

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MAY 20, 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, Tim Carroll, Eric Howard, Andy Gibbs, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Ben Norton was absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Ricardo Velmas, The Biz, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Recognition of Lieutenant Marcus Haynes, Valdosta Fire Department, as Fire Officer Designation.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that on April 15, 2021, he was notified that Lieutenant Marcus Haynes had successfully completed the process to be awarded the professional designation of “Fire Officer” (FO). The Commission on Professional Credentialing met to confer his designation and Lieutenant Haynes becomes one of only 555 FO’s worldwide and the first in Valdosta Fire Department. The Designation Program is a voluntary Program designed to recognize individuals who demonstrate their excellence in seven measured components including experience, education, professional development, professional contributions, association membership, community involvement, and technical competence. In addition, all applicants are required to identify a future professional development plan. The Fire Officer Designation Program uses a comprehensive peer review model to evaluate candidates seeking the credential. The Commission on Professional Credentialing awards the designation only after an individual successfully meets all of the organization’s stringent criteria. Achieving this designation signifies Lieutenant Marcus Haynes’ commitment to his career in the Fire and Emergency Services.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the May 6, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2021-7, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 2.69 ACRES FROM OFFICE-PROFESSIONAL (O-P) TO COMMUNITY-COMMERCIAL (C-C)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 2.69 acres from Office-Professional (O-P) to Community-Commercial (C-C) as requested by John Sineath (File No. VA-2021-05). The property is located at 3350 Country Club Road at the northeast corner of the intersection of Country Club Road and Noble Way. The Greater Lowndes Planning Commission reviewed this request at their April Regular Meeting and recommended approval (10-0 Vote). The Public Hearing for this request was held at the Regular Council Meeting on May 6, 2021. A Motion was made with no Second.

Mayor Matheson stated that this Rezoning Request has some special circumstances that occurred, and he asked City Attorney Tim Tanner to make some remarks and answer any questions that Council may have.

Tim Tanner, City Attorney, stated that at the last Council Meeting a motion was made concerning this topic. It received no second. According to his research and Robert’s Rules of Order, which is required under our Ordinances, it did not come before Council so they did not touch on it and no final action was taken. Obviously, it was not defeated or denied so Council can consider it here tonight. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to which Edition of Robert’s Rules of Order did the City Attorney use. Tim Tanner stated that he used the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition which is the latest. He initially used the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition because that is the one he had, but he actually ordered the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition and made sure that it said the same thing and it did. Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether that was supported by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) as well. Tim Tanner stated that he ran it by GMA and some Parliamentary Societies in America out in Seattle, Washington, and they agreed with his analysis.

Councilman Carroll stated that it was unfortunate that they made an error at the last Council Meeting and in his 13 years on Council, they have never had to deal with that before. Having dealt with a number of Rezoning cases over the last 28 years, he looks at all of the components of our Development Codes. He looks at the Future Development Map, the Comprehensive Plan, the Development Codes, and surrounding areas and transitions that are taking place. He then lets that be the main driver for the decision. That is the same process that our City Planner Matt Martin went through in his process, and it is the same process that the Planning Commission went through. In his review, he believes the same thing is true.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to approve the request as presented. Councilman Gibbs seconded the request. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she thought it was a very good Project as well. The reason the vote went the way it did, or the lack of a vote, was because a lot of times, Valdosta is a growing and a thriving City and the citizens should have a voice on a lot of the things they want. When the citizens got up and spoke and expressed their point of view, it was clearer than the case the Developers had made. That is part of the reason that it went the way it did. There were some meetings with more discussion given and there was more understanding which made a big difference. The citizens understood more about what was going on with the Project and they could understand it and accept it. That was one reason there was a lack of a second. This was a lesson well learned and they can move forward with it in the future when they think of other Projects. They need to involve some of the people that are in the surrounding areas so they will fully know what is going on. It was a very good learning experience for her. Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to how they came to this agreement and how did the Developer and the citizens gain an understanding to accept it. Councilman Carroll stated that the big difference was that the citizens who participated in the meeting yesterday had an opportunity to hear from the Architect who will actually be designing this Project and he helped them to really understand what they are working with and trying to accomplish. He also alleviated some concerns as far as building heights and traffic and how this is supposed to be a more pedestrian-friendly type of development. He provided some additional photographs that helped to show that this is a quality Project and it will not have the kind of impact that the citizens feared. This is his interpretation from what he heard the citizens say. Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to whether the citizens got a proper understanding of how this outline would be with the Developer and if they could accept it and sleep well at night. Councilman Carroll stated that he thought they did. Mayor Matheson thanked Councilman Carroll for taking the lead on organizing the meeting and he thanked the citizens who stayed involved and also the Developers. Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked the Developers for listening and explaining it to the citizens where they could understand it because sometimes Developers do not take time to explain it to the citizens and when don't, that is where Council comes in because the citizens come to them about it. They have to go against the Developers idea which might be prosperous for the City, but understanding is better than anything else. The motion was unanimously adopted to enact Ordinance No. 2021-7, an Ordinance to rezone 2.69 acres located at 3350 Country Club Road from Office-Professional (O-P) to Community-Commercial (C-C) as requested by John Sineath, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

## **BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES**

Consideration of bids for the design and construction of a Maintenance and Laboratory Building at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant has very limited space for tools, equipment, parts storage, and general maintenance activities. Maintenance personnel have no dedicated office for a computer, storage of records, equipment service manuals, and Treatment Plant maps/ drawings. Additionally, the Treatment Plant needs a conference/training room for meetings, training sessions, and public visits and tours. The Central Laboratory, which performs lab analysis for watershed monitoring and industrial monitoring for both Wastewater Treatment Plants, is currently located in a small outdated laboratory at the Mud Creek Treatment Plant. Designed initially for one Lab Operator, space is extremely limited for the three personnel and the necessary lab equipment. Staff discussed various options for providing a maintenance area, conference room, and an updated Central Laboratory. Given the need for all three, a plan was devised to combine them into one structure at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. This will reduce the cost considerably from constructing separate buildings in different locations. In April of 2021, the City advertised for bid a contract for the design and construction of an 80' x 40' maintenance and laboratory building at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. The work will include furnishing the necessary parking and performing interior work to include all plumbing, HVAC, etc. A mandatory pre-bid meeting was held on April 15, 2021. One bid was

received and publicly opened on May 4, 2021. Chuck Smith & Son Construction, Inc. was the sole bidder and submitted a proposal in the amount of \$783,500. Following the bid review process, Staff held a meeting with the contractor to discuss options for value engineering to reduce the cost of the Project. The contractor presented value engineering measures on May 11, 2021 that subtracted \$86,451 from the original bid. The revised amount is \$697,049. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the approve the revised bid submitted by Chuck Smith & Son Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$697,049 plus a 10% contingency (\$69,704.90) to handle any unforeseen circumstances to design and construct the maintenance/laboratory building for a total cost of \$766,753.90.

Councilman Vickers inquired as to whether all of the equipment for the facility is included in the bid. Darryl Muse stated that it was included. The new hood vent comes with that and some of the high dollar equipment that we currently use that is not that old will be transferred. The autoclaves, the spectrometers, and other equipment that is salvageable will be brought over to the new facility also.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the revised bid submitted by Chuck Smith & Son Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$697,049 plus a 10% contingency (\$69,704.90) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total cost of \$766,753.90 for the design and construction of a Maintenance and Laboratory Building at the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Consideration of bids for the purchase of new bar screens for the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant utilizes two mechanical bar screens in its pre-treatment process. Installed at the influent to the Treatment Plant, these bar screens remove large objects such as rags, plastics, and other debris from wastewater. The current system was purchased as a refurbished unit years ago and was utilized at the old Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant before being dismantled and installed at the new Plant during its construction. At 6mm wide, the screens have a low capture ratio which results in unscreened debris passing through its system. This debris clogs up pumps, gauges, and filters further along in the Treatment Plant increasing maintenance costs and undermining the treatment process. Plant Operators spend a lot time clearing debris from these critical components. Given the low capture ratio and the related maintenance issues, Staff researched alternative solutions for the Treatment Plant's screening system. After exploring several options, they determined the best option to increase screening efficiency would be to upgrade the old 6mm bar screening system to a new more effective 3mm center-flow bar screening system. The upgraded system will increase the screening capture ratio greatly reducing the pass through of larger debris and preventing system backups. The end result will be much less debris clogging up the pumps and filters. Staff is confident that maintenance and operational costs will be lowered, and overall Treatment Plant treatment efficiency will increase, especially during rain events. On April 8, 2021, the Utilities Department advertised for bids to purchase a 3mm center-flow headworks screening system. Bidders were also asked to submit an alternate bid that included turnkey installation of the system. Bids were opened on May 11, 2021 with two bidders responding. The lowest bidder was RDJE, Inc. with a base bid of \$417,451.00; however, this bid was rejected due to the required specification that the screening system be a center-flow type system. The system submitted by RDJE, Inc., though a credible unit, did not meet the specifications as advertised in the bid documents. Staff feels confident that a center-flow system is better suited for the abnormally high flows and debris from rain events that impact the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. The bid submitted by Templeton & Associates Engineering Sales, Inc. was \$478,200. Their Hydro-Dyne center-flow screening system meets all specifications as advertised in the bid documents. The two proposals for turnkey installation exceeded the approved Budget for this Project and were not considered. Installation of the system will be completed in-house by Central Maintenance personnel. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the bid meeting specifications submitted by Templeton & Associates in the amount of \$478,200 for the purchase of a new screening system for the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant plus an additional \$46,800 to be set aside if needed by the Utilities Department personnel for installation for a total of \$525,000.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired about the equipment that filters all of the trash and debris and whether we need one because we do not have one. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that was correct. We do not currently have one. The unit that we currently have is called a climber screen so it looks like a grate that you would walk

across when you are on a stairway. When it becomes caked, there is a rake that comes up and rakes all of the debris off of the screen and dumps it into a dumpster that the Public Works Department provides. As that becomes matted, the raking system is not able to keep up with it and it creates problems. In this new design, the water goes in the center and goes out the sides and it is continually rotating to clean itself so that the debris is continually being removed as opposed to being removed in a batch format the way our system currently works. Councilwoman Tooley stated that Darryl Muse would be leaving us soon and he has been wonderful with his information and knowledge. She asked if he would go out to the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant before he leaves and give us an idea of other things that we might need in order for our Treatment Plant to be State of the Art.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that we are saving money by having City of Valdosta employees performing the installation because Templeton & Associates would charge more if they have to do it. Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, stated that was correct. They would have hired another contractor to install it; however, he spoke with the City's Technician Staff and they feel that they are capable of installing it.

**A MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid meeting specifications submitted by Templeton & Associates in the amount of \$478,200 for the purchase of a new screening system for the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant plus an additional \$46,800 to be set aside if needed by the Utilities Department personnel for installation for a total of \$525,000.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Doug Robinson, 921 Lausanne Drive, stated that approximately four years ago, Ponderosa Drive was on the list to be resurfaced and he has not heard anything else about it. Also, on the corner of Ponderosa Drive and Jamestown, there is a water main that has been leaking for months and no one has come out to fix it. He also wanted to touch on the loud music Ordinance. It is not being enforced because people come through the neighborhood blasting music. They cannot sleep because of the loud music. He has a neighbor within 25 feet playing loud music and he has called the Police. They give him an excuse that they did not hear the music. Mr. Robinson stated that they are not going to hear it because they do not live in the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood call him and tell him about issues because he attends to the neighborhood. He has told them that they need to step up and call the Police themselves to get the issue handled. They also have people speeding. There was a child who got hit by a car on Lausanne Drive, but he is doing well. People also have problems with water going into their homes when it rains because there is no drainage on one side of the road on Brookwood Drive.

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

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the City Government 101 class will hold a graduation ceremony on Monday, May 24, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. This has been a wonderful group of citizens and they asked some great questions.

There will be a Food Truck Crawl tonight beginning at 5:00 p.m. today and the Food Trucks will be parked around the historic Courthouse until 8:00 p.m.

The Downtown Valdosta Walk/Run will be held on Saturday, June 19, 2021 for the Super Dad 5K. They will be honoring fathers and father figures, and a lot of the attendees will be dressed up in costumes. It will end at the Georgia Beer Company.

The Valdosta On Demand Transit is going really strong. There were a couple of days last week that they hit over 300 rides in a day. With seven vehicles, they are doing all they can do, and we have gotten a lot of positive comments. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to what was the average number of rides per day that they were aiming for. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that if we were getting 50-60 rides a day, we would have been happy; however, we jumped up right away averaging 155 rides a day. A couple of days with 300 rides is really remarkable at this stage. The pickup and drop off points are all over the City and not concentrated in one area. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether anyone has talked to him about providing this service on the weekends. Mark Barber stated that we are continuing to have that conversation with Via. On July 1, 2021, the first ten free rides time will be up so we wanted to wait until then to see if ridership drops off before we make any decisions on expansion.

Leadership Lowndes Government Day was held today, and Councilwoman Miller-Cody did a great job in planning it.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Gibbs stated that he and Councilman Carroll attended a firearm training simulator and it is a fantastic training for our Police Officers. Our Police Officers go through hours and hours of training and they go through all the scenarios. When we go through the Budget Hearings, the Police and Fire Departments get a big piece of the pie; however, it is definitely worth it.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that Leadership Lowndes today was super, and the City of Valdosta was highly represented. The City Manager was on a panel along with the Mayor and they had a great discussion. She also thanked Darryl Muse, Utilities Director, and Richard Hardy, Deputy City Manager of Operations, because they made her feel honored to be a part of the City of Valdosta. They answered all of the questions in a manner that others could go back and relate to the public.

Mayor Matheson stated that as President of Leadership Lowndes, Councilwoman Miller-Cody is being very humble in what goes into planning an entire Program Day because it is intense. She did a fantastic job along with her team in putting it together.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the May 20, 2021 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:06 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, June 10, 2021.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta