

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 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 Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Robert Yost was absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Winston Taylor, Grace Fellowship Seventh Day Adventist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Presentation by the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Freddie Broome stated that Fire Safety Education is a top priority of the Valdosta Fire Department (VFD). Few things are more rewarding to the VFD than knowing residents have properly-working smoke detectors installed in their homes, as well as witnessing citizens who respond quickly, appropriately, and often heroically in the event of a life-threatening fire. Such was the case on December 11, 2016, when the Valdosta Fire Department responded to an early morning house fire at 19 Fulton Place. VFD Firefighters arrived on the scene within a few minutes of being dispatched and reported heavy smoke and fire conditions visible. Firefighters initiated an aggressive fire attack and primary search efforts to ensure everyone was safely out of the residence. South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC) EMS assisted Firefighters with assessing the residents for injuries. One key player at the fire scene was Mr. Antoin Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell was visiting a friend at the residence when the smoke detector alerted him. He quickly evacuated the resident and her two children from the smoke-filled home. As a result, the resident and her two children did not have any reportable injuries; however, Mr. Mitchell, on account of his concern for others over himself, was transported to SGMC for minor upper respiratory burns he received while he evacuated the other occupants from the home. Chief Broome commended Mr. Mitchell for his heroic efforts in safely evacuating everyone from the residence and presented him with a Fire Department Challenge Coin.

Presentation of the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2016.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the purpose of an annual audit is to review the financial statements, footnotes, and supplementary information to ensure compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and to provide an opinion on the financial statements. The audit of the City of Valdosta's Fiscal Year 2016 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) was conducted by the firm of Henderson & Godbee, a local full service accounting firm with significant experience in governmental auditing. The audit team leader was Mark Rogers, Engagement Partner.

Mark Rogers, Engagement Partner, stated that they have completed the audit of financial statements for the City of Valdosta for the year ending June 30, 2016 and have issued an unqualified auditors' report on those financial statements dated January 9, 2017. The Accounting Department prepares this statement each year and Henderson & Godbee provides an audit on these statements. They do a great job as can be seen by consistently receiving the Certificate of Achievement Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 27 years.

The total government revenue received for all the Funds, excluding Internal Service Funds, totaled \$73,565,976. The General Fund, for the year ending June 30, 2016, ended with a budgetary loss of -\$111,412. Revenues received totaled \$31,549,320 and were under budgeted amounts by \$1,200,655. Expenditures were \$33,513,614 and were under budget by \$1,319,911 on a budgetary basis. Net transfers out were \$281,133 and were over budget by \$260,613. Capital leases were \$2,134,015 and were over budget by \$167,115. The Special Revenue Funds had revenues of \$3,555,341 and expenditures of \$2,885,956. The majority of the activity was in Accommodations Tax Fund which accounted for \$2,893,595 of the revenue and \$2,148,945 of the expenditures. The HUD Fund accounted for \$502,414 of the revenue and \$481,913 of the expenditures. The Capital Projects Fund had revenues of \$13,313,367 and expenditures of \$16,234,204. The Sales Tax 2013 Fund accounted for \$11,394,712 of the revenues and \$14,034,070 of expenditures for the year. The Airport Improvements Fund had

revenues of \$1,918,655 and expenditures of \$2,164,676. The Enterprise Funds total revenues were \$25,147,948, expenses were \$21,611,776, capital contribution of \$12,241,959, and operating transfers out of \$2,252,735 resulting in net income of \$13,257,982. The Water/Sewer Reserve Fund revenues were \$17,185,147 and capital contributions from SPLOST were \$12,241,959 resulting in net income of \$12,184,493. The Sanitation Fund revenues were \$5,025,549 and a one-time special item of \$939,291 for closing the landfill resulting in a net income of \$873,757. The Internal Service Funds total revenues were \$9,762,639, expenses were \$12,995,883, and transfers were \$3,171,816. The Motor Pool Fund broke even on revenues of \$3,367,476, the Group Insurance Fund broke even on revenues of \$4,701,745, the IT Service Fund broke even on revenues of \$1,078,417, and the Workers' Compensation Fund had net income of \$27,411 on revenues of \$615,001. During the year, the Water/Sewer Fund continued its water and sewer upgrades by adding over \$25,700,402 in construction in process with \$12,241,959 coming from SPLOST and \$13,154,991 coming from GEFA loans. The total Sales Tax Projects amounted to \$14,034,070 for the year, including the Water and Sewer expansion. Federal Funds awarded this year were \$14,022,674 with \$11,712,881 from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). The General Fund revenues show that property taxes amounted to 27% of the total, sales taxes accounted for 25%, and other taxes were 37%. Total expenditures out of the General Fund show that 44% of the total budget is in the Police Department, 27% is in general government, and 21% is in the Fire Department.

Councilman Payton inquired about the "transfer ins" in the Internal Service Funds. Mark Rogers stated that the majority of that is in the group insurance. They collect a certain amount of revenue from the employees and then the other Funds have to fund the balance of it. Councilman Carroll stated that he did not see any real surprises and it all looks like what they had planned for in the budget. Mayor Gayle stated that they need to be proud of the fact that when they saw the revenues were going down they backed off some things and the Departments saved some money to offset the \$1 million shortfall. Councilman Vickers stated that they should talk more about that at the Mayor and Council Retreat. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City's investment in technology has been a big asset for the Audit Team. Back in the day, they would come in and sit in the Finance Conference Room and be here for a month. It was a lot of heavy lifting. Now they are here less than a day and everything is done electronically. They now have the ability to go into the City's system and review everything. Mark Rogers stated that they did 90-95% of the work from their office. They have access codes so that they can remote into the system. Mayor Gayle thanked Mark Rogers and his Staff for their work during the Audit.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2016 for the City of Valdosta.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 5, 2017 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2017-1, AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH QUALIFYING FEES AND DATES FOR THE 2017 CITY OF VALDOSTA NON-PARTISAN MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Consideration of an Ordinance to establish qualifying fees and dates for the 2017 City of Valdosta Non-Partisan Municipal Election.

Mark Barber, Assistant City Manager, stated that according to Georgia Code 21-2-131(a)(1)(A), the governing authority of any county or municipality shall fix and publish a qualifying fee for each county or municipal office to be filled in the upcoming Primary or Election no later than February 1st of any year in which a General Primary, Non-Partisan Election, or General Election is to be held, and at least 35 days prior to the Special Primary or Election. The Districts to be considered for election as well as the qualifying fees are as follows: (1) Mayor/Council: District 2 - Sandra Tooley (\$465), District 4 - Alvin Payton, Jr. (\$465), and District 6 - Robert Yost (\$465), (2) School Board: District 4 - Dean Rexroth (\$35), District 5 - Trey Sherwood (\$35), and District 6 - Tad Moseley (\$35). The qualifying fee for the City Council is 3% of that seat's annual compensation which is

required by State Code. The School Board does not receive compensation so the State Code says they will pay \$35 for their qualification fee. The Secretary of State Office of Elections has set the date of qualifying for non-partisan elections for the week of August 21-25, 2017 at the Lowndes County Board of Elections. The contract with the Board of Elections is forthcoming. If a run-off election is necessary, it will be conducted December 5, 2017. Mark Barber recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to establish qualifying fees and dates for the 2017 City of Valdosta Non-Partisan Municipal Election.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the contract with the Lowndes Co. Board of Elections would be brought back before Council. Mark Barber stated that it would. They usually bring it before Council at this time but they did not have it prepared so we could do it all together at one time. Councilman Payton stated that he thought the School Board Districts and the Council Districts were the same. Mark Barber stated that they were at one time until they added the Super Wards. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Districts match up and the Super Wards are a combination of Districts.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2017-1, an Ordinance to establish qualifying fees and dates for the 2017 City of Valdosta Non-Partisan Municipal Election, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of an Agreement with Hannah Solar for Solar PV Projects to provide the City with solar arrays in return for use of excess land.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that several years ago the City of Valdosta partnered with Hannah Solar through the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority to have a solar array at the Mud Creek Water Treatment Plant. The Development Authority subleased the land to Hannah Solar and they built a solar array. We receive an annual land lease payment. Land adjacent to a Wastewater Treatment Plant does not have very much value so any lease payment would not be very high. At the time we were interested in doing this very thing but Georgia Public Service Commission regulations did not allow power to be given directly from a solar array to a facility. It has to be sold on the grid. The legislation changed over time and when we had this opportunity last year, Georgia Power had a competition around the State where solar providers could compete to sell solar to them. Hannah Solar submitted a number of sites in the City and four of those were selected by Georgia Power. We have approved two of those in the past and earlier this year we had an additional solar array placed at Mud Creek that is now providing power to help power the Plant. The value of the electricity is far greater than the value we would get in rental income from a land lease. Council also approved a solar array at the new Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant which will help provide power to that Plant because electricity is a major cost. These solar arrays will help in reducing one of our highest costs. Now there are two more projects with Hannah Solar. We have some excess land past the Valdosta State Prison on Val Tech Road where the Police shooting range is located. There is excess land there that cannot be used for any other purpose so we are considering leasing 2.5 acres of that land to Hannah Solar. Across the street from the Prison is an old unlined landfill and in our lifetime this land will never be able to be used for any kind of development purposes. Solar is above ground and is an appropriate use of an old landfill site. This is not a piece of property that the City has any use for. Hannah Solar would use eight acres of that old closed landfill and in return, they will build the City a 125 kW solar array which is valued at \$275,000. Instead of getting rent for land we do not use, we will get a solar array at a location of our choice that is worth \$275,000. We will be able to use that at no cost for up to 30 years. Hannah Solar will own it for the first six years to get tax incentives and then year seven it is deeded to the City. They will maintain it through six years and then year seven through twenty they are required to maintain it for the City as part of our agreement at no cost. It has two options for year 21-25 and year 26-30 they would also maintain if those options are exercised at no cost to us. We are going through a process to identify which of two locations would be the best for us to get the most benefit out of it. One is to add this additional array at the new Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant because it is twice as large as the other Plant so it uses a lot more electricity. The option is to put it at the Water Treatment Plant on Guest Road. We really want to put it at the Water Treatment Plant but we have to make sure it will fit. That Plant was built and opened in 1993 as a 15 million gallon Plant and now it has been expanded to 22.5 million gallons. It has a footprint for a future final expansion of up to 45 million gallons so it will be doubled in size. We need to make sure that we do not put a solar array in that would create a conflict down the road when it is time to

expand that Plant. Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, is making sure that we have the right place near the Water Plant so that we can get the benefit of the solar. The reason that we would like to have it at the Water Plant is that it is another safe guard and source of power. It gives us two redundant sources of power in case we had a catastrophic power outage. One of the good things about solar is that they are now manufacturing batteries that are able to store the power. It would be nice to have a safeguard to have at the Water Treatment Plant and if that does not work we would go back to the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. Power bills at facilities like these are several hundred thousand dollars so you can get a significant savings. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the Agreement with Hannah Solar for Solar PV Projects to provide the City with solar arrays in return for use of excess land.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Agreement with Hannah Solar for Solar PV Projects to provide the City with solar arrays in return for use of excess land.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Oscar Griffin, Jr., 204 Youles Street, stated that he was at the last Council Meeting and wanted to know if there were any funds available to assist him with his business which is located at 118 West Martin Luther King, Jr. Mayor Gayle stated that he was truly sorry but there is no way that the City could start paying for inconvenience due to a construction project. He looked at the pictures that were taken and there was entry off of Toombs Street to Mr. Griffin's business. As he understood, Mr. Griffin closed down immediately and did not really give it a chance. The City is not in a position to provide monetary funds and it is unlawful for the City to produce funds for that. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Pat Collins, City Engineer, has called Mr. Griffin yesterday to let him know the City was denying the request. Mr. Griffin stated that he did not close immediately and stayed open for two weeks after construction had started; however, because of the construction and the amount of dust and health reasons he had no other alternative but to close down. Mayor Gayle apologized for the inconvenience.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation was doing an Intersection Improvement Project on Ashley Street and Patterson Street. They are now at the point of converting the signals from the old to the new so there is some inconvenience right now. There are 12 intersections that have been improved which represent \$1.8 million of State funds. It included new cameras, converting signals to mast arms, new crosswalks, count down signals, and wheel chair ramps to make them ADA accessible. There were ten new signals on Ashley Street and two on Patterson Street. The new signals are not timed yet and not in coordination; however, the end result will be a very good benefit for our citizens. The new cameras on the pole are not red light running cameras. We have no red light running cameras in the City and do not plan to have any. These cameras basically serve in the same way as the loops in the ground. They read motion and help the signal know when to change if there is no traffic one way and a car is sitting in another direction. We use to get complaints about a motorcycle not being heavy enough or having metal so the loops in the ground could not read it. A motorcycle could sit all day at a signal and without the signal changing so this will eliminate those kinds of problems. This is the technology of the future. These signals will also have the flashing left arrow which will really improve traffic flow. With the old traffic signals you would have a green arrow, then it turns yellow and red, and then it shuts down. You would have to wait through the entire cycle in order to be able to turn left. These new signals will have the arrow green, then yellow, and then flashing yellow which means as soon as traffic clears out on the other side you can continue to turn left and not have to wait for the signal to cycle all the way back around. It will keep traffic flowing and from stacking up in a turn lane. The Federal Highway Administration has found that these turn arrows reduce accidents by 35% and they keep traffic flowing and ease congestion. They also reduce idling and air pollution because not as many people are sitting there waiting on a signal.

The Bird Supper will be held on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at The Depot in Atlanta and Council is encouraged to attend.

The Valdosta Fire Department will be holding two open houses on February 11, 2017 and February 25, 2017 if anyone is interested in becoming a Fire Fighter.

There are nine slots available for Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees and appointments will be made at the February 9, 2017 Council Meetings. There are openings on the Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful, the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission, the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals, the Valdosta Tree Commission, and the Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he spoke with the Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) earlier today and this was a great initiative by Mayor Gayle and supported by the Council. There are a lot of young people who are showing leadership skills and they want to prepare themselves to better serve the community. This year, the VYC will be traveling to Atlanta with the Leadership Lowndes Youth Program and spend a day at the State Capitol and see the Legislature in action. He spoke to them today about local, State, and Federal government and how it all works and interacts. He also explained how a Bill becomes a law. This is a great program and he encouraged Council members to attend one of the VYC Meetings.

Farm Days will be coming up again soon in April, 2017.

Group photographs will be taken of the Mayor and Council and Department Heads on Tuesday, February 7, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. prior to the Work Session.

The Georgia Municipal Association Mayor's Day Conference will be held January 20-23, 2017 in Atlanta. There will be a Legislative Breakfast on Monday morning and Council is encouraged to speak with our delegation, particularly about the two House Bills that have been introduced and the remote sales tax issue. Purchases made on-line do not have to pay sales tax despite the fact that they are required to do so. Out-of-state businesses are not collecting it and local and State governments are being hurt by that. As we have the younger generation doing more and more of their shopping on-line, it will become more and more prevalent and more and more of an issue if it is not addressed. We hope our Legislature will pass these Bills and we hope the new Congress will take up the Marketplace Fairness Act very soon and either make it a Federal law or each State do it on its own to eliminate the problem.

Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (LEAD) was held recently and any time our Officers interact with the public they are given a contact card. The person can fill that out and tell about their experience. Chief Childress collects the cards and prepares the results to see what our citizens had to say. Of the cards that were turned in last year, 96.28% said that the Officer was courteous and polite. There is a question about whether the person felt the contact with the Officer was constructive and 95.65% felt that it was. This says a lot about the men and women of the Valdosta Police Department and how they are doing their job and interacting with the public in a professional way.

The Valdosta Fire Department made the Sutphen 2017 calendar. We are October and it has a picture of Valdosta's new fire trucks. That is great to have Valdosta represented in their calendar which will go all over the United States to their clients and others.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Payton thanked Councilwoman Miller-Cody for attending the Valdosta Youth Council Meeting today. He arrived a little late but they both agree that these are some very sharp young people. They are doing some great things. He also went to the Deep South Solid Waste Authority Meeting last night which is chaired by Larry Hanson, City Manager. They are also doing some great things. They discussed the possibility of having a Regional Authority to address some of the IT issues which is a positive thing. He also went to the Airport Authority Meeting and seeing the volunteers at work reinforces why he got involved in the political side. He went to the Development Authority Meeting and heard some of the things they are working on that has also been discussed on the Council and this helps to rekindle the fire that he needs. Councilman Payton encouraged Council members to attend some of those meetings if possible.

Councilman Carroll stated that Larry Hanson, City Manager, touched on Representative Jay Powell's House Bill 61 and House Bill 62 and the more we reach out then the greater the probability is that these two

important Bills will be successfully passed. Every year between January and March, there are Bills that are proposed that we are adamantly opposed to so we are contacting the State Legislators about not supporting the Bill. It is important for them to also hear about the Bills we support. Councilman Carroll encouraged Council Members who are attending the Mayor's Day Conference to contact the Legislators.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Program was a great success and Councilman Vickers did an outstanding job. The turnout of the children was great and the collection of canned goods collected for the soup kitchen was wonderful. Councilman Vickers thanked Councilwoman Miller-Cody for her kind words and accepted that on behalf of the Committee.

Councilman Vickers inquired about the construction taking place on U. S. Highway 84/Clay Road/Hollywood street. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that was a Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Project. There were a couple of delays and the railroad crossing had to be relocated. Larry Hanson stated that he would have Pat Collins, City Engineer, contact the GDOT District Office for an update. The City's part was moving the underground utilities. Hollywood Street and Clay Road are misaligned and there have been some horrible traffic accidents there. This will line them up and a traffic signal will be installed. This will improve the safety in this area tremendously. Councilman Vickers stated that he also has some mixed thoughts about Mr. Griffin's business on Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. We need to learn a lesson from that and next time we have a situation like that we need to go to the business and see if there is any way we can assist them. This did have a devastating effect on Mr. Griffin's business. We need to make sure we are doing everything we can ahead of time to ease the impact on businesses. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that they always have kickoff meetings and invite the public. Councilman Vickers stated that the City has the experience and sometimes we have to go a little beyond the call of duty to ensure that citizens and businesses are accommodated. There is no way that he could have stayed open and we should be more mindful in the future.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she wanted to comment on Mr. Griffin's situation as well. They have been trying to promote business in this area and Mr. Griffin was very concerned about not being able to keep his business open. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she did not know if the Downtown Association could do anything to help with it since he is a part of that. She did go by there during the construction and there was a lot of dust. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there was no way to use public money to pay for something that was part of a construction project. It is considered an inconvenience and there was nothing that unnecessarily harmed him that would be considered a taking or condemnation of his property that made it unusable. He had access the entire time and if you read the State statute about that everyone has to live through the inconvenience of construction. If you are tearing a road up there is going to be dust. It specifically states in the statute that dust is an example of an inconvenience but it is not compensable and you cannot pay someone for it because there has been dust created. It is a very careful process of giving public money for something that is a private property matter unless we did something wrong or unnecessarily that harmed him. This did not rise to that standard as he had access to his property at all times. He did not come to the City or the contractor and make his concerns known and if there was something we could have addressed then we would have addressed it. He just chose to close and it is very unfortunate; however, that is the nature of construction. When they got into the Project, no one knew that AT&T had these boxes in the ground with conduit buried in two feet high by three feet deep concrete. They had to work around that because it was impossible to remove it. It would have been so costly it would have stopped the entire Project. That was something that no one could have anticipated because no one knew it was there. Larry Hanson stated that he was sorry that Mr. Griffin felt he was affected by it.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the January 19, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:24 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, February 9, 2017.