

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2023**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Matheson called the regular meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 5:30 p.m. Council members present were: Thomas McIntyre, Eric Howard, Tim Carroll, Vivian Miller-Cody, and Ben Norton. Councilman Andy Gibbs City Attorney Tim Tanner were absent. Councilwoman Sandra Tooley arrived late at 5:36 p.m. The invocation was given by Councilman Tim Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Mayor Matheson recognized members of the 2023 Leadership Lowndes Class who were in attendance at the Council Meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 9, 2023 were approved by unanimous consent (5-0) of the Council.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-2, A RESOLUTION TO DECLARE SURPLUS PROPERTY AND AUTHORIZE THE SALE OF THE SAME AS REQUESTED BY THE CITY OF VALDOSTA**

This request was tabled at the February 9, 2023 Regular City Council Meeting.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion to take this request off the table in order to address it.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to take this request off the table in order to address it.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Norton to declare surplus property and authorize the sale of the property by sealed bids. Mayor Matheson stated that if that is the way Council chooses to go, he will need an easement mentioned as well. It is a 50-foot easement for utilities. Councilman Norton amended his motion to include the 50-foot easement. Councilman Howard stated that is his motion. Councilman Carroll stated that there was no second on the motion. Mayor Matheson asked for a second on the motion. There was no second on motion. The motion died for the lack of a second.

Mayor Matheson entertained another motion.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Howard to adopt the Resolution with the 50-foot easement and transfer the land to the Land Bank Authority from South Barrack Obama Boulevard to South Fry Street. The Mayor stated that there is a motion to move the transfer of .8629 acres to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority on the condition that the City reserves the 50-foot easement. Councilwoman Miller-Cody seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2023-2, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

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

Consideration of bids for the Griffin Avenue and South Patterson Street intersection improvements.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that in June of 2020, Council approved the concept to improve the intersection of Griffin Avenue and South Patterson Street for safety and storm drainage considerations. Construction plans were developed along with the supporting studies and reports. Bid and contract documents have

been prepared and advertised and bids were received and opened February 14, 2023. Bids from two local contractors, Southland Contractors and Standard Contractors, were received and opened. After a thorough review of both bids, mathematical errors were found and corrected in Southland's unit cost proposal. Standard Contractors submitted a unit cost proposal to complete the project for \$748,803.55. Southland Contractors submitted an initial unit cost proposal to complete the project for \$709,652.65 which, as stated above, was corrected to \$729,982.65. The low bid for the project is \$729,982.65. The Engineering Department's standard practice is to apply a 10% contingency to the cost of capital projects of this nature. The 10% contingency for this project is proposed to be \$72,998.27. The total proposed cost including the base bid and the 10% contingency is \$802,980.92. This cost-plus-contingency budget is well below the TIA projected construction budget of \$1,128,000. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the approve the cost-plus-contingency budget of \$802,980.92 submitted by Southland Contractors.

Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether they were moving forward with this in unison with the private Project that was going on the corner or if that was still on hold. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated right now the Project is still in permitting. The floodway that clips that corner is going to be impacted by the private development which is fairly normal. There is some justification that private developers have to go through and prove to FEMA that their development does not negatively impact the floodway and they can quantify that using models. They are currently going through the FEMA permitting for that development on the corner. We included a contingency within this bid that covers the City's interest whether they go to production in tandem or when they go to production in a lagged production phase. We are covered either way at no additional cost to the City.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that we keep giving Southland Contractors projects and they keep coming up with excuses like the weather. Southland won the bid for Fry Street and they have not completed that Project which has been over a year. Now we are giving them another bid on something else in the City and they need to come up with a better schedule of completing the Projects. They need to give the Engineer dates on when they are starting on a Project and some deadlines. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that he did meet with Southland Contractors on Tuesday of this week to get an update on not just the Fry Street Project but viewing the entire matrix of Projects that they are currently liable for completing which includes Fry Street, West Street, and now this Project, if it is approved. They have not given him a fully complete construction schedule but that is something that he can obtain from them. Councilman Howard inquired as to whether they have given any reasons for their delays. Ben O'Dowd stated that other than the obvious delays that we faced early on, he made it very clear that the construction schedule is paramount on this. He has given them clear guidance moving forward of what the deadline is for the Griffin Project and he has given them clear guidance in tandem with this that they need to comply with contract deadlines because there are consequences for not complying. That has been made very clear to them. Mayor Matheson asked that the City Engineer drive that point home that they have been given notice.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the Agenda Item as presented for the Griffin Avenue and South Patterson Street intersection improvements.

Consideration of bids for replacement of the 40-ton HVAC unit for the Valdosta Police Department Headquarters Building.

Anthony Musgrove, Public Works Administrator, stated that the HVAC unit is responsible for the heating and cooling of the air conditioning system for the facility. The current HVAC unit is no longer functional due to the age and condition of the unit. This Agenda Item was prepared as an emergency purchase. The building is currently without air conditioning or heat and repairs are not possible for the system at this time. They received a quote from the Gordian Group, which is a State contractor, and due to their experience and knowledge, they have solicited the replacement of the 40-ton HVAC unit to Johnson-Laux Construction, LLC in the amount of \$352,687.54. This will include the necessary labor, train parts, and other items that may be needed. Anthony Musgrove, Public Works Administrator, recommended that Council approve this emergency purchase and repair of the 40-ton HVAC unit at the Valdosta Police Department Headquarters Building.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether this was the building on Toombs Street. Anthony Musgrove stated that was correct. There is no heat or air in the building at the current time. They are in dire need of some

help because the unit that is there is 26 years old. They have had many repairs done on it and now it needs to be totally replaced. Richard Hardy, Interim City Manager, stated that there is a 20-ton unit that is there; however, to make sure the entire building has the heating and air conditioning they need the 40-ton unit.

Councilman Howard inquired as to when they can get started if Council approves the request. Anthony Musgrove stated that once everything goes through it will take 150 days to get all the parts brought in. The total amount to purchase the unit will include all the labor, parts, dismantling the old unit and taking it away. Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether they have looked at renting any of the portable units until that gets in place. Councilman Howard stated that it will be hot in the next month so they would like to make sure they are comfortable. Anthony Musgrove stated that they have looked at doing that until they get everything going.

Councilman McIntyre inquired about the warranty on the new unit. Anthony Musgrove stated that the warranty was approximately six years. Richard Hardy, Interim City Manager, stated that it was six years on parts and ten years on the installation. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether they offered an extended warranty. Richard Hardy stated that they did and it was \$27,000 for a ten-year warranty on parts and maintenance. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether they were considering that. Richard Hardy stated that they did look at it but they have not decided to move forward with the extended warranty.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was adopted (6-0) to approve the request as presented for replacement of the 40-ton HVAC unit for the Valdosta Police Department Headquarters Building.

## LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request for overhaul and service of two master lift station pumps at the Gornto and Remer Master Lift Stations.

Jason Barnes, Assistant Director of Utilities, stated that the eight Gornto and Remer master lift station pumps have been in service since 2016. These are large submersible wastewater pumps with four located at each of the two master stations. All pumps require periodic overhaul, and the recommended period to overhaul is six years. This Project is to accomplish planned maintenance prior to pump failure. Submersible pumps are subject to leakage and mechanical wear and tear due to time and exposure in their normal operational environment. The Utilities Department is planning to overhaul two pumps during this FY23 Budget cycle. Submersible pump performance degrades over time and requires routine replacement of impellers and seals to maintain reliability and operational efficiency. The pumps to be overhauled are two of eight total 385 horsepower Xylem Flygt model N3312 units. These are sole source items. The pumps will be removed and reinstalled by City employees. The pumps will then be shipped to the regional Flygt pump service center in Savannah, Georgia for service/overhaul. Planned overhaul of these pumps will minimize the chance of more expensive pump failure at our two most critical lift stations. We have no spare pumps on hand. Jason Barnes, Assistant Director of Utilities, recommended that Council approve this sole source service/overhaul of two Flygt master lift station pumps.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Norton, was adopted (6-0) to approve the request for overhaul and service of two master lift station pumps at the Gornto and Remer Master Lift Stations.

Consideration of a request to abandon a drainage easement located between two parcels on Ridge Road.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that on January 18, 2023, Mr. J. Ryan Moorman contacted the Engineering Department with a request that the City abandon a 497' drainage easement located between his two parcels located on Ridge Road. There are no utilities within its boundaries. The drainage easement request was circulated to all City departments as well as all utility companies. There were no objections to abandoning this drainage easement. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the request to abandon the drainage easement.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was adopted (6-0) to approve the request to abandon a drainage easement located between two parcels on Ridge Road.

Consideration of a request to approve additional American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for minor housing repairs.

Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta allocated \$350,000.00 of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation for minor housing repairs. The Program is designed to provide relief to homeowners impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and to assist with minor home repairs. Applications from homeowners were accepted from October 24, 2022 until November 4, 2022 at noon. In order to receive Grant Funding, applicants were required to meet the following qualifications: (1) provide a copy of the deed to prove ownership of property, (2) provide a copy of a State issued ID, and (3) complete the City of Valdosta ARPA Housing Application. Awards were not to exceed \$10,000.00. Applications were prioritized based on location in the qualified census tract (QCT) as defined by ARPA, minority/female/veteran ownership, and time of application receipt. This prioritization results in the applications being divided into four tiers: (1) Minority/female/veteran owned property located in the QCT, (2) Non-minority/female/veteran owned property located in the QCT, (3) Minority/female/veteran owned property located outside of the QCT, and (4) Non-minority/female/veteran owned property located outside of the QCT. Applications within each tier were prioritized on a first come first serve basis. As of 12:00 p.m. on Friday, November 4, 2022, the City had received 911 of which 877 applications were located with the City limits. Following is the breakdown of the applications: (1) Minority/female/veteran owned properties located in the QCT - 650 applications, (2) Non-minority/female/veteran owned properties located in the QCT - 27 applications, (3) Minority/female/veteran owned properties located outside of the QCT - 198 applications, and (4) Non-minority/female/veteran owned properties located outside of the QCT - 2 applications. Unfortunately, the funding allocation only served the first 42 applications. Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, recommended that Council approve an additional \$500,000 to assist 50 more people.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to whether some of the homes that previously had work done on them had some additional repairs. Anetra Riley stated that was through CDBG. Councilman McIntyre inquired about the number of applications that had been received. Anetra Riley stated that they have received 911 applications to date and 877 were in the City. Councilwoman Miller-Cody inquired as to whether the applications were first come first serve. Anetra Riley stated that they were first come first serve and time stamped. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that there were a lot of senior citizens in certain areas who were not aware of the Project. Some did not understand about the procedure and we did not get a chance to help them. Anetra Riley stated that they had some Town Hall Meetings and it was first come first serve and that is how they proceeded. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether the application was on-line. Anetra Riley stated that it was not on-line. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether they could make that happen. Anetra Riley stated that a lot of the senior citizens called and felt like they were at a disadvantage to the millennials who had access to technology so to make it fair, they required everyone to come in and get an application. Councilman McIntyre stated that they would still be at a disadvantage assuming that a younger person could get there faster than they could. Anetra Riley stated that they are no longer taking applications. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to how many were approved out of what they do have. Anetra Riley stated that they have done 42. Councilman McIntyre stated that they only approve as funds are available. Anetra Riley stated that was correct. Mayor Matheson inquired as to how many workshops were held. Anetra Riley stated they held two Town Hall Meetings. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that some of the senior citizens that came up there were helped but some came up there too late and they were placed at the bottom of the list. By the time they get to 700, there will be no money left and that is the problem she has with how it was done. Anetra Riley stated that with CDGB she did have a lot of the elderly come in this time. With them, she will mail the applications if they call and request it. With the regular Housing Program, a lot of things did come in early too. Councilman Howard stated that he wanted everyone to be clear on this because if they approve it, it will only do another 50 homes. Anetra Riley stated that it would probably do 50-100 homes because not every Project would cost \$10,000. Councilman Howard stated that he just wanted everyone to know that it would not be enough for the 600 or 700 who applied. Anetra Riley stated that it was not and it may get up to 100. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to what type of repairs they were doing or was the most prevalent. Anetra Riley stated that roofing was the most prevalent.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was adopted (6-0) to approve an additional \$500,000 for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for minor housing repairs.

Diana Deeley, 201 West Gordon Street, stated that the corner of Toombs Street and Gordon Street has had 27 accidents there since 2017. Gordon Street does not stop but Toombs Street does; however, a lot of people evidently think it is a four-way stop. The simplest solution would be to get the little yellow placards that read "Cross Traffic Does Not Stop." They could be attached to the Stop sign. That would knock down the number of accidents. There have had three accidents in less than a month and it would be nice not to have that happen anymore. It happens in front of their house once a month.

Jeffery Copeland, 506 North Troup Street, stated that he was concerned about the heavy foot traffic on Troup Street. He would like to get some trash cans like they have in the Downtown area because as a homeowner, he has to do most of the cleaning in his yard because of other citizens. Also, another concern is for the safety of those citizens who walk in very poor lighting. He understands that there are only so many lumens per light, but the problem is that the trees cover those which creates very dark areas. That area is also a heavy crime area so he is trying to create safety in the area as well as clean it up some. He understands that there are people who are supposed to pick up trash in that area but accountability and responsibility are two different things. He would like for the City to help them out. The third thing is the very high demand and supply in that area and he is going to keep it clean. If there is no supply then there is no demand. He understands that the City can add extra Police Officers to the area but they have to get rid of those who are buying the product. There are guys who are picking up young ladies and he does not want his sons or daughter to see that. He would like that to be gone.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Richard Hardy, Interim City Manager, stated that there will be a Love Where You Live Event on Saturday, February 25, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on North Lee Street from East Park Avenue to East Gordon Street. They will meet at the corner of 400 East Gordon Street.

The Azalea After Dark Event will be held on March 10-11, 2023 at Unity Park from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Also, the Bluesberry Festival will be held on Friday, April 14, 2023 from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on Saturday, April 15, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The Mayor's and Chairman's Paddle will be held on Saturday, March 4, 2023 at the Troupville Boat Ramp beginning at 8:00 a.m.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Mayor Matheson stated that this year, they will have a two-mile takeout and the full eleven-mile paddle. The South Georgia Film Festival people will be joining them this year and their event is also taking place that weekend so they have to get back for that. They will preview a couple of the local films at the Valdosta Mall on March 3, 2023. There is one that was shot in Tifton and one shot in Quitman. The Film Festival will go all weekend.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that she attended the South Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting and they have a drone that might be able to help Mr. Copeland. The City could also use the drone to help determine exactly where pipes are in the ground at someone's home. Then the customers could not say that the City damaged their property. If there is a problem then we could get the drone to fly in certain areas to see what we can do to help. Mayor Matheson asked if that was something we could request. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that correct.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the February 23, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:09 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, March 9, 2023.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta