

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 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 Pastor Lee Henderson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 10, 2017 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Consideration of a request to close an alley located between 601 and 605 Holliday Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that on July 11, 2017, Ms. Sandra Fuller and Mr. Desmond Stokes petitioned to have the alley located between their properties (601 and 605 Holliday Street) closed. The alley has not been in use by the City for many years. The petition to close the alley has been properly completed and reviewed by the Engineering Staff and all of the pertinent utility companies. They are in agreement with the closure. There were no objections to the closure of the alley. The Public Notice was advertised for the required amount of time. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the closure of the alley located between 601 and 605 Holliday Street.

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the closure of the alley located between 601 and 605 Holliday Street.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE LOITERING ORDINANCE AND ADD PARENTAL SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS (FIRST READING)

Consideration of a request to amend the Loitering Ordinance and add parental supervision requirements. (First Reading)

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this is the First Reading of the changes to the Loitering Ordinance and there will be no vote on it tonight. If you look at crime statistics from 2000 to 2016, some people would think that crime has gone up over that period of time and there are a lot of reasons for that. There is more social media, people are more in tune, and there is a lot more reporting than there was many years ago. The reality of it is that in the year 2000, there were 3,654 crimes committed in Valdosta and in 2016, there 2,833 crimes committed. Crimes went down by over 800 from the year 2000 to 2016 despite having the largest population growth in the City’s history. If you took the crimes per capita, then the percentage of decline would be even significantly greater. If we compared the year 2016 to 2017, there were 1,645 crimes in the City and this year through this period of time we have had 1,970 which is an increase of approximately 300. This increase is in the area of larceny which includes vehicle break-ins. Those have increased from 1,119 to 1,326 so while crime is down over 16 years and had continued to go down, we have an issue this year that we are trying to manage and deal with. This summer throughout South Georgia, there has been an increase of this type of theft in many cities and many of these crimes are attributed to juveniles. We have had well over 300 vehicle entries in Valdosta and the Police Department has

done a phenomenal job and arrested over 60 people this summer for vehicle entries. Approximately two-thirds of thefts were committed by juveniles. In fact a 14 year old who committed 9 vehicle break-ins was arrested just this week. We have a problem and we are trying to find a way to deal with it in a responsible way. There have been conversations with the Juvenile Court Judge to get his thoughts and find out what challenges he is dealing with as well as many conversations with Police Chief Brian Childress. Chief Childress framed out an Ordinance and sent it to the City Attorney for review. The purpose of the Ordinance is to bring some parental accountability for juveniles between the hours of midnight and 5:00 a.m. In the Juvenile Court system, there has to be multiple crimes committed by a juvenile before there is any type of incarceration. Most everyone believes that when we bring children into this world as parents there is also a responsibility to go along with that. For minor children under the age of 17, there should be some parent or guardian responsibility for that young person between the hours of midnight and 5:00 a.m. The Ordinance creates reasonable exceptions and the goal is to change behavior and not to find a reason to arrest parents or young people. The places where juveniles should not be between the hours of midnight and 5:00 a.m. are on streets, alleys, right-of-ways, and on private property without the permission of the owner. The exceptions for that would be if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian or another adult who is 21 or over and has legal custody of the minor, if they are running some type of emergency errand directed by the parent, if they are returning home from lawful employment, if they are in motor vehicle with parental consent for normal Interstate and travel throughout the City, if they are married in accordance with applicable law, or if they are attending or returning home within one hour of the conclusion of a school sanction or approved event. They tried to take into account all the reasons that juveniles would be out after midnight and incorporate those into the Ordinance. They also thought about how they would enforce this Ordinance. Chief Childress has identified two of his existing personnel, Officer Hancock and Lt. Shirley and if there is a juvenile out between the hours of midnight and 5:00 a.m. without a legitimate excuse, the Officer will put information into the computer system and nothing will be done to the parent during that time period. The next morning Officer Hancock and Lt. Shirley will review those that are flagged as potential curfew violations, investigate the incident, contact the parents, and seek to identify if there was a legitimate reason why the young person was out. If there is a legitimate reason then there is no issue; however, if there is not, then a Summons to Court will be issued. Over the past several days there has been some discussion about penalties and the goal is to change behavior. They would like to recommend that the penalty for the first offense be that the parent will be required to take a parental responsibility course. LODAC has offered to work with the City to develop that course and they would determine what a reasonable fee would be. The parent would attend the course to help them become a better parent.

Councilman Yost inquired as to whose behavior they are trying to change. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that by State law, juveniles are a function of the State Court system and they do not come into Municipal Court. We do not play a role in Juvenile Court or discipline. We can focus on a parent or guardian and that is why they are looking at identifying this as an option to try and hold parents responsible for knowing where their children are. Councilman Yost inquired as to what would happen to the child if the parent goes to this class for a first offense. Larry Hanson stated that we have no regulatory authority over juveniles. Councilman Yost inquired as to what we do with them now. There are some really good parents who have some really bad children. He does not have a problem holding parents responsible, but there is a problem with the legislative people elected on the State level and the Governor who signed a Juvenile Bill that did not help us. They have tied our hands in being able to deal with this problem. The child is going to end up back out on the street as a repeat offender. There has got to be something where the child pays a price also. The people who continue to have their neighborhoods vandalized and robbed are going to shoot someone. Chief Childress stated that assuming you catch a juvenile out, we do not have jurisdiction over juvenile cases. The procedure is pretty clear though. If you catch a juvenile out in the middle of the night violating this Ordinance or State law, the juvenile will still be held accountable because there will be a juvenile report filed which goes automatically to the Department of Juvenile Justice. They will not automatically pick the juvenile up because it is not one of the offenses that they will allow the Police Department to pick the juvenile up on; however, the juvenile will still have to go to Court. If you have a parent who has a child involved with gangs and they cannot control them, there is a Gang Task Force who teaches classes and does interventions. A parent should not be charged if their child is out of control; however, this is a way for them to identify a juvenile who is in a gang and to have some intervention. Councilman Yost stated that the Juvenile Judge has his hands tied and there is not much that he can do. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Judge can follow the State law and if it is a felony then the Judge will have a lot of discretion. If it is not a felony then the Judge will have less discretion. Chief Childress stated that if there are juveniles out at night then they will be held accountable and face a Juvenile Judge.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that they do need to have a curfew for the juveniles; however, a lot of the juveniles who are out come from single parent homes. She was a guardian for a juvenile during the summer and she works at night. One time when she was off, it was after midnight and she was out riding her bicycle and the juvenile was out walking his dog. If she is at work and he decides to go out with his dog and someone picks him up, then you will probably say that he has no reason to be out late at night. There is nothing that he has done wrong so why would you fine her as a guardian for that. Chief Childress stated that the Officers will come back and see what they have got and he cannot say whether they will or will not fine someone. The parents that he is worried about are the ones that are clearly not watching their children. There will be a methodical investigation because you cannot just go out and charge the parents if you assume they are not watching their children. The first step should be to identify the problem and if the parents need parenting classes then they should take them. They have to enforce the law with a little compassion and look at what is going on behind the scenes. They are some parents who are repeat offenders that the Police Department has tried to help and they totally ignore it, and then there are some parents that just do not care. Councilwoman Tooley stated that the juveniles who are committing the crimes need to pay and be held accountable. She suggested that the City look at establishing some type of program with the Juvenile Court in order to help the juveniles who are committing the crimes. They could be picked up and placed in a facility where they can be helped. They could be placed in a house with a controlled environment and stay there at night. In the morning they could take the bus to school and then someone could pick them up after school and take them to a controlled environment where they have to do community service work. It is hard for parents to control all the children and especially different age groups. They need to take away some of the freedoms of these juveniles. Chief Childress stated that he respectfully disagrees because that is not always the case. That is the type of procedure that this Council cannot do and it has to be from the State level. He has seen enough of these cases and a lot of the parents just do not care. There has got to be some responsibility of the parents. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether fining the parent is going to make the parent do anything. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they are hoping that having the parents go through a parental responsibility class will give them the skills they need to be a better parent and manage their children. Councilwoman Tooley is asking for the same thing they are asking for but they are asking the parent to be responsible for getting their children to school and knowing where they are at night. The government does not have the resources and cannot legally open a facility to do those things. Councilwoman Tooley stated that maybe they could start something with the State. Chief Childress stated that they are not trying to teach anybody how to be a parent, but he is insisting that they be a parent.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that they need to do something to save the children. She has worked in law enforcement and is tired of seeing children who are 15 years old being arrested. They need to get involved in the community and take these children back because once juveniles get a record it follows them for the rest of their lives. They cannot correct the mistake. In her neighborhood, you can walk out the door at 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. and if you see a child walking down the street then you want to know where the parents are at. It is her desire is to save these children. If we can build something then build it. If we can get more recreation centers that will give the children something to do then we need to do it. She raised three children and when 5:00 p.m. came they all had to be in the house. Parents have to get back to raising their children themselves and stop letting the law raise them. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he wanted to compliment the Mayor for creating a Youth Council which identifies young people every year and gives them leadership training. The City is also a partner in the Great Promise Partnership (GPP) which won a State award. We have 20 at-risk high school students working for the City through this partnership. We also have a Job Shadow Day every year and where we bring at-risk students into the City Departments and teach them about careers in local government. We as a City are doing a lot of things to try and reach out to the young people in our community and help them to take the right path. We need to encourage other businesses in our community to do the same.

Councilman Payton stated that he and Councilwoman Miller-Cody went to an event at the Boys and Girls Club several months ago where they were talking about a new parenting concept which was an excellent idea. He is always concerned about how items that are put into place are enforced and he is of the opinion that you have to start somewhere. Also, it would be nice to get some input from some of the civic organizations in our community about what we are trying to do. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he found out today that the Boys and Girls Club has started a Parenting Class, Raising Highly Capable Kids. This has been introduced in Quitman and will begin soon in Lakeland and Valdosta. In Brooks County, the participants were ordered by the Court system to attend the classes that are being offered.

Councilman Carroll stated that when a mother and father bring a child into this world they are responsible for the child until it becomes an adult. This is not a new concept and it has been around forever. It is not the Police Department's job or the School System's job to raise the children. There are children in the schools who have parents that do not care and do not discipline them. Consequently, they are disruptive and do not learn in schools. There is a concept that the government has to solve these problems and the government needs tools to do so. This is one of the tools that they can put in the box to help; however, at the end of the day it is the parents' responsibility for raising the child until he/she becomes an adult. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she was in agreement with Councilman Carroll. She has a program where she helps a lot of children. She had one mother who hit her daughter and put a scratch on the child's head. The mother went to jail because the daughter called the Police and got them involved. The daughter needed to be disciplined but the parents today cannot discipline the children like they want to because the children know they can call the law. Some of the children are just that bad that they need to be disciplined but the parents are afraid they will get into trouble so that is why they let them go.

Councilman Vickers stated that he agrees with everything that has been said but you have to understand that our authority comes from the State of Georgia. We do not have the authority because the State has provided the guidelines for us to follow. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Juvenile Court Judge is working very hard to address these issues in the same manner that we are trying to do.

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-19, AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE TAX MILLAGE RATE FOR THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of an Ordinance to adopt the tax millage rate for the City of Valdosta.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the millage rate for the City Valdosta had not been increased from 1992 until 2014. The City has increased the millage rate only two times in the last 23 years while the City reduced the millage rate 11 times in that same period. The current millage rate is 7.95. The proposed millage rate is the rollback rate computed under Georgia law and is not a tax increase under the law. Georgia law, under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, established a formal mechanism that calculates the rollback millage rate for local governments. The information is provided by the Lowndes County Tax Commissioner's Office to the City with the calculation already determined. If a local government wishes to increase the millage rate beyond the rollback rate, then three public hearings are required and the local government must run advertisements advising the public of a proposed tax increase. The proposed millage rate for adoption is not considered a tax increase and, therefore, does not require the various advertisements beyond the five year history and does not require three public hearings. Under State law, it is not a tax increase. The information the City received from the Lowndes County Tax Commissioners Office shows an overall reduction in the City's net tax digest of \$25,208,079. The majority of the decrease is attributable to reductions in both real property values and motor vehicle values as well as a significant increase in exemptions. The change in real property is the result of the contesting of tax values by property owners, the transition of several neighborhoods from owner-occupied homes to rental units which lowers assessed values, and new valuation procedures that do not allow distress sales to be weighted less heavily. The change in motor vehicle value is the continued result of the Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) that the State enacted several years back. The TAVT fee provides for an exemption from sales tax on a motor vehicle purchase and the purchaser is also exempt from the annual ad valorem tax or birthday tax. Due to the approximately 2% decrease in the net digest, and the continuing erosion of taxable motor vehicle value on the digest, the rollback millage rate as calculated under Georgia law by the Tax Commissioner's office is 8.001. This is the rate necessary to fund the adopted Fiscal Year 2018 General Fund Budget. A Five Year History of millage rates must be published one week prior to the adoption of the new rate. This ad appeared in the Valdosta Daily Times on August 17, 2017. Chuck Dinkins recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to adopt the tax millage rate for the City of Valdosta. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether Council would need to adopt the School Board millage rate. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that was correct and Council would need to adopt the School Board millage rate which is 16.98 mills and 5 mills for the Downtown Development Authority. Neither of the millage rates is considered a tax increase for under Georgia law. Councilman Payton inquired as to whether it would have been a different amount without the rollback. Chuck Dinkins stated that the way they compute the rollback is to look at last year's digest and the current year digest and if the millage rate moves in the opposite direction then you would end up with the same revenue. Larry Hanson stated that there are several things that are causing challenges for us. The TAVT has affected all local governments and the tax digest has declined by approximately \$16 million. We

have seen a transition during the last decade from primarily a homeowner-occupied home to primarily rental property. Some of those are not being adequately maintained and the valuations have decreased which causes the tax value to decrease and less revenue on them; however, we still have the same responsibilities to provide Police and Fire protection for them. A third issue is that the State passed a new law on foreclosures and distressed sales. In the past this did not affect the value of a neighborhood and they were considered to be an anomaly; however, the State passed a law requiring this to be taken into consideration. A bankruptcy in one neighborhood that ended up with the bank giving a distressed sale just to get something out of it lowers the value of every home in that neighborhood. Also, last year that was a mass re-evaluation of commercial and industrial property so we set the millage rate and digest based on what we were told by the Tax Commissioner's Office. Many people appealed those and evidently many of those appeals were granted. Some of the decline in the digest is artificial and it was over-valued last year. Those people appealed and won and now it has been reduced. Chuck Dinkins stated that last year at this time we were at the beginning of the appeals process and this year at this time we are at the end of the appeals process. If you look at the difference in the tax digest and where we are now, there are two years of appeals affecting the change in the value. Councilman Payton stated that next year it could be reversed. Larry Hanson stated that was correct and we could be reducing the millage rate. We need to see property values rise, new investments, new businesses, and new industries that grow the digest naturally. As people improve property the digest grows and if we can do a better job with rental property maintenance then we can see if property values increase by requiring people to bring them up to a standard to increase the value. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether we would see our property taxes increase. Larry Hanson stated that if many people had their property values lowered then they would not see a property tax increase.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2017-19, an Ordinance to adopt the tax millage rate as presented which includes 8.001 mills for the City of Valdosta, 16.98 mills for the Valdosta School Board, and 5 mills for the Downtown Development Authority, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-9, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF AN APPLICATION WITH THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE TO APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITIES OF THE VALDOSTA POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE LOWNDES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance to apply for Grant Funds for improvements to the law enforcement capabilities of the Valdosta Police Department and the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office.

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that the City received funding under the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in 2005 through 2016. Since a disparate situation exists between the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County, the grants were joint projects where both law enforcement agencies teamed together to request Federal grant funds to improve law enforcement services in the City of Valdosta and the Lowndes County area. The grant guidelines identify seven purpose areas for which grant funding can be utilized: (1) law enforcement programs, (2) prosecution and court programs, (3) prevention and education programs, (4) corrections and community corrections programs, (5) drug treatment and enforcement programs, (6) planning, evaluation, and technology improvement programs, and (7) crime victims and witness programs. In 2007 and 2009, the City and the County were each awarded allocations for use in one of seven program purpose areas with crime victim and witness programs (other than compensation) being added to the program purpose areas. The funding in 2008 was so low that the County did not request any of the funding allocation. The 2005 through 2016 grants are either complete or nearly complete. For the 2017 Grant Program, a lump sum was again awarded and after previous discussion with the Department of Justice, it was recommended the split of funding be based on FBI Part 1 Crimes in the City and County. A split has been proposed as follows: \$9,697 for the City of Valdosta and \$5,000 for Lowndes County. Since a disparate situation exists with Lowndes County, an agreement must be reached on the allocation of funding between entities. Both the City and the County will use their funding for one of the seven program purpose areas. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been executed with the County pursuant to the allocation breakdown. The City will file the grant application for the entire amount of \$14,697 and act as the fiscal agent for the funding. No match is required for the grant. Chief Childress recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the U. S. Department of Justice,

Bureau of Justice Assistance to apply for Grant Funds for improvements to the law enforcement capabilities of the Valdosta Police Department and the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2017-9, a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance to apply for Grant Funds for improvements to the law enforcement capabilities of the Valdosta Police Department and the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of a request to approve a Design-Build Bid for the extension of utilities to eight Annexed Islands.

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. This request is part of a larger effort and would provide water and sewer infrastructure to 15 annexed islands. The 15 annexed islands were grouped into 8 Projects so that annexed islands that were close to each other could be grouped together. This was advertised as a lump sum Design-Build Project and under a design-build scenario, the licensed Design Engineer works under a licensed contractor (builder) for the design and construction of all sanitary sewer mains, sanitary sewer manholes, sanitary sewer services, water mains, water services, and other related works. The design-build approach gives the owner less direct control of the design decisions; however, the approach is quicker than contracting separately for design and construction and the price of the Project is contracted as a fixed lump sum cost that is less subject to overruns (except for unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances). To help ensure that this could be completed on time and at a reasonable price, the City provided two options on how to bid the Project: (1) To individually award the eight Projects which could result in multiple contractors performing work, or (2) To award all eight Projects to one contractor. In addition, the City included an "Alternate to Bid" for a financing option which stated, "Financing facilities will not be a primary factor in determining the award of the bid but will be reviewed as part of the award process." Bids were received on Tuesday, August 15, 2017 from two contractors, RPI Underground, Inc. and Standard Contractors, Inc. Funding for the Annexed Island Projects has been through Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) loans and the City is currently working with GEFA on an additional loan to cover the remaining annexed islands. Based on the August 15, 2017 bid, the total requested funding for these annexed islands is \$4,489,188.95 and the breakdown is as follows: Island 27A - \$176,822.50, Islands 28, 30, and 51 - \$1,925,180, Island 29 - \$493,740, Island 36 - \$14,750, Islands 37, 38, 41, 45 and 48 - \$489,867, Islands 52 and 53 - \$419,314, Island 66 - \$144,060, and Island 86 - \$53,711 for a total bid of \$3,717,444.50. There will also be a 10% contingency of \$371,744.45 and an estimated cost for easements of \$400,000 for a grand total of \$4,489,188.95. Once the extension of utilities to the eight Annexed Islands is finished, this will complete all major work required. Staff is reviewing all previous Project areas to ensure that all original Annexed Island parcels have been served as identified in the Consent Order. If any parcels are remaining, then this should be minor work (e.g., install services) and will be addressed by the December 31, 2018 deadline. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the bid from RPI Underground, Inc. in the amount of \$3,717,444.50 plus a 10% contingency and easement costs for the extension of utilities to eight Annexed Islands.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the design-build bid from RPI Underground, Inc. in the amount of \$3,717,444.50 plus a 10% contingency of \$371,744.45 and easement costs of \$400,000 for a total amount of \$4,489,188.95 for the extension of utilities to eight Annexed Islands.

Consideration of bids for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive pedestrian improvements between South Lee Street and South Fry Street.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that between 2004 and 2006, the City of Valdosta entered into an Agreement with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for partial funding of the Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Drive Corridor and Streetscape Project. By securing \$500,000 in State Transportation

Enhancement funds, \$159,373.00 in CDBG funds, and \$245,000 in HUD funds, the City was able to beautify and revitalize public right-of-way and infrastructure along MLK, Jr. Drive, between North Oak Street and South Lee Street with the most recent section being completed in April, 2017. While the grant funding has ended, improvements are still needed on MLK, Jr. Drive between South Lee Street and South Fry Street. To continue the City's efforts in providing pedestrian improvements and safety, the City identified areas along this section where existing sidewalk needed to be replaced and both new sidewalks and crosswalk improvements were needed. The Project was advertised on July 17, 2017, a mandatory pre-bid meeting was held on July 25, 2017, and the bid opening was held on August 17, 2017. Four bids were received on August 17, 2017 and based on the bids, Standard Contractors, Inc. was the low bidder in the amount of \$89,478.00. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Standard Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$89,478.00 plus a 10% contingency of \$8,974.80 for a grand total of \$98,425.80 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive pedestrian improvements between South Lee Street and South Fry Street.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Payton to approve the bid submitted by Standard Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$89,478 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive pedestrian improvements between South Lee Street and South Fry Street. Councilwoman Miller-Cody seconded the motion. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the motion would include a 10% contingency of \$8,974.80 for a grand total of \$98,425.80. Councilman Payton and Councilwoman Miller-Cody were in agreement to include the 10% contingency. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0).

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Roy Taylor, 2209 Bridlewood Drive, stated that they have a Neighborhood Watch in his neighborhood and recently he found three young men knocking on the door of one of his neighbor's house at 2:00 a.m. He drove up to them and asked what they were doing. The young men told him they were looking for someone and he knew they were lying. He laid his gun on the dash of the car and told them that they had five seconds to get out of there and if they came back they might get shot. Mr. Taylor wondered where their parents were and if they were going to make him a murderer by letting these children come into his neighborhood and hurt his family. He is there to protect his family and he has no malice in his heart for a child that is not raised properly by their parents. If he had done something like that when he was young his mother would have gone next door to the neighbor's house to borrow an extra belt after she wore him out with the first one. There needs to be more of that. He is tired of children filling up the jail. Iceland is a great country and they have almost no crime because if a child commits a crime the parents go to jail. It is time to make parents responsible. If this keeps up it is going to make him and his neighbors a murderer. They are not going to come into his neighborhood and kick his door open or grab his wife as she gets out of her car without him shooting them. He will pray for them first and then he is going to pray for himself because they will have made him a murderer. It is time that Council spoke up and take care of all the citizens. Mr. Taylor also stated that it takes him 35 minutes to go across town because there are so many red lights and so many disillusioned people on phones.

John Page, representative of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs Council, stated that he had sent a letter to the Mayor and Council from the Governmental Affairs Council regarding Transportation Projects. They have six committees that comprise the Governmental Affairs Council and the Chairs of each committee serve on the Council. One of those committees is the Transportation Committee and they have held Members to Heard sessions so that they could express their views and wishes. They have met with people from the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, City and County leaders, as well as Tim Golden who is on the Georgia Department of Transportation Board. Once the Transportation Committee finalized the list, it went to the Governmental Affairs Council who then reviewed it and approved it. It then went to the Chamber's Board of Directors for their consideration. Once it cleared the Board, they submitted it to the City and County leaders and asked that they take serious consideration of these Transportation Projects. Most of the ones on the list will definitely impact the City of Valdosta. They have discussed some of these issues for decades and he asked Council's consideration in supporting the list.

Gary Wisenbaker, 3338 Country Club Road, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs Council has been working on this list since last summer. The Mayor and City Manager attended several of their meetings and Councilwoman Tooley serves on the Transportation Policy

Committee so they have had good input from the City and the County as well. These prioritized Transportation Projects are 6 of 16 that they identified and are ones that could be done with City and County responsibility as well as the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) responsibility. It is a wonderful time to make up lists like this today because GDOT is running into money and they will be spending a lot of that money around our area. They tried to approach this from a business community standpoint because they are the Chamber. The Transportation Projects that they identified affect and promote economic development in businesses within our community. He appreciated the fact that the City considered several of these items in a presentation. The truck bypass is the number one issue and is listed as a priority. They were delighted to learn that GDOT now has it in procurement stage to obtain a consultant. Tim Golden, former State Senator and GDOT Board Member, has been very instrumental not only on the Truck By-pass Project but also on several others. The Airport is also important and that is on the City's list. Their list is for everything and for whatever pot of money it comes from whether it is TSPLOST, regional SPLOST, or GDOT money. Mr. Wisenbaker asked for Council's consideration in supporting the list for the betterment of our community and the businesses in our community which helps employment and lowers crime.

Lou McClendon, 2120 Jerry Jones Drive, stated that he is a member of the Aging Council and they have approximately 16 to 18 counties that they are concerned with. They will hold a question and answer event on September 13, 2017 at the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. There are a lot of seniors in our area who get sick and go to the hospital and once they get home they have no one to help them. The senior citizens will go in and fix a meal for them or do some light house cleaning. Other counties are using money that the State has set aside and we are not getting the benefit of it. We want our citizenry to be able to get some of the benefits from it. Mr. McClendon invited the Mayor and Council to attend this event to see what they are doing to help people in their Districts when they get sick. Councilman Vickers inquired as to what vehicle other counties use for that money to come through. Larry Hanson stated that it is through the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. Mayor Gayle thanked Mr. McClendon for his service on the Aging Council.

Stan Rumphol, resident of Lowndes County, stated that he had an idea about how to help some of these kids. A lot of the problem with these kids is that they do not have any purpose in life. Teachers tell them that they need to know math and reading when they grow up but they do not know why. He wondered if some of the businesses and industries in Valdosta could approach these kids and give them a reason why they need to know math and have good reading skills. The kids get bored because they do not have a purpose. He has been watching Battle Bots on the Science Channel where people design remote control robots to destroy other remote control robots. There are a lot of hydraulics, engineering, and electronics that goes into that. Kids need a reason why they need to know something and just because the teacher says so is not good enough. If they had a little more practicality then maybe they would stay off the street and study. Mayor Gayle stated that was what they were trying to do with the Great Promise Partnership but we need more businesses to volunteer to accept some of these students.

Gregory Williams, Principal Investigator for Play-On Foundation which is a Valdosta scientific research and community action organization, stated that he wanted to share two things that they have discovered over the last couple of weeks. He partnered with several other non-profits and they discovered that the living wage for the City of Valdosta is \$10.36. He asked that the Mayor and Council consider adopting some type of minimum wage for the City employees. If we are paying the City employees anything less than \$10.36 we are paying them to live in poverty. They have been on the radio this week and announced this information to the public so a lot of the residents are becoming aware of the living wage. He also shared this information on social media and received responses from many past residents of Valdosta and that was one of the main reasons they left. As a scientist, they consider this a public health disparity. The second thing he wanted to share was the hospital situation. He knows that there is a Hospital Authority and we may need to hire some health care executives to come in and give us some tips that the Council can use to help push the hospital in a more progressive way. There are a lot of public health disparities with the hospital and it stems with the academic institutions such as the Valdosta State University Nursing Program. They are having rotations and clinicals done in other cities because our hospital cannot meet the demand. One of the major issues with the hospital right now is that they are going in all other directions paying lawsuits and doing everything other than what is right for the people. One thing that is right for the people is getting a Trauma Center here. We have a Transport Team that transports people from rural areas but they cannot fly more than 200 miles without having to refuel the helicopter. If you are in a trauma situation and cannot get to

Atlanta, then that is a life or death situation. Mr. Williams asked Council's consideration in clamping down on the Hospital Authority and make them do what is right for the people.

J. D. Rice, 501 Knob Hill Drive, stated that he wanted to applaud the Police Department and the City Manager for the curfew proposal; however, he wanted to add a caveat on the exemptions. In the African American community, they celebrate an event called Watch Night on December 31st between 11:00 p.m. and midnight. There are 16 year olds that drive to church and some of them may be driving to the Watch Night program. He would hate for some of them to fall through the cracks coming to church and violating the Ordinance if it is approved.

Marion Ramsey, 605 Monroe Street, stated that he wanted to address an issue that has been going on throughout the United States and that is the removal of Confederate statues on public property. Valdosta has a statue that sits at the old Courthouse that was donated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1911. On the back of the statue it states, "The principal that they fought for shall live eternally." He has contacted the United Daughters of the Confederation in Richmond, Virginia, which is the home office, about removal of the statue as well as the Governor and our State Representative. Mr. Ramsey asked for Council's support in the removal of the statue because it is going on throughout the United States by prominent government officials including Governors, Mayors, and City Councilmen. He does not believe that the City of Valdosta wishes to stand for the principles that the Confederate soldiers fought for which was to continue a system of enslaving human beings. That was one of the most heinous and violent acts against God's creations today in the United States. Mr. Ramsey stated that he prays for their support on this because it is not their issue but a County issue and he will have to go before the County Commission; however, it would say a lot and put a lot of voice in what he is trying to do if the City Council would agree to have this statue removed. They started a petition last week about removal of the statue and they have over 500 names of people who wish to have the statue removed. Mr. Ramsey asked for Council's support by signing the petition or speaking out and having a voice.

Steven Glover, 510 3rd Avenue, stated that he was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan and he has been through a lot because of that. He is bipolar, suffered a lot of abuse, and is scarred. He brought his family down here for a better life and to get them out of Detroit. He and his wife do not like it here because they miss the snow and Detroit; however, he wanted to give his children some peace and they are happy here. On his second day in Valdosta he got arrested for disorderly conduct which was in August, 2015. He was arguing with his family and the Police Officer came out and asked him to stop yelling. In Detroit they yell out to cops all day long and it is no big deal. He yelled and the Officer told him that was it and he was going to jail. That was his first experience in Valdosta. The South is different because you cannot do certain things down here that he was raised to do up North. During the past two years he has been dealing with probation and he has done what he was supposed to do. He has worked odd jobs to be a citizen of the State of Georgia and things have not been working out for his family. A lot of churches have been helping them out with the rent and other things and they are grateful to God for the experience. This year he had an opportunity to apply for a City position. He worked with Shirley Britt at the Azalea Festival and she thought he would be a great fit for the City. After four months of calling and waiting he finally got a job working at Sunset Cemetery on July 18, 2017. In one month he had three days off and he was working full speed because he cared; however, he was fired two days ago for insubordination and allegedly threatening his supervisors. He worked for four months trying to get a job with the City and in one month he was gone. Mr. Glover also stated that there is a great misappropriation of City funds at the cemetery. The employees do not work eight hours and just do the routine work. They bicker, complain, and argue all the time. He went there and gave 82 hours on his first check and 93 hours on his last check. Mr. Glover asked Council's consideration in looking into his termination.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mayor Gayle stated that Larry Hanson, City Manager, was recently appointed as Vice Chair of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Board which is a real honor for him as well as for the City of Valdosta. He was appointed by the Governor to serve on this Board which is a very important agency in our State. They provide community and economic development for fair housing and there is quite a bit of business that they transact. Mayor Gayle congratulated Larry Hanson on his appointment. Larry Hanson stated that he was proud to be in a position to help cities, counties, and local governments throughout South Georgia and across the State and he thanked Mayor Gayle for his kind comments.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Youth Council is now accepting applications for the 2017-2018 program year. They are looking for young people who want to build their leadership and civic responsibility skills, gain a better understanding of municipal government, and prepare them for the opportunity to participate in public and community services. The deadline to apply is August 31, 2017. They will be sworn in at the September 21, 2017 City Council Meeting.

The City and the County will be having a celebration for Moody Air Force Base as part of the U. S. Air Force 70th Birthday at Freedom Park on Saturday, September 16, 2017. There will be a 5K run starting at 8:00 a.m. and food and festivities will begin at 10:00 a.m. and run through 2:00 p.m. This is a way we can honor and give thanks and praise to those who serve our community and our country.

Fire Chief Freddie Broome earned a Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation which is a professional designation by the Commission on Professional Credentials, an entity for the Center of Public Safety Excellence. Chief Broome is one of 1,262 individuals in the world to achieve this designation. There are 20,000 Fire Departments in the United States and he is one of 1,200 in the world which tells you the commitment he has made for education and professional development, association membership, community involvement, and technical expertise. Also Shirley Britt, Associate City Clerk, has now been certified as a Certified Municipal Clerk from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks. This is a demanding and difficult undertaking and we are very proud of her commitment to learning.

The Finance Department has received the Government and Finance Officers Distinguished Budget Award for the 22nd consecutive year which is the highest award in Governmental Accounting. It means our Budget is not only about numbers but about communication and how we present it as well as the information we share with the public. It is used to measure our services and is not merely something that is adopted once a year and placed on a shelf. This is quite an accomplishment and it shows the great leadership in the Finance Department.

Tim Golden, former Georgia State Senator, has been serving on the Georgia Department of Transportation Board of Directors for two years. Last week he was appointed to serve as Secretary of that Board. This works in progression which means that in two years he will become the Chairman of the State Transportation Board. This is very important to our community, speaks highly of Tim Golden, and demonstrates the respect he has gained among his fellow Board members in a short period of time.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta will be making an announcement tomorrow about hiring Darryl Muse as the new Utilities Director. Darryl comes from Ocala, Florida and for the last 8 years he has been the Assistant Director of Engineering and Water Resources. He has also served in various utility management positions in Ocala for 14 years prior to that. In the City of Valdosta's Utilities Department, he will oversee 100 people who provide services to over 20,000 water and wastewater customers and deliver over 4 billion gallons of water annually to the residential, commercial, and industrial customers. In his most recent position, he was responsible for the oversight of Ocala's Water and Wastewater Department, their Stormwater Department, their Traffic Engineering, and all capital projects for the City of Ocala. That included the operation of two water treatment plants, three wastewater reclamation facilities, a certified laboratory, an industrial pre-treatment program, over 130 lift stations, and a system that serves over 55,000 customers. He has a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Southern Illinois University and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Nova Southeastern University. He was a graduate of the Leadership Ocala/Marion County Program and he has also served as a Board member and Chairman of the United Way in Ocala. He is a veteran of the United States Navy and he and his wife Earlene have two daughters, Amy who is 24 and Raven who is 17. Larry Hanson asked Darryl Muse to come forward and introduce himself to the Mayor and Council.

Darryl Muse stated that he was glad to be in Valdosta and he had noted that the City of Valdosta's system is very similar to the one in Ocala. He had previously worked for Henry Hicks, retired Utilities Director, 22 years ago and he went through the Henry Hicks' training program so there will be some consistency. There were a lot of great applicants to choose from and he was proud to be selected. He is ready to go to work and looking forward to doing great things here. Larry Hanson stated that Darryl will be starting work on September 18, 2017 and welcomed him to the City of Valdosta.

Councilwoman Tooley acknowledged John Page, Gary Wisenbaker, and Myrna Ballard from the Chamber of Commerce and stated that she worked with them on the Transportation Project list. They worked together to try and build businesses and Valdosta up and she appreciated their efforts. Also, Roy Taylor had pointed to a picture of a young man on the front page of the Valdosta Daily Times as a juvenile offender; however, that young man is not one of the teens involved in recent break-ins and he is in a program where they do community work. He also comes to her Community Center. They are trying to work with these kids to make them better. They also work with the parents and she would hate for the parents to be penalized unjustly when they are trying. This young man is very helpful in the community and is well mannered. The kids help out with the elderly and they are in the process of getting another building where the kids can come in the afternoon and get off the streets. It takes a village to raise kids and that is what they are doing and this young man is one of the products of that.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that on Saturday, August 26, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. there will be a street renaming ceremony at the corner of Brookwood and Deeb Street in honor of the late Councilman James Wright. The Mayor and Council are invited to attend.

Councilman Payton inquired as to what the Chamber's position is as it relates to TSPLOST. John Page stated that the Transportation Committee, the Governmental Affairs Council, and the Board discussed it at length and voted to oppose the regional TSPLOST. They felt like if there was a regional TSPLOST then the City and County could not have one here just for our community. Mayor Gayle stated that they actually included three of the Chamber's projects in their presentation. The others could not be included because they were in the County and hopefully the County will include those. There is a lot of confusion about the regional TSPLOST due to the interpretation of the law. We are going to move forward though with the regional TSPLOST because we are a regional City and we depend on the surrounding areas come to Valdosta to shop and eat in our restaurants. Mayor Gayle stated that he was very much in favor of promoting it and if it does not pass then they could have a County-wide Referendum. John Page stated that it was his understanding that Ware County was having a Referendum and if it passes then the whole region is not allowed to have one. Larry Hanson stated that there is now an opinion from the Attorney General that says otherwise.

Councilman Vickers stated that three or four weeks ago Tim Golden had visited with Larry Hanson, City Manager, and he had mentioned sending a memorandum to Terry Gable with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) regarding the St. Augustine Road sidewalk. Larry Hanson stated that they are currently finishing up the excess money from one sidewalk and he asked Pat Collins, City Engineer, to draft a letter to Terry Gable asking GDOT to reconsider the St. Augustine Road sidewalk that we had asked for approximately one year ago.

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 August 24, 2017 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:07 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, September 7, 2017.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta