

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MAY 19, 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, Andy Gibbs, Sandra Tooley, Vivian Miller-Cody, Tim Carroll, Eric Howard, and Ben Norton. The invocation was given by Councilman Ben Norton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD POSTPONED

Consideration of the May, 2022 Employee of the Month Award (Nathanial McKinnon, Public Works Department).

Mayor Matheson stated that the May, 2022 Employee of the Month has been postponed to the first Council Meeting in June.

PRESENTATION OF THE MUNICIPAL AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that David Irwin, Auditor with Mauldin & Jenkins, will present the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2021.

David Irwin, Auditor with Mauldin & Jenkins, stated that the purpose of an annual audit is to review the financial statements, footnotes, and supplementary information to ensure compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and to provide an opinion on the financial statements. The audit of the City of Valdosta's Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) was conducted by the firm of Mauldin & Jenkins in accordance with governmental auditing standards. They are issuing a clean or unmodified opinion of this year's report. This is the highest level of assurance that they can provide as the external auditor. It is their opinion that the financial statements are fairly stated in all material respects in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. As part of the audit, there are two compliance reports that they issue. The first is the single audit which is a compliance audit that is required when an entity has over \$750,000 of Federal expenditures during the year. The City of Valdosta had a little over \$14 million in FY21. As with the financial audit, they are issuing a clean or unmodified opinion on the single audit as well. The second compliance report is the Yellow Book Report is a report on the City's internal controls and compliance with various laws and regulations. They do not have any audit findings this year which means that they noted no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in the City's internal control during their audit. For a City the size of Valdosta, we have significant financial activity for which we have to account for. In addition, with all the new accounting and auditing standards implemented each year and how complex the financial reporting process has become, it makes it all the more impressive to be able to report to a City Council an audit that is a clean opinion with no audit findings. The City of Valdosta is to be congratulated on that and this is a reflection of the hard work done by your Staff.

Mr. Irwin stated that he wanted to give a brief overview of the City's financial statements. They prepare an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) which requires the inclusion of additional information that goes above and beyond the basic financial reporting requirements. The City of Valdosta goes over and above and prepares your own financial statements. This document is submitted annually to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and they put it through a stringent review process. They have their own Professional Staff as well as a Review Committee to go through the document. Their goal is not to assess the financial health of the City but rather to make sure that the necessary information is included in the financial statements. Through this review, the City of Valdosta has been awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 33 years in a row. They audit approximately 600 governments throughout the southeast and approximately 160 of them receive this Certificate. He can count on two hands how many can say that they have received this Certificate

for over 30 years. This is a very impressive document and one that you should be very proud of. The City's financial statements are broken down into three sections the first of which is the Government-Wide Financial Statements. This provides a broad view of the City's operations in a manner similar to what you would see in a private sector business. All the funds of the City are combined under either a governmental activities column or the business type activity column depending on the nature of the fund. The City's total assets and deferred outflows of resources is \$415 million with approximately \$344 million in capital assets (net of accumulated depreciation). The City had approximately \$22.6 million in cash and cash equivalents and a little over \$11 million in investments. The total liabilities and deferred inflows were approximately \$190 million and of that amount, \$160 million are long term in nature and not due within the next fiscal year. Revenues were a little over \$100 million which is an increase of approximately \$15 million compared to FY20. Expenses were \$86 million which is an increase of approximately \$8 million compared to the prior year. This resulted in an ending net position of approximately \$224.5 million which represents an increase of approximately \$14 million for the year. This was a good year for the City of Valdosta from a government-wide perspective. The second part of the financial statements are the Fund Level statements which focuses on individual parts of the City's financial funds and reports these funds in more detail. The General Fund is the main operating fund of the City and it accounts for the majority of the revenues received and funds expended. Total revenues were approximately \$42.6 million which is an increase of \$7 million compared to FY20. Taxes are the primary driver of the fund which is just under \$36 million for the year. The General Fund expenditures were a little of \$41 million which was an increase of \$3.2 million compared to FY20. The majority of your expenditures is Public Safety which was approximately \$27.5 million. The City had General Government expenditures of \$9.7 and Public Works expenditures of \$2 million for the year. The revenues exceeded expenditures in the General Fund by \$1.6 million. That is an impressive turnaround from FY20 when your expenditures exceeded your revenues by \$2.6 million. The General Fund also had \$6.4 million of transfers in from other funds and \$2.5 million was transferred from the Water and Sewer Fund. Another \$2.6 million was from a new fund called the Federal COVID Relief Fund which accounts for the funds that the City received from the American Rescue Plan Act. In total, the General Fund balance increased approximately \$6.2 million for an ending balance of \$10.5 million for the year. The City's Enterprise Funds are used to account for operations in a manner similar to a private sector business and includes the Water and Sewer Fund, Sanitation Fund, and the Stormwater Funds. The goal of these funds is to be self-sufficient and to generate sufficient operating revenues to cover their operating expenses. The Water and Sewer Fund continues to do quite well and ended the year with operating revenue of \$3.7 million. Both of the other two Funds generated operating income of approximately \$175,000 each. All in all, the Enterprise Funds continue to do well. Finally, there is certain information that the auditing standard requires that they communicate to the City. There was a clean opinion and no audit findings. There were no difficulties or disagreements in dealing with management. They had no uncorrected mis-statements and they are independent of the City as required by Government Auditing Standards. Mr. Irwin thanked the City of Valdosta Staff for their hard work this year and for the opportunity to be of service to the City of Valdosta.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 5, 2022 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of a request to purchase a Hydrogen Generator for the Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory.

Police Chief Leslie Manahan stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory uses several types of gases to operate several pieces of equipment, to include the Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometers and the Gas Chromatograph Flame Ionization Detectors. This is the equipment that is used for drug identification and blood alcohol testing. The gases include, but are not limited to Hydrogen, Helium, and Zero Air. For over ten years, the equipment has been using Helium as the carrier gas. The laboratory has been renting tanks of these gases from AirGas. Over the past couple of years, the laboratory has seen an increase in the rental cost. The laboratory contacted AirGas recently, to refill their Helium order. The laboratory was advised that there is a shortage of Helium worldwide. AirGas advised that even if tanks of Helium were available, they would go to medical services

first at an increased cost. Without the gas, the equipment will not be able to be used for analysis. The laboratory received three quotes for the generator, but only one of the quotes met the specifications. The laboratory received a quote from PEAK Scientific in the amount of \$33,502.40. This generator will give the laboratory the ability to generate Hydrogen and Zero Air constantly; therefore, they will no longer need to rent tanks of gas. The laboratory will be able to calibrate their equipment to run on the unlimited supply of Hydrogen, instead of using Helium. This price includes the generator, shipment, installation, and a 1-year warranty. The laboratory has a Headspace Autosampler/Rack, which was approved in the current Fiscal Year Budget (Item CP22.20) as a Capital Expense in the amount of \$36,000. Even though the laboratory has a need for this piece of equipment in the future, the Hydrogen Generator is currently needed as a priority purchase. Police Chief Manahan recommended that Council approve the purchase of the PEAK Scientific Hydrogen Generator in the amount of \$33,502.40.

A MOTION by Councilman Vickers, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by PEAK Scientific in the amount of \$33,502.40 for the purchase of a Hydrogen Generator for the Valdosta-Lowndes Regional Crime Laboratory.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of appointments for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Non-Profit Grant Selection Committee.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that on March 11, 2021, the United States Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), which provides fiscal relief funds to State and Local Governments to support urgent COVID response efforts to decrease the spread of the virus, to replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services, to support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses, and to address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to unequal impacts of the Pandemic on certain populations. The City of Valdosta was allocated \$16,254,692 under this program, of which ½ or 8,127,346 has been received to date. Valdosta's non-profit community has been significantly impacted by the Pandemic in a variety of ways. Non-profit organizations have experienced greater operating costs even as their ability to raise the funds to meet these costs have been severely hampered. In many cases, this has also been accompanied by a significant increase in the demand for their services. City Council designated \$945,000 of the City's ARPA allocation for assistance to non-profit organizations impacted by the Pandemic. In order to distribute this amount effectively and efficiently, the City will need the expertise of individuals with knowledge of the work done and the challenges faced by these organizations. The most effective way to obtain and utilize this expertise is to form a Selection Committee to advise the City as to the most affected and most effective organizations. This will help ensure that the community receives the greatest possible benefit from the available funds. The following individuals have the needed experience and have indicated their willingness to serve on a Selection Committee: (1) Michael Smith – Greater Valdosta United Way (GVUW) Executive Director, (2) Brittany Hull - GVUW Board Chair, (3) Marty Ellison - GVUW Vice Chair, (5) Andy Griffin - GVUW Treasurer, (6) Jennifer Denham - GVUW Secretary, (7) Kent Patrick - GVUW Past Chair, (8) Joe Brownlee - GVUW Board Member, (9) A.C. Braswell - South Georgia Diversity Chair, (10) Sam Allen - South Georgia Diversity Committee Member, (11) Greg Powell - South Georgia Diversity Committee Member, and (12) Angela Ward - South Georgia Diversity Committee Member. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the selection of the Committee Members.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the individuals listed above to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Non-Profit Grant Selection Committee.

Mayor Matheson stated that since we are ultimately responsible that he would like to recommend that two Council Members go along as observers for this process and for the Non-Profit Grant Selection Committee he recommended Councilman Andy Gibbs and Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody.

Consideration of appointments for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Small Business Grant Selection Committee.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that on March 11, 2021, the United States Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), which provides fiscal relief funds to State and Local Governments to support urgent COVID response efforts to decrease the spread of the virus, to replace lost public sector revenue to strengthen support for vital public services, to support immediate economic stabilization for households and businesses, and to address systemic public health and economic challenges that have contributed to unequal impacts of the pandemic on certain populations. The City of Valdosta was allocated \$16,254,692 under this program, of which ½ or 8,127,346 has been received to date. Valdosta's small businesses have been significantly impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. Small businesses typically operate on smaller margins with less reserves than their larger counterparts making them more vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy. The recent shut-downs and other measures related to the Pandemic had a tremendous impact on many small businesses, especially those in the hospitality and entertainment industry. The Valdosta City Council designated \$1,000,000 of the City's ARPA allocation for assistance to small businesses impacted by the Pandemic. In order to distribute this amount effectively and efficiently, the City will need the expertise of individuals with knowledge of the work done and the challenges faced by the local business community. The most effective way to obtain and utilize this expertise is to form a Selection Committee to advise the City as to the businesses experiencing the greatest negative impact of the Pandemic. The effective allocation of these funds will not only provide relief to small business owners but also positively impact the local economy as a whole. The following individuals have the needed knowledge and experience and have indicated their willingness to serve on a Selection Committee: (1) Katrena Sermons - First Federal Savings, (2) Karla Walker - Attorney (Copeland, Haugabrook and Walker), (3) Miguel Vicente - Hispanic Business Community, (4) Stephen Heddon - Asian Business Committee, (5) Ricco Ramsey - Black Business Committee, (6) DeWayne Johnson - Bridge Builder Education Foundation, (7) Christie Moore - Chamber of Commerce, (8) Nick Perry - Ella's Top Corral, (9) Chris Jones - Georgia Beer Company, (10) Justin Purvis - Attorney (Young, Thagard, & Hoffman), and (11) Nick Harden - Big Nick's. Mark Barber, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the selection of the Committee Members.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the individuals listed above to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Small Business Grant Selection Committee.

Mayor Matheson stated that he would like to nominate Councilman Tim Carroll and Councilman Eric Howard to serve on the Small Business Grant Selection Committee.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Thomas Henderson, III, 2122 Amberly Trail, stated that on Lamar Street, there is a wooden bridge that is in bad condition. He was told that it had historical value and that it had been condemned. It is located in the vicinity of S. L. Mason Elementary School. The bridge is dangerous and unsafe and if it was located in another area of the City, it would have been fixed a long time ago. He would like for Council to look into it. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that we have asked the Georgia Department of Transportation to help us with the Lamar Street bridge and they have agreed to do so. He will be providing some timelines and additional information.

John Quarterman, 3338 Country Club Road, Suite L, stated that he wanted to praise the Mayor and Councilman Gibbs for helping with the cleanup at Sugar Creek and the Withlacoochee River. There is a trash problem coming out of the City of Valdosta and it is coming down the creeks out of the City. There are some easy things to do about this and what he is going to recommend will cost less than one sewer line or fixing one manhole. There are three companies that sell trash booms with nets below that would be good to put at Sugar Creek, Two Mile Branch, and Three Mile Branch. This would stop the trash before it gets into the river; however, there is still trash coming from upstream. Fortunately, the City has Ordinances about trash in parking lots and have so many trash cans per parking spaces. He would like to see an education and enforcement plan for that which would really help. That is a big part of what is needed and it would be good if the Police would enforce the anti-littering laws. The trash traps will cost less than \$4,000 each and they have to be custom built. He is looking forward to the City doing something about this and taking some action.

Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that this week was National Public Works Week and Mayor Matheson presented a Proclamation. They also did an Adopt-A-Street event at McIntosh Park and an Employee Appreciation Luncheon. The Public Works employees work very hard to make our City shine and they do a wonderful job.

This is National Police Week and a Proclamation was presented today by Mayor Matheson at the Police Department. The Police Officers have been out visiting with different people such as Moody Air Force Base and LARC. Last Thursday, they had a Promotion Ceremony for the Police Officers and it was a great event. They will also be having open testing on June 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Annex. The Police Department won first place in the Great American Cookoff this past Saturday in the Battle of First Responders which was hosted by the local Boys and Girls Club.

The Brown Bag Concert series will start on Monday, May 23, 2022 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Olympic Park and it will be a good time for everyone who attends.

On Saturday, June 18, 2022, Main Street will host a Super Dad 5K Run and Walk at the Georgia Beer Company.

The Makers Market was held on Saturday, May 14, 2022 and it continues to grow. The Downtown businesses are also having more business than they have had in quite a while.

The Fire Department visited Sallas Mahone Elementary School to teach fire safety and how the Firefighters prepare for drills and emergencies.

We hosted the New Employee Breakfast this week and it turned out very good. We have a great group of new employees and we are looking forward to seeing what they do and move up to be the future leaders of the City.

The Great Promise Partnership students graduated recently. It was a smaller group this year but we are hoping that the number will increase next year. The City Government 101 Class graduated on Monday, May 16, 2022.

The Budget Hearing with the Mayor and Council will be held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 beginning at 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. There will be a break for dinner and we should finish in one night.

Councilman Howard inquired as to when the ARPA Committees will meet. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that they are going to start with the Non-Profit Committee first and as soon that one is up and going then they will start with the Small Business Committee. Councilman Howard inquired as to when a Project Manager will be named for that. Mark Barber stated that Crystal McGhin, the new Accounting Manager, will be in charge of the ARPA Project along with Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired about the status of Mathis Auditorium and if there is anything going on. Mark Barber, City Manager, stated that he is working on some things and will provide Council with an update tomorrow.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Vickers stated that he has been trying to keep informed and stay up-to-date the best he can. He asked that everyone continue to pray for him and we will get through this after a little while.

Mayor Matheson stated that they had a successful Creek and River Cleanup Event with WWALS and he, along with Councilman Gibbs, is proud to announce the City's first purchase of a trash trap that will be installed on Sugar Creek near the Salty Snapper. They plan to get more for other creeks and waterways. Also, he congratulated Chief Manahan and the Police Department on celebrating National Police Week. They did a joint Foster Care Month Proclamation at the Turner Center this week. The City Government 101 graduation was fantastic. He also thanked Valdosta North Rotary for inviting him out to honor the life and service of Wes Taylor, Lowndes County School Superintendent, who will be retiring in July. The Amphitheater Project was shown to Leadership Lowndes

today and they were amazed at what it took to bring something like that together. Ben Meany came before the Council a while back regarding a new car care clinic on Inner Perimeter Road and he had nothing but praise about the entire process.

Councilman Gibbs thanked Chief Manahan for showing how hard we work to stay within our Budget and even though they have a need for some equipment for the Crime Lab, they decided to put it on hold instead of asking for more money. That shows why our Budget is the way it is and how our Department Heads work really hard to make sure our City has the best but also not going into debt to get it. He also thanked Richard Hardy, Deputy City Manager of Operations, for his help with Mathis Auditorium. He received a text message last night about the air conditioning unit at Mathis Auditorium being down. They put some temporary equipment in there this morning and got it up and running. We have some great Department Heads who really respond to the needs of the community and they do not get enough praise for it.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she has been talking to a lot of people about the ARPA Committees but it is the Mayor's decision for placing people on the Committee. She is not trying to give up or do anything to be involved because she is but she just wanted the citizens to know. Mayor Matheson stated that he appreciated the feedback and ultimately it will be the decision of the Council. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she wanted the citizens to call the Mayor and talk to him about it. Mayor Matheson stated that he would welcome the calls.

Councilman Howard stated that we live in a City of approximately 60,000 people and we have approximately 600-700 employees and we do not have enough employees to solve all of the citizens problems so we need for them to call Council Members. That is what they are here for. If they do not know about a problem, then they cannot fix it.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that there has not been a time that she has sent an E-mail to the City Manager and the Deputy City Managers that they did not answer her within 24 to 48 hours with information for her to take back to the citizens. Also, she is honored to see Councilman Vickers back because he is very special to her and she asked that everyone continue to pray for him because we never know when our sick days will come. Prayers can be answered to make a man stand back with the strength that only Jesus can apply and make him go higher and higher in serving the City of Valdosta.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel, real estate, and litigation.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the May 19, 2022 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:18 p.m. to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel, real estate, and litigation.

Mayor Matheson reconvened the May 19, 2022 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:12 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of personnel, real estate, and litigation in the Executive Session and no action was taken.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the May 19, 2022 Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:12 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, June 9, 2022.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta