

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2015
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: Tim Carroll, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Robert Yost, and James Wright. Councilwoman Sandra Tooley arrived late at 5:32 p.m. and Councilman Joseph "Sonny" Vickers was absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Johnnie Quarterman, Mt. Zion Church of God, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Consideration of the August, 2015 Employee of the Month Award (Monica Nelson, Utilities Department).

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that Monica Nelson began her employment with the Utilities Department in November, 1999 as a Meter Reader. In August, 2001, she was promoted to Senior Meter Service Worker which is the position she currently holds. As the Senior Meter Service Worker, Monica plays an important role in the connecting and disconnecting of water services while also working with Customer Service Staff on billing, responding to citizens regarding high water bills, and checking for leaks. Monica also directs the activities of the Division in the absence of the Meter Operations Supervisor. The City of Valdosta has annexed a large number of parcels and has been working to install water and sewer services to those areas. Recently, Staff was asked to provide a summary of how many customers were connected which involved the Engineering and Utilities Departments. With Monica's rich understanding of not only the billing system software and extensive knowledge of the properties in Valdosta, she was the perfect person to be a part of this Project. Within three days, Monica went through over 700 accounts while completing her daily tasks with the Meter Reading Division. She not only put in the extra hours to confirm the current services of each of the accounts and the connection dates, but she also identified 20 accounts that appeared to not be billed for services such as stormwater and sanitation. While there are over 20,000 utility accounts for the City of Valdosta, it is as if Monica knows them all personally and always ensures everything is accurate, not just for the City, but for all customers. From the moment you meet Monica, you can easily see her enthusiasm and natural gift of public service which is why she always goes above and beyond to serve the City proudly. For these reasons and many others, the Employee Relations Committee nominated Monica Nelson as Employee of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 23, 2015 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2015-18, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone two parcels totaling 0.36 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Residential-Professional (R-P) as requested by David Brown (File No. VA-2015-10). The properties are located at 1311 and 1313 Melody Lane.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that David M. Brown is requesting to rezone two parcels totaling 0.36 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Residential Professional (R-P). The property is located at 1311 and 1313 Melody Lane which is along the east side of the road about 600 feet south of Baytree Road. The properties are currently developed as rental Single-Family homes (700 square feet and 900 square feet respectively) and the applicant is proposing to convert the buildings for use as professional offices. The property is located within a Transitional Neighborhood (TN) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of R-P zoning. This side of Melody Lane already contains a mixture of older Single-Family homes and professional offices. The properties have been zoned R-6 for many

years and have always been used in the past for Single-Family Residential. These small homes are very similar to other properties along Melody Lane that have already been rezoned to R-P and converted to professional offices. The most recent change was the property immediately to the south which was rezoned three years ago from R-6 to R-P with the same applicant. When considering the Commercial Zoning and more intensive development patterns across the street, this portion of Melody Lane is no longer a Single-Family Residential corridor. Mandating a continued Single-Family Residential use and zoning of the property seems impractical. Allowing the Residential-Professional flexibility of R-P Zoning seems the most logical for this area and fits the character area designation of Transitional Neighborhood. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power and recommended approval to the City Council. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their July 27, 2015 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (5-0 vote).

David Brown, 1309 Melody Lane, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Brown stated that when he rezoned the property next door several years ago he was able to take a piece of property that was dilapidated and keep the architecture in line with the history of the property (one of the mill houses). He updated the house and turned it into a professional use which has been adequate for his needs. He would like to make further improvements to the area and asked Council’s consideration in approving the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilman Yost, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2015-18, an Ordinance to rezone two parcels totaling 0.36 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Residential-Professional (R-P) as requested by David Brown, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids to purchase a Wireless Flashing Beacon System for School Speed Zones.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that as part of the FY 2016-2020 requests for capital projects, the Engineering Department submitted funds for a new School Zone Flasher System. The City Council approved the request within the adopted FY 2016 Budget. The new System is wireless and will replace the existing system which is old, outdated, and badly in need of replacement. The new System will greatly improve the accuracy of timing operations for flashing School Zone beacons on local roadways and it can be remotely adjusted from the Traffic Management Center (TMC). Given that the City’s FY 2016 just went into effect on July 1, 2015 and that school commences in early August, time is of the essence to get the old School Zone System replaced. The low bid was submitted by Temple, Inc. in the amount of \$58,493, and Pat Collins recommended that Council approve the low bid for a Wireless Flashing Beacon System for School Speed Zones.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Temple, Inc. in the amount of \$58,493 for a Wireless Flashing Beacon System for School Speed Zones.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of appointments to the Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee has two members, Mary Bryant and Kelly Strozier, whose terms expired on February 24, 2015. Ms. Bryant and Ms. Strozier have not expressed an interest in being reappointed. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: (1) Thaddeus A. Blue – Pharmacist at Valdosta State University, (2) Bill Donaldson - Retired (3) William (Bill) E. Shultz – Building Analyst, Auditor, and Weatherization Tech for Coastal Plain EOA, (4) Craig Steckelberg – Architect/Project & Construction Manager at Moody Air Force Base (First Choice), and (5) Karla Walker – Attorney with Copeland, Haugabrook and Walker.

Mayor Gayle asked for nominations for the two slots. Councilman Wright placed in consideration the name of Karla Walker. Councilwoman Tooley placed in consideration the name of Bill Donaldson. There being no other nominations, Mayor Gayle closed nominations. Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to appoint Karla Walker and Bill Donaldson by acclamation to the Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Wright to approve the appointment of Karla Walker and Bill Donaldson by acclamation to serve a term of four years on the Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee.

Consideration of appointments to the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) has the following three members whose terms expired on June 1, 2015: (1) Position #1 - LVAC Professional Artist (City) - Mitchell Bruce Smith, (2) Position #2 - LVAC Board Member (City) William Al Turner, and Position #3 - Community at Large (City) - Carla Penney. Mr. Smith and Mr. Turner have both expressed an interest in serving again on the PAAC and Ms. Penny has not expressed an interest in serving again. The PAAC has recommended that Mitchell Bruce Smith be appointed as the LVAC Board Member (City) and William Al Turner be appointed as the LVAC Professional Artist (City). The PAAC also has a one member {Position #4 - Community at Large (City)}, Dr. Dacia Charlesworth, who resigned and whose term expires on June 1, 2017. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: Position #1 - LVAC Professional Artist (City) - William Al Turner, Attorney, Position #2 - LVAC Board Member (City) - Mitchell Bruce Smith, Architect (Studio 8 Design), Position #3 (Term Expiration 06/01/15) & Position #4 (Term Expiration (06/01/17) - Community at Large (City) – (1) William C. (Buddy) Boswell - Personal Chef/Health Coach (Daily Dinners Personal Chef Services and Corporate Health Partners), (2) Meghan Duke - Marketing & Community Relations (Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Development Authority), (3) Roberta George - Writer & Editor (Snake Nation Press), (4) Caitlin Harden - Marketing (Bush Wealth Management), (5) Jolie Hyatt - Co-Owner (Kaleidoscope Gallery & Emporium), (6) Miranda Moore - Director of Marketing (Taylor Insurance Services) - Currently serving on the Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful Board), (7) C. A. (Charlie) Oliver - Educator/Director of Non-Profit Organization (8) Susan Wehling, Ph.D. - Professor (Valdosta State University), and (9) Lauren Jennifer Yale - Landscape Designer & Office Manager (ASA Engineering & Surveying, Inc.) – Second Choice.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to appoint William Al Turner, Attorney, for Position #1 - LVAC Professional Artist (City).

A MOTION by Councilman Payton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to appoint William Al Turner to serve a term of three years as the LVAC Professional Artist (City) on the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to appoint Mitchell Bruce Smith, Architect (Studio 8 Design), for Position #2 - LVAC Board Member (City).

A MOTION by Councilman Wright, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to appoint Mitchell Bruce Smith to serve a term of three years as the LVAC Board Member (City) on the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Mayor Gayle asked for nominations for Position #3 – Community at Large. Councilman Carroll placed in consideration the name of William Buddy Boswell. Councilman Yost placed in consideration the name of Dr. Susan Wehling. There being no other nominations, Mayor Gayle closed nominations. Dr. Susan Wehling received two votes and William Buddy Boswell received four votes. William Buddy Boswell was appointed to serve a term of three years as the Community at Large member on the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Mayor Gayle asked for nominations for Position #4 – Community at Large (fill the unexpired term of Dr. Dacia Charlesworth). Councilman Yost placed in consideration the name of Dr. Susan Wehling. There being no other nominations, Mayor Gayle closed nominations. Dr. Susan Wehling was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Dr. Dacia Charlesworth as the Community at Large member on the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta Tree Commission.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Tree Commission has three members, Brenda Thrasher, Terrie May, and Patsy Giles whose terms will expire on September 6, 2015. They have not expressed an interest in being reappointed. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: (1) Roberta H. George - Writer and Editor (Snake Nation Press) - Second Choice (2) Monica Haynes - Landscape and Grounds Superintendent (Valdosta State University), (3) Craig Steckelberg - Architect/Project & Construction Manager (Moody AFB, AECOM) - Second Choice, and (4) Laura Jennifer Yale - Landscape Designer (ASA Engineering & Surveying, Inc. - First Choice.

Mayor Gayle asked for nominations for the Valdosta Tree Commission. Councilman Carroll placed in consideration the name of Monica Haynes. Councilman Payton placed in consideration the name of Craig Steckelberg. Councilman Norton placed in consideration the name of Laura Jennifer Yale. There being no other nominations, Mayor Gayle closed nominations.

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion to appoint Monica Haynes, Craig Steckelberg, and Laura Jennifer Yale to the Valdosta Tree Commission.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to appoint Monica Haynes, Craig Steckelberg, and Laura Jennifer Yale to serve a term of four years on the Valdosta Tree Commission.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta-Lowndes Co. Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the appointment to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals will be postponed and re-advertised at a later date for the Electrician's slot that was held by Ronald Cowart whose term expired on June 30, 2015.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the second City of Valdosta Gateway sign is being erected at the intersection of Madison Highway and Inner Perimeter Road. It will be a replicate of the sign on North Valdosta Road.

There was a Press Release sent out earlier this week to notify citizens that Phase II of the Smoke Testing Program will start on August 17, 2015.

It is back to school week for the public and private school systems so citizens are encouraged to slow down and pay attention to the School Safety Zones. Valdosta State University will also be starting back within the next couple of weeks as well and there will be 11,500 students back in and around the City.

The Police Department has had body cameras for some time now on all of the Officers but we did not have them on the Detectives. We have ordered additional body cameras which should be arriving within the next two weeks and all 125 sworn personnel of the Valdosta Police Department will be wearing body cameras. The Police Department has been ahead of the curve on doing this as compared to other agencies around the country.

A Press Release was sent out this afternoon regarding the 3,600 street lights which will be converted to LED lighting between now and December 31, 2015 at no cost to the City. We are one of the first eight governments in the State of Georgia to do this out of over 700 local cities and counties in Georgia. During the first phase, Georgia Power will replace all of the 100, 150, and 250 watt fixtures in the City. There is an activation device which will turn the lights on at dusk and turn them off at daylight. It is also electronically monitored so that Georgia Power will be notified immediately if a lamp is not working. These are high quality lights and they are much more energy efficient so the City and the citizens will be saving money. The lighting is more uniform and the bulbs have a life expectancy of ten years which will mean less maintenance. The replacement work will begin on August 17, 2015 and it will be done by work district.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Wright stated that the LED lights will run off of a lot less electricity and the City will save a lot of money using these lights. He also inquired as to whether the Engineering Department could put the traffic signals at Park Avenue as a priority.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

John Robinson, 3287 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that the City has put the Valdosta Small Emerging Business Program (VSEB) into place; however, the contractors who participate in the VSEB Program are like people who have been placed in a raging sea where the currents overtake them and they are swept away. There is no one who can throw them a life jacket. Council members are the ones who are available to cast them a life jacket and save them. There is funding out there and it is reflected throughout the City. Some of the contractors have problems that they have to deal with based upon the economic structure that they are going through. The VSEB Program was designed to help them and it has made some progress; however, at the same time there are a lot of contractors who participated at first but have since gone out of business. A lot of these people are black, low income contractors who need assistance. They need someone to put together a conservative plan. They do not have any banking institutions and often they have no more than a contract. If there is a flaw in the contract then it seems as if they do not receive any assistance. Mr. Robinson asked that Council consider putting a Program together that can help the smaller contractors to succeed. Mr. Robinson stated that he has been in the community since 1994 and the black community has not changed one bit. The only thing that has been put into place there is a monument honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He has asked how much money that monument has made for the community. There was supposed to be more work done on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor it but it seems as if that has ceased. It is unreal to believe that a City of this magnitude has upper echelons of power that always seem to reign and the people of low income, black and white, cannot get any help. If someone comes in that can bring them economic justice there is always something that prevents that from occurring. Council is the life source and bloodline to these communities and the decisions that you make here are the ones that help people to make it. People have ups and downs and a lot of businesses are started in their backyards but somehow they get caught up in life and get destroyed. Council should consider all of the factors pertaining to helping the VSEB contractors instead of watching them fade away. This would also help to address some of the impediments that the City is facing. Council members can help bring about these changes by the decisions that are made.

Linda Battle stated that she resided in Councilman Sonny Vickers' District and she was appreciative of the opportunity to address her concern for liberty and justice. Throughout the years she has tried to make sense of people being superficially divided by race, color, language, religion, financial status, and political boundaries. Every form or application in America requires race and she always responds with the word "human" because there is only one race and that is the human race. We are supported by the same food, hurt by the same wounds, wounded by the same wrongs, and we should enjoy the same liberties and be protected by the same laws. Our revolution is not African-Americans against Caucasians but right against wrong in the pursuit of happiness and equality. They are not looking for a hug because they get that from their families. They want liberty and to live as mankind should. Had their ancestors been taught the language and customs of America instead of having laws that did not allow them to learn to read or write, the way they are perceived would be a lot different. Nevertheless, they have made the most rapid progress under the most trying circumstances. They are not ashamed of their ancestors who were enslaved because the dishonor was being a slave holder. President Barack Hussein Obama is proof of that but they are still experiencing disparity between colors. For those who are tired of hearing about racism,

imagine how much more tired they are experiencing it. Also, regarding the Police Department and the body cameras, according to the article in the Valdosta Daily Times dated August 3, 2014, they were very proud that they had received cameras for everyone in the Police Department. Ms. Battle stated that she also took the Police Department's Citizens Academy Program in 2010 and at that time the Detectives were wearing body cameras. The cameras are really not new because they just outfitted everyone in 2014 so for them to come back now and ask for money for body cameras is bogus.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Wright, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the August 6, 2015 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:04 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, August 20, 2015.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta