

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021
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, Andy Gibbs, Eric Howard, and Vivian Miller-Cody. The invocation was given by Councilman Ben Norton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2020.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the purpose of an annual audit is to review the financial statements, footnotes, and supplementary information to ensure compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and to provide an opinion on the financial statements. The audit of the City of Valdosta's Fiscal Year 2020 CAFR was conducted by the firm of Henderson & Godbee. Henderson & Godbee is a local full service accounting firm with significant experience in auditing, including governmental auditing. The audit team leaders were Mark Rogers, Engagement Partner, and Scott Simpson, Engagement Manager. The annual audit will be posted on the City's website. Chuck Dinkins introduced Mark Rogers of Henderson & Godbee who will present the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2020.

Mark Rogers, Engagement Partner with Henderson & Godbee, stated that they have completed the audit of financial statements for the City of Valdosta for the year ending June 30, 2020 and have issued an unqualified auditors' report on those financial statements dated December 29, 2020. The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) encompasses all Funds of the City. Many hours of work both from Henderson & Godbee and the City of Valdosta's Accounting Department has gone in to produce this Report. The Accounting Department prepares this entire Report. They are very few governments in the State of Georgia that prepare their own financial statements.

The total revenue for all funds, excluding internal services, was \$88,847,336. For the year ended June 30, 2020, the General Fund ended with a budgetary income of \$536,336. Revenues received totaled \$35,688,559 and were under budgeted amounts by \$1,010,807. Expenditures were \$37,832,203 and were under budget by \$2,465,197 on a budgetary basis. Net transfers in were \$2,562,745 and were under budget by \$581,527. For the General Fund revenue, property taxes account for 32%, sales tax accounts for 25%, and other taxes represent 35%. The General Fund expenditures for the year shows that the Police Department accounts for 42%, the Fire Department accounts for 24%, and the General Government represents 23%. For other Governmental Funds, the Special Revenue Funds has revenues of \$3,372,280 and expenditures of \$3,062,820. The majority of the activity was in the Accommodations Tax Fund which accounted for \$2,700,834 of the revenue and \$2,053,341 of expenditures. The total Capital Projects Fund had revenues of \$15,004,570 and expenditures were \$10,806,157. The Sales Tax 2013 Fund accounted for \$7,497,618 of revenue and \$9,041,601 of expenditures for the year. The Sales Tax 2019 Fund accounted for \$4,423,853 of the revenues and \$131,849 of expenditures. The Airport Fund had revenues of \$1,263,646 and expenditures of \$1,323,669. The Enterprise Funds had total revenues of \$30,771,120, expenses were \$25,727,128, capital contributions of \$6,336,790, and operating transfers out of \$2,826,688 resulting in net income of \$6,915,222. The Water/Sewer Revenue Fund had revenues of \$20,934,210 and capital contributions from SPLOST were \$6,336,790 resulting in net income of \$6,069,104. The Sanitation Fund revenues were \$5,787,430 resulting in a net income of \$134,619. The Internal Service Funds revenues were \$13,258,371, expenses were \$14,252,027, and transfer in were \$1,404,706. The Motor Pool Fund broke even on revenues of \$5,140,449, the Group Insurance Fund broke even on revenues of \$5,610,859. IT Services broke even on revenues of \$1,764,523, and the Workers' Compensation Fund had net income of \$231,972 on revenues of \$742,540. During the year, the Water/Sewer Fund continued with major water and sewer upgrades by adding \$5,333,367 in construction in progress with \$545,160 coming from GEFA loans and \$3,685,275 from the SPLOST Fund. Total sales tax projects amounted to \$9,173,450 for the year, including \$2,651,515 for GEFA loan payments for the Water/Sewer Fund. Federal awards expenditures totaled \$1,808,849 with \$568,242 coming from HUD and

\$1,191,627 from the U. S. Department of Transportation. Mark Rogers thanked the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to serve as their Auditor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 13, 2021 Special Called Meeting and the January 21, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-2, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF A GRANT APPLICATION WITH THE FIREHOUSE SUBS PUBLIC SAFETY FOUNDATION FOR THE PURCHASE OF BALLISTIC VESTS FOR THE VALDOSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the filing of a Grant Application with the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation for the purchase of ballistic vests for the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that the Mission of the Firehouse Subs Foundation is to impact the lifesaving capabilities and the lives of local heroes and their communities by providing lifesaving equipment to first responders. The City of Valdosta Fire Department has previously applied for a Grant through the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation to fund the purchase of Thermal Imaging Cameras and was not awarded the Grant. The City of Valdosta Fire Department plans to apply for a Grant to fund the purchase of ballistic vests to add protection for members rendering medical care in a hostile event. If awarded the Grant funding through the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation, the Fire Department will purchase 20 ballistic vests for personnel to wear on incident scenes that may pose a firearm threat such as active shooter scenes. The Valdosta Fire Department has participated in more than 20 hours of Rescue Task Force training in which personnel learn and practice methods of treating and extracting patients from a scene under the armed protection of law enforcement. The practice of utilizing a Rescue Task Force allows law enforcement to continue threat mitigation while medically trained personnel treat life threatening injuries. The purchase of ballistic vests in different sizes to meet the needs of our personnel will only add a level of protection in the event of an unforeseen incident that may put Fire personnel at risk. The Valdosta Fire Department has consulted with the Chief of Police on the decisions involving the purchase. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing the Valdosta Fire Department to apply for the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant which is 100% funded through the Firehouse Public Safety Foundation with no match obligation from the City. Fire Chief Boutwell recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the City of Valdosta Fire Department to apply for Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant funds to purchase ballistic vests.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2021-2, a Resolution authorizing the filing of a Grant Application with the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation for the purchase of ballistic vests for the Valdosta Fire Department, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-3, A RESOLUTION TO APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDING WITH THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY'S FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY AND THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE PURCHASE OF SELF CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS EQUIPMENT FOR THE VALDOSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Consideration of a Resolution to apply for Grant Funding with the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for the purchase of new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus equipment for the City of Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grants Program Directorate is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program. The purpose of the AFG is to enhance the safety of the public and Firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The City of Valdosta Fire Department is in need of new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) meeting the latest update to meet the National Fire Protection Standard (NFPA) 1852 and 1981 for the Firefighters. The City is seeking funding through

the U. S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grants Program Directorate to purchase 43 new SCBA’s to bring the Department’s cache up to the latest NFPA standards. The City of Valdosta Fire Department is requesting Grant funding up to \$317,512.00 in the Personal Protective Equipment Category of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). The Grant requires a 10% match of \$31,751.20 that will be available from future SPLOST proceeds. The new SCBAs will meet the latest updated standards that were changed by the NFPA Board requiring the “low air alarm” sound at 33% of the air bottles capacity instead of 25% thus also resulting in the need of new bottles with a larger capacity. The latest standard also requires that all SCBAs have the same sound for a Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) that alerts on-scene personnel when a Firefighter is motionless for more than 30 seconds. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing the Mayor to execute an application to apply for the Grant funding. Fire Chief Brian Boutwell recommended that Council approve the Resolution to apply for Grant Funding in the amount of \$317,512.00 for 43 SCBAs with masks and spare cylinders with a 10% match (\$31,751.20) from the City of Valdosta and authorize the filing of a Grant Application with the U. S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Grants Program Directorate.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2021-3, a Resolution to apply for Grant Funding with the U. S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for the purchase of new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus equipment for the City of Valdosta Fire Department, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-4, A RESOLUTION FOR THE ADOPTION OF A PUBLIC TRANSIT TITLE VI PLAN FOR THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of a Resolution for the adoption of a Public Transit Title VI Plan for the City of Valdosta.

Richard Hardy, Deputy City Manager of Operations, stated that the City of Valdosta applied for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Grant on June 6, 2020 through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to assist in the funding of a Public Transit System. In order to receive Federal funds, the recipient (City of Valdosta) must have a Public Transit Title VI Plan in place. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act requires that “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The City of Valdosta’s Transit Director collaborated with both GDOT and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to develop this Plan. The FTA will fund 80% of the City of Valdosta’s Transit Program. Adoption of this Plan by the City is a requirement that must be met prior to GDOT giving the City of Valdosta “Notice to Proceed” authorization to further contract negotiations and approval between the City and River North Transit, LLC (Via) to bring public transportation to Valdosta. Richard Hardy, Deputy City Manager of Operations, recommended that Council adopt the Resolution of the Public Transit Title VI Plan in order to meet both FTA and GDOT requirements to receive Federal financial assistance.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2021-4, a Resolution for the adoption of a Public Transit Title VI Plan for the City of Valdosta, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-5, A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE FILING OF A GRANT APPLICATION WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION FOR PHASE 2 RE-SURVEYING OF THE VALDOSTA LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Consideration of a Resolution of Support for the filing of a Grant Application with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division for Phase 2 Re-Surveying of the Valdosta Local Historic District.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission along with the City of Valdosta Historic Preservation Planner of the Planning and Zoning Department are working together to submit a Grant Application for Phase 2 for the re-survey of the historic resources in the Valdosta Local Historic District that are 40 years old and older. Phase 1 of this survey was completed in

September of 2020 with Grant assistance from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division covering 998 parcels. The purpose of the proposal is to meet Certified Local Government (CLG) requirements, planning purposes, Historic Preservation Commission decision making, and to update the Georgia Natural and Historic Resources GIS Database (GNAHRGIS) - Georgia's electronic database of historic resource survey information. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs is offering matching Grants for re-survey of historic resources through the through the Georgia Historic Preservation Division to financially assist local governments to accomplish this task. The City of Valdosta will be applying to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for a Survey and Planning Grant. The Survey and Planning Grant as part of Phase 2 of its Historic Resources Survey has a total estimated cost of \$43,964 which includes cash and in-kind services. The City of Valdosta budgeted a maximum of \$30,000 in the FY 2021 Budget to be used as a match for a Grant. The City will be applying for \$15,000 in Grant Funding from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. A Consultant will be hired to individually survey the remaining approximately 927 eligible resources in the Local Historic District. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing the Mayor to submit the Grant Application to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division for consideration and have the budgeted monies available to be used as a match for the Grant. Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the Mayor to submit the Grant Application to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division and to have the matching funds available.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2021-5, a Resolution of Support for the filing of a Grant Application with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Historic Preservation Division for Phase 2 Re-Surveying of the Valdosta Local Historic District, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VI.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the construction of the City of Valdosta Downtown Amphitheater Park.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that after a proposed Downtown Hotel Development Project fell through in 2018, the City of Valdosta obtained possession of a one-acre parcel located diagonally across from City Hall which the City originally sought to attract another developer. Upon further consideration and thought, City leaders decided to make the land available to the larger Valdosta community for Downtown events use and an Amphitheater. The consensus was that such a venue could help bring more people to the Downtown area and it could be used for a variety of live stage events, food truck events, movie nights, as well as make the Downtown area more vibrant and beautiful. In 2019, several food truck events were held at the Lee Street park site and these events brought thousands to Downtown during that year. To further develop the vision, the City partnered with the University of Georgia Civil and Environmental Engineering Department over both the Fall of 2019 and Winter of 2020 semesters. Three Senior students prepared a preliminary site design as part of their Capstone Project requirement for graduation. Final design amenities included an amphitheater with storage, sidewalks, landscaping, splash pad and/or fountain, a stormwater bio-retention pond, and park benches with ample parking for food trucks. A spot to display the annual Christmas tree was also provided. To expedite the final design and construction of the improvements, Staff elected to bid out the preliminary park concepts and improvements using the design-build approach. This approach partners a design professional and general contractor to both design and build the Project under one turn-key contract. In December of 2020, the project was advertised both in the local newspaper and on the City's website. At the mandatory pre-bid meeting held on January 6, 2021, ten people were in attendance. The meeting was held to answer questions about the preliminary site design and bid specifications. The specifications outlined a base bid which included the amphitheater, sidewalks, landscaping, bio-retention pond, park benches and food truck parking. Alternate bid options included the following: (1) a splash pad/fountain, and (2) a pipe connection of the bio-retention pond to the City's storm drainage system. Final bids were received and opened on Friday, January 29, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. The only bid was submitted by Artesian Contracting from Albany, Georgia. The cost of the base bid was \$826,600. The alternate bid to construct the splash pad/fountain simultaneous was \$72,000. The alternate bid option to connect the bio-retention pond to the City's storm drainage system was \$250,000. The total of the base bid and the two alternate bids was \$1,148,600. The bid was reviewed by Staff and considered both responsive and responsible. Staff is recommending the acceptance of the base bid and two alternates. The park was programmed in the City's FY 2021 budget for \$1,500,000. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Artesian Contractors in the amount of \$1,148,600 plus a 10% contingency (\$114,860) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,263,460.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by Artesian Contractors in the amount of \$1,148,600 plus a 10% contingency (\$114,860) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$1,263,460 for the construction of the City of Valdosta Downtown Amphitheater Park.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to purchase 17 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment for the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that the City of Valdosta Fire Department currently has 55 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) used to supply breathable air to Firefighters in Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) atmospheres. The current SCBA's are 2008 edition. Newer editions have been updated with more safety restrictions that our current SCBA's do not have. Due to the newer standards, the Fire Department intends to replace the current cache of SCBA's over a three-year period. The Fire Department currently has \$126,000 in SPLOST VIII funds for FY 2021. The SCOTT SCBA was selected by members after wearing three different brands in the field on actual incidents while providing a warranty against defects in workmanship and materials as long as the product is owned by the original purchaser. The purchase of SCOTT SCBA's will make the transition to new SCBA's seamless due to the fact that we are currently using SCOTT. The Fire Department is requesting permission to proceed with the purchase of 17 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) with cylinder plus one extra cylinder per unit to allow total interoperability with our SCBA inventory under State Contract (Georgia State Safety and Lab Contract 99999-SPD- SPD0000156 at \$125,447.11. The SCBA's are in compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and mandates for all our first responders. Fire Chief Brian Boutwell recommended that Council approve purchase of 17 SCBA's with cylinder plus an extra cylinder under State Contract in the amount of \$125,447.11.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the purchase of 17 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment with cylinder plus one extra cylinder per unit from SCOTT utilizing the State Contract (Georgia State Safety and Lab Contract 99999-SPD-SPD0000156) in the amount of \$125,447.11 for the Valdosta Fire Department.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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

Mayor Matheson stated that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Citizens Advisory Committee has four members, Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody, Rebecca Taylor, Thomas Simpson, and David Adams, whose terms will expire on February 24, 2021. Ms. Taylor, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Adams have not expressed an interest in being reappointed. Councilwoman Miller-Cody is interested in serving again and she will submit her application in the very near future for consideration of reappointment. 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) Beverly Richardson-Blake - Retired Educator/Administrator (Valdosta State University), and (2) Deborah White - Retired (City of Valdosta Public Works Department).

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for appointments to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Citizens Advisory Committee.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to appoint Beverly Richardson-Blake and Deborah White to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Citizens Advisory Committee to serve a term of four years.

Consideration of an appointment to the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County has a member, Tim Dame, whose term expired on February 1, 2021. The Hospital Authority submitted the following three names for consideration: (1) Tim Dame, (2) Michelle Hayes, and (3) Susan Swader. Mr. Dame has expressed an interest in being reappointed. This appointment was not advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council due to the Hospital Authority By-Laws which require the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County to submit three names to the City of Valdosta for consideration of Mr. Dame's seat.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for an appointment to the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to re-appoint Tim Dame to serve a term of five years on the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission has three members, Dr. Charles "Alex" Alvarez, Sandie Burkett, and Celine Gladwin whose terms will expire on February 13, 2021. Dr. Alvarez, Ms. Burkett, and Ms. Gladwin have all expressed an interest in being reappointed; however, applications for Ms. Burkett and Ms. Gladwin were not received prior to the deadline. Their applications will be submitted for consideration in the very near future for reappointment. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The only applicant to apply was Dr. Charles "Alex" Alvarez, Administrator/Educator with the Valdosta City Schools and his application is attached for your review.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for an appointment to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to re-appoint Dr. Charles "Alex" Alvarez to serve a term of three years on the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that there were no new Citizens to be Heard items for this Council Meeting. We did have a citizen, Victoria Futch, who submitted comments for the January 21, 2021 Council Meeting, and she was interested in having the Moratorium on Vaping Shops lifted. We have been waiting for some State guidance on that; however, the session was cut short last year due to COVID. They may be taking it up again this year and we would like to structure our Ordinance around what the State guidelines are. We sent a response to Ms. Futch to let her know that we will be looking at the Moratorium within the next 60 to 90 days either to uplift it or to have an Ordinance on our books that applies to vaping.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the Selection Committee for a new Municipal Court Judge met yesterday and it was very successful. They do feel that they will meet the dates that were given to the Council and are hopeful that an appointment will be made at the March 11, 2021 Regular Council Meeting.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she will get her second COVID-19 vaccine on February 17, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. and it will be live-streamed in order to stress the importance of getting the vaccine especially for our senior citizens.

Councilman Norton stated that the new amphitheater will be a great edition to the Downtown area, and he is excited about the opportunity.

Councilman Howard stated that he wanted to let everyone in the community know we take the Ethics Complaint that is going around on Facebook and in the media very seriously. Instead of turning this into a bashing session or beating up on the Mayor session, he wanted to use this as a “teaching moment” as Councilman Vickers would say. There may be some people who do not understand why people take this so seriously because they have never had a dog siced on them for the right to vote or they never had to guess how many gumballs were in a jar just for the right to vote. They have never had to walk five miles to vote and then turn around and walk five miles back because they were told they were in the wrong place and then walk two more miles and be told that it was closed. These are teaching moments and we are not afraid to confront the issue because the only way that we are going to get past this is to talk to one another instead of talking past one another. To Pastor Reginald Benjamin who was offended by the comments because he canvassed and he never received anything, to the 30-year retired Air Force Chief who canvassed, and to anyone else who may have been offended by some of those comments, this is now the time to reach out to one another and have a conversation and dialog because we are never going to get past it if we do not learn how to talk to one another. Councilman Howard stated that he would like to apologize to any of our Staff, City employees, and anyone who felt offended by some of the comments that were made. He still thinks we should take this opportunity to be mindful of what we say and when we say it because we are always going to be held to a higher standard just because of the position and title that they hold as public officials.

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 February 11, 2021 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:07 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, February 25, 2021.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta