

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 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, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and Vivian Miller-Cody. The invocation was given by Chris Musgrove, Future Now, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Consideration of the June, 2017 Employee of the Month Award (Lt. Justin Ply, Valdosta Fire Department).

Mayor Gayle stated that Lt. Justin Ply was unable to be at the Council Meeting tonight and the Employee of the Month Award will be postponed until the next City Council Meeting.

Mayor Gayle recognized Ross Berry, the new Chief Executive Officer of the South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC), and Johnny Ball, Assistant Administrator at SGMC, who were in attendance at the Council Meeting. Mr. Berry stated that he wanted the Council to be able to put a face with a name and this was day ten of his new position. He has been really busy getting to know the Staff and doing meet and greets. He will be very accessible and will provide Council members with his contact information. He will also be available to answer any questions they might have and talk with them about healthcare.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 25, 2017 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-10, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 0.08 acres (3,414 square feet) from Conservation (CON)(County) to Single-Family Residential (R-15)(City) as requested by Todd Wilson (File No. VA-2017-08). The property is located approximately 220 feet south of the southern terminus of Ravenwood Circle in Valdosta, Georgia. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission reviewed this request at their May Regular Meeting and recommended approval of "Conditional" R-15(C) Zoning with nine conditions (6-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that Todd Wilson is requesting to rezone a small area of land consisting of 0.08 acres (3,414-sf) from Conservation (CON)(County) to Single-Family Residential (R-15)(City). This request is running concurrently with the annexation request File No. VA-2017-08. The property is located adjacent to the Eager Subdivision and is approximately 220' south of the southern terminus of Ravenwood Circle. The applicant is proposing to annex this small area of land so that it can be combined (upon annexation) with the adjacent vacant parcel of land to the east which is already in the City Limits. The applicant is proposing to subdivide this recombined parcel into a four-lot residential subdivision, which includes an extension of the Ravenwood Circle right-of-way that will have an offset cul-de-sac at the end. This is a slightly different design than when this parcel was annexed and rezoned in 2009 which was for a proposed five-lot subdivision and a centered cul-de-sac. Most of the subject property to be annexed will be used for the newly proposed offset cul-de-sac. The property is currently located within a Parks/Recreation/ Conservation (PRC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan; however, upon annexation the property will be assigned an Established Residential (ER) designation which is eligible to have R-15 Zoning. The subject property is very tiny

and has no development potential except for incorporation into other property for a proposed development. The adjacent R-15 property to the east is currently owned by the applicant who is proposing to utilize the subject property simply to augment his design of the proposed subdivision by allowing an offset cul-de-sac rather than one that is centered; therefore, the proposed R-15 Zoning for this property is certainly logical and appropriate. When the adjacent property was rezoned in 2009, it was approved with a series of nine conditions that pertain to the proposed subdivision. For consistency, these same nine conditions of approval should be part of this rezoning as well. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval of Conditional R-15(C) Zoning, subject to the same following conditions of adjacent R-15 Zoning area: (1) No more than five homes will be constructed on the property being rezoned. (2) On-site detention will be provided. (3) No wetlands will be disturbed. (4) All homes will be compatible to the homes located in the adjoining sections of Eager Subdivision. (5) Restrictive Covenants compatible to the adjoining sections of Eager Subdivision will be established. (6) Appropriate compaction tests will be performed on the property before construction. (7) The 100-year FEMA flood elevation will be established before construction. (8) The finished floor elevation of all homes will be set at 137.00' msl (2' above 500 year flood elevation). (9) Delineation of 100-year flood plain will depict final zoning line/City Limits line and will be required to submit topographical and stormwater plans. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 30, 2017 meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval, subject to the same nine conditions as recommended by Staff (6-0 vote).

Todd Wilson, Applicant, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Wilson stated that by offsetting the cul-de-sac the lots will be more accessible and the houses will have better frontage. Mr. Wilson asked for Council's consideration in approving the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2017-10, an Ordinance to rezone 0.08 acres (3,414 square feet) from Conservation (CON)(County) to Single-Family Residential (R-15)(City) as requested by Todd Wilson with the nine conditions stated, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-11, AN ORDINANCE TO EXTEND THE CITY LIMITS, VOTING DISTRICT 5

Consideration of an Ordinance to annex 0.08 acres (3,414 square feet) from County to City as requested by Todd Wilson (File No. VA-2017-09). The property is located approximately 220 feet south of the southern terminus of Ravenwood Circle in Valdosta. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission reviewed this request at their May Regular Meeting and recommended approval of annexation with one condition (6-0 Vote).

Mayor Gayle asked for a motion on the annexation of 0.08 acres from County to City.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Yost, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2017-11, an Ordinance to annex 0.08 acres (3,414 square feet) from County to City as requested by Todd Wilson with one condition which requires that the property being annexed is combined with the property already in the City, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-12, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF VALDOSTA'S RADAR PERMIT

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta's Radar Permit.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that the Georgia Department of Public Safety issues Radar Permits to law enforcement agencies so that speed detection devices can be used to enforce the posted speed limit. This permit is necessary to legally run radar on City streets. Per Georgia Code, the City applies to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Office of Traffic Operations with all Permit changes or renewals. Upon review of the City

requested revisions or renewal, the Office of Traffic Operations compiles the updated list and sends it to the Mayor and City Council for their approval at the local level. The approved and executed list is then submitted to the Georgia Department of Public Safety in Atlanta for final authorization and issuance of the updated permit. The Police and Engineering Departments compiled a list of revisions to the City's current Radar Permit for the use of speed detection devices. The new list includes a change of speed on the SR 38 (West Hill Avenue) Norfolk Southern Overpass and the requested school zone revisions along East Park Avenue for W. G. Nunn Elementary, Scintilla Charter Academy, and the addition of a school zone for the new Valdosta High School. The Ordinance also includes the elimination of a zone for Highland Christian Academy. Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta's Radar Permit.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2017-12, an Ordinance to amend the City of Valdosta's Radar Permit, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-5, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF AN APPLICATION WITH THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES (COPS) TO FUND FOUR ADDITIONAL OFFICERS

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the U. S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) under the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) to fund four (4) additional Officers of the Valdosta Police Department to serve as Patrol Officers.

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that the City has previously completed a three-year grant under the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program in the past where new Officer positions were provided. This has been very successful and has resulted in many new initiatives within the community and increased manpower based on documented workload assessments. Under Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, COPS Hiring Program (CHP) awardees may receive up to 75% of the approved entry-level Officer salary and fringe benefits costs with a minimum 25% local match requirement and a maximum Federal share of \$125,000 per Officer position over a three-year grant period. Grant funds may be used to hire new, full-time sworn Officer positions, to rehire Officers who have been laid off, or to rehire Officers who are scheduled to be laid off on a specific future date as a result of budget cuts. As in the past, CHP requires that each position awarded be retained with local funds for a minimum of 12 months at the conclusion of 36 months of Federal funding for each position. Applicants must also use awarded CHP funding to supplement (increase) State, local, and or Bureau of Indian Affairs funds that otherwise would have been dedicated to sworn Officer positions in the absence of the grant. If approved, four new entry level Officers will be hired as Patrol Officers to help the Police Department to continue to respond to crimes inside the City Limits. These costs will include all salary and eligible fringe benefits covered by the award. The City will supply the Officers with a vehicle and all equipment necessary to fulfill their role as a Patrol Officer. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing the filing of the application to apply for grant funds with the U. S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) under the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) to fund four additional Officers of the Valdosta Police Department to serve as Patrol Officers. Chief Childress recommended that Council approve the Resolution.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether the 25% match would come out of the upcoming budget. Chief Childress stated that was correct. Councilwoman Tooley inquired about the entry level employees and employees that are about to be rehired. Chief Childress stated that was an option for the grant. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will allow us to use an entry level Officer or we could rehire an Officer that has been laid off. That is part of the grant guidelines. Sometimes we hire Officers that are certified and come from other Agencies; however, normally our process is to find new Officers. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether they are using this as a way to recruit Officers. Chief Childress stated that we do not use this to recruit Officers. Our recruitment of Officers is going very well and it is a collaborative effort among community organizations. We do a workload assessment and show a need based off of call for service. The intent of the grant is to put more Police Officers on the streets when you can show a call need for them. Councilwoman Tooley stated that after three years we have to hire them. Chief Childress stated that was correct; however, in actuality our assessment shows that we need them and would have asked for them in a regular budget at some point based on the call volume. The DOJ is giving us a good deal and paying 75% of the salary benefit during that period. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that what

we have done with grants is not look at the work load and if we anticipate that we need to add staff then that would be an opportunity to get the Federal funds to pay for three years. They are our employees the entire time but they become 100% our financial responsibility so we can grow our way into it over four years to help meet a need that we already have. We look for grants to meet a need and we do not necessarily go look for a grant. Some of the language in the grant is in there because the Federal government does not want you to hire Officers for three years and then remove them when the grant runs out. They added the new language because people were downsizing during the hard times so if you had to let someone go then you could hire them back. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to why they had not used this before when there was a shortage of Officers. Chief Childress stated that in most cases they have applied for this grant every time it came out. Larry Hanson stated that at that time we did not have a shortage of positions but we had a shortage of people. Now we are almost at 100% manned and we are looking at meeting a need based on workload.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2017-5, a Resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the U. S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) under the COPS Hiring Program (CHP) to fund four (4) additional Officers of the Valdosta Police Department to serve as Patrol Officers, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve the Employee Benefits Broker Services for Health & Welfare Benefits Plan for the City of Valdosta.

Renassa Small, Human Resources Director, stated that a bid process was conducted for the City of Valdosta's Employee Benefits Broker Services for Health & Welfare Benefits Plan. It is a three-year contract with two, one-year renewal options. Sealed Requests for Proposals (RFP) were received from 11 eligible participating vendors for the Employee Benefits Broker Services for Health & Welfare Benefits Plan. After a review of participating vendors, four vendors were invited to conduct presentations to the Selection Committee which was comprised of the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Human Resources Director, Finance Director, and Councilman Tim Carroll who was previously appointed by the Mayor. The participants were narrowed down and selected vendors were forwarded a group of questions in which to respond to assist the Committee in making a final decision for recommendation. Upon review and deliberation of the responses, as well as an interview with the firms, the Committee recommended vendor Arthur J. Gallagher & Company. They have recommended innovative programs and solutions that have significant cost savings and they made a commitment to assign an account person to Valdosta as a local contact for the account. This is a national company with solid credentials and a demonstrated commitment to meet the needs of the City. Renassa Small recommended that Council approve Arthur J. Gallagher & Company as the Employee Benefits Broker Services for Health & Welfare Benefits Plan for the City of Valdosta.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid of Arthur J. Gallagher & Company as recommended by the Selection Committee for the Employee Benefits Broker Services for Health & Welfare Benefits Plan for the City of Valdosta.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Southwest Georgia Arson Investigators met on Wednesday, June 7, 2017 in Valdosta for training led by the Valdosta Fire Department. The training involved arson investigators from Valdosta, Lowndes, Albany, Americus, Georgia Department of Corrections, insurance office, and other agencies in the region. Their meeting focused on improving the first responder's role in arson investigations and providing information that they can use to train others.

The Valdosta Farm Days will continue this Saturday, June 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the 100 block of East Valley Street located behind the historic Courthouse in Downtown Valdosta.

The 9th Annual Valdosta People's Choice Photo Contest starts on Monday, June 12, 2017 at the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts. There will be an Opening Gallery Reception on Monday, June 12, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Arts Center and citizens can view the galleries and vote on their favorite photo.

The City of Valdosta Budget Hearings will be held June 14-15, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. with a third Public Hearing to be held on June 22, 2017 at the City Council Meeting. These meetings are open to the public and citizens are encouraged to attend.

The Citizens Police Academy will hold a graduation ceremony on Thursday, June 15, 2017 at 6:30 p. m. for 22 citizens who took 10 weeks of their time to learn about the internal workings of the modern day law enforcement agency. These citizens have expressed a deep appreciation for local law enforcement and City government as a result of their participation in the Citizens Police Academy.

The GMA Annual Convention will be held on June 23-27, 2017 in Savannah and many of the Council members will be attending to participate in training and networking opportunities.

The Southern Hospitality Group Work Camp will be held on June 25, 2017 and will run through July 1, 2017. There will be approximately 200 youth in our community who will be helping to improve 12 homes in our neighborhoods. A tour of these homes for Council members has been scheduled for Thursday, June 29, 2017 at 9:30 a.m. beginning at the City Hall Annex.

Several of our local restaurants recently won an award sponsored by the Georgia Department of Economic Development Tourism Division. This year there were 750 entries in the "100 Plates Locals Love" Recognition Program which identifies local restaurants that do a really great job. Steel Magnolias was recognized for their pan seared sea scallops, the Bleu Pub for their burger tour, and Friends Grille and Bar for their filet of beef. This is really notable for our community to have three restaurants make the list.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Vickers inquired about the military group tour. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia House of Representative Military Affairs Working Group will be meeting in Valdosta on Monday, June 12, 2017 with a reception at 5:30 p.m. on at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center. They will take a tour of Moody Air Force Base on Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

Councilman Yost stated that he would like to have an update on the TSPLOST and where we stand. Mayor Gayle stated that he had just given Tim Tanner, City Attorney, a copy of House Bill 134 to interpret because there were some contradictions. He is on the Regional Roundtable along with Lowndes County Commission Chairman Bill Slaughter. The Roundtable has passed a Resolution to have a regional TSPLOST. Last week they met and Chairman Slaughter was elected to the Executive Committee along with four others. Mayor Gayle stated that he was elected as the non-voting Chairman of that Committee. They have been given a list of criteria which will need to be approved and sent back to the State. They give their comments to the South Georgia Regional Council and that has to be sent back to the Georgia Department of Transportation by June 21, 2017. After that, the criteria will be updated and amended if necessary. They will have a meeting in August to invite projects and then in September they will start discussing the projects. Although they passed a regional TSPLOST, Waycross and Ware County has said that they will not be in favor of that and they will have a County-wide TSPLOST instead of being a participant in the regional TSPLOST. If they were to pass that in November, according to House Bill 134, everything would be null and void so they could come back and have a County-wide TSPLOST. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the regional Referendum would be held May 22, 2018. Mayor Gayle stated that when they heard what Waycross was going to do they discussed changing it to November; however, several of the other cities and counties that were in favor of that had already put their SPLOST Referendum on the ballot and they did not want to have both the SPLOST and TSPLOST on the ballot. The State is in the process of providing guidelines about what can be included. There is \$513 million that will be available to the region if it passes. The different cities and counties will be awarded money based on population and road mileage. We can use 25% of what we get any way we want to and the other 75% has to be used for the projects that are submitted. Then 30% of the 75% has to come from the State Transportation Improvement Program list. Larry Hanson stated that the Legislature passed a Bill

this year that says effective in 2018, a county cannot have a Referendum for TSPLOST if there is going to be a regional Referendum until the regional Referendum is held. Mayor Gayle stated that House Bill 134 states that “if the majority of the governing authorities of the counties in the region have passed such a Resolution, the county proposing a tax (which would be Ware County) under this part shall postpone the Referendum until the regional Referendum has been decided.” Then on the last page it states, “Section III of this Act shall become effective January 1, 2018.” This means that even though we passed a Referendum it does not apply until January and Waycross is going to turn around and have a county-wide Referendum. They are getting a lot of criticism though for what they are doing. Councilman Yost stated that the only way a local city or county could have their tax was if it failed overall. Mayor Gayle stated that was correct. Larry Hanson stated that there could only be a county-wide Referendum. Councilman Yost inquired as to how Waycross could do anything if it were to pass it regionally. Mayor Gayle stated that we would not know until after they have already voted. Councilman Yost inquired as to what has changed since it was defeated so soundly a couple of years ago. He is not sure that his view has changed about a regional TSPLOST and he could not support it unless there have been some major changes. He is not sure that the Legislature heard us when the majority of the counties of this State voted overwhelmingly against it. His view at that time was that they should not be passing anything that gives our vote or allows other counties to dictate what can happen or not happen to us. If Lowndes County overwhelmingly votes against this TSPLOST but all the rest of the region votes in favor of it, then they could implement something over a county that is totally against it plus receive funding from the tax revenues raised in that county. Those were the reasons why he was totally against it then. Mayor Gayle stated that has really not changed. Lowndes County could vote against it and it could still pass. That is why he has been so adamant that we are involved to make sure we get some projects on the list and not get left out. The only thing that has changed is that the three regions that passed it before have been very pleased with the way things have gone and they have influenced other regions. The State put in House Bill 170 that after two years the county could come back and ask for a region or county-wide TSPLOST. The county is the one that dictates that. They voted to have a regional Referendum and all of the cities have agreed to go along with that. He has some reservations about how the 18-county region was set up because some counties like Charlton County do not really spend a lot of money over here. He has heard people say that if it was a six-county area then they would be much more in favor of it. We have started with a list of approximately \$75 million in projects. Larry Hanson stated that the projects and the distribution will be determined upfront so you would know this year what your allocation was going to be and when it is voted on next May they would know what they will receive. Councilman Yost stated that it is really sharing the wealth of Lowndes County with the rest of the region. Mayor Gayle stated that at the same time we have to realize that we do have a responsibility to the region because of the fact that 52% of our sales tax revenue comes from outside of Lowndes County. Those roads that they want paved in Berrien County lead to Valdosta. Councilman Yost stated that some of the smaller Counties do not have the population and they cannot raise the tax dollars to do certain things; however, this is a shirking of the Legislative body’s responsibility of fixing that inequity instead of sharing the wealth of the larger counties. They have not done their duty to fix the problem and they just sent it back to us in this format with a tweak or two.

Councilman Payton inquired as to how this was done prior to TSPLOST. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that historically a lot of transportation was funded by the Georgia Department of Transportation either directly, through LARP, or State-aid contracts. Over time that became less and less so local communities had to do it through their own SPLOST. Communities our size rarely receive any Federal transportation money. We received some for the West Hill Avenue Overpass but that took 20 years. The regions are set based on the boundaries of the Regional Commissions and 3 out of the 12 passed it several years ago so 25% of the State has a TSPLOST and those are doing very well. It failed here 70 to 30 in our region. For the smaller communities it is a challenge to generate their own revenue even if they have a SPLOST. You would expect a community like Valdosta to be a donor to the area to some degree. We are a regional community and we have a lot of benefits from public and private businesses. All of this has to be balanced. We do not receive any gas tax directly because that goes to the Federal and State governments. The nation’s infrastructure is aging and back in the 1960’s a lot of roads and water/sewer were built with Federal funding which is not the case anymore. Now local communities have to find a way to meet their needs. It is becoming a crisis in the country with the condition of roads and bridges and the need has to be met not only for commerce but for safety. Councilman Vickers stated that the Legislature does not want to raise taxes because they want the local elected officials to do it.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the June 8, 2017 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:12 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, June 22, 2017.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta