

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 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: Sandra Tooley, Vivian Miller-Cody, Eric Howard, and Ben Norton. Councilmen Joseph “Sonny” Vickers, Andy Gibbs, and Tim Carroll were absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Ben Norton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag which was led by Boy Scouts of America Girl Troop 2020 Valdosta.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 10, 2022 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (4-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Consideration of a request to close an unnamed alley between Savannah Avenue and Parcel 0157D 010.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated that a Petition was submitted requesting an unnamed alley between Savannah Avenue and Parcel 0157D 010 be vacated and closed to facilitate the expansion of adjacent neighborhood parcels in the Pine View Subdivision (Linzie Drive and Stokes Drive area) just west of Clay Road. The initial request was received from Charles Wright. The alley would transfer to adjacent parcels owned by Sarita Foster, Charles Wright, Earl Wright, Mike Bailey, and O.W. Wright. All existing utility providers and City Departments have reviewed the matter and have no objection to the alley and street closure Petition as proposed. The alley and street closure Petition for the unnamed alley was circulated to all five adjacent property owners. A Public Notice of the Petition was circulated in the Valdosta Daily Times on March 4, 2022 and March 11, 2022. Certified notification letters were mailed to the property owners on February 28, 2022. A Public Hearing Notice sign was posted on Savannah Avenue at the alley on March 7, 2022. The signed Petition has all five of the property owner’s signatures obtained, which meets the required 60% threshold to proceed with the hearing. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the request to close an unnamed alley between Savannah Avenue and Parcel 0157D 010.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the request to close an unnamed alley between Savannah Avenue and Parcel 0157D 010.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2022-4, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE FOR THE COURT TECHNOLOGY FEE

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the Ordinance for the Municipal Court Technology Fee.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that in 2015, Commander Eugene Bell of the Valdosta Police Department, Probation, and Tim Tanner, Attorney with Coleman Talley, LLP, met with several software vendors who provided technological needs for Courts which included computer hardware, software, imaging, scanning, fax, communication, printing, and courtroom visual media. The City had previously set a goal to implement software enhancements to improve efficiency with records management. Based on the presentations of those vendors, the one that best met the needs of the City of Valdosta’s Municipal Court was CourtWare Solutions, Inc. CourtWare would charge a base fee of \$3.50 per paid citation. Of that \$3.50, \$3.00 was for unlimited users of the software. The additional \$.50 was for access to NCIC/GCIC (used in streamlining running of Driver’s histories). Not only did CourtWare best meet the needs of the Municipal Court, but their per fee citation charge was the most reasonable. The Municipal Court also added a reasonable amount on top of the \$3.50 for technology maintenance

so a reasonable technology fee would be between \$6.00 and \$10.00. CourtWare fees were assessed after a citation was paid. For example, if the Municipal Court's fine was \$112.00 and a technology fee of \$6.00 was added, the final fine would be \$118.00. Of the additional \$6.00, CourtWare would be paid its \$3.50 and the remaining \$2.50 would go into the Municipal Court's Technology Fund which was maintained by the City of Valdosta. The Municipal Court is allowed to collect a Technology Fee, which is \$2.50, for each criminal action, traffic action, and violation of the City Ordinance; however, the Municipal Court has yet to collect the Technology Fee because they did not have a software-based system capable of integrating all Court functions and responsibilities. Recently, CourtWare Justice One made a proposal to the City of Valdosta Municipal Court for their services. The proposal includes a monthly software licensing fee of \$1,420 per month with a \$4.00 per paid violation offset fee. Municipal Court Judge Jeremy Baker believes that the Courtware Management System can perform and integrate all of the Court's functions and responsibilities and he is proposing an Amendment to the Ordinance in order to increase amount of the Technology Fee from \$2.50 to \$4.00. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to amend the Ordinance for the Municipal Court Technology Fee.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2022-4, an Ordinance to amend the Ordinance for the Municipal Court Technology Fee and increase the fee from \$2.50 to \$4.00, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the West Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

Pat Collins, City Engineer, stated on West Street between River Street and West Gordon Street is a two-lane urban major collector street. The speed limit is 35 mph. This portion of West Street has a grassed shoulder and ditches. The shoulder is heavily used by citizens who walk from their homes on West Street to the convenience stores on West Magnolia Street and West Gordon Street. 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 2,500 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 corridor will include new sod, concrete driveway aprons, and asphalt paving to complete the work. The West Street Pedestrian Improvements were advertised for bid in the local newspaper and on the City's website. Bids were opened at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. The City received two bids. The low bid was received from Southland Contractors in the amount of \$1,154,792.00. Adding a 10% contingency (\$115,479.20) for unforeseen circumstances, the recommended award amount to Southland Contractors is \$1,270,271.20. Pat Collins, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$1,154,792.00 plus a 10% contingency (\$115,479.20) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total amount of \$1,270,271.20 for the West Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Southland Contractors in the amount of \$1,154,792.00 plus a 10% contingency (\$115,479.20) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total amount of \$1,270,271.20 for the West Street Pedestrian Improvements Project.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission has a member, Sally Querin, whose term expired on February 13, 2022. Ms. Querin has expressed an interest in being reappointed. 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 was Sally Querin (Retired Landscape Architect).

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

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to reappoint Sally Querin to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission for a term of three years.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals has two members whose terms expired on August 7, 2020 and two members whose terms expired on August 7, 2021. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The only applicant to apply was Carlton Richard (County Public Works/Road Maintenance Worker).

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for an appointment to the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to appoint Carlton Richard to the Valdosta Housing Board of Adjustments & Appeals whose term will expire on August 7, 2023.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no Citizens to be Heard.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

There was no City Manager's Report.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Norton thanked the Staff for their efforts in coordinating the Strategic Initiatives Summit. They got a lot accomplished together for our City and the citizens will benefit from it.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (4-0) to adjourn the March 24, 2022 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:50 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, April 7, 2022.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta