

**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL  
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 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, Sandra Tooley, Ben Norton, Tim Carroll, Eric Howard, Andy Gibbs, and Vivian Miller-Cody. The invocation was given by Pastor Mark Brady, Anchor Faith Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag which was led by the Park Avenue United Methodist Church and the St. John Catholic Church Boy Scout Troops 415 and 491.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the October 8, 2020 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-11, A MASTER BOND RESOLUTION FOR REFINANCING CITY OF VALDOSTA LOAN AGREEMENTS WITH THE GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE AUTHORITY (GEFA)**

Consideration of a Master Bond Resolution for refinancing City of Valdosta Loan Agreements with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA).

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the City has made significant improvements to its water and sewer system in recent years. It has financed much of this cost with Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) borrowings. These Notes have been issued at varying rates over time and currently total \$66,815,619 over nine notes with interest rates ranging from 1.4% to 4.12%. This does not include the recently authorized note for AMI which has not been drawn against to date. Interest rates have declined significantly recently and several Notes bear interest at rates above the current market. The City currently has approximately \$40 million of GEFA debt that may be a good candidate for refunding in the current interest rate environment. The City retained Davenport & Associates, LLC to assist with the solicitation and analysis of bids for a refinancing of the higher rate notes. Davenport & Company, LLC received bids on the City’s behalf from Truist (Sun Trust) and Synovus on October 15, 2020. The Banks were given three options on which to bid in amounts ranging from approximately \$10.5 million (representing the smallest but highest rate Note plus provisions for closing costs) to \$40 million. Truist elected to bid on only the first and smallest option while Synovus bid on all three options. A Master Bond Resolution has been prepared which provides for the issuance of Water and Sewer Revenue Bonds, in one or more series, for the repayment of certain GEFA Loans of the City of Valdosta, and for the acquisition, construction, and equipping of improvements to the City’s water and sewer system. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the Master Bond Resolution authorizing the issuance of Revenue Bonds for refinancing City of Valdosta Loan Agreements with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA).

**A MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2020-11, a Master Bond Resolution for refinancing City of Valdosta Loan Agreements with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-12, THE FIRST SUPPLEMENTAL BOND RESOLUTION FOR REFINANCING VARIOUS LOAN AGREEMENTS WITH THE GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE AUTHORITY (GEFA)**

Consideration of the First Supplemental Bond Resolution for refinancing various Loan Agreements with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA).

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that on October 15, 2020, Davenport & Company, LLC received bids on the City of Valdosta's behalf from Truist (Sun Trust) and Synovus for the refinancing of various loans with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). Banks were given three options on which to bid in amounts ranging from approximately \$10.5 million to \$40 million. Truist elected to bid only on the first and smallest option while Synovus bid on all three options. After reviewing the bids, Davenport & Company, LLC has recommended accepting Synovus's bid on the intermediate option for the refinancing of the following GEFA Notes at 2.29%: (1) Loan No. 2006L53WJ - \$9,797,971 @ 4.12%, (2) Loan No. DW97036 - \$1,043,471 @ 3.00%, (3) Loan No. CW08003APF40 - \$3,850,580 @ 3.00%, (4) Loan No. CW08003P1 - \$7,835,736 @ 3.00%, (5) Loan No. CW08003P2ARRA - \$756,994 @ 3.00%, and (6) Loan No. CW08003P2 - \$8,613,295 @ 3.00%. The total amount is \$31,898,047, and assuming closing costs of \$250,000, refinancing the above notes will result in a total savings to the City of approximately \$1,552,549 over the life of the note (a net present value of \$1,361,353). The First Supplemental Bond Resolution has been prepared and the purpose is to amend and supplement the Master Bond Resolution in the previous Agenda Item for the refinancing of the six GEFA Loans. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the First Supplemental Bond Resolution and the recommended bid from Synovus for the refinancing of GEFA loans at the recommended amount.

**A MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2020-12, the First Supplemental Bond Resolution for refinancing various Loan Agreements with the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

## LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta City Schools using the 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) funding and authorize Staff to complete the necessary compliance activities to access this funding from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, stated that in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States, President Donald Trump signed into law the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March, 2020. In this Act, additional funding has been set aside to give directly to Governmental Departments, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to aid in the preparation, response, prevention of the spread of the coronavirus. States, cities, and entitlement communities have been given additional funding in the form of a Grant to assist with eligible activities to address the local Pandemic response. As a HUD Entitlement Community, the City of Valdosta was given an initial allocation of \$387,715 in CDBG-CV funding back in April, 2020 to aid our community in its fight against COVID-19. The funding given to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the purpose of fighting COVID-19 in local communities was supposed to be dispersed in two phases to entitlement communities. In September, 2020, HUD dispersed the second round of allocations of CDBG-CV funding. The City of Valdosta was dispersed a second allocation of CDBG-CV funding in the amount of \$456,050 to aid in the preparation, response, and prevention of COVID-19 in Valdosta. The current pandemic guidelines still suggest social distancing, mask wearing, constant hand washing, and personal and environmental hygiene as the best actions to take to assist in the prevention and spread this deadly virus. For this round of funding, we are asking to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) in the form of environmental sanitation equipment for both the City of Valdosta's publicly accessed buildings and the schools in the Valdosta City School System. This equipment will not only be used in our current battle in preventing the spread of COVID-19, but it could also be used in future flu outbreaks and communicable illnesses in both organizations. This equipment will be used to ensure citizens, students, teachers, and City employees will be protected, while continuing to make sure our schools and public offices remain open for those who must utilize these facilities and the services they provide. Staff is seeking permission to complete the necessary HUD compliance activities to access this funding, to complete the required virtual Public Hearing for the community, and to open the five-day public comment period for the proposed activity. Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, recommended that Council approve the purchase of PPE for the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta City School facilities for the second allocation of CDBG-CV funding and give Staff permission to complete the necessary compliance activities to access this funding from HUD.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the City of Valdosta and the Valdosta City Schools using the 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) funding and authorize Staff to complete the necessary compliance activities to access this funding from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Jerry Robinson, 910 East Adair Street, stated that he wanted to discuss the closing of a street from East Gordon Street to Adair Street. The street was closed without the proper signatures and he wanted to see what could be done to reopen the street. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that he has had several conversations with Mr. Robinson about the closing of Myon Street. That street was closed approximately 16-18 months ago as requested by the Irvin family. The Engineering Department worked with the Irvin's to get signatures on a Petition and they did get the required 60% of signatures; however, Mr. Robinson feels otherwise. We will work with the City Attorney to provide us with direction and we will be back in touch with Mr. Robinson. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether that was the little street located close to Forrest Street. Mark Barber stated that it runs behind the Irvin's daycare center and when they wanted to expand their daycare center, they requested that Myon Street be closed in order to make that expansion. Mr. Robinson stated that no one was notified and there were no signs posted. The signatures on the Petition included two people who own it and one of them was a lady who was not supposed to sign it. The other person was told that just a building was going to be put up. There was nothing said about the street being closed. It should have been posted saying that they were wanting to close the street. He does not see how it could be 60% when two of the people are the applicants and none of the homeowners are on there. One person signed the petition because the guy that owns the daycare told him that they just needed a building put up. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that he would continue to work with Mr. Robinson.

Pastor Randy Jones, Rehoboth Church of Valdosta, stated that he recently purchased property at 706 North Ashley street. He is a former Police Officer for 17 years for the City of Valdosta and an Investigator for the Lowndes County Sheriff's Department. He is also a proud member of the Concerned Clergy of Valdosta. They are here tonight to state their position. Members of the Concerned Clergy of Valdosta have been before Council several times asking for Council to do what is right in regard to the actions of Lt. Wheeler and Antonio Smith. Pastor Jones stated that he wanted to find out whose decision it was to not discipline Lt. Wheeler. As concerned citizens, we should know who made that decision. Whoever made that decision to not discipline Lt. Wheeler could not have taken into consideration the Valdosta Police Department's Code of Conduct 100-50. If that had been taken into consideration, Lt. Wheeler would have been disciplined. That Code states that any employee of the Department, must at all times, whether on duty or off duty, conduct themselves in a manner which does not bring discredit to themselves or the Department of the City of Valdosta or the local Law Enforcement in general. Conduct unbecoming shall include that conduct which adversely affects the morale and efficiency of the Valdosta Police Department or the tendency to destroy the public respect and confidence in the Valdosta Police Department. To sustain conduct unbecoming, it is not necessary to allege the conduct to be criminal in nature. The basis for disciplinary action is preponderance of evidence. Lt. Wheeler was not disciplined and that presents a greater problem. They have already stated what needs to be done and they have not and will not change. They look forward to hearing from the Council regarding this matter.

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that there was a Rededication Ceremony of Taylor-Cowart Park on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. It was truly a special event and they have received so many positive comments on all of the changes that were made to the Park.

We will have our first annual Festifall Event on Thursday, October 29, 2020 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Lee Street grass lot across the street from City Hall. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have had a lot of parents calling us about whether we would have Halloween and Trick or Treating so we thought this might be something we could do on behalf of the City. We will be using all precautions such as social distancing and wearing masks. Each City Department will have a booth set up and they will have games for the children to play and they will pass out candy and prizes.

The City will host a Fall Electronics Recycling Event on Saturday, November 14, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Mathis Auditorium. This year we will be partnering with Lowndes County and Atlanta Recycling Solutions.

Mayor Matheson stated the Turner Center for the Arts will be hosting the third Annual Artoberfest on Saturday, October 24, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at their Art Park. They will have a lot of activities for families, live music, and food trucks. Also, the WWALS River Keepers will be hosting a Boomerang Paddle Event on Saturday, October 24, 2020 and they will be paddling down the river to Florida and then back again.

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) is doing great things in Atlanta and all around the State. They are currently looking at ways to hold the United Cities Summit and it may be held virtually in January of 2021. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta is mentioned in several places in the GMA publication that came out last week and we are very proud of the leadership of the Mayor and Council and the Departments.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired about the City partnering with Lowndes County on the Fall Electronics Recycling Event. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that Lowndes County will provide employees for the event. Normally, we would partner with the Keep Lowndes-Valdosta Beautiful, but we are now forging ahead with a partnership with Lowndes County for all of these types of initiatives.

### 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 October 22, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:56 p.m. to meet again on Thursday, November 5, 2020.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta