Ford F-150 truck and when there is a heavy rain event, Lee Street and Ashley Street are always flooded. She has lived here for two years and she has not seen a change. It appears to be getting worse and not better. She was told that the flooding was due to debris and trash in the ditches; however, that does not appear to be the problem. When you turn onto Lee Street from Valley Street late at night you can barely see the water. Some people have small cars which could be a problem during the flooding. The water is also dirty. Ms. Perry stated that she would be glad to take some pictures for Council the next time it rains. Mayor Gayle stated that he was aware of the flooding on those streets and it is due to old infrastructure and small drain pipes. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Ashley Street is a State route and the drainage infrastructure is owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). We will pass her concerns along to the GDOT.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he has a video that he wanted to show about the storm damage and after effects of Hurricane Irma. The City employees worked very hard in preparing, planning, and following up after the storm event. Hurricane Irma was the strongest storm on record in the Atlantic and it spent more than three days as a Category 5 Hurricane. On Friday, September 8, 2017, Irma was on track to go directly over Valdosta before moving slightly west over the weekend. By September 11, 2017, over 70,000 residents in Lowndes County were without power, trees were down all around the City, and Valdosta employees were working around the clock to meet the needs of the community. Multiple City Departments had been preparing for the storm. The City lowered the water levels at the Millpond, cleared out trouble spots in the collection system, put personnel on standby, and assigned additional personnel to key City facilities. Workers also made sure that all necessary equipment, such as generators and vehicles, were inspected and fueled and that hand-held radios and cell phones were fully charged. The Valdosta Water Plant and the Wastewater Treatment Plant was manned around the clock, and the City opened Mathis Auditorium as a shelter for local citizens in mobile homes or less safe housing who needed a safe place during the storm. Members of the Valdosta Fire Department served as Administrators at the facility which housed 213 during the weather event. Also, VC3 had prepared before the storm to back up the computer systems to a different server to save information in the event of a flood or damage to City Hall. City Hall opened for business on Monday, September 11, 2017 at 5:30 a.m. with three City employees ready to respond to all citizens' concerns. All critical Department lines were transferred to City Hall the night before to support a central information office. During the storm, the Valdosta Police Department never stopped responding to calls and added an additional 50 personnel on duty to maintain public safety services. The Police Department received 407 calls on Monday which is more than twice the typical number of calls. Engineering dispatched calls from the Emergency Operations Center and responded to over 100 calls. They also had 12 full time Stormwater employees, three Arbor Division crew members, and the Traffic Division who worked the entire storm. Irma's force took out over two dozen of the City's 126 signalized intersections and closed a dozen roads. By Wednesday, power at all intersections was restored and by the end of the week all roads were open except one. The Arbor Division continues to respond to tree issues and will likely continue to do so for weeks. The Public Works Department had ten employees ride out the storm with an additional three employees who were relieved as winds began to decrease late Monday afternoon. Crews cleared roads of downed limbs and trees for first responders. In just a week after the storm, crews were working in two shifts daily from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and utilized five claw trucks and nine truck trailers to pick up nearly 300 tons of debris. The Valdosta Fire Department normally has 27 Firefighters and six engines on call around the clock. During the storm, there were 38 Firefighters worked on eight engines and the GSAR truck. Additional personnel also worked at the Emergency Operations Center. The Fire Department typically responds to 20 calls a day and during the storm they responded to 259 calls. After serving Valdosta, the GSAR Task Force II deployed 38 Task Force members with 11 of those being from the Valdosta Fire Department to assist search and rescue efforts in Camden County. The Utilities Department made sure there were City-owned and rental generators at lift stations prior to the storm. This pre-planning, along with significant improvements made to the City's wastewater collection system in recent years, allowed the Staff to respond quickly to the 19 lift stations that lost power during the storm. The preparation of the Utilities Department personnel minimized storm overflows to only one minor spill at Bemiss Road. The Water Plant on Guest Road and the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant also utilized backup generators to provide uninterrupted water and wastewater collection services to citizens. We want to thank all of the dedicated City employees who worked so tirelessly before, during, and after the storm. We also want to thank our great citizens for their patience and cooperation while the City cleans up. Larry Hanson stated that this is day ten of the storm cleanup and as of today, they had 638 tons of yard debris picked up which is 1,276,000 pounds of yard debris. This is a tremendous undertaking and

the Public Works employees have been working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They have two claw trucks working all night but it is still slow. Richard Hardy, Public Works Director, will be bringing in some additional resources and will contract with Advanced Disposal to help us on a daily fee. Larry Hanson thanked all the City employees for their hard work and he was very proud of team Valdosta during this storm event.

Sementa Mathews, Public Information Officer, planned an event for the U. S. Air Force 70th Birthday Celebration at Freedom Park on September 16, 2017. There were several thousand in attendance and they had 75 citizens who participated in the Fun Run with a Cross Fit challenge. They gave away over 500 hamburgers, 500 hotdogs, 200 snow cones, and 200 T-shirts so it was a fun day for families at Moody Air Force Base. They would like to continue this event every year so we will be working with Moody to do that.

The Dumpster Art event will take place on Saturday, September 23, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the City Hall Annex Building.

The Valdosta Fire Department will be doing a controlled house burn on September 28-29, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They will be using a condemned house for this training exercise. Council members and the media are invited to attend.

Sementa Mathews, Public Information Officer, does a tremendous job with communication and while we work under the auspices of the Emergency Operations Center, we have to do things unique to our City to keep our own citizens informed. We are having 30,000 visitors a month on the City's website and this is 1,000 people a day. Also, Lt. Herpin's story was put on Facebook and 12,000 people watched it in less than 24 hours and shared it 80 times. His story was run by WCTV last night and it was picked as one of the top four stories in the entire company and shown by 54 stations all over the country. His story is now being shared nationwide and we should all be proud of that. The event at Freedom Park for the Air Force was watched by over 10,000 people with over 60 shares. We reached thousands of citizens with our pre-storm information telling people in advance that we were going to cancel sanitation collection on Monday. During the storm event, the Police Department and Fire Department posts were watched by 100,000 people. This tells you the power of social media and the things we are doing to reach out to the citizens and communicate with them to keep them informed.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carroll stated that they are all extremely proud of team Valdosta. He received numerous calls with lots of positive comments. The communication by the City Manager and Staff was excellent throughout the entire storm and he appreciated all of their efforts.

Councilman Yost stated that he had a big thank you to everybody. He had a gentleman in the City telling him today about a strange noise that he heard during the night and it turned out to be the City's claw truck working at night. He was so impressed that the Public Works Department was doing what they needed to do to get Valdosta cleaned up. He also thanked Larry Hanson, City Manager, and Sementa Mathews, Public Information, for keeping Council informed.

Councilman Payton stated that he wanted to echo the comments made by Councilman Carroll and Councilman Yost. Larry Hanson, City Manager, did an outstanding job in keeping them informed on what was going on and that is priceless. He anticipates their questions before they even ask them. Councilman Payton stated that he also participated in the U. S. Air Force 70th Birthday Celebration and it was a lot of fun. He ran in the 5K Fun Run and won in his age group. Sementa Mathews, Public Information Officer, did an outstanding job in pulling all of that together.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she wanted to thank Staff for the way that they handled the cleanup. The City employees, Georgia Power workers, and contractors were real nice to the citizens and they did a wonderful job. She commended them for the way they reacted to the citizens because it really helped a lot.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked the City Manager and the Georgia Power workers for their efforts during the storm. The City offered the workers breakfast and they were so thankful. The senior citizens were so glad to be back home.

Councilman Vickers stated that he wanted to get the schedule for the public meetings that will be held to discuss changes to the Loitering Ordinance. He heard on the radio that Council would be voting on this at the Council Meeting on October 19, 2017; however, there is a lot of misunderstanding on this. He would like for the City to do a good job in advertising these public meetings so citizens can be informed. Larry Hanson stated that they have been waiting to finish up some changes and Police Chief Brian Childress is already planning to schedule three public meetings. They will be prepared to share with the citizens their thoughts and ideas and what they will be recommending. This should clear up a lot of the misunderstanding that citizens might have. Councilman Vickers stated that he wanted to make sure they had the meetings before it was brought before Council for a vote. Councilman Vickers also stated that at the Mayor and Council Retreat, they had talked about changing the Mobile Home Ordinance so those that already have mobile homes that were burned out or that they want to replace be allowed to do that. He would like to have that done before Council Payton leaves office.

Mayor Gayle stated that the Georgia Municipal Association will be holding the Fall District 11 Meeting in Fargo, Georgia on October 4, 2017 and inquired as to whether anyone else was planning to attend. Councilman Payton stated that he had registered today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the September 21, 2017 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:24 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 5, 2017.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta