

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 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 Pastor Chuck Owens, First Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD

Consideration of the January, 2017 Employee of the Month Award (James Dean, Community Development Department).

James Dean began his employment with the City of Valdosta in September, 1999 and presently holds the position of City Marshal. As a City Marshal, James inspects and notifies owners and tenants of Code violations within his district, conducts checks of business licenses, and current tax certificates. James also monitors Code violations reported on the See, Click, Fix website and presents cases to Municipal Court on violations. Each time an initiative is brought forth to improve conditions in the City, the Marshals are there to assist as best they can. One Marshal in particular that exemplifies this is James Dean. James has been involved in the planning and execution of each of the City’s Southern Hospitality Group Work Camps, Bulk Trash Amnesty Days, and now the Azalea City Yard Showcase program. Each of these activities involves working weekends, attending meetings, and assisting with coordinating sites, materials, and resources. Regardless of the Department or the task at hand, James is always there when he is needed. James is also one of the employees always there to serve others at the City’s Annual Holiday Luncheon and the Employee Appreciation Picnic during Georgia Cities Week. James was one of the City employees who assisted a disabled homeowner, living in a substandard home, in receiving a new home built through the CDBG program. The home was not fit to live in and was condemned to allow the resident to find a safer place to reside until his new home was completed. During the years of waiting for construction, James kept in touch with the resident through this transition to make sure he followed through with his applications and program requirements which went beyond James’ duties in Code Enforcement. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated James Dean as Employee of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the December 8, 2016 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-1, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF A PETITION FOR JUDICIAL RESOLUTION OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY DISPUTE

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of a Petition for Judicial Resolution of the Service Delivery Strategy dispute.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia Service Delivery Strategy Act (SDS Act) requires local governments to implement Agreements that specify the manner and procedure in which all governmental services will be provided and funded between and among a particular Georgia county and any municipality located wholly or partially within that county’s geographical boundary so as to minimize duplication of services and achieve funding equity between residents of the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Lowndes County. The municipalities in Lowndes County and the Lowndes County governing authority have been unable to agree to a

comprehensive Service Delivery Strategy as required by the SDS Act; therefore, the Cities of Valdosta, Hahira, Remerton, Lake Park and Dasher are filing a Petition for Judicial Resolution of the SDS dispute in the Superior Court of Lowndes County. The Petition seeks judicial resolution of the SDS dispute as outlined in the SDS Act. One of the smaller municipalities has already adopted the Resolution, one met yesterday, and one will meet today. At that point in time, it will be filed and the process will begin as outlined in the statute. This is just part of the statute—negotiation, mediation, judicial resolution if you are unable to reach an agreement. Larry Hanson recommended that Council approve the Resolution.

Councilman Yost inquired as to whether we would be asking the Judge to look at all of the items we originally asked for or just a certain number. Larry Hanson stated that when the Mayors met in December, 2016 and discussed that at length, the original list contained 14 issues. It was paired down to about three issues and a few have now been added back. There should be approximately five or six issues that would be handled by the judicial review. Councilman Yost stated that we cut our list way down but we could add them all back. Larry Hanson stated that at the time we file we will have to state what the issues are that we are asking the Court to resolve. Councilman Yost stated that we have nothing to lose. Mayor Gayle stated that we have added a lot back. Larry Hanson stated that some were redundant and some were minor and it is better to take the issues that are most relevant and try to address those.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2017-1, a Resolution authorizing the filing of a Petition for Judicial Resolution of the Service Delivery Strategy dispute, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for Phase 4 of the Lift Station Rehabilitation/Replacement Program. This request was tabled at the December 8, 2016 Regular Council Meeting until the January 5, 2017 Regular Council Meeting.

Mayor Gayle stated that this was discussed at length at the Work Session and they will be asking for a motion to reject all bids and rebid the Project if Council has no objection. There was no objection from Council.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to reject all bids for Phase 4 of the Lift Station Rehabilitation/Replacement Program.

Consideration of bids for Single Stream Recycling Services for the Public Works Department.

Richard Hardy, Public Works Director, stated that the Public Works Department is in need of Single Stream Recycling Service assistance in the removal and processing of collected recyclable material. This includes the transportation of and processing of recycling material. This is an annual contract with renewal options. Sealed bids were received on December 27, 2016 with the low bid submitted by Attaway Recycling in the amount of \$18.00 per ton. The City has never contracted this service out before but has visited several entities that do this and the price is within reasonable charges of what the entities are paying and the Department feels it is a good price. Richard Hardy recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Attaway Recycling in the amount of \$18.00 per ton and allow the Public Works Department to proceed with Single Stream Recycling Services. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that this is a year-long contract and is on an “as needed” basis. The Public Works Department currently has an excess of recyclable material that needs to be removed and we will be hiring nine Valdosta High School students this month to assist with the recyclables. It is anticipated that we will be able to manage what comes in going forward. The markets have not been good and some of the recyclable products have no market. There is not an excess amount of storage space for the 400 tons of recyclable material that we currently have on site.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Attaway Recycling in the amount of \$18.00 per ton and allow the Public Works Department to proceed with Single Stream Recycling Services.

Consideration of a request to appeal the decision on a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission for demolition of a building located at 902 North Ashley Street.

Mayor Gayle stated that the person who is appealing the decision will speak first and will get 15 minutes. Then the other side will speak and they will get 15 minutes.

Patrick Cork, Attorney, stated that he represents the Roger Budd Companies, and Mr. Budd owns 902 North Williams Street. The property is the old Insta-Lube property which faces Ashley Street. The property was originally a Dairy Distribution warehouse and for that reason the warehouse was part of three buildings altogether. Across the street there was an office building that was restored a while back by King Smith and his father and they had their architectural firm there. This property is in "V" and the City block that it sits on contains two properties. One of the properties is the old used car dealership at the intersection and was known as Tommy's Tires and before that it was an old gas station. Behind that is the Maluda Auto Dealership and some office buildings and retail shops. Mr. Cork stated that the Maluda Auto Dealership has a chain link fence with barb wire strung across the top. It starts near the Gordon Street side of the property and extends all the way up to the property adjacent to the proposed property to be demolished. If you approach from the west, there is a back fence for an apartment house, the Maluda Auto Dealership fence, and a house there is carved up into an apartment building. It has several entrances and is a duplex on the front with a cheap aluminum overhang for the front porch. The vinyl siding is peeling off of the house. When you come back toward Patterson Street, on the other end of the street there is the Teacher's Credit Union and the side of the Chevron Station. If you look across the street there is the old Western Sizzlin Steak House which later became Big O's Buffet and is now vacant. The Vitamin Shop sits in front of what appears to be a historical building. Other than the original Dairy building and the offices that were restored by the architectural firm and which has its own parking lot, nothing is restored in the vicinity of this business except for one property next door and then everything else is commercial with chain link fences and parking lots. There is demolition going on all the time over there. They just tore down the old Colony Square buildings that were behind the old Georgia Power building facing Slater Street. There is the old Georgia Power Data Processing Center that once had an old historical home there but they tore it down and replaced it with what is there now. They did not need a permit to tear it down. The present building they built is not historical in the least and it does not meet any of the historical standards. The standard that the Historic Preservation Commission is charged with is to find that the proposed change by the landowner/taxpayer will substantially detract from what is there already. The proposed demolition must meet that standard because otherwise they are abusing their discretion. They are finding that they cannot demolish this building which has been sitting vacant for decades. The floor is approximately three or four feet off the grade. It has various levels of floors and generations of wiring and plumbing. It is just not feasible as a practical matter. His client is interested in the highest and best use of the property. The proposal is to take down the part of the building that is not useable or functional as a modern structure and keep the remaining part which is basically a warehouse at the grade level (the old Insta-Lube property). They would like to use the vacant land as parking. They submit that when you judge this property and the proposed change with what is there already, it cannot be said that change is going to substantially detract from the surroundings. Mr. Cork asked Council's consideration in voting to allow the demolition.

Councilman Payton inquired as to what would stop the owner from coming back in a year or so and ask to build something on the property that is demolished. Mr. Cork stated that someone could eventually build something there but they would have to obtain approval for it in this District. The remaining part of the original structure has been changed so much that you would not recognize it. They changed it drastically to allow Insta-Lube to go in there. This building has changes to it that are not historical and would not pass mustard today. This is the problem when you have patchwork. Individual landowners feel that they are being treated differently than everyone else because of the patchwork that is there. That is not the case because it has historically evolved to where we are now and now we care about this building. Most people did not care about any of them 20 or 30 years ago unfortunately. That is why we have what we have.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the roof leaked. Mr. Cork stated that the roof leaks substantially and if it stays there it will have to be rebuilt. It is just not economically feasible. They have a glut of this type of space available on the market and Roger Budd owns lots of vacant buildings on Ashley Street that are better suited for whatever is going in there than this building.

Councilman Carroll stated that the proposal is to build a parking lot and inquired as to whether there was a site plan or quote on the construction of the parking lot. Mr. Cork stated that does not exist because they wanted to see if they could get the demolition permit first and then they would engage an architect or engineer to design something that would have to be approved by the Commission.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to when the address was changed from Williams Street to Ashley Street and if there were any changes to the building. Mr. Cork stated that they were just stuck with that address and that was the original front of the building. The Ashley Street side is actually the back of the building. Insta-Lube went by the Ashley Street address. When Insta-Lube was housed there they carved out the ground but it has been filled back in. That building is being used now by a Heating and Air Conditioning contractor but they do not have any parking so they are moving out. This historical area is the bungalow district of North Brookwood and some of the nice bungalows have been torn down. They tore down a Lloyd Greer home near Valdosta State University. They are supposed to be trying to protect the old bungalows and not so much the old warehouses that have been reused and converted to whatever.

Celine Gladwin, Chairman of the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), stated that the task of the HPC is to protect the City's cultural historical heritage and they acknowledge the preservation of this heritage is essential to the promotion of health and prosperity and general welfare of the community. Council is tasked with deciding if the HPC abused their discretion. The facts were presented by Matt Martin, Planning and Zoning Administrator, at the Work Session. The HPC vote was unanimous (4-0) and they were acting with a six-member Commission because they had a vacant seat and one of the members was absent. It was very important to them during the presentation of these cases to cover the demolition criteria. When the HPC is presented with a demolition case, they have seven criteria to see if that case meets the criteria. The Design Guidelines, which are also included as an Appendix to the Land Development Regulations (LDR), elaborates on each one of these items. As a Commission, they are charged to go through each of the criteria and evaluate the case based on the criteria. One of the criteria (No. 5 under Demolition), asked about the proposed plans are for the property. It specifically spells out what is inappropriate. It says that it is inappropriate to demolish a building for new construction that would diminish the character of the Historic District. It is inappropriate to demolish a building for reuse as a parking lot. This criteria is very straight forward. This building and three other buildings on opposite corners are all contributing structures within the Historic District which means they are assets within our Historic resources. When they went through the seven criteria, the HPC determined that this application does not meet the criteria for demolition and that is what their decision was based on.

Councilman Yost inquired as to whether the parking lot criteria was the only one that it did not meet. Ms. Gladwin stated that there were several that it did not meet and none of the criteria under Demolition meets the application.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to how they address property when the owner states it is not feasible to fix it up. Years ago the Church on River Street bought a house next door and they wanted to tear it down because it was in deplorable condition. The Church was not going to fix it. The HPC denied the request and ten years later when it started to cave it they allowed the demolition; however, they could have done it ten years earlier. You have to have rules and regulations to guide you, but one thing you have to apply to it is common sense. When a property owner states that it is not financially feasible to fix it up then that should bear some weight. Ms. Gladwin stated that she agreed. She is an Architect and a Historic Preservationist and serves as Vice Chair of the National Registry Review Board for the State of Georgia. She is very familiar with a lot of projects all over the State. There are various State and Federal programs out there that are tax incentives and are made specifically to help these historic resources so they can be rehabilitated and preserved. There are economic incentives. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether this information was offered to the property owner and pointed them in the direction of the money. Ms. Gladwin stated that she did not think they discussed tax incentives. If you look at Downtown Valdosta, there are a lot of new businesses that have located there to specifically take advantage of the tax incentive programs that are offered by the State. Councilman Vickers stated that this building is not included in the Downtown area. Ms. Gladwin stated that it is located in a local Historic District and there use to be some local incentives when she first came to Valdosta ten years ago. If a building is deemed to be a contributing structure within the historic fabric, there are programs out there that should be considered. If they are not available then the question remains as to whether the renovation or rehabilitation of that building is still doable and does it make economic sense. She

cannot provide that information right now because she has not seen the information in that regard. A structural assessment could be done on the building and a plan could be put together to see what it would financially take to bring it up to standards. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether the HPC members went inside the building. Ms. Gladwin stated that they could not go inside the building without permission; however, they did look around outside. The local HPC does not have jurisdiction on the interior of the building. The only thing they look at is the exterior. Regardless of what has been done on the interior of the building, the HPC does not get involved with color or interiors. Their task is to look at the exterior of the building. Councilman Vickers stated that the story might be on the inside and not the outside.

Councilman Carroll stated that he saw in the HPC Minutes where there was a potential buyer for the building. Ms. Gladwin stated that Mr. Bajalia recently purchased a building across the street on Williams Street and he will be restoring that building for his office use. During the HPC Meeting, it was made known that Mr. Bajalia was unable to attend the Meeting to express his opposition because he was on his way to Atlanta; however, he expressed an interest in acquiring that building.

Councilman Payton stated that he was looking at criteria No. 6 and No. 7 regarding the structural condition of the building which Mr. Cork indicated there were some structural concerns as well as the reasonable economic return which is No. 7. Mr. Cork also indicated that to put money into the building to bring it up to Code would not be economically feasible. Mr. Payton inquired as to whether Ms. Gladwin thought those were valid arguments. Ms. Gladwin stated that she has not performed a structural assessment or seen an assessment on the building but one of the HPC members, King Smith, is an Architect and he had met with the owner several weeks before at the owner's request. They went through the building and discussed possibilities for the building. Mr. Smith's opinion was that the repairs and renovations are certainly doable but there was no further work done or an assessment for potential plans. It could be that the current layout or configuration of the building does not suit the current use or what the owner sees for the building; however, the request is for a parking lot for the current tenant. The current amount of parking to serve that business is in compliance with the current Zoning Code. It is not the HPC's place to ask why but rather is it suitable for a building of historic nature to be removed and be replaced with surface parking.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that people have been going inside the building and if the owner does not fix it up then people will continue to go in there and cause a lot of problems. Ms. Gladwin stated that every building has a potential to be a hazard if it is left to deteriorate. This building has been left vacant for many years and it has that potential to be a hazard. The building needs to be properly secured.

Mayor Gayle stated that the options for Council on this request is as follows: (1) They can uphold the HPC's decision to deny the request to demolish the building, (2) They can find that the HPC abused its discretion and approve the appeal filed by Attorney Patrick Cork on behalf of Roger Budd, or (3) They can return the matter to the HPC for reconsideration. Tim Tanner, City Attorney, stated that they could send it back to the HPC but only if new information has been presented to the Council.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Vickers to send the request back to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission based on new information that was presented about funding that they may be able to tap. Councilwoman Tooley seconded the motion. Councilman Vickers stated that he did not think the HPC did anything wrong. He would like to support the property owner's right but he also wanted to support the HPC. He was on Council when they created the HPC and if they vote to deny it then it will be several months before they could try to even bring it back. He wanted to give them an opportunity to explore what may be some other possibilities for the property owner. Councilman Yost asked City Attorney Tim Tanner to read the information that he presented earlier. Tim Tanner stated that this is from Section 238-15(B), the third option, City Council has the option to return the matter to the Commission for reconsideration only if new information is presented to City Council during the appeal hearing that directly relates to the Commission's decision. Councilman Yost stated that he understood where the Councilman was coming from but he was not sure it is pertinent as new information that would change the decision of the HPC. Mayor Gayle stated that he was basing that on whether there were grants available. Councilman Yost stated that he needed someone to explain to him how that was important, how the HPC presented the material, and how it may have affected their vote. That to him is irrelevant to the situation and it is not new information that has anything to do with what they recommended. What they recommended was based on

the criteria so whether this is new information or not, their decision has to be based on the criteria and it cannot possibly change their decision because it clearly states that it cannot be considered for a parking lot. Councilman Payton stated that Councilman Vickers made the motion he did because the information is new and is something that the property owner had not considered. Councilman Yost stated that the property owner owns so much property that he has got to know what the deals are. Mr. Cork stated that there is nothing available in terms of money such as grants or tax incentives. Maybe they could have a new Tax Code like they had in the 1980's where they were restoring buildings 75 years old or older. He did not know if this building was 75 years old. Councilman Payton stated that according to the records it was built in 1928. Larry Hanson, City Manager, inquired as to whether it was new information or old information that there was a potential purchaser. Mr. Cork stated that was old information. Larry Hanson inquired as to whether that was information available at the time it went before the HPC. Mr. Cork stated that it came up during the HPC Meeting that Nick Bajalia was interested in buying the building. He had already bought the King Smith building. King Smith would have to tell you that it is not economically feasible to restore either one of these buildings. They lost a ton of money when they restored the building they sold. Councilman Carroll stated that he agreed with both Councilman Vickers and Councilman Yost. He agrees with Councilman Vickers in that the HPC did not abuse their powers. He agrees with Councilman Yost in that whether there are tax incentives that the property owner could use or not it would not have any impact on the question of demolition. So if it is sent back to the HPC you still have a demolition request. His concern is that they would just be kicking the can down the road. Councilman Vickers stated that is what he was trying to do. Councilman Carroll stated that they all agree the HPC did not abuse its power and he wanted to offer a substitute motion.

A SUBSTITUTE MOTION was made by Councilman Carroll to uphold the decision of the HPC. Councilman Yost seconded the motion. The motion failed (3-4 vote) with Councilman Payton, Councilman Vickers, Councilwoman Tooley, and Councilwoman Miller-Cody voting in opposition.

Mayor Gayle asked if there was any further discussion on the original motion which is to return the matter to the HPC for reconsideration. Councilman Carroll asked for clarification on the motion. This is not being sent back for reconsideration but is being sent back because there may be tax incentives. Councilman Payton stated that Councilman Vickers did not say tax incentives but rather new information. The motion was adopted (4-3 vote) with Councilman Carroll, Councilman Norton, and Councilman Yost voting in opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-2, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF A REMNANT PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED AT GORNTO ROAD AND TOOMBS STREET

Consideration of the sale of a remnant parcel of land located at Gornto Road and Toombs Street for \$13,500.

Tim Tanner, City Attorney, stated that William Sims, GIS/Real Property Coordinator for the City of Valdosta's Engineering Department was contacted in October, 2016 by Travis Pate regarding the remnant parcel located at the southeast corner of Gornto Road/Woodrow Wilson Drive and Toombs Street. This is the 0.073 acre tract immediately north and adjacent to the property owned by Gelana Goddard. Mr. Pate is purchasing the property from Mrs. Goddard and wishes to purchase the remnant parcel from the City to allow for an upgrade to the building and to have a location for signage. The parcel is approximately 13 feet at its narrowest, 35 feet at its widest, and 137 feet long. Mr. Pate was informed of the various steps in the process of the City disposing of property and that the City would require him to bear the cost of an appraisal, and deed preparation. On October 13, 2016, Mr. Pate called William Sims and stated that he had the appraisal done and that he would like to proceed with the purchase. The appraisal has the parcel valued at \$13,500 which is comparable to the values of some other remnant parcels as determined by the Appraiser, Bryan Almand. After discussion with Matt Martin, Planning and Zoning Administrator for the City of Valdosta, and given the shape of the property, there is simply not enough room to place a small office building (of really any size) and still provide the required 1-2 parking spaces and access driveway thus deeming it undevelopable because of its size and irregular dimensions. In the past, the City has been able to sell the remnant parcels without going through the process of public bids if the parcels were deemed undevelopable which is the case of this parcel. Tim Tanner recommended that Council approve a Resolution authorizing the sale of a remnant parcel of land located at Gornto Road and Toombs Street.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2017-2, a Resolution authorizing the sale of a remnant parcel of land located at Gornto Road and Toombs Street in the amount of \$13,500, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book V.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

John Robinson, 3027 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he wanted to discuss the Valdosta Small Emerging Business Program (VSEB). He stopped by the Purchasing Department this morning and gave them a list but it did not seem that he got anywhere with the list because it did not fit the VSEB requirements. They need to have something in place for a better communication base for everyone to be notified. He contacted the Dodge Report, which is a database where contractors are notified of all construction going out for public bid, and was told that the City and County do not use the Dodge Report. It would be difficult to ask the citizens to pay for such a program; therefore, we need to come up with something. Without a database there is a lot of unfairness that occurs with the bid process on a timely basis for contractors to be notified. For example, if someone receives a bid and has two weeks' notice, then that may not give him enough time. They have issues with the VSEB Program regarding the limit for a person qualifying which is \$750,000. If you have more than that then you do not qualify. They need a better communication base and send out flyers pertaining to the City and County projects. If the Mayor and Council could help with this it would be very much appreciated. Mayor Gayle stated that the City advertises every bid in the newspaper, it is placed on the City's website, and we send an E-mail to all of the VSEB contractors. Dodge Reports would not be beneficial for the City because we cannot pay for all of those. Mr. Robinson stated that he understood all that but something is not working out just right with what is currently in place. They need to find a mechanism to make it work a little better. Councilman Vickers stated that if Mr. Robinson could provide a list of contractors then we could E-mail it to them.

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that he had some pictures he wanted to give to the Council of some holes. Mr. Rhynes stated that people commend him for what he is doing and he tells them that he has brought things before Council. He has been here four times to present these issues to the Council. He has not gone public with these items because he did not want to embarrass the City; however, since he has not received an answer to the complaints that he has brought before Council, he has no other alternative but to try to get the word out through his sources. He also has professional videographers who follow him and want to do a video to highlight some things not only here but other places as well. When the parents told him that children have to go behind the filling stations on the southside of town to use the bathroom he wrote it down. Everything that he has brought to Council has been done in good faith and he thought that someone would get back to him. You will see these items again and they will not fade away because it is something that the community needs and appreciates being done. Someone asked him last night if he knew what he was doing because taxpayers should foot the bill for fixing the concrete problem. He knows that but if you look closely you will see a water meter and it either belongs to the City or the County. Mayor Gayle stated that they would give the pictures to the Utilities Department and the covers over the water mains will be taken care of; however, the City cannot repair parking lots and holes in parking lots on private property. Mr. Rhynes stated that he was aware that the City could not do that; however, it seems to him that if he sees the people who drop in these holes and if he cares enough to try to help the citizens of this community then truly the elected officials should be concerned enough to take on the issues. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that we would give a copy to Mark Barber, Assistant City Manager, so we can see if there is something that Code Enforcement can do about that even though it is on private property. Councilman Yost stated that maybe they could notify the property owner that this has been brought before Council and it is a concern. Mayor Gayle stated that he has a real concern about how citizens are taking care of their property and he will be bringing that up at the next Mayor/Council Retreat.

Oscar Lee Griffin, Jr., 204 Youles Street, stated that he is a native of Valdosta and was a two time Iraq War Veteran with 20 years of service in the U. S. Army. He and his wife are purchasing the property located at 118 West Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive which is a restaurant called It's All Good. He has been closed down since the second week of October due to the construction they are doing on the road. They have dug up a portion of the driveway and now there is something wrong with the drain system and it may be four more months before that is completed. It is very rough because he still has to pay his water bill, his electric bill, and gas bill. He did not know if the City was able to assist him on that for the simple reason that they were not prepared to be closed this long.

They had food in freezers which will have to be thrown away. Mr. Griffin inquired as to whether the City had any grants or funds that they could provide to him to help him through this situation. He purchased that property with the hope of trying to help this side of the community, but the aspect of being closed this long is a burden. They have a lot going out and nothing coming in. He still has a mortgage that he has to pay every month and other bills. It was his understanding that he was a part of the Downtown community. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Mr. Griffin can speak to the City Engineer, Pat Collins, and the complaint will be investigated.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Law Enforcement Appreciation Day is on Monday, January 9, 2017 and Mayor Gayle will present a Proclamation to members of the Valdosta Police Department at 10:00 a.m. to show our appreciation for their service to our community. There is also a table in the lobby of City Hall with some thank you cards for the men and women of the Police Department and these will be presented to them at the event as well.

Citizens can also participate in the Bring One for the Chipper Program if they would like to get rid of their Christmas Trees. The drop-off sites are Home Depot on Norman Drive, Walmart on Inner Perimeter Road, and Mathis Auditorium. Anyone who brings their Christmas Tree on Saturday, January 7, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. will be given a free tree seedling.

The Bird Supper will be held on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. at The Depot in Atlanta. This event is jointly sponsored by the City and the County.

The Georgia Municipal Association Mayor's Day will be held on January 20-23, 2017 in Atlanta and some of the Council members have already registered for this event.

The Valdosta Fire Department put their four new fire trucks in service in December and they have been very well received by the men and women of the Fire Department. They also had two promotional ceremonies in December as well. These events are very heartwarming to see those who are being promoted tell their stories. It is very touching to see family members pin on their new rank. Council is encouraged to attend one of these events in the future.

There was a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the South Troup Street Project on December 15, 2016. This is another Project that was completed well ahead of schedule.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Founders Banquet will be held on Saturday, January 7, 2017. This event has been sold out for many months which is a wonderful problem to have. It has grown over the years from Mathis Auditorium to the James H. Rainwater Conference in order to fit as many people as they can in that facility. This has been a great success over the years.

A Press Release was sent out today about opportunities for citizens to serve on Boards, Commissions, and Authorities. The Keep Lowndes Valdosta Beautiful Board has one slot, the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission has two slots, the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments and Appeals has two slots, the Valdosta Tree Commission has one slot, and Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee has three slots. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2017.

There were seven students from Valdosta High School who participated in Great Promise Partnership Program. These students were employed by the City prior to the holidays and they will start back to work on Monday, January 9, 2017. We will be bringing on 11 new students who will be working in Public Works, Public Information, Main Street, and Fire Department. This is a great opportunity for these students and for our employees to serve as mentors. It is good to see this Program growing.

On a sad note, there will be a funeral service tomorrow morning for former Council member James Wright at 11:00 a.m. at New Life Ministries Church. Some of you will want to attend and express your condolences to the family.

Councilman Carroll congratulated Larry Hanson, City Manager, for being named to the Georgia Trend Magazine’s 2017 Notable Georgians. Also, Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether the City Manager had a ticket for the MLK Founders Banquet this year. Larry Hanson stated that he did not have a ticket for that event but he has a function at Moody Air Force Base on Saturday night that the Wing Commander has asked him to attend. This will be the first time in 21 years that he has missed the Founders Banquet.

Councilman Payton stated that he attended the Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) Leadership Training and they were very much engaged. They are very sharp and he invited Council members to attend the next VYC Meeting on January 19, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. He would like for the VYC members to see the passion you have for what you do. This would go a long way with them. Sementha Mathews, Public Information Officer, and Teresa Bolden, City Clerk, are doing a great job with the VYC.

Councilwoman Sandra Tooley commented on Larry Hanson, City Manager, being named to Georgia Trend Magazine’s Notable Georgians. It is really good for the citizens of our community to see that Valdosta is being represented. It would be good for the VYC and the young people of our community to see that they have an opportunity to grow and become whatever they want to be and make a difference. Councilwoman Tooley also thanked the Mayor, Council, and Staff for the Troup Street Project. They are all very happy and excited about how it turned out.

Councilman Vickers stated that if they had any idea how happy the Troup Street Project made Councilwoman Tooley then they would have done it a long time ago.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she would like for everyone from the City Council to sit together at former Councilman Wright’s funeral to show their support.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to adjourn the regular Council meeting and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the January 5, 2017 meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:51 p.m. and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate.

Mayor Gayle reconvened the regular City Council meeting at 7:02 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of real estate in the Executive Session and no action would need to be taken.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the January 7, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:02 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, January 19, 2017.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta