

**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 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, Ben Norton, Vivian Miller-Cody, Eric Howard, and Andy Gibbs. The invocation was given by Pastor David Adams, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Consideration of the September, 2021 Employee of the Month Award (Dujunnea Bland, Utilities Department).

David Frost, Utilities Director, stated that Dujunnea Bland began his employment with the City of Valdosta in January of 2021 and is currently a Central Maintenance Technician in the Utilities Department. The nomination for Mr. Bland was submitted by his Supervisor, Tanner Smith. Here is what Mr. Smith wrote, “DJ Bland stepped up as Acting Maintenance Supervisor at the Water Treatment Plant during his Supervisor’s medical leave of absence after only having been in this Department for two months. His ability to learn and execute required tasks to keep our citizens and communities drinking water flowing is beyond phenomenal! His continuous positive attitude has a very positive effect on the morale of fellow co-workers. During his time as Acting Supervisor, he continued to prove his ability to take on new jobs which would be difficult to most others having only been in this Department for a couple months. His mechanical skills abled him to keep the Water Treatment Plant operating at full force. The Water Treatment Plant consists of highly dangerous chemicals and hazards and DJ was able to successfully work with these hazards with no safety issues again with having very minimal experience at the Plant. He was also in charge of one other co-worker during his time as Acting Supervisor. This allowed him to show his leadership skills which are very easy to recognize! DJ is always bringing up new and beneficial ideas to help make our work as efficient as possible. The City of Valdosta benefits highly from having DJ on our team. His exceptional overall performance was quickly noticed by me as well as other Superintendents and fellow co-workers. At the rate he is learning, he will be moving up quickly in this line of work. Based off of his short time as Acting Supervisor, I know he will continue to learn and thrive in this organization and industry. Without DJ’s hard work and contributions to the Water Treatment Plant and the City as a whole, our citizens would not have received adequate drinking water during this time. Providing our community and citizens with fresh, uncontaminated drinking water is of upmost importance to our community’s health and well-being.” It is for this reason and many others that the Employee Relations Committee nominated Dujunnea Bland as the September Employee of the Month.

Recognition of Achievement for City of Valdosta Fire Chief Brian Boutwell.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Fire Department is known for its professionalism and excellence in service to the citizens of Valdosta. Fire Chief Brian Boutwell has shown his dedication and commitment by successfully completing the process that awards the professional designation of Chief Fire Officer (C.F.O.) from the Center for Public Safety Excellence. The Commission on Professional Credentialing (C.P.C) recently met on June 1, 2021 to confer the designation. Fire Chief Boutwell now becomes one of 1,554 C.F.O.’s worldwide and one of only 48 C.F.O.’s in the State of Georgia. The Designation Program is a voluntary program that recognizes individuals who demonstrate their continued excellence in the seven measured components of experience, education, professional development, professional contributions, association membership, community involvement, and technical competence. In addition, applicants are required to identify a future professional development plan. The C.F.O. Designation Program uses a comprehensive peer review model to evaluate candidates seeking the C.F.O. credential. The C.P.C, which is comprised of individuals from federal and local governments, academia, and the fire and emergency medical services profession, awards the C.F.O. designation only after an individual has successfully met all the organization’s stringent criteria. The C.F.O. designation is valid for three years, and maintaining the designation requires the recipient to show continued growth in the areas of professional development, professional contributions, active association membership, and community involvement. Achieving

this certification signifies Fire Chief Boutwell's continued commitment to his career in the fire service. He is to be commended for his dedication to the fire profession and the City of Valdosta. This prestigious designation demonstrates his commitment toward professionalism, leadership, and outstanding service to the Valdosta Fire Department and the citizens of our community.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the August 19, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS****REQUEST TO CHANGE THE NAME OF BILES CIRCLE TO TORRINGTON LANE**

Consideration of a request to change the name of Biles Circle to Torrington Lane.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that On May 24, 2021, Mr. Jerry W. Stoker presented the Engineering Department with a request to change the name of an existing stubbed-out portion of roadway known as, "Biles Circle" (located within Branch Point Subdivision) to Torrington Lane. If approved, the name change would eliminate the shorter stubbed-out road section known as "Biles Circle" and incorporate the Biles Circle name (and short road segment) into Torrington Lane. The result is a direct connection of the Stonebrooke and Branch Point Subdivisions via Torrington Lane at the intersection with Beulah Circle. There is a signed Street Renaming Petition and the only two parcels that abut Biles Circle have Beulah Circle addresses. Mr. Stoker has obtained both parcel owner's signatures, which have been verified by Engineering Staff. Mr. Stoker owns the entire parcel where Torrington Lane is being developed. Consequently, the Petition has exceeded the 60% signature requirement as outlined in Ordinance No. 2019-2. Note that all names were verified using property records and the customer service database. As required, a public notice was run on August 13, 2021 and again on August 20, 2021 in the Valdosta Daily Times to advertise the subject of this renaming Petition and hearing date.

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request to change the name of Biles Circle to Torrington Lane.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2021-24, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A PERSONAL CARE HOME IN A RESIDENTIAL-PROFESSIONAL (R-P) ZONING DISTRICT**

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Personal Care Home in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District as requested by Blue Wright Holdings Opportunity Zone Fund, LLC (File No. CU-2021-04). The property is located at 1006 Slater Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their August 30, 2021 Regular Meeting and recommended approval with four conditions (7-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that Ms. Eshonda Blue, on behalf of Blue Wright Holdings Opportunity Zone Fund, LLC is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Personal Care Home (PCH) in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District. The property consists of 0.20 acres located at 1006 Slater Street, which is along the west side of the street about half-way between East Mary Street and East Force Street. The property is currently developed as an unoccupied professional office (1,708 square feet) which was converted from a former residence with a paved parking lot of seven spaces in the rear yard. The applicant is proposing to convert the building for use as a licensed Personal Care Home for up to six adults who are senior citizens and/or persons with disabilities. The applicant is not proposing any changes to the site or the exterior of the existing building; however, in terms of operation of the facility, the applicant's proposal is a little different than what we have seen in the past. The applicant (as a business entity) is simply proposing to own the property and will lease it to a separate PCH operator. One of the applicant's other companies (Innovative Senior Solutions) will

subcontract with the PCH operator as a consultant and provide oversight for the operation of the facility. The property is located within a Transitional Neighborhood (TN) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within the local Historic District. Any exterior changes to the building or site will require COA approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. The property is located within a former residential area that mostly transitioned many years ago to one that is dominated by professional offices. The small historic buildings (former houses) still remain and preserve the unique residential character of the area. The front yards are very small. All parking is off-street and located in the rear yards only, with interconnecting parking lots among the properties. The subject property is eligible for consideration as a Personal Care Home with up to six residents (additional residents would require a larger minimum lot size). Typically, a Personal Care Home of six residents would be considered too intensive for a house and lot this small, and it would be considered too much of an institutional use for most single-family residential neighborhoods; however, this property is an ideal location for such a use in that it still maintains a residential character but its land use pattern is already dominated by non-residential. Furthermore, in many ways a Personal Care Home of this size, even as an institutional use, is less intensive than most professional offices that could otherwise locate here under R-P Zoning. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval subject to the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for a State-licensed and fully compliant Personal Care Home with up to six residents at the facility. No other uses allowed in R-P Zoning shall be allowed on the property that are in addition to the Personal Care Home. (2) All parking associated with the facility shall be located on-site and in the rear yard only. (3) There shall be no temporary signage, and permanent signs shall be limited to those which are allowed in the Historic District under R-P Zoning and in accordance with the Historic District Design Guidelines (Land Development Regulations - Appendix G). (4) Conditional Use approval shall expire after two years from the date of approval if no City Business License has been approved for the facility by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their August 30, 2021 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same four conditions as recommended by Staff (7-0 Vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilwoman Tooley to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Personal Care Home in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District as requested by Blue Wright Holdings Opportunity Zone Fund, LLC with the following four conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for a State-licensed and fully compliant Personal Care Home with up to six residents at the facility. No other uses allowed in R-P Zoning shall be allowed on the property that are in addition to the Personal Care Home. (2) All parking associated with the facility shall be located on-site and in the rear yard only. (3) There shall be no temporary signage, and permanent signs shall be limited to those which are allowed in the Historic District under R-P Zoning and in accordance with the Historic District Design Guidelines (Land Development Regulations - Appendix G). (4) Conditional Use approval shall expire after two years from the date of approval if no City Business License has been approved for the facility by that date. Councilman Carroll seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2021-24, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

#### **ORDINANCE NO. 2021-25, 1N ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A CHURCH FACILITY IN A SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6) ZONING DISTRICT**

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Church facility in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning District as requested by LeRoy Butler, Jr. (File No. CU-2021-05). The property is located at 820 Woodlawn Drive. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their August 30, 2021 Regular Meeting and recommended approval with five conditions (7-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that Pastor LeRoy Butler from the Woodlawn Forrest Church of Christ is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Church facility in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning District. The property consists of 2.44 acres located at 820 Woodlawn Drive, which is along the north side of the street immediately across from the intersection with Vallotton Drive. The property is

currently developed with a single-family residence (2,239 square feet) at the east end of the property, and an old warehouse building (5,000 square feet) that was previously used as a tent manufacturing facility near the center of the property, as well as with a 16 x 76 old single-wide mobile home in between. The applicant is proposing to renovate the residence for Church office use, renovate and convert the former tent manufacturing building as a gathering place for Church meetings and perhaps as a place for youth activities, remove the mobile home, and install a parking lot with 30+ parking spaces. The property is located within an Established Residential (ER) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan and is located within a well-established mostly residential area. It is surrounded on three sides by a Single-Family Residential neighborhood and is directly across North Forrest Street from two well-established churches (including the applicant's Church). For many decades, the property was developed partially with a manufacturing use that became completely out-of-character with the surrounding land use pattern. It pre-dated the City's adoption of Zoning and it was always classified as a legal non-conforming use. Fortunately, it eventually became vacant and abandoned long enough to have lost whatever grandfathering status it may have once enjoyed. Any future usage or development/redevelopment of the property is subject to the provisions of R-6 Zoning, which includes the possibility of a Church and its related accessory uses with a CUP approval. With good site planning and reasonable conditions of approval, a Church campus can be a very compatible neighbor with a surrounding residential area. In this particular case, most any form of redevelopment of the property under R-6 Zoning would likely be better than its previous usage anyway. The only issues of concern would be lighting, buffering along the north property line, actual intensity of the use(s), and hours/times of usage. Find consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval to the City Council subject to the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for Church usage of the property as a subordinate expansion of the Woodlawn Forrest Church of Christ facility located across the street to the east which shall remain the primary Church campus. Uses on the subject property may include a typical single-family residence, Church office, Sunday School classrooms, playground, storage, meeting and social rooms, and Church gathering space along with any requisite restrooms and access/support rooms. Cumulative total of all existing and proposed buildings on this property shall not exceed 10,000 square feet heated Gross Floor Area (GFA). (2) The existing mobile home and any existing outdoor storage materials shall be removed from the site. (3) Parking facilities shall meet the same landscaping and lighting requirements of the Land Development Regulations (LDR) as other non-residential parking lots. All site lighting shall be directed away from surrounding residential properties. Any unused curb cuts onto Woodlawn Drive shall be entirely removed. The existing sidewalk along Woodlawn Drive shall be extended along the property's entire frontage with North Forrest Street and connected to the North Forrest Street crosswalk as approved by the City Engineer. Note that Council discussed at the Work Session about removing the last sentence on this condition that deals with the sidewalks. (4) The entire north property line shall be maintained with a minimum 10' wide buffer yard and/or 6' tall opaque privacy fence, and a minimum 10' building setback distance. (5) Conditional Use approval shall expire after five years from the date of approval if no Building Permit has been issued for any new building or existing building expansion/renovation, by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their August 30, 2021 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to these same five conditions as recommended by Staff (7-0 Vote).

Pastor LeRoy Butler, Jr., Minister of the Woodlawn Forrest Church of Christ, spoke in favor of the request. They have come to request that Council approve the application; however, they would like for Council to consider a matter in regard to the maximum square footage allowed which is 10,000 square feet. They have determined through inquiry that there is no maximum square footage in terms of development in R-6 Zoning. They feel like they are being hand-cuffed if they decide to expand or extend the square footage on the 2.5 acres. They would like to be granted the use and not be restricted in terms of full development of the 2.5 acres. That would be the best case scenario for them and not have to go through this process all over again if they decide to expand beyond 10,000 square feet. Pastor Butler asked that Council consider this request and not saddle them with the burden of having to go through all of that. They are respectfully requesting that they not be held to 10,000 square feet.

Councilman Vickers inquired if they were in agreement with the rest of the conditions. Pastor Butler stated that they were in agreement. Councilman Vickers inquired about the sidewalk. Pastor Butler stated that the City has paved the sidewalks on Woodlawn all the way to North Forrest Street. There is sidewalk on North Forrest Street from Park Avenue all the way back to East Moore Street. Mayor Matheson stated that they are going to strike that sentence about the sidewalks because Forrest Street is in line for vast improvements. Councilman

Vickers stated that he wanted to make sure they discussed that for the record. Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked Pastor Butler for what they are doing in that area. She lives in that area and she is in agreement with what Pastor Butler is asking and they should allow him to be able to do the things that he wants to do with the property. Councilman Carroll stated that eliminating any kind of maximum square footage on the building size on the property may not be really what they are asking for or want because there are limitations on the size of a building in R-6. Matt Martin stated that there is no upper building area limitation in any of the Zoning Districts other than some of the Overlay Districts. The R-6 Zoning is a Single-Family Residential District and if you can get a 9,000 square foot house to fit on a R-6 lot it is possible. That is why there is no upward limitation. Churches and other institutional uses are Conditional Use Permits. The site plan and future development come into play. If the property were half the size and their entire proposed site plan takes up all of the subject property, then in all likelihood, you are looking at the maximum scenario. In this case, you are looking at half of the maximum scenario because you see the whole western half of the property is left open and that was part of the concern. If you can visualize the 5,000 square foot building in the center, then how many more of those buildings could possibly fit even with parking? Maybe two or three more at least depending on how it is configured and usage. That is where the concern stands from. With other Churches that have come through the Conditional Use process and Single-Family Zoning, we have done the same thing and put an upward limit to give them room to expand. If they have a Master Plan, then they try to accommodate that as much as possible. He could think of two examples in the past ten years, one of which is Crossroads Baptist Church at the corner of Country Club and Eager Road. They went through a long-term building expansion and had a lot of extra room with plans for more buildings. We put an upward limit on them to accommodate their plans but it was a reasonable limit. The other one was the Episcopal Church on North Patterson Street which is located across from the Valdosta State University campus. They had multiple acres and room to expand and they were not quite as sure what their future expansion would be so they got an upward limit. He would be much more in favor of a much higher number than no number at all. If they get to that point in the future, then to change that they would come through the process. We would be dealing with a different site plan and different specifics which makes for a better review. Mayor Matheson stated that was discussed at the Work Session on Tuesday to expand that. Councilman Carroll stated that if you could visualize three or possibly four more 5,000 square foot buildings on the property and depending on parking requirements, you would be raising that limit from 10,000 gross floor area to 25,000 or 30,000 gross floor area. Pastor Butler stated that sounded reasonable to him. The property is zoned R-6 so he would assume that if they decided at some point to put some type of housing on the end of the property, they would just have to comply with what is normally complied with building codes and setbacks. They would not have to go through a special use. Councilman Carroll stated that all he would have to do is subdivide the lot into however many parcels and go pull your permits and start building. Councilwoman Tooley stated that there is an Ordinance on R-6 restrictions on land use (square footage). Pastor Butler stated that since this is a Church it comes under other consideration. Councilwoman Tooley stated that they would not have to put a number figure on there. Matt Martin stated that there is no upward limit automatically in R-6 Zoning mainly because it is Single-Family Residential and there would be a limitation on house size. Things that are not houses like a Community Center, a Church, or a School are Conditional Uses and are reviewed case-by-case; therefore, the numbers should be different case-by-case. The Ordinance Councilwoman Tooley is referring to is in the LDR. There are no criteria in there for maximum building but just minimum floor area for a house which is 800 square feet. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether they need to put a number on it. Matt Martin stated that they have a recommendation of a number which is subject for discussion. His recommendation to Council is to change the number rather than eliminate the number. Councilman Carroll stated that they were talking about raising the number to 30,000 square feet. Pastor Butler was in agreement with that number.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilwoman Tooley to approve the request of the applicant for the Church usage of the said property with the following five conditions and the removal of the verbiage from Condition (3) stating extending the sidewalk along the entire frontage of the property with North Forrest Street and connected to the North Forrest Street crosswalk and to change the verbiage from the Condition to read not to exceed greater than 30,000 square feet of gross heated floor area: (1) Approval shall be granted for Church usage of the property as a subordinate expansion of the Woodlawn Forrest Church of Christ facility located across the street to the east which shall remain the primary Church campus. Uses on the subject property may include a typical single-family residence, Church office, Sunday School classrooms, playground, storage, meeting and social rooms, and Church

gathering space along with any requisite restrooms and access/support rooms. Cumulative total of all existing and proposed buildings on this property shall not exceed greater than 30,000 square feet heated Gross Floor Area (GFA). (2) The existing mobile home and any existing outdoor storage materials shall be removed from the site. (3) Parking facilities shall meet the same landscaping and lighting requirements of the Land Development Regulations (LDR) as other non-residential parking lots. All site lighting shall be directed away from surrounding residential properties. Any unused curb cuts onto Woodlawn Drive shall be entirely removed. (4) The entire north property line shall be maintained with a minimum 10' wide buffer yard and/or 6' tall opaque privacy fence, and a minimum 10' building setback distance. (5) Conditional Use approval shall expire after five years from the date of approval if no Building Permit has been issued for any new building or existing building expansion/renovation, by that date. Councilwoman Miller-Cody seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2021-25, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

### **ORDINANCE NO. 2021-26, AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE VALDOSTA CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT BOARD (SECOND READING)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to establish the Valdosta Citizens Engagement Board. (Second Reading)

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that in 2020, there was discussion among the City Manager, and the Police Chief to make substantial updates to the existing Citizens Engagement Board to create continued positive interaction between the citizens of Valdosta and the Police Department, as well as increase transparency and accountability of the department. We were then hit with the COVID-19 Pandemic and the establishment of this Board was placed on hold. Later in 2020, the creation of a Review Board then became mandatory regarding the settlement of the Antonio Smith case. A document was created to serve as guidance for this Board which outlines the Purpose, Members and Terms, Duties of the Board, Meetings, Administration and Training, and Complaint Procedure. The Mayor and Council have reviewed the document several times as changes were made. The latest change was made November 6, 2020 per a Council recommendation. In order to officially create the Valdosta Citizens Police Engagement Board, an Ordinance has been drafted for your review. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended approval of the Valdosta Citizens Engagement Board.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2021-26, an Ordinance to establish the Valdosta Citizens Engagement Board, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated the membership is made up of nominees from the Mayor and Council and they will need to take a vote on that. Mayor Matheson's nominee is Lee Henderson, Councilwoman Miller-Cody's nominee is George Tharpe, Councilwoman Tooley's nominee is Darren Neal, Councilman Vickers' nominee is Lewis Gordon, Councilman Howard's nominee is Denise Peters, Councilman Carroll's nominee is Kay Reeves, Councilman Gibbs' nominee is Terry Ball, and Councilman Norton's nominee is Michael Thomas.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adopt the nominees for the Valdosta Citizens Engagement Board.

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

Consideration of a Request for Proposal (RFP) and Consulting Contract for services to perform Phase II of the Re-Surveying of the Valdosta Local Historic District.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the City of Valdosta Historic Preservation Planner are in the process of Phase II of the Local Historic District survey of existing historic resources. The purpose of the survey is to meet Certified Local Government (CLG) requirements, advance City planning initiatives, enhance the HPC decision-making capacity, and update the State historic resources GIS database. Phase I of the Local Historic District survey was completed in September of 2020 with Grant assistance from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). In February of 2021, the

City of Valdosta budgeted a maximum of \$30,000 to be used as a match for Grant funding to complete Phase II of the survey. On June 30, 2021, the City of Valdosta received notice of an award for the DCA Grant assistance totaling \$17,344.93 for Phase II. On July 28, 2021, the City of Valdosta issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a historic resources survey for Phase II to include approximately 927 parcels. This figure represents the remaining portion of the Local Historic District not surveyed during Phase I. On August 27, 2021, the City of Valdosta received three competitive sealed proposals from qualified Historic Preservation Consultants/Firms. On August 30, 2021, the HPC gathered to review and evaluate the proposals, and to select the most qualified Consultant. The HPC voted unanimously to select Johnson, Miriam, & Thompson (JMT) at a cost of \$43,131.25. Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, recommended that Council approve a Request for Proposal (RFP) and Consulting Contract with Johnson, Miriam, & Thompson (JMT) in the amount of \$43,131.25 to perform Phase II of the Re-Surveying of the Valdosta Local Historic District.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a Request for Proposal (RFP) and Consulting Contract with Johnson, Miriam, & Thompson (JMT) in the amount of \$43,131.25 to perform Phase II of the Re-Surveying of the Valdosta Local Historic District.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Mayor Matheson stated that he had an event, LAMP's Changing Lives Dinner, to attend and he would turn the Council Meeting over to Mayor Pro Tem Carroll to finish. Mayor Matheson left the Council Meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Jennifer Blanc stated that she would not give out her address because there is an open case involving her as a victim of a crime in Valdosta. They are here as taxpayers to alert the Council as to some circumstances that require measures to be taken. They would like to reduce the amount of crime taking place in the Historic District of Valdosta. She is a lawyer and grew up in Chicago. She came to Valdosta in late 2019 around the time that COVID hit. She did not know any of her neighbors at the time but she has now grown to love her neighbors. On March 28, 2021, she was confronted by a gunman in the vestibule of her home. It is an open case so she will not go into all the details but he shot her for the purpose of carjacking. She was in the hospital for 17 days and was in a coma for the first 3 days. She has had three different surgeries. One bullet hit her in the liver and exited out of the back of her spine. Another bullet went through her breast and another one went through her money-making hand. Through all of these surgeries and four blood transfusions, she is standing here before you because of the grace of God as the lawyer from Illinois and a taxpaying citizen of Valdosta. Her neighbors have taken care of her since she got out of the hospital. There have been seven shootings since her shooting and all of those were in the Historic District at Park Avenue and Williams Street. Between May and June there was a shooting that took place with two cousins exchanging fire, a shooting of family members around the College with one person critically wounded. In July, there was some sort of drug deal that went bad. There were four men against one and they were taking shots at him walking down the street. This was in front of the Baptist Church at Park and Williams. In August, right before she was getting on a plane to go see her daughter, she was in her home laying in bed and was shaken out of bed because there was a drive-by shooting on Williams Street. There were three Police Officers who came to the scene and they picked up 14 shell casings. She came out of her house and spoke with the Police Officer who told her it was a drive-by shooting involving a purple car and a black SUV. Later, nothing transpired and there was no visible presence of Police. There was no notification of knocking on doors. She only saw one neighbor that the Police actually knocked on their door. She was not here to bash the Police because they love them and they are very responsive when called. Unfortunately, there has been a series of events and no meaningful intervention to prevent future crimes. The reason they are here is because they want more of a disciplinary approach and they want Council to pass Resolutions so that they can have a camera at Park and Williams. Mayor Pro Tem Carroll stated that was not something they could not do tonight; however, it might be possible within the Budget of the Police Department that they could do something but it would have to be discussed.

John Robinson, 3227 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he recently gave a presentation to Council asking to join in a partnership with The People's Tribunal and to ask the Federal government for \$250 million for development on the south side only. These funds would not be for The People's Tribunal but a request for the City itself. He lives under conditions because he cannot plan for 10 or 15 years due to his cancer diagnosis. He was given only a few months to live but he is in remission now. The people that live in our community are living under

conditions of not earning \$10,000 a year and 40% live below poverty. To live under oppression is the same result that he faced. People lose their hope and if Council would go to LAMP and deal with the homeless people, you will find that they have a waiting list for the homeless. They are also overwhelmed at the food kitchen. Something is very wrong here. People want to paint a picture of a luxurious Valdosta. It is a nice place. He was born here and this is his home. There is a gross unfairness in this City and they are trying to come together to see if something can be done in a positive manner and to move ahead. People who live in poverty and a hopeless condition will throw paper on the street because they do not care. We need to restore the dignity and pride by having something done. He would like to make a request that they get a record of the projects that were done on the south side versus the ones that were done on the north side of the City and where the money is flowing in the City.

Counselor Terry Burton, 1501 Iola Avenue, stated that he used to represent 380,000 residents across London and one of the Committees that he was the Chair of was the Police Consulting Group. Council Members were appointed to it as well as the Police Chief and some of the Police Officers. Church leaders attended and people who ran the community centers were there. There were approximately 20 people on it and they met once a month. In London they have stealing, stabbing, robberies, assaults, and everything that goes on here goes on over there. They would thrash out the ideas. The Police need ideas and the people need input. They worked together as a team effort to determine what they were going to do about it and deal with the issue. It was a wonderful melting pot. It would be nice if the City of Valdosta could have something like this Police Consulting Group.

Melanie Parker, 422 Connell Road, Apt. E-4, stated that she is a native of Valdosta and has spent 20 years in Alaska. She graduated from the University of Alaska with a Degree in Human Services. She has returned home to be with her family and work in the community. She is representing the Valdosta Black Heritage Group and she serves as the Secretary. At the Tuesday Work Session, she was pleased to hear the Mayor indicate that he was in favor of expanding the boundary line south of the Local Historic District. Given the fact that it seems the entire southside Historic District and black neighborhoods of the east Historic District were excluded from the Local Historic District 40 years ago, they do have the following questions for you. Will the next Phase involve expanding the Local Historic boundary line south as the Mayor stated he would be in favor of? Will it also include, for example, Macedonia, which is Valdosta's oldest black heritage Church to the west? Also, what would be the estimated start time of that next Phase? Lastly, what can Valdosta Black Heritage do to help?

Pearl Chappell, 2008 Carolyn Terrace, stated that Council made a decision on changing the name of North Forrest Street. She wanted to point out that their vote really is null and void for a couple of different reasons. If you go to Section 86-81 it states that Council shall consider the changing of a name only upon receipt of all residents of all parcels. It does not say some, not the majority, not just the ones that have signatures on it but all. This was not done. Mr. Davis was given a list of 279 names and addresses but did not notify all. He is missing 107 people if you go by the numbers that were given. Section 86-82 (b) states that the City Engineer shall verify the actual requisite signatures of all and shall be allowed one signature per parcel. All parcels were not verified, only the ones that were submitted by Mr. Davis. This causes her concern as to whether or not that there was only one signature per parcel that was verified. If they are not checking all of them then what else was missed? Nonetheless, how can this submittal be deemed complete to give to you to vote on when not all parcels were contacted? Section 86-82(c) states that it has to be published a minimum of two times. She has looked and could only find one. She was told it was published twice in the Valdosta Daily Times but she could only find one. Lastly, according to the Georgia Sunshine Law, this should have been placed on the Agency website and she could not find it. She has to ask Mr. Davis why is the changing the name of a street so controversial? Could it be that he should go for changing the name of our City because after all, it is named after a plantation. Why are we doing this? She heard these people and there are a lot of things we need to put attention on. We need attention on our mission and our purpose and that is what you are here for.

## **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that there will be a 9-11 Memorial Service tomorrow at 10:15 a.m. on the historic Courthouse lawn. On Saturday, September 11, 2021, the Fire Department will host a 9-11 Memorial 5K Run. Before the awards ceremony, there will be a ceremony to lay a wreath on a fire truck in the McKey Parking Lot.



Also, the City Manager's Report has been distributed to the Council and if Council would like to see any other information placed in the Report then please let him know.

Councilman Howard inquired as to whether the Mayor and Council could be copied on the response to the citizens. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that normally what we do is to provide the Council with that information at the next Council Meeting because sometimes it takes that two week time frame; however, he will E-mail Council and we will continue to distribute it every two weeks as well.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that approximately two months ago she asked if the City Manager would get with the City Attorney to come up with some information to give to the citizens about the ARPA and CARES funding. There are a lot of questions coming from the citizens about that. We keep telling them that we are working on it but this would help to alleviate a lot of the questions. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that if he did not work here he would not believe that we have no rules on how to spend money that has been designated to the City. He would say that we are not being truthful; however, it is the honest truth because we are still waiting. They have been told by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) not to disperse the money until we get the final regulations. We are still awaiting the final regulations as of today. We are trying to get some input as to when we might receive those final regulations. The funding is basically for economic development, premium pay for employees, and infrastructure. There is no more detail to help us navigate through it as of yet. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she would like for clarification on infrastructure. Mark Barber stated that it is mostly about sanitary sewer and water. It has to be prevention of COVID so you have got to have those services for washing your hands and bathing. The majority of that will center around provision of water and sanitary sewer. There are pots of money out there that people are getting confused. We received our local ARPA allocation but we can also go to the State and pull from some of their allocation that Governor Kemp has allowed us to do. There is also an Infrastructure Bill coming down so that is another pot of money. It does get very confusing but we do not have the final regulations. We do not want to violate any kind of Federal Law. We want to be good stewards of the money and we want to spend it the way they mean for it to be spent. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether there were any other cities that have used any of their money. Mark Barber stated that he was not aware of any; however, he has heard that the City of Macon has done some things and they could possibly be in violation. Mayor Pro Tem Carroll stated that he spoke with someone at GMA today and they expressed that cities all over Georgia are in the same boat and are waiting to get the details. Councilman Vickers inquired as to how much money the City has received that we have not spent. Mark Barber stated that our total allocation is a little over \$16 million. We received half in June and we will receive the other half next Fiscal Year. We have spent a portion of that for premium pay for employees who worked during COVID and continue to work during COVID. The majority came from the CARES Act Fund that we received in September just to be sure we were not violating ARPA. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she would like to see a statement that the City has received some money and we are still looking at the regulations. Mark Barber stated that we are at a standstill. With the Executive Order that Mr. John Robinson was referring to, we are still very eager to make that agreement but at the same time we are waiting on additional information so we know how to put together a good agreement and partnership with Mr. Robinson. That is still on the table but that process has not been finished at the Federal level as well.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that we have a Valdosta transit and inquired as to whether there was any way we could explain it to the citizens. There is some confusion as to why citizens cannot have the drivers do certain things like their dress and the timing. We may need to give the citizens some additional information. Mark Barber stated that it is Valdosta On Demand and the City pays for that service so it is a City of Valdosta service to our citizens. We are currently pushing 300 rides a day and there are 7,500 people signed up on the app to ride. We do contract through a third party so it is not a physical City Department like Public Works. Our Deputy City Manager of Operations, Richard Hardy, is the Transit Director. The timing is already built in because that is the Federal dollars that we received. We cannot control that until the next round of Federal dollars. We can redo that as the Fiscal Years come through because the CARES Act has covered us for the last two years. All of those things were set up in the original contract. We have the allocated dollars from the Federal government and we have to stay within that dollar because we do not have another source at the moment to increase it. Citizens should consider it a City of Valdosta service because we will have to pay for it eventually after all the funding is over. Everything is based on hours driven. The whole Federal Grant system is hours driven so right now we have to respect that. We knew that going into this and we knew that it would be popular so we would probably expand that with the next round of Federal dollars.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she wanted to thank everyone for being there for her when she lost her nephew and her sister. Her sister was 94 years old so we are thankful for that. The City is her family and she thanked everyone for their prayers and support. She asked Council to continue to pray for her and her family.

Councilman Gibbs stated that Councilman Howard came up with a great idea and he asked Council to mark their calendars for October 9, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. for a corn hole tournament at Georgia Beer Company. There will be a food truck on hand, and music at 6:30 p.m. He and Councilman Howard will play against two County Commissioners and then Mark Barber and the Mayor will play against the County Manager Paige Dukes and Chairman Bill Slaughter. There will also be four Police Officers playing against four Firefighters. All of the proceeds will go to the fund that was set up for the four First Responders who were injured in a recent accident. Georgia Beer will also donate a portion of their money to the fund.

Councilman Howard stated that there will be an event at Scott Park on October 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with hamburgers and hotdogs. Also, there will be a Blood Drive on September 30, 2021 at the City Hall Annex building.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Carroll entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the September 9, 2021 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:45 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, September 23, 2021.

---

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

---

Mayor, City of Valdosta