

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2016
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 Willie Harris, Macedonia First Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Presentation for Valdosta Police Auxiliaries (Police Chaplains and Volunteers).

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that in 2014, the Valdosta Police Department (VPD) initiated a Volunteer or Auxiliary Program which included a Police Chaplain Program and a Citizen Volunteer Program to improve operations and community relations. In the Policy and Accreditation world, an Auxiliary is considered a volunteer. We have developed a lot of different programs and one that has had the most impact on the VPD is the Auxiliary Program. These volunteers have been working with the VPD to improve community relations and efficiency. The Police Department has been paying for off-site storage of Police records that are required by Georgia law to be kept for a certain period of time. The Georgia Archives in Atlanta was contacted about storage requirements and we learned that these records could be kept electronically. The VPD purchased some scanners and volunteers have been steadily working non-stop every day to scan these documents and eliminate the need for paper storage. Once the records are scanned, the VPD IT Department will be merging the old files into the Comprehensive Police Reporting System (COPRS), a system built in-house. This system has been so successful that the volunteers will be working with other City Departments to move old paper records to computerized ones. The VPD will now no longer pay \$5,000-\$10,000 per year to store records off-site. These volunteers have saved the City money and they will continue to scan these records and save money and space. The other Program is the Police Chaplain Program which is really a Public Safety Chaplain Program. These six local Chaplains, who received training, work hand-in-hand with the VPD, the Valdosta Fire Department (VFD), and the community. Areas which the Chaplain Program focuses on includes providing Police Chaplains for on-duty Officers and civilians, providing a Chaplain for the community in times of need and on Police calls, community policing activities, and special events. Recently, there was an incident with the Dallas Police Department and the Chaplains asked if they could be an advocate for the Officers in Valdosta and just be with them during this horrific event. They had no idea that one of our own Officers would be shot in the line of duty that same morning. In either case, the Chaplains were there at the scene and at the Emergency Room when Officer Randall Hancock was shot. Fire Chief Freddie Broome stated that these volunteers are a great asset and they have used them as well. The volunteers are Ronnie Mathis, William Morgan, Wayne Robertson, Darren Neal, Winston Taylor, Lonnie Grant, Bonnie Lou Rumphol, Stanley E. Rumphol, Roy Leonard Hall, Sr., Mickey Williamson, and Sue Sempert.

Mayor Gayle stated that he wanted to recognize Beth English, Executive Director of Easter Seals, who is present tonight. She is also a past President of the Georgia Municipal Association and Mayor Pro Tem of Vienna. Ms. English stated that it was a pleasure to be here tonight and she wanted to share information about the services that they provide in Lowndes County and the economic impact. They serve over 300 people in Valdosta with one of their four program lines. They have an Employment Program for people with disabilities, a Community Residential Program that operates supervised apartments, two Group Homes for people who are medically fragile, and they provide in-home support. They have a Family Support Program that pays for a large number of services that families need for their loved ones who have disabilities in order for them to continue to live at home. They also have an Adult Day Program. They cover 60 counties in Georgia and 14 counties in north Florida. They served over 3,000 people in Fiscal Year 2015. Ms. English asked for Council's consideration when they are looking at their constituents who may need some assistance. Also, when you think about Easter Seals, many of you know it is a charitable organization and they do good work; however, they are also a partner with the City in economic development. They provide jobs for 68 people and they bring \$2.25 million in State and Federal money into this community that would not be there any other way. She has had a number of phone calls in the past from economic developers or businesses who are trying to relocate an executive who has a child with a disability and they want to

know about the services. You would be surprised how many times that plays a role in people moving to the community. Easter Seals is thrilled to be a collaborative partner with Behavioral Health, LARC, and all the other agencies in Valdosta who do provide services. They have some unique services that the others do not have. Ms. English thanked Mayor Gayle, City Manager Hanson, Councilman Norton, and Councilman Payton who toured their program a year ago and for allowing her to share the Easter Seals services.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of a request to approve a Contract for technical support for Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the City's Water Treatment Plant, both Wastewater Treatment Plants, and sewage lift stations all utilize Rockwell/Allen-Bradley machine control/Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment. Given their complexity, advanced technical support is necessary to properly maintain and troubleshoot these control systems and ensure uninterrupted operation of these critical facilities. Department Staff conducted extensive research on the maintenance requirements for these control systems and discovered a comprehensive sole-source technical support program through Rockwell Automation called TechConnect. TechConnect provides software maintenance and updates, real-time phone support, and online support for Rockwell/Allen-Bradley control systems. With TechConnect, the City has the capability to reduce maintenance time and costs and improve overall equipment effectiveness. This support has the ability to not only reduce the length of equipment downtime, but also prevent it from occurring altogether. The Contract provides tech support for three years and covers all Rockwell/Allen-Bradley machine control/SCADA equipment to include Programmable Logic Controllers (PLC), Human Machine Interface (HMI), and switches. TechConnect will cover systems at the Water Treatment Plant, existing lift stations, new master pump stations, and both Wastewater Treatment Plants which includes the new Withlacoochee Water Treatment Plant. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the three-year Contract with Rockwell Automation for TechConnect support in the amount of \$28,263 to be paid in three annual installments of \$9,421 for Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to where the funds would come from for this request. Henry Hicks stated that it would come from User Fees in the Water and Sewer Fund. Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether they were putting this in because of the new Wastewater Treatment Plant. Henry Hicks stated that these systems have been in place at all the Treatment Plants and it is not something new. Larry Hanson stated that there are 30-40 lift stations in the system and these are spread out in the community. If we had a major storm event causing some areas to be without power, the pump system may go down and the only way we know about it is for someone to manually go out and look at everything. The SCADA will connect everything electronically so if a pump station has an alarm it will notify the operator at the Plant and they will know where the problems are. They will not have to wait until there is an overflow or a spill. We are adding this to the pump stations but it has been at the new Treatment Plant and it connects all of the system. Councilman Carroll stated that we are one of the first Wastewater Treatment Plants in the State of Georgia to have the technology that has been implemented at the new Wastewater Treatment Plant. Henry Hicks stated that some of this technology has been around for almost 20 years such as the PLCs. The HMIs are fairly new and came about within the last ten years. The SCADA system has been around for the same amount of time and we have been using SCADA for a while. At some time in the future, the Maintenance Staff will have laptop computers so when they get a call they will know where to go and will have the capability to troubleshoot the site. Maintenance does have that capability now for lift stations and there are laptops at each of the Treatment Plants so that an offsite Maintenance person who is on-call can find out what is going on at the Treatment Plant and trouble shoot it on-line or physically go in and do a repair. This provides technical support if there is a power failure or if lightning causes a programming error. They can look at it in real time over the Internet or phone and either fix it or tell Staff what they need to do to fix it. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she thought the systems would already tell you or alert you to a potential problem. Henry Hicks stated that they already have personnel monitoring it at the Treatment Plants and this will be for the lift stations. Councilwoman Tooley inquired

as to how they get the information now on the lift stations. Henry Hicks stated that the operator at the Treatment Plant may see something but if he cannot fix it he would have to call a Maintenance person in. If the Maintenance person cannot fix it then they would call in technical support to troubleshoot the problem. Larry Hanson stated that they also rewired all the lift stations so that they could accommodate a generator in case of a power outage. This all comes back to the Consent Order and using best management practices and state-of-art technology to help us prevent problems ahead of time and not be reactive after the fact. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether this was already incorporated in the new Water Treatment Plant. Henry Hicks stated that these systems have been in place for a while. This gives us the next level of technical support and troubleshooting that we do not have the capability of doing. We do not have the equipment or the expertise. We will be hiring people with the systems and equipment to do it on an as needed basis. We have one person right now who does all the SCADA work and he can program basically the PLCs, HMIs, and SCADA and make modifications; however, when you get into the advanced area that is more into the machine language, he does not have that level of capability. It takes a long time to learn and he has been doing this for ten years now; however, we hope to have him at that point at the end of three years.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Vickers, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a Contract for technical support for Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated we have a Back the Red and Blue Blood Drive that will take place on Thursday, July 28, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Building. This will be in honor of our Police, Fire, and EMS personnel.

A Press Release was sent out today inviting citizens to participate in the third Valdosta Fire Department Fire Academy. This Program will take place on nine consecutive Tuesdays from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. beginning on August 30, 2016. Citizens are encouraged to take advantage of this great educational program.

Tangela Rowe of the Valdosta Fire Department who was recently named 2016 Georgia State Firefighter Association's Firefighter of the Year. She was recognized last week at a ceremony at the Parks and Recreation Office located on Forrest Street.

The Police Department has a Retirement and Promotion Service Awards Ceremony on Tuesday, July 26, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. There will be two long time employees retiring. Crime Scene Technician Ray McGraw will retire after 25 years and Lt. Joanne Ruffolowitz will retire after 24 years of service.

The Great Promise Partnership Program is on-going and we have eight high school students who have been participating and working full time with the City. They will have a brief vacation and then start back working on August 15, 2016 every Monday through Friday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

There was a Job Fair held recently on July 19, 2016 at the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room. The City was one of the co-sponsors and it was very well received. They are helping to connect people who are looking for job opportunities with employers in the community who are looking to hire.

This is Restaurant Week in the Downtown area and there have been many people participating. The citizens purchase an arm band and the go around and eat at the different restaurants. They sold 150 of the arm bands and this event has been very well received.

Farm Days will be held this Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Courthouse square.

There was a big celebration for the People's Choice Photo Contest and the citizens who participated had many innovative ways to take pictures and celebrate the different aspects of our City.

Last week was the new Wastewater Treatment Plant Dedication Ceremony and it was the culmination of a lot of hard work and heavy lifting over the past few years. There were 100 people who showed up along with the Mayor and Council members.

The Fire Department had a Graduation Ceremony last week and it was a very uplifting event.

The new City Beat will be coming out soon and will have information about the new Wastewater Treatment Plant, the First Step Program that helps small businesses, and the Group Work Camp Program.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that he wanted to personally thank the Mayor and Council and the community for their support during a difficult time when a Police Officer was shot. It was a trying time and a heavy day. On behalf of Officer Randall Hancock and his family, he thanked everyone for their prayers, support, and concern. He also thanked the Chaplains who were at the hospital all morning in support of the Officer and his family. It made a difficult day bearable and it shows how people in our City care for those who serve this community.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Gayle stated that he has provided Council with an update on the Service Delivery negotiations with the County which was put on hold for a period of time because of the budget process that the City and County were going through. They met last week and started negotiations on the 14 items. They got to water and sewer and the meeting ended at that point. The Georgia Constitution tells us what we can do with water and sewer and that is what we are going to proceed with doing. We have called another meeting for next Wednesday to start back with the other items to see if there is anything we can do to save the taxpayers from double taxation. At this point in time, of the 14 items that we feel need to be negotiated, there has been no progress made.

Councilman Yost stated that the County's attitude has been that they do not need to negotiate and they have just been sitting at the table. Mayor Gayle stated that the County wanted to leave everything as it was ten years ago and that is not the way it is supposed to go. We are required by House Bill 489 to negotiate every ten years and that is what he has been trying to remind them of. Councilman Yost inquired as to what would happen if we do not sign another ten-year Agreement. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that several things would have to happen before they get to that point. They would negotiate for a period of time until the parties resolve some of the issues, all of the issues, or none of the issues. At that time, if they agree there is a stalemate, then there is mandatory dispute resolution. They will be required to go through some process of mediation and have a third party to attempt to help resolve whatever remaining issues they have. If that fails and the Agreement has expired, then the local governments would be out of compliance with the State. That means that the local governments of Lowndes County would not be eligible to apply for grants and loans if they are out of compliance. The Agreement will expire at the end of this year. Mayor Gayle stated that we have until October 31, 2016 to submit a signed Agreement to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Councilman Yost stated that we all pay the same taxes to the County but we pay for services that we do not need or receive. He does not get water and sewer from the County and he does not get his service for fire from the County. He is not sure where the County is coming from when the citizens of the cities are not receiving the same benefits that the unincorporated residents are and we do not need some of those services. Mayor Gayle stated that the only issue with the water and sewer is where we can run lines (service area). Councilman Yost stated that we are paying for all these services that we do not receive. Mayor Gayle stated that we are being double taxed. Larry Hanson stated that the County funds fire in the unincorporated area through an insurance premium tax and water and sewer is paid by the customer. If you are a customer in the City you are paying the City and if you are a customer of the County then you are paying the County; however, there are other examples that are among the list that Mayor Gayle provided that appear to have some inequities. Mayor Gayle stated that ten years ago the City signed an Agreement which stated that we would fund the Rainwater Conference Center and the Arts Center. The County uses those facilities as much as the cities do and we feel like we should reduce our contribution and the County should pick that up. The Airport Authority is not being disputed. Mayor Gayle stated that we are trying to form another Agreement that is fair to our citizens. Councilman Yost stated that the County comes to the table, acts like they are listening, leaves the table, and then we are forced to sign an Agreement. Those individuals are elected by every person in each city to represent them and he is not seeing representation from that body. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to what the recourse would be if we do not reach an Agreement. Mayor Gayle stated that they would have to come back to the Council to see how far they want to go in the Court system. Councilman Carroll stated that he was asked to serve on the negotiating team on behalf of the City and it has been a very eye opening experience and not all of it pleasant. We are not done yet though and there is still a ways to go. When it comes to negotiating, being a stone wall in the beginning is a

negotiating strategy. He is hopeful that all parties involved will find a way to truly negotiate and do what is best for all of the tax paying citizens of our community.

Councilman Yost stated the traffic light at the intersection of Azalea Drive and Alden Avenue needs to be checked. The light changes green and hangs there for quite a while. He also thanked the Hospital Authority for making a very, very slight change in their Attorney. They have not done what he has asked them which is firing the CEO of the Hospital and having the members representing the City on the Hospital Authority to resign. They have made a little progress by moving the Attorney out of the Hospital and back into his law practice in Quitman. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that when citizens mention things like traffic light problems, they should be encouraged to use the Valdosta Click 'N Fix Program which is a great way for them to go on their phone and notify the City of the issue. It could be a loop that has been disconnected or a lightning strike. They can help us by letting us know sooner so we can have the traffic unit respond. T

Councilwoman Tooley stated that there is a lot of construction going on with the Troup Street Project and they are doing a good job; however, if anyone comes to Staff with a complaint they should just ignore it. They have already discussed the Troup Street Project with citizens who live on that street and told them that there may be a few glitches. They understood that so if anyone comes to Staff about any problems they should be referred to her. There are some people taking pictures for history and they are very happy that this is happening. The street is looking good and this has been a blessing. Councilwoman Tooley also stated that she has had a lot of citizens asking her about moving the Citizens to be Heard portion of the Agenda to an earlier spot. She supports that and told them she would mention it to the Mayor and Council. She has been here two and half years now and the Mayor has kept everything under control.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that Public Works had picked up some yard debris in her District recently and a citizen had thrown a cigarette butt in the trailer and caught the debris on fire. Some of the residents of her District ran behind the truck to alert the driver that the trailer was on fire. Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked Richard Hardy, Public Works Director, and Fire Chief Freddie Broome, who came out to the area to give their assistance.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Bill Donaldson stated that he was concerned about the perception of the City. He has lived here for approximately five years and has not heard anyone say anything good about the School Board. He was at a School Board Meeting the other night and he saw what was going on. He saw the people they are hiring and they are doing a good job. The perception is so off-beat. We need to look at it and change the perception. He sees the same thing with the City Council. He does not hear anything good about the Council but he knows that they are trying to do the best they can. They are working hard but no one says that. Also, he goes to Pinevale Elementary School four days a week to help the students. He encouraged the Mayor and Council to visit Pinevale Elementary School and speak to the children. A lot of them only see doom and gloom in their neighborhoods. The students need to be encouraged and told that there is a better and different way. There is no one solution for this but we need to think about these children and get them connected so they will be productive citizens. Right now all he sees are people going to jail and we are paying thousands of dollars to keep them in jail instead of helping them to get a good education. He stated that they are also asking churches to adopt a school. They are over 100 churches in Valdosta and approximately 10 schools. The teachers are hurting and we can do better. His church took in a mother, her four children, and her daughter's children. They were like animals crawling all over the place. They worked with them and made a difference. We could do this all across the community. This is a great City and we cannot sit back and let the City be defined as something other than what it is because a few people have negative opinions and attitudes about the City. It hurts his heart about what is going on with the Police Departments all over this country. There are people out there who make it seem like a Police Officer leaves home in the morning saying that he is going to kill a black kid. He does not believe that; however, it is a national perception. The Police Department comes from the community and they are part of us. There is a faction out there that keeps portraying that the Police are bad. That is not true because he has dealt with the Police before. This is a great community and we need to show the City in the best light that we can.

John Robinson, 3227 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he wanted to talk about economic taxation and representation that hurts low income communities. They have been struggling for quite some time based upon

the things that occurred from this Council. There has been a lot of work put into the Troup Street Project and there will be good results coming from that; however, if no one had stood up before the Council and fought for it then it would have never occurred. They have the Valdosta Small Emerging Business (VSEB) Program and there are some VSEB members that are doing some work but they need some real transparency. They need some input from the entire Council and not just the City Manager. They need to be a part and they need groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). They need to be able to have some input into what happens instead of having something put together and then handed off to them. He has spoken with John McDonald, the Developer for the new Downtown Hotel Project, and it seems to be going pretty well. He spoke with the General Contractor who will be doing part of the work and it sounds reasonable. They want some transparency and they want to be involved. Mr. Robinson stated that he does not need you to put something together to make the decision for him that he cannot make for himself. He wants to be a part of the decision making process of what is going to happen in his life and in his grandchildren's lives instead of someone putting a package together and then saying this is what we have and these are the people who are going to do this. They need to have everyone involved. It now seems that the VSEB Program is beginning to work but they need to be able to have some input and have open discussions with the Council about the bid process instead of things coming down the pipe that have already been bid out. Sometimes you may feel that the contractors are not qualified but they are. Some are doing work right now. They want to be a friend all the way around and not just on the surface. Things happen and it is unfortunate about the things going on in our country. If you change the environment you will change the people. The only way you will change the people is by having money to provide to the low income communities. They need to be able to express themselves and they want to have input. They understand and appreciate everything that Council is doing but they want some transparency and input.

Douglas Robinson, 921 Lausanne Drive, stated that he was concerned about the community and some things that are going on. He lives in a peaceful and quiet community and now people are moving in who want to take over and be disruptive. The homeowners call him every day and tell him about things that are going on. They are afraid to come to a Council Meeting so that is why he is here. He thought things would get better but they are getting worse. They need help from the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the July 21, 2016 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:32 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, August 11, 2016.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta