

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Scott James Matheson 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 Mayor Matheson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Recognition of the 2019-2020 Valdosta Youth Council Members.

Mayor Matheson stated that former Mayor John Gayle had a vision for a Youth Council which came to fruition on September 24, 2015 when the Valdosta City Council passed a Resolution to establish the first Valdosta Youth Council. Though the 2019-2020 VYC Year was cut short due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we wanted to have a virtual graduation for the VYC Members.

A short video was presented which included the following: Emily Dinkins, VYC President for 2019-2020, greeted the VYC Members and expressed her appreciation for everyone who participated this year. She has not seen everyone in quite a while and was sorry that the year was cut short; however, they had lots of fun. She will miss everyone and wished all the best to the VYC Members in their future endeavors.

Former Mayor John Gayle stated that he was the Mayor from 2012-2020 and during that time he was very proud to start the Valdosta Youth Council. It has been a real rewarding experience for him. Last year, he was surprised and honored that the VYC established the John Gayle Leadership Award for his leadership, his commitment, his dedication, and his passion to serve the citizens of our community and make Valdosta a better place to live, work, and play. He received the first John Gayle Leadership Award that year and it was a distinct honor. He stated that it was a pleasure for him to return to virtually present the John Gayle Leadership Award to a Valdosta Youth Council Member who exhibited the qualities of leadership, made a positive difference, inspired others, and who was actively involved in community service. Former Mayor John Gayle presented the John Gayle Leadership Award to Caleb Perez, an 8th Grade Student at Hahira Middle School.

Mayor Matheson stated that it was former Mayor John Gayle’s desire to help young people build leadership skills, learn about civic responsibility, gain a better understanding of municipal government, and prepare them for a lifetime of public and community service. Now in its fifth year, the Valdosta Youth Council has its largest class of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders with 32 members from 11 different schools in Valdosta and Lowndes County. Throughout the 2019-2020 program year, VYC members embraced their mission and accomplished the following: (1) Gained an understanding and appreciation of municipal government by meeting monthly with a variety of City and local leaders including the City Manager, City Clerk, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Police K-9 Unit, and Municipal Court Judge, (2) Participated in Sidewalk Stencil Art in the Downtown area, along with marking Stormwater drains and a Scrapbook event, (3) Completed one organized cleanup of their adopted .6-mile portion of North Lee Street resulting in 12, thirty-gallon bags of trash removed from this City street, (4) Participated in the Fall Electronics Recycling Event with Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful, (5) Toured the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts, (6) Participated in the City of Valdosta’s Christmas Tree Lighting Event and had a float in the Christmas Parade, (7) Participated in a fluid artwork event and then sold their artwork to raise money to purchase toiletry items for the homeless population in our community, (8) Hosted a Leadership Development Training in January, 2020 where VYC members identified leadership traits in themselves, as well as in others, (9) Took a Legislative Trip to Atlanta and toured the Capitol and the Apex Museum, (10) Collectively completed more than 100 hours of community service (a minimum of 8 hours each), and (11) Produced seven VYC Video spots that were shown on Facebook, YouTube, and City Focus with the assistance of Metro 17’s Marcus McConico to discuss issues being addressed each month at VYC meetings. Though the VYC Year was cut short due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the VYC members were commended for their leadership and for having over 100 hours of community service. Mayor

Matheson stated that he wanted to congratulate the following VYC Members on a job well done and we look forward to seeing many of them back again next year: Dean Barnett (Vice President), Myriah Bennett, Najah Blankumsee (Secretary/Treasurer), Avery Childers (Parliamentarian), John Laurent Dean, Jalen Denton, Emily Dinkins (President), Brooke Felkel, Kapreal Griffin, Thomas Griner, Henry Hamilton, Yunique Hazzard, Brizeida Hernandez, Jackson Hill, Nah'Torrie Hill, Erin Howard (Historian), Aida Miller, Raymond Moody, Bryce Moore, Morgan Parnell, Caleb Perez, Cerigan Phillips, Aaron Robertson, Tiffany Rutland, Elizabeth Scruggs, Tristen Steward, Erick Thomas, Jr., Malcolm Thomas, Jayci Thompson, Patrick Wallace, Davis Wardwell, and Zacharie Watts-Thomas.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 11, 2020 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2020-9, AN ORDINANCE FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2021 BUDGET (SECOND HEARING)

Public Hearing for the Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. (Second Hearing)

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that last Wednesday, June 17, 2020, the Mayor and Council spent approximately three hours discussing the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. Each year we meet our Public Hearing requirement with the first session and tonight he would like to summarize their discussion. The City of Valdosta Fiscal Year 2021 proposed Budget has a projected total of fund sources in the amount of \$115,415,842 and a projected total of fund uses in the amount of \$114,857,436 which nets out City-wide excess of sources over uses in the amount of \$558,406. When you compare the total Budget of this year to last year, the increase is \$14,965,274. The General Fund increased \$1,577,565 (4% increase), the Enterprise Funds (Water, Sewer, and Sanitation) increased \$1,203,864 (4%), and the Capital Projects increased \$8,403,450 (23% increase). When your Budget increases, you want to see that increase in the Capital Projects. The Operating Expenditures increased 1.6%, Capital Expenditures increased 23%, and the Debt Service decreased 9%. The Budget highlights include a 3% cost of living adjustment for career employees effective January 1, 2021, and no anticipated millage rate increase at this time; however, if the tax digest does not grow, then there will be a discussion about an increase in the millage rate. Councilman Vickers inquired as to how much growth we would need. Mark Barber stated that we need a minimum of 2.5% growth and last year we had under 2% growth. This Budget funds 654 positions at the City which includes full time and part time employees. The General Fund, Sanitation Fund, Water and Sewer Fund, Inspections Fund, Mathis Auditorium Fund, Motor Pool Fund, and the Group Insurance Fund are all balanced. The State of Georgia only requires that the General Fund is balanced. The Budget does not require any increase in contributions from employees for health care, retirement, or other benefits. It also continues to fund the Care Here Health Clinic for employees, dependents, and retirees. We will be getting a new Physician at the Clinic within the next few weeks because Dr. Sule has relocated to Washington. We have additional positions in the Budget this year which include four Police Officers, one Community Risk Reduction Officer, a GIS Technician, and a Heavy Equipment Operator. The Budget includes the continuation of the Water and Wastewater Sufficiency Rate Plan adopted in 2013 and its proposed rate adjustments. There is no general obligation bonded debt in the Budget. The General Fund balance was reduced in recent years, but it is projected to increase at the June 30, 2020 Budget end. The estimated Fund balance at June 30, 2021 is estimated to be \$4,636,662. In the General Fund, we have a \$65,000 difference which is our margin of error. This means that we are only increasing the General Fund balance this year by \$65,000. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she would like to see more cross-training of employees. Mark Barber stated that we do cross-train employees, but we will increase that. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve an Ordinance for the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget.

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve Ordinance No. 2020-9, an Ordinance for the Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-4, A RESOLUTION AND AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THREE LOCAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Consideration of a Resolution and an Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for three local Transportation Improvement Projects.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that local Projects were approved by the final Regional Roundtable for the South Georgia Special Tax District and transmitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The District voted to levy the Special District Sales and Use Tax on May 22, 2018 by Voter Referendum. Included in the Second Band (2022-2024) list of approved Projects were the following: (1) Old Clyattville Road Widening - SGRC-124, P.I. 0016285, (2) South Patterson Street at Griffin Avenue Intersection and Drainage Improvements - SGRC-126, P.I. 0016287, and (3) Baytree Road at Gornto Road Intersection and Signal Improvements - SGRC-129, P.I.0016290. In March of 2020, the GDOT Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Office advised the City of Valdosta that we could proceed with the Application to GDOT for Local Delivery of the above listed Projects. On May 11, 2020, GDOT notified the City that the Local Delivery Application had been approved for the following phases: (1) Preliminary Engineering (PE), (2) Right-of-Way (ROW), (3) Utilities (UTL), and (4) Construction (CST). A local Agreement between the GDOT and the City is required to be executed prior to beginning work. A written Notice to Proceed (NTP) from the GDOT, or its Agent, is also required prior to beginning any work on any Project Phase. This Agenda Item seeks authorization to both concurrently adopt a Local Government Resolution and to enter into an Agreement, in the form of a Transportation Investment Act of 2010 Project Agreement (Local Government Local Projects Agreement or LGLPA) for the three aforementioned Projects. The Resolution requests that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to execute the TIA Agreement on behalf of the City Council of the City of Valdosta. It will be the responsibility of the City to follow all terms of the Agreement relative to each phase of the aforementioned Projects. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Resolution and the Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for three local Transportation Improvement Projects.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2020-4, a Resolution and an Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for three local Transportation Improvement Projects, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-5, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) TO PROCEED WITH WILDLIFE HAZARD MANAGEMENT PLAN DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT (CONSTRUCTION), RUNWAY 17/35 PROTECTION ZONE LAND CLEARING AND FENCING (DESIGN), RUNWAY 17/35 ASPHALTMILL AND REPLACE, REPLACE MARKING AND SIGNAGE, CHANGE TO RUNWAY 18/36 (DESIGN), AND PROCURE A MOBILE FOAM TEST SYSTEM FOR FIRE TRUCKS

Consideration of a request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority to approve a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to proceed with Wildlife Hazard Management Plan drainage improvement (construction), Runway 17/35 Protection Zone land clearing and fencing (design), Runway 17/35 asphalt mill and replace, replace marking and signage, change to Runway 18/36 (design), and procure a mobile foam test system for fire trucks.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority desires to proceed with the following Projects: Wildlife Hazard Management Plan drainage improvement (construction), Runway 17/35 Protection Zone land clearing and fencing (design), Runway 17/35 asphalt mill and replace, replace marking and signage, change to Runway 18/36 (design), and procure a mobile foam test system for fire trucks. The Federal Aviation Administration(FAA) has offered to fund 100% of the costs at the Valdosta Regional Airport. There will be no City of Valdosta funds required for these Projects. The 100% funding is a departure from the normal 90% due to funding from the CARES Act to make up the remaining 10%. The FAA has prepared a Grant in the amount of \$1,807,743 for the Projects. The Grant has been delivered to the Valdosta City Hall. The Agreement must be executed and returned to the FAA by July 10, 2020. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing Mayor Scott James Matheson to accept the Grant in order to process the documents. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended

that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the Mayor to accept the FAA Grant and process the Agreement for Projects at the Valdosta Regional Airport.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2020-5, a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to proceed with Wildlife Hazard Management Plan drainage improvement (construction), Runway 17/35 Protection Zone land clearing and fencing (design), Runway 17/35 asphalt mill and replace, replace marking and signage, change to Runway 18/36 (design), and procure a mobile foam test system for fire trucks at the Valdosta Regional Airport, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the purchase of ten Automatic Transfer Switches (ATS) for the City of Valdosta Lift Stations.

Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that to ensure continued operation during power outages and to satisfy Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) requirements, the City of Valdosta purchased and installed emergency generators at numerous sewage lift stations over the past several years. Though the generators provided much needed continuity for lift station operation, critical time is lost when maintenance personnel are dispatched to start the generators once the power fails. Safety is a major concern when these personnel respond during extreme weather events. Responders often encounter lightning and high winds along with obstacles such as fallen trees and powerlines. Those obstacles also prevent them from reaching lift stations to start the generators resulting in system surcharges and sewer overflows. To eliminate those situations, Staff determined the best course of action was to install automatic transfer switches (ATS) at the lift stations. ATS provide automatic emergency power transfer in the event of loss of utility power, removing the need for personnel to respond. The ATS allow the lift stations to switch seamlessly to generator power and back to commercial power once it is restored. With no interruption to their operation, safety is ensured, and sewer overflows are prevented. On March 11, 2020, the Utilities Department advertised for bids for the Project to purchase and install Automatic Transfer Switches at ten of the City's lift stations. A pre-bid conference was held on March 26, 2020. Bids were received from two bidders and opened on April 9, 2020 with the lowest responsive and eligible bid submitted by Powerhouse Diesel Generators, Inc. in the amount of \$79,395. The Utilities Department has elected to install the ATS utilizing in-house personnel. As a result, the Utilities Department is requesting \$69,395. This represents the purchase, delivery, set-up, and testing of the ATS only. The Utilities Department has Electricians who will perform all necessary wiring. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the low base bid submitted by Powerhouse Diesel Generators, Inc. in the amount of \$79,395, as well as a reduction of \$10,000 for in-house installation, which amends the total amount to \$69,395.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low base bid submitted by Powerhouse Diesel Generators, Inc. in the amount of \$79,395, as well as a reduction of \$10,000 for in-house installation, for a total amount of \$69,395 for the purchase of ten Automatic Transfer Switches (ATS) for the City of Valdosta Lift Stations.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve and submit the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program FY2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, FY2020 Annual Action Plan, and FY2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that on April 28, 2020, we had a presentation from Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development and Community Protection Manager, and J-QUAD Planning Group who is the company that we have retained to prepare the Consolidated Plan (Con Plan), Annual Action Plan, and the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. The City completed the required 30-day public comment period on June 12, 2020 for all three Reports and is seeking approval from the Mayor and Council to submit the Reports to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). They held a virtual Public Hearing on May 11, 2020 and it was the largest Public Hearing that they have ever had on the Con Plan. There were over 100 people on the

virtual meeting and there were over 2,400 hits where people were reviewing it; however, we had no comments on the Con Plan. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve and submit the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program FY2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, FY2020 Annual Action Plan, and FY2020 Analysis of Impediment to Fair Housing to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to why Ms. Kelly Saxton and Dr. Ronnie Mathis were not given an opportunity to be part of this because they deal with the homeless per se more than Vanessa Flucas, Neighborhood Development and Community Protection Manager. Also, when it came down to HUD, Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she had several people who told her that they had applied and they tried to talk to Richard Joyner, Rehab Construction Coordinator, but it was to no avail. She inquired as to whether they will be starting with a brand new list or will they go back to putting people's names on the list as before. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that last year all of this got restructured and they tried to pick people who had been on the list for a number of years. If they were still eligible, then they were put back on the list and they stayed on it for 12 months. At that point in time, they decided to give everyone 12 months to get all of the documents together so that they could apply and move forward. If they did not come back in 12 months with the appropriate documents, they were going to roll off until they could get the information together. By doing that, we are not standing in the way of someone else who did have all of the appropriate documentation. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that this person can prove that they did fill out the paperwork to be considered for a home and inquired as to whether the City Manager would speak to this person. Mark Barber stated that he would be glad to meet with this person. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that this person is in District 3 and was dumbfounded with the results. As far as Ms. Saxton and Dr. Mathis, they did have input with James Gilleylen, J-QUAD Planning Group, when he was here in our community and our Department had nothing to do with putting together the five-year Con Plan. Mr. Gilleylen did his own interviews and Public Hearings.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she did not feel like they should have the AI included with all of this together because it is so much. She was told that all of these Reports have to be together due to the timeframe and there was no request for an extension. She was told that an extension can be given if requested even with HUD. That is the only thing that she has a problem with. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether they would have to include the AI if they do this again. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that there was a restructure with HUD in 2018 and our AI should have been done at that time. Because they were restructuring, HUD told us to wait and include it with the five-year Con Plan. Five years from now, whatever the HUD regulations are will be what we have to go by. That is why it was like this right now. If we are going to stay CDBG eligible, we have to follow HUD's regulations. It was not a local decision that was made.

A MOTION was made by Councilwoman Miller-Cody to approve and submit the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program FY2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, FY2020 Annual Action Plan, and FY2020 Analysis of Impediment to Fair Housing to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gibbs. The motion was adopted (6-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that he has been asked questions about Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful (KLVB) and whether there is anything in the Budget that Council adopted tonight that funds KLVB and there is not. We do not have the funding source that Lowndes County has. As you are aware, Dr. Michael Noll, KLVB Chairman, sent each Council Member an E-mail last night with a business plan. Mark Barber stated that he has not had time to go through it, but he will make sure that each of the Council Members receives a hard copy so they can make notes and comments. Currently, though, there is no funding source for KLVB from the City and there is no Budget Item in the FY21 Budget. Dr. Noll may make arrangements to visit with each Council Member to discuss his business plan and vision for the continuation of KLVB. Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether the City indirectly funds KLVB. We fund our own cleanup effort through Public Works and community outreach.

Mark Barber stated that we may not have put cash in the bank with KLVB, but we have provided free housing for approximately five years or more, access to our equipment, and storage. The Electronics Recycling Events are coordinated by KLVB, but it is our Public Works Department employees who do the heavy lifting. It is our equipment being used to dispose of the electronics and our employees assisting with the unloading. These are in-kind services. One of the conversations that we had during the Budget Hearing is that we have our own programs in place to take care of the situations and we have funding for that available. Mayor Matheson stated that he hoped that their Board stays together and that they continue their efforts. He also hopes they will do some fundraising and he would be glad to help promote them as a private citizen.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she has heard from a lot of citizens about everything that is going on and the City of Valdosta has held up wonderfully. We have done very well. Councilwoman Tooley applauded the City of Valdosta and she was very proud of the fact that she is on the Council and that she helped initiate it.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she wanted to thank the City Manager, Mark Barber, for always having an open-door policy for her. They can disagree and walk back through the door and that is what leadership is about. Sometimes she comes in like a lion and then she leaves out like a lamb. She thanked Mark Barber for that. Councilwoman Miller-Cody asked that everyone be careful because they are getting some very ugly telephone calls. Today she had to vent with Mayor Pro Tem Carroll because she had gone to a higher level and he brought her back down. She encouraged everyone to be safe and watch their surroundings because people who do not live in Valdosta are the ones who are causing so much confusion in our area. She asked that Council pray for her and that she stays humble and understandable because people are human, and they can push the wrong button. Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked Mayor Pro Tem Carroll for listening to her.

Mayor Matheson thanked the Council, Department Heads, and City employees for standing tall.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the June 25, 2020 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:10 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, July 9, 2020.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta