

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 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, Alvin Payton, Jr., Sandra Tooley, and Robert Yost. Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody was absent. The invocation was given by Father Brian LaBurt, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for Phase 4 of the Lift Station Rehabilitation/Replacement Program.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the Utilities Department initiated the first phase of its annual Lift Station Rehabilitation/Replacement Program in 2010. Upon completion of that work in 2012, Phase 2 rehabilitation was designed and a contract was awarded. The four stations were all completed in 2014. In 2015, Phase 3 was designed and awarded for the rehabilitation of four more lift stations. This work was completed in 2016. The fourth and final phase of rehabilitation was initially advertised in October, 2016 and then re-advertised in January, 2017 following a Council vote to re-bid the Project. The Project includes five lift stations and the addition of approximately 44 linear feet of force main for the Goodyear Lift Station. The final five lift stations include Little Country Club, Airport #1, Highway 84, Ridge Road #3, and the Goodyear Lift Station located on Bemiss Road. The Utilities Department began this Lift Station Replacement/Rehabilitation Program to upgrade those stations in the worst condition first (oldest and most deteriorated) to prevent an eventual failure leading to potentially major sewer spills. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) recognized the importance of this Program and included it as part of their Consent Order with the City of Valdosta. The Utilities Department re-advertised for bids on January 10, 2017. A mandatory Pre-bid Meeting was held on January 26, 2017 with three contractors attending (Standard Contractors, RPI Underground, and James Warren & Associates). Bids were received from the three contractors on February 9, 2017. The lowest responsive and responsible bidder was RPI Underground, Inc. at \$858,383. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by RPI Underground, Inc. in the amount of \$858,383 plus a 10% contingency to handle any unforeseen circumstances.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the low bid submitted by RPI Underground, Inc. in the amount of \$858,383 plus a 10% contingency to handle any unforeseen circumstances for Phase 4 of the Lift Station Rehabilitation/Replacement Program.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we normally have an Arbor Day ceremony but this year we extended that and had Tree Week on February 13-17, 2017. Early in the week a memorial tree was planted at McKey Park for professional law enforcement and then a freedom tree was planted at Freedom Park in conjunction with Moody Air Force Base. The week culminated on Friday with the Arbor Day celebration for the City's 31st consecutive year as a Tree City. Valdosta is one of three cities in the State of Georgia to have the longest designation and we are the only community that has a Tree City designation, Tree City designation for Moody Air Force Base, a Tree Campus at Valdosta State University, and a Tree Utility at Georgia Power. This shows the commitment that our community has in planting and preserving our urban forest.

The Rotary Club held the 10th Annual Law Enforcement Appreciation Dinner on February 16, 2017 at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center. Every year one of our Police Officers is named as the Officer of the Year and this year Officer Randall Hancock received that honor. It was very touching to be there and see him recognized and we are proud to have people like him in our Police Department.

Applications are being taken for City Government 101 through March 17, 2017. This has been a great program and it was an initiative of the Mayor and Council several years ago. This will be the 8th Annual City Government 101 Class and it will start April 3, 2017 and run through May 15, 2017. Citizens are encouraged to apply.

Farm Days will begin on April 8, 2017 and will run through November, 2017. Any vendors who are interested in participating will need to contact the Main Street Office.

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) will be in Valdosta on April 2, 2017. The Valdosta Police Department has been internationally accredited since 1999 and they have to go through this process every three years. They will be assessing the Police Department to ensure that they are living up to the approximately 500 standards that are in place. This will also include a public comment meeting on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Building Multi-Purpose Room. Citizens are encouraged to attend. We are proud to have a Police Department of this caliber.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he wanted to take a moment of personal privilege. He stated that the last several weeks and months have been a difficult time for him and his family during his mother's illness and recent passing. He appreciated the support of the Mayor and Council, Staff, Department Heads, and City employees. He and his family have been overwhelmed with support and comfort during this difficult time and he did not have the adequate words to express his appreciation but wanted to thank everyone.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carroll stated that he wanted to congratulate Larry Hanson, City Manager, for being nominated by the Georgia Municipal Association and the State of Georgia to serve as a representative on the Federal Communications Commission Rural Broadband Study Committee. This speaks highly of him and his knowledge and connections that he would be selected to represent the State of Georgia. Broadband is not a huge issue here in the City but it is in the rural areas. Councilman Carroll also stated that this is National Engineering Week and he wanted to give a "shout out" to the City's Engineering Department. They are responsible for road and street maintenance, land acquisition, the Arbor Division, and the Stormwater Division. Councilman Carroll thanked the Engineering Department for their work with the citizens of Valdosta.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that several years ago the City Government 101 class incorporated residents from the County to participate and inquired as to whether this is advertised on the County's website. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we do not advertise through the County for our program but we make it available if there is someone outside the City who wants to participate. Also, it was opened up a couple of years ago to no more than five high school students to participate with a parent or guardian. It is primarily promoted for the citizens of Valdosta so that they can gain a better understanding of the operations of City government. We have the only City Government Program in Lowndes County.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to the difference between broadband and the Internet. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that broadband is the mechanism that gets you to the Internet. We prefer to have hard fiber in the ground and in a perfect world every home and business would have fiber so that they will have speed and bandwidth. There is a national standard of download/upload of 25 and 3. Approximately 40% of Lowndes County does not have fixed broadband. That means they have no broadband and they cannot get on the Internet or they have a satellite base which may be 10 to 1 which means sometimes it works and sometimes it does not work. They have basically no ability to download a file or a document. Only 10% of the City and much of Lowndes County and most everything around Moody Air Force Base is without quality broadband. This also affects the Development Authority in recruiting businesses because we have always seen ourselves as a regional leader and community so we think outside the City. When a business comes it may be outside the City but we benefit from

those jobs and that spending so the City has always seen itself as supporting the entire community and region. This is an issue for Moody Air Force Base and some of our citizens. Councilman Vickers inquired as to why they could not use wireless. Larry Hanson stated that wireless has some limitations and does not have the same bandwidth. It works for some but there are providers in a lot of neighborhoods around Moody where they have wireless and it is inconsistent. There are even people living out by Moody who have to rent hotspots for \$200 a month so that their children can do their school work or have facetime with their father who is in Afghanistan. That is less than perfect circumstances but it is better than not having anything. Satellite-based and wireless-based has short comings in bandwidth. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether bandwidth was where they had to put in wires and cables and the other one is satellite. The wires and cables cost more. Verizon now has a tower out near Moody and you could pick up wireless more but when they had the broadband there were a lot of problems. Larry Hanson stated that years ago AT&T was putting in hard fiber and after they bought out Direct TV they started steering their customers to satellite which is not the same level of service. If there is a thunderstorm or it is raining they may not have coverage. Broadband is now a necessity and it is a basic infrastructure. You have to have it to be competitive. The technology keeps advancing and they are now studying technology where a signal could run through a magnetic field around the power line. We need to ensure that our community is fully served and on par with metropolitan areas in this country.

Mayor Gayle stated that Councilwoman Miller-Cody is out tonight because she is representing the City at the CeCe Winans concert. There were three events tonight but he could only attend two of them.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the February 23, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:50 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, March 9, 2017.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta