

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019
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, Sandra Tooley, Eric Howard, Andy Gibbs, and Vivian Miller-Cody. The invocation was given by Pastor Lonnie Grant, Chaplain with the Valdosta Police Department, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 19, 2019 were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-13, A RESOLUTION FOR A MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF LICENSES FOR RETAIL PACKAGE STORES IN THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of licenses for retail package stores in the City of Valdosta.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta is responsible for regulating the renewal and issuance of alcohol licenses, including retail package licenses, within the City Limits of Valdosta. Chapter 6, Alcoholic Beverages, of the City of Valdosta's Municipal Code regulates the sale of alcoholic beverages in accordance with O.C.G.A. Title 3, Alcoholic Beverages. This industry has undergone significant changes in recent years and Valdosta has experienced growth in this sector. This has presented the City with the challenge of ensuring that the alcohol license process remains effective and continues to grant licenses appropriately. Appropriate licensing decisions are particularly important for retail package stores given their impact on the surrounding area. The City of Valdosta is currently reviewing the Ordinance that governs alcohol licensing to ensure that it properly serves the public interest. In light of the recent changes in the industry, the significant State legislation affecting the process, and the impact of alcohol sales on the quality of life in a community, the City of Valdosta is asking for a Moratorium of 180 days (or until lifted by Council action) on the issuance of licenses for retail package stores. A Resolution has been prepared for the issuance of a Moratorium. The Moratorium would not affect applications submitted for approval prior to the passage of this Resolution. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of licenses for retail package stores in the City of Valdosta.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve Resolution No. 2019-13, a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of licenses for retail package stores in the City of Valdosta, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-14, A RESOLUTION FOR A MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF LICENSES FOR NEW VAPING ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of licenses for new vaping establishments in the City of Valdosta.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that vaping has become increasingly popular, especially among teenagers and young adults, even as concerns about its health consequences have grown. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is investigating the effects of vaping and the Federal Government is preparing to ban the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. Several states and many cities are considering banning sales to those under 21. The City of Valdosta is home to a small but growing number of vaping establishments with five dedicated "vaping shops." The City issues licenses based on current laws and regulations which appear to be changing rapidly in response to increasing evidence of the harmful side effects of vaping. It appears that additional regulations may be needed for

this industry both to protect the health of Valdosta's population and to remain in compliance with emerging Federal and possibly State legislation. The City of Valdosta is currently reviewing the rapid changes in the regulatory landscape as well as the impact of these businesses on the local community. Given the rate at which new information is coming to light and the number of changes being made to the laws affecting this industry, the City is asking for a Moratorium of 180 days (or until lifted by council action) on the issuance of licenses for new vaping establishments. A Resolution has been prepared for the issuance of a Moratorium on new vaping establishments in the City of Valdosta. The Moratorium would not affect applications submitted for approval prior the passage of this Resolution. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of licenses for new vaping establishments in the City of Valdosta.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve Resolution No. 2019-14, a Resolution for a Moratorium on the issuance of new vaping establishments in the City of Valdosta, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-15, A RESOLUTION TO APPLY FOR A SECTION 108 LOAN FOR THE VALDOSTA AREA BUSINESS INCUBATOR (VABI)

Consideration of a Resolution to apply for a Section 108 Loan for the Valdosta Area Business Incubator (VABI).

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, stated that in the early 2000s, while gathering data for an Annual Report to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce Board regarding the economic status of the community, a startling statistic arose--Lowndes County's average weekly wages had fallen to the bottom quartile of the State's counties. Unfortunately, Lowndes County was not producing the high-quality jobs needed to keep our best and brightest in South Georgia. Small businesses are the fastest growing segment in American commerce and create 98% of all new jobs. Over 66% of small businesses fail in the first year. Conversely, business incubator "graduates" enjoy an 87% plus success rate. Often entrepreneurs know how to produce "the work" but lack the skills necessary to operate a business. Start-up costs and fixed expenses of operations drain hard pressed and limited capital. Starting a business in an entrepreneurial environment, such as the Valdosta Area Business Incubator (VABI), allows the small business owner to focus on being successful. A business incubator is a temporary home for the start-up. It is not intended to be a permanent, inexpensive space to do business, but rather is designed to provide resources and assistance to early stage companies during their critical development stages. The primary mission of the Valdosta Area Business Incubator will be to ensure that its business clients are financially viable. Entrepreneurs need a professional atmosphere, accurate business advice, and office equipment but often cannot afford it. VABI will provide an integrated set of business services to support young companies during their critical early years. The Chamber commissioned Dr. Cynthia Royal Tori, Ph.D., Professor of Economics at the Langdale College of Business and regional economic forecaster for the Center of Business and Economic Research at Valdosta State University to conduct an independent study of the economic impact of the VABI. Among her findings, Dr. Tori states, "For every \$1 million in expenditures, total output in the Valdosta-MSA will increase by \$1.6 million. Given the capacity of the Incubator and the expected success rate, the Incubator's expected total economic impact in year five is \$9.7 million and 81 jobs." Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve a Resolution authorizing the City of Valdosta to apply for a Section 108 Loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve Resolution No. 2019-15, a Resolution to apply for a Section 108 Loan for the Valdosta Area Business Incubator (VABI), the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for replacement of the sanitary sewer system on Sustella Avenue.

Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that in early August of 2019, a City Utilities crew investigated a possible sewer collapse under a parking area near the 1400 block of Sustella Avenue at One Mile Branch. Following a subsequent video inspection of the sewer system, personnel determined that a 30-inch sanitary sewer main was the source of the problem. They discovered a small section of the main had partially collapsed. The

collapse is restricting sewage flow which increases the risk of sewer backups and overflows. A point repair of the collapsed section was considered, but Staff determined the best course of action to prevent future pipe failure and overflows, was to replace the entire 350 feet section of the sewer system, including the manholes. Cured-In-Place-Pipe (CIPP) lining was not considered because of the age and poor condition of the existing pipe. On August 27, 2019, the Utilities Department advertised for bids to replace the sewer main, two manholes, and to rehab the third manhole. A mandatory pre-bid conference was held on September 11, 2019 with four potential bidders attending. Bids were received from two bidders and opened on September 26, 2019. The lowest responsive and eligible bid was submitted by James Warren & Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$551,100, which includes a 10% contingency. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by James Warren & Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$551,100, which includes a 10% contingency, for replacement of the sanitary sewer system on Sustella Avenue.

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by James Warren & Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$551,100, which includes a 10% contingency, for replacement of the sanitary sewer system on Sustella Avenue.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to purchase Structural Firefighting Gear for the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that it has been a goal of the Fire Department over many years to provide members of fire suppression in the Operations Division with two sets of firefighting (turn-out) gear. All other fire personnel only require one set. The gear referred to is the heavy fireproof gear worn by Firefighters while on an incident scene. This gear protects the Firefighter from moisture, flame, and heat. All gear must adhere to current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards. This gear is custom fit to each Firefighter after measurements are taken. Due to the Standards that must be met, older gear is eventually rotated out of service and replaced over an NFPA specified time frame. After typical use, the gear is thoroughly cleaned from smoke residue, other contaminants, and debris, and then dried before the next required use using special machines at the Fire Station. If another call for service is required before the proper cleaning and drying takes place, the Firefighters have to put the unclean or wet gear back on and proceed to the new scene. Having clean gear is not only important for the health of the team, but also for the working environment. This is the reasoning behind two sets of gear for the Operations Division personnel. Although this purchase will not meet the entirety of the goal, it will hopefully begin the process. The Fire Department currently has \$55,000 in their current year Budget to purchase turn-out gear. The Fire Department tested certain brands that meet the current NFPA standards in the field under real working conditions. Globe was selected as the best gear that would meet the needs of our Firefighters as well as the working conditions while providing a top tier 10-year warranty. The Fire Department would like to request the purchase of 30 sets (pants \$767.38 each and coats \$1,026.70 each) of gear from Ten-8 Fire & Safety Equipment of GA in the amount of \$53,822.40 utilizing the NPP.GOV National Contract that is utilized by government agencies across the nation. The Purchasing Ordinance allows this type of purchase and the pricing offered in the contract is both competitive and fair in the opinion of the Fire Department. Chief Boutwell recommended that Council approve the purchase of 30 sets of gear (pants \$767.38 each and coats \$1,026.70 each) from Ten-8 Fire & Safety Equipment of GA in the amount of \$53,822.40.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to purchase Structural Firefighting Gear for the Valdosta Fire Department.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that he attended a Community Meeting that was held by Councilman Andy Gibbs and Councilman Eric Howard to educate the people in our community. He also commended the Council members who were in attendance because it was very informative. The Meeting was a step in the right direction. We hear a lot of criticism about the Mayor and Council from people who have never attended a Meeting and they did not come to that Meeting. He commended them for their efforts and when other Council Districts host that type of event it would be outstanding for the other Council members to attend as well. It is a good example of what can go on in our beloved community under the type of government that we have.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the Maker's Market will be held on Saturday, October 12, 2019 at the old Courthouse from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It has been very successful this year and it brings a lot of people to our Downtown. The Public Arts Advisory Committee is hosting an Air Art Competition Downtown as well, and the Valdosta Youth Council will be placing stormwater markers on the drains and making rain art on the sidewalks in the Downtown area on Saturday, October 12, 2019.

The next Food Truck Thursday will be held on October 17, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the corner lot located at Central Avenue and Lee Street. The event continues to grow each month and has been well received.

The Annual Health Fair will be held on Thursday, October 24, 2019 at 11:00 a.m. at Mathis Auditorium. This year the theme is "Follow the Yellow Brick Road to Wellness."

The City of Valdosta will be sponsoring a Blood Drive on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 at the City Hall Annex Building in the Multi-Purpose Room from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that he and Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, attended the North Florida Regional Council Meeting in Madison, Florida on Thursday, October 9, 2019. The meeting went very well, and Darryl did a fantastic job in presenting our progress on infrastructure.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carroll inquired as to how many Bar-B-Que Boston butts, ribs, and plates were sold to help out the two Police Officers who are dealing with some health issues. Chief Manahan stated that they have sold 212 Boston butts, 200 ribs, and 600 plates in the past two days.

Councilman Howard stated that we are our best commodity as Mayor and Council and when we hear people criticize us, we need to have a list of accomplishments readily available so that they can count them off. We are advocates for our City employees such as the Police Officers, Firefighters, Public Works, and Engineering, and if we do not take the time to educate ourselves on the projects then we are doing them a disservice. We ask the City employees to continue their hard work because we are very proud of all that they have accomplished.

Councilman Gibbs stated that the newly reformatted Departmental Report that Ashlyn Becton, Public Information Officer, prepared looks really good and contains a lot of great information. This will help him whenever he has citizens calling him about various things.

Councilman Vickers stated he has been keeping citizens informed for many years. He also asked Mayor Gayle to give an update on SPLOST VIII. Mayor Gayle stated that the SPLOST Committee has some signs and billboards which were donated. They are also almost up to their budget with collections so you will start to see more advertising.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that the Town Hall Meetings are great, and it is a wonderful way to get information out to the citizens. It would also be a good idea to have our Media Coordinator film some of the Town Hall Meetings and put on Channel 17. This would be a great way to get information out to the citizens because a lot of them do watch Channel 17.

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 October 10, 2019 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:00 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 24, 2019.