

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022
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, Ben Norton, Vivian Miller-Cody, and Eric Howard. Councilwoman Sandra Tooley, Councilman Andy Gibbs, and Councilman Tim Carroll were absent. The invocation was given by Pastor Martin Collins, Image of God Ministries, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 6, 2022 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (4-0) of the Council.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the purchase of a Grapple Truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 8-21-22).

Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, stated that the Sanitation Division of the Public Works Department is adding a vehicle to its fleet. This is a truck with a claw mounted on a boom with a dump trash body which is used for picking up debris. This is a Council-approved item for the FY22 Budget (Residential Trash - Line Item #VR 22.06 - \$160,000). SPLOST VIII will be used for the funding source. One sealed bid was received on November 30, 2021 from Hol-Mac Corp in the amount of \$204,845.65. Greg Brown, Purchasing Agent, recommended that Council approve the bid meeting specifications submitted by Hol-Mac Corp in the amount of \$204,845.65.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the bid meeting specifications submitted by Hol-Mac Corp in the amount of \$204,845.65 for the purchase of a Grapple Truck for the Public Works Department.

Consideration of a request to approve payment for Engineering Services for the Jerry Jones Drive Widening Project.

David Frost, Utilities Director, stated that in preparation for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Project to widen Jerry Jones Drive, the City must develop and submit utilities relocation plans to relocate sewer mains, manholes, sewer laterals, water mains, hydrants, valves, water services, and meters. Following a review of the GDOT plans for the Project, Staff determined the necessary surveying, engineering, and plan development would need to be outsourced. Performing the work in-house is not considered a viable option due to the complexity of the work and time constraints. Using the City's library of approved Engineering Firms, Staff selected Innovate Engineering and Surveying to perform the work. Innovate was immediately available and had the resources to expedite the development of the relocation plans. A "not-to-exceed cost" for the work would be used because of the Project scope and unknowns involved with engineering plans. Based on the industry standards for this type of Project, the engineering cost is typically 4% of the construction cost. The estimated construction cost for the Jerry Jones utilities relocation is \$3,076,727.11. The "not-to-exceed cost" for engineering services is \$123,069.08. The actual cost will be determined in February upon the opening of bids for the Construction Project. David Frost, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve payment for Engineering Services in the amount of \$123,069.08 to Innovate Engineering and Surveying for the Jerry Jones Drive Widening Project.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the payment of \$123,069.08 to Innovate Engineering and Surveying for Engineering Services for the Jerry Jones Drive Widening Project.

Consideration of bids for the purchase of a Jet Vacuum Sewer Truck for the Utilities Department.

David Frost, Utilities Director, stated that the Utilities Department needs to replace an older Jet Vacuum Sewer Truck with high mileage, high usage hours, and rising maintenance costs. A new Vacuum Sewer Truck is in the Council-approved current year Budget. The Vacuum Truck market, like all others, is going through the same effects with inflation and availability. Because of this, only one vendor had the chassis available for this Vacuum Truck to submit a bid. The Vacuum Truck purchase is a Council-approved item for the FY22 Budget (Central Lines - Line Item #VR 22.35 - \$395,000). The Utilities Department will consider leasing options for the purchase. One sealed bid submitted by Adams Equipment in the amount of \$424,973 was received on November 30, 2021. David Frost, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Adams Equipment in the amount of \$424,973 for a Jet Vacuum Sewer Truck for the Utilities Department.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the bid submitted by Adams Equipment in the amount of \$424,973 for a Jet Vacuum Sewer Truck for the Utilities Department.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve the submittal of a new Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application less than 12 months after the denial of the previous CUP application for the same property located at 4036 Bemiss Road.

Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator, stated that on June 10, 2021, the Valdosta City Council voted (4-3 vote) to deny a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request by Corner Storage, LLC (represented by Andrew Bettinger & Perry Solem) to convert the former grocery store building located at 4036 Bemiss Road into a self-storage facility business. The original applicant is from out-of-town and has not contacted Zoning Staff about this case since June of 2021. Every land use decision made by City Council, such as for a Rezoning or a CUP, must be made at an advertised public hearing after following due process as prescribed in O.C.G.A (State Law) as well as local Ordinance. The City's Land Development Regulations (LDR) require that applications for any rezoning, CUP, or other form of land use decision affecting the same property, shall not be submitted sooner than 12 months following the date of final action by the City Council on the previous application. The City Council may vote to reduce this requirement when such action is deemed to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, or to relieve an unnecessary non-economic hardship; however, if the previous action was a denial of a request, in no case shall a subsequent action be considered on the same property sooner than six months following the previous action to deny the request (as mandated by State Law). Mr. Trey Taylor is now wishing to be a new applicant for the same CUP request for this same subject property, and is seeking permission from the City Council to submit his own CUP request before the one-year expiration date (waiting period) which will occur on June 10, 2022. Once this expiration date passes, he would otherwise be eligible to submit his application as soon as the June 25, 2022 deadline, which would be reviewed and advertised during the July case review cycle and brought to City Council on August 11, 2022. He instead wants to be able to submit his application as soon as the January 25, 2022 deadline, which would be reviewed and advertised during the February case review cycle and be brought to City Council on March 10, 2022. It should be noted and emphasized that this would be a completely new CUP application with its own filing fees and attachments (site plan, schematics, etc.) that would be advertised and processed completely from scratch, including having its own Pre-Application meeting with City Staff that is required before submittal. As for the City Council decision on whether or not to grant an expiration timeframe less than 12 months, it is purely discretionary and the only guidance in City Ordinance is that the request should be "deemed consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, or to relieve an unnecessary non-economic hardship." Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether Council would like the applicant to come forward. Council was in agreement to let the applicant speak.

Trey Taylor, 4 Fox Hollow Circle, stated that he is looking to invest quite a lot of money into this Project which is in District 4. He has partnered with the previous applicants on this who are not local people and needed some help in determining exactly what would be a good Project to go in there. They are coming back a little bit early but time is money as you know. They have marketed this property to over 32 special use cases and they have not received any interest in those cases. They continue to pursue those and would like your approval to move forward with the plans for a self-storage facility as a use for that while they investigate the other ones.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the request for submittal of a new Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application less than 12 months after the denial of the previous CUP application for the same property located at 4036 Bemiss Road.

Consideration of a request to purchase 20 sets of structural firefighting gear for the Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that the goal of the Valdosta Fire Department has been for many years to provide members of the Operations Division with two sets of structural firefighting gear. Structural firefighting gear is the heavy, protective clothing worn by firefighters while working on incident scenes. This gear provides members with protection against moisture, flames, and heat. Each set is custom fit to each firefighter and must adhere to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1971. The Standard requires that structural firefighting gear be removed from service when it exceeds ten years of life. After typical use, the gear is thoroughly cleaned to remove smoke, debris, and other carcinogens. The gear is then dried with special machines at the Fire Station before being placed back in service. If another call for service is received before the gear is properly cleaned, firefighters are forced to wear the soiled, wet gear to answer the emergency call. Having clean gear is not only important for the health of our personnel, but also to the customers we serve. This is the reasoning for purchasing gear as a progressive step in providing two sets for each member in the Operations Division. This purchase will not fulfill the goal, but it is the next step in reaching their goal. The Valdosta Fire Department currently has \$62,700 in their current year Budget to purchase structural firefighting gear. The Valdosta Fire Department tested certain brands last year that meet the current NFPA standards in the field under real working conditions. Globe was selected as the gear that met the firefighters' needs while providing a top tier ten-year warranty. The Fire Department would like to request the purchase of 20 sets (pants \$1,030.22 each and coats \$1,324.91 each) of gear from Ten-8 Fire & Safety Equipment of GA in the amount of \$47,102.60 utilizing the NPP.GOV National Contract that is utilized by government agencies across the nation. The Purchasing Ordinance allows this type of purchase and the pricing offered in the Contract is both competitive and fair in the opinion of the Valdosta Fire Department. Chief Boutwell recommended that Council approve the purchase of 20 sets (pants \$1,030.22 each and coats \$1,324.91 each) of gear from Ten-8 Fire & Safety Equipment of GA in the amount of \$47,102.60 utilizing the NPP.GOV National Contract.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the request to purchase 20 sets of structural firefighting gear from Ten-8 Fire & Safety Equipment of GA in the amount of \$47,102.60 utilizing the NPP.GOV National Contract for the Valdosta Fire Department.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority. This appointment was postponed at the January 6, 2022 Regular Meeting until the January 20, 2022 Regular Meeting.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority had a member, Karla Walker, whose term will expire on January 31, 2022. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The only applicant to apply for this slot was Karla Walker (Self Employed as an Attorney)

Mayor Matheson entertained nominations for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody placed into consideration Karla Walker. There being no other nominations, Mayor Matheson closed nominations.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to reappoint Karla Walker to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority to serve a term of four years.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that Council has before them a summary of the final regulations for ARPA spending. The detailed version is 856 pages long. If anyone would like a copy of the detailed version, he will be glad to provide them with a copy or share a link. There are some big changes from the interim rules and he thanked Council for waiting on the final regulations before they did a lot of spending the ARPA funds. Councilman Vickers inquired as to how much money we have received that we have not spent yet. Mark Barber stated that in a two-year period, we will receive approximately \$16.3 million. In June of 2021, we received half of that and we spent approximately \$3 million for employee premium pay for those who worked during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The total cost for our employees was \$5 million but we took that from another pot of money to make sure that we were in the spirit and intent of the ARPA regulations. After reading it now, we made the right decision to do that. Councilman Vickers stated that he would like to suggest that they have some Council discussion in order for them to help make up the Agenda on what we are going to do. Mark Barber stated that on Saturday, March 19, 2022 at the Strategic Initiatives Summit, they will talk about ARPA and the projects that Council would like to move forward with. He would like to come away with the direction that Council wants to go in with different projects so that they can get started on them as soon as possible. We will not get the remainder of the \$16.3 million until June of 2022.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that Council has been provided with a Valdosta Opolo Game at their seat tonight which is all the rage around town. He wanted to make sure that Council had one.

We received a notice today that Councilman Howard has been recognized by the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) for his training efforts and he has reached approximately 72 hours on his Training Certification through GMA.

The Bird Supper will be held on February 2, 2022 at The Depot in Atlanta.

Also, earlier in the week Council received an E-mail about re-districting because there has been a lot of questions about it. The Reapportionment Office had asked us to be patient with them because a majority of the Counties have their elections this year. We do not have an election in 2022. The Reapportionment Office is behind because of the Census count being so far behind. Our information is not ready yet but we will call them back in late February and Council will travel to Atlanta or to a local office in Tifton to move lines and make decisions as a team. They are looking for an average of 9,200 voting people in a District. Right now, some are higher and some are lower. Senator Russ Goodman will sponsor the legislation during the next Legislative Session for whatever changes we are doing. The Reapportionment Office has stated that we grew 860 people in ten years. We can contest that number but it would take forever and we would not have anything in time for us to do redistricting. Councilman Vickers stated that we had to get some adjustments on the last two because of the Census count. Mark Barber stated that one time it was Valdosta State University and one time it was prison inmates that did not get counted. Councilman Vickers stated that we really need to have someone look at that number. Mark Barber stated that there is a process that you have to go through and our local person is Matt Martin, Planning & Zoning Administrator. He was in charge of working with the State Census people. It is a long and drawn out process to get the ball rolling to look at those numbers. Even if we did it late in the year, we would not have the amended numbers in time for redistricting. Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to whether it was due to COVID numbers. Mark Barber stated that it kept being extended because of COVID but he did not know if the extension really did that much good. Obviously in our case it did not.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that Ashlyn Johnson, Public Information Officer, is leaving the City of Valdosta and will now be working with the City of Thomasville. This will be her last Council Meeting and she has truly been a talented and amazing employee. As much as he hates to see her go, it is a complement to our City that people look to us first. Ashlyn has done an incredible job and we wish her the best of luck. Ashlyn Johnson stated that she is so grateful for the opportunity that the City of Valdosta has provided to her. She will definitely miss everyone but she will keep in touch. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that Ashlyn was such an inspiration to her as a Council person and there was not a time that when she asked Ashlyn for something that she did not come to her rescue. That meant so much to her and she is very excited for Ashlyn's new opportunity.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that on January 25, 2022, the City of Valdosta's Citizens Engagement Board will meet at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Building in the Multi-Purpose Room. They will introduce the Board Members and they will select a Chairman and a Vice Chairman.

Mayor Matheson stated that on January 29, 2022, they will have the third Annual Mayor's Paddle and they will be putting their boats in at the Troupville Boat Ramp off of Highway 133. They will go 11 miles on the Withlacoochee River. This is the City of Valdosta's commitment to keeping our waterways clean. They will have extra kayaks and the Boys & Girls Club will help with shuttling. They are expecting over 100 people. Mayor Matheson also stated that the Cities United Summit will be held in Atlanta on January 21-24, 2022.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired about the Great Promise Partnership Program. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that they had six students sign up and on the day of the event for introductions, only three showed up. Usually, the Mayor and Council would receive an invitation to the introduction event and to the graduation event. Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development Coordinator, is learning and she now knows that is a standing invitation to the Mayor and Council. She is doing a good job in filling in for Vanassa Ross.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to adjourn the January 20, 2022 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:10 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, February 10, 2022.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta