

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 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, Sandra Tooley, Robert Yost, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Alvin Payton, Jr. was absent. The invocation was given by Rabbi Moshe Elbaz, Temple Israel, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 9, 2017 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES**

Mayor Gayle stated that if there was no objection from Council, Agenda Items 3(a) through 3(i) would be considered under a Consent Agenda. There were no objections from Council.

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that all of the items up for bid were approved by Council in the current year budget and asked Council’s consideration in following the recommendation of the Purchasing Agent if all of the following bids were accepted at one time: (1) Item 3(a) Consideration of bids for 11 pursuit vehicles for the Valdosta Police Department (Bid No. 16-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Cass Burch in the amount of \$22,897 for each vehicle, (2) Item 3(b) Consideration of bids one pursuit administration vehicle with rear wheel drive for the Valdosta Police Department (Bid No. 17-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Cass Burch in the amount of \$21,967, (3) Item 3(c) Consideration of bids for one pursuit administration vehicle with rear wheel drive for the Valdosta Fire Department (Bid No. 18-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Cass Burch in the amount of \$22,587, (4) Item 3(d) Consideration of bids one super crew cab pickup truck for the Valdosta Police Department (Bid No. 19-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Langdale Ford in the amount of \$26,340, (5) Item 3(e) Consideration of bids for five half-ton crew cab trucks for the Utilities Department (Bid No. 20-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Langdale Ford in the amount of \$26,616 for each vehicle, and (6) Item 3(f) Consideration of bids for one F-350 truck with a utility body for the Utilities Department (Bid No. 21-16-17) – the low bid was submitted by Langdale Ford in the amount of \$38,776, (7) Item 3(g) Consideration of bids for a half-ton, 4-wheel drive truck for the Engineering Department (Bid No. 22-16-17) - the low bid meeting spec was submitted by Cass Burch in the amount of \$23,877, (8) Item 3(h) Consideration of bids for a knuckle boom loader claw truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 23-16-17) - the low bid meeting spec was submitted by Consolidated Wastebuilt in the amount of \$143,113, and (9) Item 3(i) Consideration of bids for a front end loading dumpster truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 24-16-17) - the low bid meeting spec was submitted by Consolidated Wastebuilt in the amount of \$237,950.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to follow the recommendation of the Purchasing Agent and approve the low bids under a Consent Agenda for Agenda Items 3(a) through 3(i).

**LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a Letter of Support for the Georgia Department of Transportation for an Operational Improvement Roundabout Project at Smithbriar Drive and Oak Street Extension intersections.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that a Traffic Roundabout Design and Construction Project is currently programmed by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) as an Operational Improvement Project for the Five Points area. For many years, there has been a lot of conversation about traffic and gridlock in the Five Points area. In the 1960’s, that area was Valdosta’s first Mall and it made a lot of sense to bring five different roads together at one point; however, as the community and traffic counts have grown over time, there are now roads with

25,000 to 30,000 cars per day on them at this intersection which just cannot accommodate the cars. Several years ago when the City designed the Municipal Auditorium, there was a Traffic Study done because the City traffic would have to be managed in some way. The Study showed that a roundabout was the best solution. Because two of the roads are State routes, the City was able to get GDOT to look at this as a State-funded Project. They brought in a roundabout expert from the Federal office who conducted a study. GDOT came back saying that the best solution to the traffic gridlock issue at Five Points would be dual roundabouts. Roads have a grade just like a report card (A to F) and they measure them by the level of service. There are times of the day that the level of service in this area is an "F" which means it is failing. GDOT is in the concept stage of the Operational Improvement Project at SR 7/SR7 Alt at Smithbriar Drive and Oak Street Extension intersections. The concept is to construct two roundabouts at these intersections. There are currently 32 points of entry in that area and by putting the roundabouts in it would reduce the number of entry points to 8. Roundabouts keep traffic moving so there would be no traffic signals where vehicles would be backed up waiting for the next green light. This is designed in such a way that it can accommodate 35,000 to 40,000 cars a day which is more than double the present volume. These are very large roundabouts and they are not traffic calming devices like the one behind Wal-Mart or on Country Club Drive. These are much wider and they have a lane for public safety in the event there is an emergency. GDOT is willing to commit to fund this 100% which is a tremendous benefit; however, they want to make sure the City is on board with the concept. If Council is in agreement, GDOT will proceed with preliminary engineering in June, 2017 which will cost approximately \$750,000 and then right-of-way acquisitions which will cost \$250,000. Some of that would include the purchase of a portion of the City's Five Points property. Several years ago some of the previous concepts would have resulted in a couple of private businesses being eliminated; however, the current design does not appear to show the necessity of buying out businesses which will accelerate the timeline for getting the Project finished. They estimate the Project would cost approximately \$2,500,000 with an additional \$750,000 for utility adjustments. There is a proposed Letter of Support from GDOT asking for approval from the Mayor and Council to advance the Project to the design stage. Larry Hanson asked for Council's consideration in approving the Letter of Support. Councilman Vickers stated that he is in support of these roundabouts and inquired as to where all of the 32 points were located. Larry Hanson stated that there would be two entry points at all of the private businesses.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a Letter of Support for the Georgia Department of Transportation for an Operational Improvement Roundabout Project at Smithbriar Drive and Oak Street Extension intersections.

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There were no citizens to be heard.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the recent Mayor and Council Retreat was very successful and there was a lot of work that went into the planning and preparation of it. There were 12 goals and 12 additional action items that the Mayor and Council agreed upon. These goals are provided to the public and a Press Release was sent out Monday. They are also placed on the City's website along with Mayor/Council goals from previous years.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that one of the goals that Council set this year was to identify and encourage good life decisions for the youth in our community and help to prepare them for future success. On Monday, March 20, 2017, Mayor Gayle was at the Valdosta Early College Academy (VECA) for presentation of a proclamation to recognize the importance of preparing students for college and a career. The curriculum taught at VECA blends middle school, high school, and college into one seamless program and they are presently changing the lives of 197 students between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This is one example of many good things that are going on in our community. Another example is the Great Promise Partnership Program that we have. Through this Program, there are young people employed by the City who are learning work ethics and values. The City is also providing them with a mentor. They earn income and learn what it takes to have full time employment upon graduation. The Job Shadow Day will be coming up in the April and approximately 30 high school students will spend the day with Departments Heads and others to shadow them. The students are encouraged to look at public service for a career. City employees also stress things such as education, work ethics, skills, dress, or how to

interview so that the students will be ready for job opportunities when they graduate. The Fire Department has an Explorer Program as well. These are just a few of the things that the City is doing to reach out and engage the young people in our community and we will be looking for ways to do more in the future.

Police Chief Brian Childress has been invited to speak in October at the International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference about law enforcement, the importance of the accreditation process, and how that helps to breed better public confidence in Police Departments. Also, Fire Chief Freddie Broome had an article that he wrote published in the March 1<sup>st</sup> International Association of Fire Chiefs On-Scene Newsletter. The article was entitled, "Human Relations – Inclusion is Effective Only if Everyone is Included." It was a very good article with a very good message. This says something about the caliber of our public safety professionals in our community.

City Government 101 will begin on April 3, 2017 and will run through May 15, 2017. There are 26 people participating in the class this year and Council is invited to attend all the sessions. Council members will also be given an opportunity to speak if they would like to do so.

The Signal Timing Study, which was a goal from last year, is underway and the firm is now on-site and studying the signal timing of 44 intersections during the weekday peak period. Traffic counters have been placed all over town which will help them to collect information about timing and intersection improvements that may be needed. Those 44 intersections are in addition to eight around the Valdosta Mall that are being studied very intensely to help us make good planning decisions. The goal of the Signal Timing Study is to reduce travel time, reduce vehicle emissions, reduce driver delays, and improve fuel consumption.

Sementa Mathews, Public Information Officer, released a training video this week to show the public how to use Valdosta Click 'N Fix. Citizens are encouraged to use this tool to send information to the City Departments whether it is about fixing pot holes, signs, or whatever the case may be. SeeClickFix is our partner and they are using The City of Valdosta's video as a national example for all of their customers to view how to engage with the public and educate them on how to use this program. The video was created by a Valdosta State University student who is an intern in the Public Information Office and the person in the video is a Valdosta High School student who is also interning in the Public Information Office and is a participant in the Great Promise Partnership Program. This shows another great example of the things we are doing to involve young people in our community. Our goal is to get more and more citizens using this incredible tool because it is great for them and it helps the City in addressing issues in a timely manner.

There will be a South Georgia Coalition Job Fair on April 20, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Police Chief Brian Childress was instrumental in getting this organized last year and it was one of the biggest job fairs ever held so we are doing it again this year.

There will be many events beginning this spring. The Electronics Recycling Event will be held on Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium, the Neighborhood Development Week will be held April 17-21, 2017, the Community-Wide Bulk Trash Amnesty Day will be held on Saturday, April 22, 2017, and Georgia Cities Week will be held the last week in April. We have a lot going on in the City and we are doing a lot to engage and communicate whether it is City Government 101, the Police Academy, or the Fire Academy.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he and Councilman Vickers were honored to have the opportunity to make some comments at former City Councilman Bunnis Williams' funeral. He served for many years on the Council at an interesting time in the City's history and he did some great work along with Councilman Vickers and others. Having the opportunity to go back and talk about some of the contributions Bunnis made and the times that they went through together gave him an appreciation for B. He was glad to participate in the service along with Councilman Vickers on behalf of the City.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the Click 'N Fix goes to one location. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it goes to the appropriate Department. Sementa Mathews, Public Information Officer, stated

that it depends on the category that a person selects. There are approximately 30 different categories that you can choose from. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether you have to put your location in. Sementha Mathews stated that if you use this app from your Smart phone it has GPS built in so it knows where you are. Larry Hanson stated that you can also take a picture and upload it. Sementha Mathews stated that there were approximately 550 issues reported last year for the first 12 months of using the app and we had a response time of one day to acknowledge the receipt and three days to fix the most commonly reported issues. Councilman Carroll stated that he has asked citizens to utilize it and they receive E-mails stating that it has been received and resolved, and they also receive an E-mail about other issues related to the one they reported.

Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether Council could get a list of the City Government 101 participants this year. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the letters were just sent out yesterday. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the City had control of the new GDOT traffic signals. Kevin Tolliver, Development Review Engineer, stated that we do have control of the signals on Ashley Street and Patterson Street. Larry Hanson stated that we have the Traffic Management Center (TMC) and they have the ability to go into cabinets and adjust signal timing; however, on State routes, GDOT had their own consultant for installation of new traffic signals. For a period of time, they tested and implemented the timing that they thought was right. Then there will be a period of time for real world experience and changes will be made based on how it is actually being used by drivers. For the first 60-90 days, the City is not allowed to touch the cabinets, which is appropriate. Once the testing is complete and the GDOT consultant is released, the City will have the authority to go back into the cabinets and make corrections based on our experience. Kevin Tolliver stated that they are getting calls at the TMC and the Engineering Department and they are logging all of the comments.

Councilman Vickers commended the City Manager and Staff for a job well done on the Mayor/Council Retreat. It was very productive and it is amazing how the list of issues has become smaller. They are addressing issues and solving problems and the Retreat is one of the key factors Council has used to get them where they are today.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that the MLK Corridor Project is almost complete and it is very nice. There are new Stop signs, sidewalks, and landscaping. The residents in the area really like it and it has been a big improvement. Councilwoman Tooley thanked the Staff for all their hard work. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the lights have been ordered from Georgia Power and they will be installed upon receipt.

Councilman Vickers stated that this is the first term for Councilwoman Tooley and she had gotten two roads done and two or three sidewalks installed. This has never been done in the history of Council for a first term Council member to get as much done as Councilwoman Tooley has done. Councilwoman Tooley thanked Councilman Vickers and stated that she had help from the Staff, Council members, and citizens which was very much appreciated.

## 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 March 23, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:10 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, April 6, 2017.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta