

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Carroll called the regular meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 5:30 p.m. Council members present were: Ben Norton, Vivian Miller-Cody, Eric Howard, and Andy Gibbs. Mayor Scott James Matheson, Councilman Joseph “Sonny” Vickers, and Councilwoman Sandra Tooley were absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Anghaarad Dees, Trinity Presbyterian Church and Chaplain for the Valdosta Police Department, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 23, 2021 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (4-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-27, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 2.63 ACRES FROM RESIDENTIAL-PROFESSIONAL (R-P) TO HIGHWAY-COMMERCIAL (C-H)

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 2.63 acres from Residential-Professional (R-P) to Highway-Commercial (C-H) as requested by Burke Batten (File No. VA-2021-17). The property is located at 4955 Inner Perimeter Road. The Planning Commission reviewed this request at their September Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Tracy Tolley, Zoning Coordinator, stated that Burke Batten is requesting to rezone 2.63 acres from Residential-Professional (R-P) to Highway-Commercial (C-H). The property is currently vacant and located at 4955 Inner Perimeter Road which is along the east side of the road approximately 1,000 feet north of U.S. Highway 84. The property for the rezoning is the northern portion of a 9.22-acre wooded parcel of land that is currently split-zoned between C-H and R-P. The applicant is seeking to make all of the property zoned C-H and develop it as a commercial trailer and storage container business. Some of the applicant’s proposed uses for the property will require Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approval, and if this rezoning is approved, then the CUP application will be submitted for a future monthly review cycle. The property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan, which allows the possibility of C-H Zoning. The property is also located within the Inner Perimeter Road Corridor Overlay District (IPR-COD). The property was part of the very large “Brayland” tract of land which was annexed in the late 1980’s. At that time, it was given a Zoning pattern that was based on an overall Master Plan for development which never materialized. About 15 years ago, the Brayland tract was subdivided and auctioned off into smaller tracts. Many of the existing Zoning boundaries did not follow the new parcel lines. The subject property was one of those subdivided parcels which ended up with split-zoning. The area along Inner Perimeter Road at the intersection with U.S. 84 has always been planned and zoned for industrial development to the south and commercial development to the immediate north. The area of R-P Zoning to the north of that was intended to represent a transition between commercial development near U.S. Highway 84 and residential subdivisions farther to the north; however, with all of the surrounding properties still being undeveloped, the irregular split-zoning of the subject property causes a very awkward condition for any form of development. Given the fact that the property is more than two-thirds commercially zoned, the overall intensity of the Inner Perimeter Road location and its proximity to U.S. 84, as well as the property’s location within the CAC Character Area, it would seem very logical and appropriate that this entire parcel have Commercial Zoning. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their September 27, 2021 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (9-0 vote).

Burke Batten, 120 Leyland Drive, Broxton, Georgia, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Batten stated that he is the Vice President of a rising industry and they are a family-owned business. They are a wholesale

manufacturer of enclosed cargo trailers. They purchased the property in July of 2021 and they are starting a new division with new products. They want to have portable storage like pods or a pack rat. They will use the property as a distribution point for the pods. They will potentially have static storage on there as well along with the corporate office. There will be multiple uses that will be on the Conditional Use Permit; however, for the most part, they will be retailing more products that they manufacture elsewhere at their other plants. They are very excited about this property. It is a wooded lot so they are going through the Land Disturbance process.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2021-27, an Ordinance to rezone 2.63 acres from Residential-Professional (R-P) to Highway-Commercial (C-H) as requested by Burke Batten, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Valdosta Fire Department and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency Homeland Security's Georgia Search and Rescue Team (GSAR).

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) has caused the creation of the Georgia Search and Rescue (GSAR) teams as special regional response teams comprised of qualified local governmental public safety entities. These teams have been supplied with appropriate equipment, training, and exercises to enable them to assist the State and requesting party with GSAR personnel, equipment, services, supplies, and other resources during an emergency or disaster. The State of Georgia is vulnerable to a wide range of natural or man-made disaster/emergencies. The City of Valdosta's Fire Department hosts one of eight (8) Regional GSAR Response Teams in the State covering an area from Interstate 75 south of Cordele to the Florida line and all areas west to the Alabama State line. Members of the Valdosta Regional Response Team were deployed to assist on many natural disasters as well as man-made incidents such as trench collapses. Hosting the team places technical rescue assets in our community for rapid response. The Georgia Emergency Management Act gives the State and local governments the authority to make agreements for mutual aid assistance in emergencies to ensure the timely reimbursement of costs incurred by the local governments which render such assistance. A Memorandum of Agreement was approved in 2008; however, it has to be renewed periodically to ensure continuity across agencies. If we decide to end the Agreement, we will need to submit a letter to GEMA. The Agreement will continue until January 31, 2025.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve a Memorandum of Agreement between the Valdosta Fire Department and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency Homeland Security's Georgia Search and Rescue Team (GSAR).

Consideration of bids for the South Fry Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that Fry Street between Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and North Forrest Street is a two-lane urban collector street. The speed limit is 35 miles per hour. This portion of Fry Street has a grassy shoulder and ditches. The shoulder is heavily used by citizens who walk from their homes on Fry Street or Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive to the convenience store and other businesses along East Hill Avenue. There is currently no curb and gutter or sidewalk. Consequently, pedestrians are left with only two options which are to either walk in the street or walk along the shoulder of the road. The scope of work consists of construction of 1,500 linear feet of sidewalk, curb, and gutter. Piping of the ditches, new retaining walls, curb inlets, and yard drain inlets will be installed where necessary to accommodate the installation of the sidewalk. The final improvements along the Project corridor will include new sod, concrete driveway aprons, and asphalt paving to complete the work. The South Fry Street Pedestrian Improvements Project was advertised for bid in the local newspaper and on the City's website. Bids were opened at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, September 27, 2021. The City received three bids with the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$529,286 plus a 10% contingency (\$52,928.60) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$582,214.60. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$582,214.60 which includes a 10% contingency.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$529,286 plus a 10% contingency (\$52,928.60) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$582,214.60 for the South Fry Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Pearl Chappell, 2008 Carolyn Terrace, stated that she was upset about the vote to change the name of Forrest Street. She feels that it should be null and void because it was not done according to City Ordinances. There was a minimum of 279 people who were to be informed; however, only 172 signatures were gathered and that was the end of it. The other people were not informed. There are over 56,000 people in Valdosta and you have not done your job to let people know about it. All 56,000 people should have been informed and all should have had an opportunity to let their opinions be known. She saw where Mr. Davis asked why changing the name of a street was so controversial. She would like to know that herself. She feels like it is political and the last thing we need right now in our City, a City Without Limits, is to put limits on it and be political and that is what the name change is doing.

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that people often call him on various issues and they ask him why we no longer have a news network that will publish their concerns to the general public. He received several calls this week and he went out to check a concern on South Cypress Street. There was a car that backed into a ditch and that is not the first time that has happened. There are also issues with water drainage and a hazardous roadway with cracks in the concrete which could put motorists and pedestrians in danger. He could talk about why these residents call him because it is not the first time. He chose to film it and he wanted to give a DVD to the Mayor and Council. He asked for them to review it and hear the needs of the taxpaying citizens in Valdosta.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta Police Department and the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office have announced that they will officially recognize Trick or Treat on Saturday, October 30, 2021 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. There will be additional patrols in the City to help keep everyone safe.

The City of Valdosta will have a Fall Festival on October 28, 2021 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Scott Park with drive-through Trick or Treating. Last year was the first year we tried this and it was extremely popular.

The National Faith and Blue Community Fun Day will be held on Saturday, October 9, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Scott Park. It will be sponsored by the Valdosta Police Department, Valdosta State University, and several others. There will be lots of activities going on such as basketball, kickball, a bounce house, and food.

Also, on October 9, 2021, the Maker's Market will be held on Saturday, October 9, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the old historic Courthouse. The Latino Expo will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Willis Miller Library on Julia Drive. WWALS Watershed, the City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County will be hosting a river cleanup from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The City cleanup sites are Valdosta State University, Drexel Park, and One-Mile Branch at Lee Street. Citizens are encouraged to sign up for this cleanup. There will also be a Valdosta-Lowndes County Corn Hole Tournament at 3:00 p.m. at the Georgia Beer Company to raise funds for the City of Valdosta First Responder Fund. Mayor Pro Tem Carroll inquired as to how they were going to raise money at the Corn Hole Tournament. Mark Barber stated that citizens will make donations as they wander around the Georgia Beer Company. Councilman Gibbs stated that they would have donation buckets where citizens can donate money to the team that they think will win the tournament. They will also get proceeds from the Georgia Beer Company and the food truck that is on-site. They will have four Police Officers, two Firefighters, Chairman Bill Slaughter, County Manager Paige Dukes, City Manager Mark Barber, and Deputy City Manager of Operations Richard Hardy competing in the tournament.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked Pat Collins, City Engineer, for the work to be done on Fry Street.

Councilman Howard stated that he would like for the City Manager and City Engineer to go over the street name change with Ms. Chappell so she can understand the process. He also thanked Mr. Rhynes for bringing up citizen's concern before the Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Carroll stated that it has been a busy week with the Mayor being out but it has been fun. He got to spend a lot of time with the Fire Department in honor of Fire Prevention Week. Today was very special because they went to Pinevale Elementary School to judge the door decorations for the second, third, and fourth grade classes for Fire Prevention Week. There are some very creative people and it was a tough decision. The staff, students, and teachers were all very welcoming and they did a great job.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Carroll entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to adjourn the October 7, 2021 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:59 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 21, 2021.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta