

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JULY 23, 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: Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, Tim Carroll, Ben Norton, Alvin Payton, Jr., Robert Yost, and Sandra Tooley. Councilman James Wright was absent. The invocation was given by Associate Pastor Caleb Clay, Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the July 9, 2015 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to enter into a Lease-To-Own Agreement with Forensic Technology for an Integrated Identification System (IBIS) Trax-HD 3D System.

Police Chief Brian Childress stated that the Valdosta/Lowndes County Regional Crime Lab has a firearms/ballistic section where analysis and identification of firearms ballistics data is conducted. The section has had great success in helping solve shootings and murders in Valdosta. The system, referred to as the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS), is tied into the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) operated by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). Since 2003, the laboratory has operated an older Heritage IBIS System which was provided by ATF. Currently the Crime Laboratory has two certified Firearms Examiners who are authorized per ATF and Crime Lab Accreditation Standards to operate the IBIS System. Over the past few years, the City has paid the maintenance cost for the older system which is now considered obsolete and no longer supported by ATF. Many other laboratories have updated their IBIS System; however, we currently pay approximately \$45,000 annually to maintain the older system. Forensic Technology has agreed to replace the older system with a new state-of-the-art High Definition (HD), Three-Dimensional (3D) System referred to as the IBIS Trax-HD-3D System under a four-year, Lease-to-Own Agreement with annual payments of \$52,651 which will commence in the FY 2016 City Budget. This request is a sole-source request because the IBIS Systems are connected to the NIBIN operated by the ATF. At this time, the Forensic Technology IBIS Units are the only systems sanctioned by the ATF to work on NIBIN. Also, per the City of Valdosta's Purchasing Ordinance, we have discretion when purchasing information technology. If this is approved, the City of Valdosta would be the only Agency in the State of Georgia using the new 3D High Definition System. Chief Childress recommended that Council approve the request to enter into a Lease-To-Own Agreement with Forensic Technology for an Integrated Identification System (IBIS) Trax-HD 3D System. Councilman Norton inquired as to the life span of this equipment. Chief Childress stated that the life span would be approximately 10-15 years. Mayor Gayle inquired as to whether the Maintenance Agreement would go away. Chief Childress stated that only on the first year. The second, third, and fourth year we would have a \$20,000-\$25,000 Maintenance Agreement; however, after it is paid off then we would pay \$25,000 per year. In the long run, this will give us the most updated technology and will save us a lot of money.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a request to enter into a Lease-to-Own Agreement with Forensic Technology for an Integrated Identification System (IBIS) Trax-HD 3D System for the Valdosta/Lowndes County Regional Crime Lab.

Consideration of request for the City's participation in a Valdosta-Lowndes County MPO Study of Transit in the Urbanized Area of Lowndes County.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that in 2003, based upon the City's designation as a Metropolitan Statistical Area, the local governments were required to form a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This organization has the following three Committees: (1) the Citizens Advisory Committee, (2) the Technical

Committee, and (3) the Policy Committee. The MPO receives designated funding from both the Federal government (FTA and FHWA) and the State (GDOT) for planning, as well as project funding on a shared basis with the City and County. Over the past decade, the MPO has had two Studies of the Public Transit System and each time the City and County concluded the Project was not affordable at that time. The last Study was approximately five years ago. Since that time, many innovations have taken place in regards to how Transit can and is being provided in other Metropolitan areas. There are new models where communities of Valdosta's size are buying equipment and then outsourcing the operation of it so it significantly reduces the risk and cost to the local government. In fact, this community is the only Metropolitan community in Georgia without a Public Transit System so we feel now would be the appropriate time to conduct a Transit Study to determine if it is feasible and affordable to do so. The Federal government provides funding each year to each MPO in the United States for planning purposes and for providing public transportation. In the case of our MPO, approximately \$1,000,000 is provided each year for transit, but since no Public Transit System currently exists, those funds are returned to the State and are being re-allocated to the other Metropolitan areas in Georgia that are providing transit. The MPO is allowed to keep up to two years' worth of funding, so at this time, the MPO has approximately \$2,000,000 available for studying and implementing a Public Transportation System. If not spent, these funds will be given to other communities. The MPO has recommended a Transit Study be performed to look at the issue and develop a proposed plan, which includes looking at several options for operation of the system that have never been studied before. These new innovative operation systems could make it affordable; however, without a Study, that cannot be answered because the costs are unknown. Furthermore, the proposed cost of the Transit Study is \$125,027.02 with \$100,021.62 to be paid with Federal funds that could soon be given to other communities in Georgia if not spent here locally. The State would provide \$12,502.70 and the City and County would provide only \$6,251.35 each to have the \$125,027.02 Transit Study performed. In the last meeting of the MPO, which includes City, County, and Regional Representatives, Mayor Gayle made the motion to approve this which passed with a 4-2 vote. The MPO is ready and prepared to issue the Request for Proposal (RFP) to have the Transit Study conducted. Larry Hanson, City Manager, recommended that Council authorize the City's participation as requested in the amount of \$6,251.35. Corey Hull, MPO Transportation Planner, will be available to answer any other questions that the Mayor and Council might have on this request.

Council Carroll inquired as to what kind of feedback and turnout they had at the MPO Transit Study Forum held the other night at the South Georgia Regional Library. Corey Hull, MPO Transportation Planner, stated that at the first Forum for the 2040 Transportation Plan, there were approximately 25 citizens in attendance. There were a lot of general comments and questions and there was not any one particular issue that stood out. There was another Open House yesterday with approximately five citizens in attendance, and there will be another one next Thursday at the Southside Library. Larry Hanson stated that copies of the MPO Meeting Minutes were provided to the Mayor and Council so that they could review the conversation and the position of the local governments.

Councilman Payton stated that there were some challenges in 2005 with obtaining input from the citizens and inquired as to what the Transit Study would entail. Corey Hull, MPO Transportation Planner, stated that they are looking at asking a Consultant to provide a recommendation for implementation of a Public Transit System for the urban area that is operated as efficiently and cost effectively as possible to reduce the local monetary burden. Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that it is always a struggle to get citizens' involvement in obtaining feedback and opinions and inquired as to whether there was anything in the RFP that proposes outreach in order to get more input from the community. Corey Hull stated that they have included some stakeholder outreach and general public comments in the RFP. They are also going to supplement this with some free technical assistance on public involvement from the Community Transportation Association of America for communities implementing a Public Transit System.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she was in favor of the Transit Study but there is one thing that keeps coming up when speaking to citizens and that is that nothing was implemented after the first Study conducted approximately five years ago. Now there are a lot of changes so many citizens are inquiring as to whether we would be able to move forward within five years if another Study is done so that it would not be stagnated. Corey Hull stated that ultimately the Transit Study will answer questions that our local officials have and it will be up to them to take the step to conduct the Study. Mayor Gayle stated that the Study will tell us how much it would cost and what the most cost effective system would be. It may not be buses but it could be some other form of transportation. It would also provide suggested routes. We would have to take that information and decide if we are going to move forward with it and how the money was going to be raised to do it. This is providing information

to us in order to make a decision. Larry Hanson stated that five years ago it was recommended that local governments buy the equipment, which was several million dollars, and at the time there was a million in stimulus money available. Then the local government would be the provider of the service so there was a lot of cost in that which included building a center to maintain the buses, hiring the drivers, and managing the system and bus stops. The information provided to the City and County by the Consultant was based on what they expected the ridership to be, revenue from ridership, and revenue from sponsorships. The Study showed there would be a \$500,000 annual operating loss so the City and County both voted not to proceed with implementing it. It was a conscious vote based on the fact that the revenue was not there to do it. Now we can conduct another Study and we will get the information we need to have an informed discussion about it and no one can really predict the outcome because we do not know what the Study will show.

Councilman Yost stated that he was a little confused with the information that he had been given and inquired as to whether the County was in favor of the Study and if they were going to support it. The Mayor and Council need to make their own decision on this and if we are expecting the other governing bodies to be a part of this then we need to know if they are voting any time soon and whether they are in favor or against. We need to know something from the County Chairman or the County Manager as to what they are thinking.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Payton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a request for the City's participation in a Valdosta-Lowndes County MPO Study of Transit in the Urbanized Area of Lowndes County.

Consideration of a request for the City's participation in a Valdosta-Lowndes County MPO/GDOT Study and Concept for a truck by-pass.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that in 2003 the City of Valdosta was designated as a Metropolitan Statistical Area and the local governments were required to form a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO receives funding from both the Federal and State governments for planning and projects on a shared basis with the City and the County. For the past 20 years or more, there has been a conversation about the need for a by-pass to eliminate the heavy trucks in the Downtown area. These trucks present a danger to the traveling public and to the many pedestrians who frequent the Downtown area. They have a negative impact on the historic buildings, make Downtown less friendly, pollute the air, and disrupt many public events that take place throughout the year. Perimeter Road solved much, but not all, of the north and south truck issue; however, it did nothing to eliminate the east/west truck issue. Many of our neighboring communities such as Moultrie-Colquitt County, Thomasville-Thomas County, Albany-Dougherty County, and others have worked together with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to develop a plan, build a truck by-pass, and make the existing State routes through those Downtowns locally maintained streets. Once this is done, the local community can prohibit thru truck traffic. Until that is done, the local community cannot legally prohibit truck traffic on a State or Federal highway; therefore, the only solution is a truck by-pass. Currently, Douglas-Coffee County has worked with GDOT and they are about to have a multi-million dollar truck by-pass constructed. The MPO has been informed by GDOT that if the excess funds are not spent within the next Federal fiscal year, those funds will have to be returned and given to other communities. The MPO has recommended these excess funds be used to conduct a professional Truck Study to look at several alternatives that have been suggested and to develop a proposed plan that would be acceptable to the City, County, GDOT, and meet all Federal requirements. This type of Study has never been performed. The proposed cost of the Study is \$103,756.61 with \$83,005.29 to be paid with Federal funds that will soon be returned if not spent here locally. The City and County would provide \$10,375.66 each to have the \$103,756.61 Study performed. At the last meeting of the MPO, which includes City, County and Regional Representatives, the MPO voted to move forward with the Study. Larry Hanson, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the City's share of the necessary funding for the Truck Traffic Study in the amount of \$10,375.66 so that the \$103,756.61 Study can be completed and avoid loss of the Federal funds. Without the Study, there is no chance of having a truck by-pass become a reality. This Study will bring together the City, County, and GDOT to develop a plan that will work for all parties and ensure the Project can be eligible for Federal construction dollars.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Vickers to approve a request for the City to participate in a Valdosta-Lowndes County MPO/GDOT Truck Transit Study and Concept for a truck by-pass. Councilman Payton seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (4-0-2) with Councilman Yost and Councilwoman Tooley abstaining.

Consideration of an amendment to the CDM Smith contract for additional work performed during the drilling phase of Wells 9 and 10.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that in May, 2012, the City of Valdosta solicited the services of CDM Smith for the new Test/Production Wells No. 9 and 10 as part of the City's plan to provide rehabilitation and abandonment of existing wells. This Project has been critical for the City, as some of the existing production wells have identified groundwater under the direct influence of surface water and the City needed reliable capacity to meet the water demands. This Project is funded by a low interest loan from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). The Project started in June, 2012 and the design and engineering services for Wells No. 9 and 10 were originally set to be completed in 500 days. The Project was stopped after the construction of Test Well No. 9 in order to renegotiate the GEFA loan. In addition, Rowe Well Drilling, the drilling contractor, ran into construction issues that also delayed the schedule and caused additional expenditures which included the following: (1) Drilling for Well No. 9 was started on January, 2013 and completed at the end of May, 2013. Wet weather conditions caused site-access difficulties for the drilling contractor and resulted in excess Resident Project Representative (RPR) time. Once the test well was drilled for Well No. 9, the Project was halted for six months while the City worked on restructuring the GEFA loan. Work on Well No. 10 was not started until December, 2013 and, therefore, a critical permit extension from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) was required. CDM Smith prepared and secured the permit extension from EPD for one year for the completion of work on Well No. 10. (2) Rowe Well Drilling remobilized in December, 2013 and finished drilling and testing Well No. 10 in late September, 2014. A series of issues related to drilling occurred at this well, including equipment mobilization conditions (ground conditions to stage equipment) bore-hole collapses and drill bit collapses which caused the additional need for on-site RPR observations during the installation, testing, and commissioning of Well No. 10. Due to setbacks during the drilling phase of Well No. 10, an additional five months was needed to complete this phase and caused CDM Smith to incur additional RPR costs to ensure the successful completion of this well. (3) CDM Smith provided assistance to the City pertaining to GEFA contract management. Throughout the design period, CDM Smith provided input to the City regarding how the Project was tracking (with the onset of delays from drilling) and the bidding environment anticipated for the construction of the production well portion of the job. Services included coordination with GEFA for loan documentation requirements, coordination with the City, and budget tracking updates on monthly calls with CDM Smith throughout from June, 2014 through April, 2015. Furthermore, the additional 18 months of contract time needed to bring this Project to completion also caused additional management expenditures which included restart time, additional invoicing, planning, and scheduling. CDM Smith was able to successfully complete the design and the Project was awarded to the lowest bidder, Radney Plumbing, Inc., in April, 2015. The Project received a Notice-to-Proceed on June 8, 2015, and is currently scheduled for completion by April 3, 2016. CDM Smith is requesting an Amendment to their existing Contract in the amount of \$40,040 to offset costs they incurred while working to secure successful completion of the Project during construction of the production wells and pipelines. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the Amendment to the CDM Smith Contract for additional work performed during the drilling phase of Wells 9 and 10.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Payton to approve an Amendment to the CDM Smith Contract in the amount of \$40,040 for additional work performed during the drilling phase of Wells 9 and 10. Councilman Vickers seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (5-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

Consideration of a request to award a contract for Phase 4 of the Manhole Rehabilitation Project.

Henry Hicks, Utilities Director, stated that the Utilities Department has over 6,500 sewer manholes within its sanitary sewer system. Many of these manholes are at least 30 years old or older with some almost 100 years old. Many are deteriorated due to hydrogen sulfide gas corrosion over the years. Age and constant corrosive effects of sewer gases have caused a portion of the manholes to be at a point where failure is likely without immediate rehabilitation. As manholes fail, they cause sewage spills in the vicinity of the manholes which in most cases create a violation of State and Federal regulations as well as public health and safety issues. Failure to address this issue would result in regulatory action including but not limited to fines and/or Consent Orders. To address this and avoid regulator and environmental consequences, the Utilities Department has implemented an annual Manhole Replacement and Rehabilitation Program using structurally sound liner technology and addressing the most seriously deteriorated manholes first. This will be an ongoing Project until the entire system is evaluated and appropriate corrective measures are taken where needed. Since 2011, Utilities Department Staff has inspected about 50% of the sewer system's manholes focusing on areas within the City where prior manhole failures

occurred, recurring sewer overflows occurred, and where defects were detected through smoke testing. From these investigations, Staff has compiled a list of 120 manholes meeting one or more of the criteria required for rehabilitation. The first three phases of this Project addressed approximately 98 manholes. This will be the fourth phase and will address 30 additional manholes in our system. On May 27, 2015, a pre-bid conference was held to review the expectations and requirements of this work as well as answer pertinent questions from the prospective bidders. Bids were received on June 23, 2015 with the low bid submitted by Mechanical Jobbers in the amount of \$86,939.85; however, their bid was removed based on negative feedback from reference checks. Mechanical Jobbers provided four references with three responding with positive feedback and one indicating that they would use them again but they need to be monitored closely. The Utilities Department also sought independent references and received two from municipalities known to have contracted with Mechanical Jobbers. Both gave negative feedback and conveyed that they would not use them again due to poor performance and inadequate liner product. Additionally, one of these municipalities removed Mechanical Jobbers from a major project and replaced them with a different contractor due to performance issues. Based on their record of questionable performance and their use of a liner product that has not been tested in the City system, Mechanical Jobbers is not recommended for this Project. Radney Plumbing, Inc. submitted the second lowest bid in the amount of \$125,295.66. Radney Plumbing uses a proven manhole lining product and has a consistent record of good performance. A 10% contingency is requested on this Project due to potential unknown structural issues associated with the manholes. Henry Hicks recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Radney Plumbing, Inc. in the amount of \$125,295.66 for Phase 4 of the Manhole Rehabilitation Project plus a 10% contingency.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid submitted by Radney Plumbing, Inc. in the amount of \$125,295.66 plus a 10% contingency to handle any unforeseen circumstances for Phase 4 of the Manhole Rehabilitation Project.

## **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Main Street is sponsoring Restaurant Week in the Downtown area this week. Restaurants are offering specials each night and citizens are encouraged to participate.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the City's Photo Contest Awards reception was held Monday and Mayor Gayle recognized the winners. This has become a popular and beneficial event for our City.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there were three Transportation Meetings held and this is a good way for citizens to provide input regarding the 2040 Transportation Vision Plan. The final meeting is scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the McMullen Southside Library.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Fire Department and the Valdosta Police Department will be participating in a Blood Drive for the American Red Cross on July 30, 2015 at the City Hall Annex. The goal is to exceed 100 pints of blood.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there are several vacancies coming up on the Boards and Commissions. The slots that are open are on the following Boards: (1) Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory Committee, (2) Public Art Advisory Committee, (3) Valdosta Tree Commission, and (4) Valdosta-Lowndes County Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals. The appointments will be made at the August 6, 2015 Council Meeting and citizens are encouraged to apply.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the inaugural Fire Academy was well received and citizens have the opportunity to participate in year two, with the deadline for applications on July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, congratulated Municipal Court Judge Vernita Bender for being recognized for her efforts in providing a Mock Trial Program for students. Hundreds of local youth have been educated on the workings of local government and the court system as a result of this program.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the millage rate is normally set at the first meeting in August; however, the Tax Assessors Office and Tax Commissioners Office have yet to provide a completed digest to the City; therefore, a Called Meeting will be held in late August to set the millage rate.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that there will be a Street Renaming Ceremony for Ruth Council on Saturday, August 2, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. at Crowder Street.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that Georgia Power will be replacing streetlights with LED lighting beginning in mid to late August. The LED lights are more energy efficient and last longer than normal streetlights as well as provide a higher quality and more uniform lighting.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Insurance Services Organization will visit Valdosta on August 10<sup>th</sup> to evaluate the Fire Department and determine our new ISO Rating. Lots of hard work and effort is taking place for this important determination. Property insurance rates are based partially on the ISO rating. The Valdosta Fire Department has had a goal for many years of achieving a Class 1 rating and we are hopeful this year to finally achieve it. Very few Departments achieve a Class 1 rating.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner will be in Valdosta next week and he will be viewing various projects and concerns, particularly Forrest Street, Five Points, Oak Street Extension, and the Downtown truck issue.

### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Vickers stated that Pat Wells, Customer Service Representative, will be retiring and the City is hosting a Retirement Celebration for her on Friday, July 24, 2015 at the Customer Service Department.

Councilman Yost discussed his concerns about the two studies approved tonight and what Lowndes County intended to do and how the MPO might proceed based upon whether the County does or does not participate.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

J. D. Rice, 501 Knob Hill, stated that he wanted to commend the Mayor and Council for approving the City's share of funding for the Transportation and Truck Traffic By-Pass Study.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Gayle entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the July 23, 2015 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:24 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, August 6, 2015.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta