

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 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, Sandra Tooley, Eric Howard, Tim Carroll, Ben Norton, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Andy Gibbs was absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Ben Norton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 20, 2023 were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-23, AN ORDINANCE TO GRANT PLANNED DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL FOR A MIXED-USE CHILD DAYCARE AND SCHOOL FACILITY IN OFFICE-PROFESSIONAL (O-P) AND SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6) ZONING

Consideration of an Ordinance to grant Planned Development Approval for a Mixed-Use Child Daycare and School Facility in Office-Professional (O-P) and Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning as requested by Jonathan Irvin (File No. VA-2023-12). The property is located at 510 and 512 North Barack Obama Boulevard. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their July 31, 2023 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to seven conditions (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Jonathan Irvin is requesting to amend a previously approved Planned Development which was approved by City Council on June 10, 2021 (File No. VA-2021-10). The approved development is for a mixed-use Child Daycare and School facility in Office-Professional (O-P) and Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning, and it is located at 512 North Barack Obama Boulevard. This Planned Development was approved with seven conditions of approval and the facility is currently operating (File No. VA-2021-10). The applicant is now proposing to expand this facility by adding the adjacent lot at the southeast corner of the site which contains an existing single-family residence. The applicant is proposing to demolish the residence and replace it with a new building (about 1,860 square feet) that will function as a “support building” to the overall operation by providing a small kitchen and dining area for the facility. The building’s architecture will maintain the residential appearance and character of the previous building. The interior portion of this corner lot addition will also include a small parking lot with one-way entrance from East Adair Street which will be used by employees and the facility’s fleet of daycare vans. The applicant is also proposing to add the western half of the vacated right-of-way of Myon Street which was recently acquired in order to better serve a two-way traffic flow at their entrance from East Adair Street. The proposed total expansion of the property is approximately 0.30 acres. The property is located within an Established Residential (ER) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The existing O-P Zoning is a grandfathered-in non-compliant Zoning classification in this Character Area, and the R-6 Zoning area is compliant. All of the neighborhood characteristics, policies and planning considerations from the previous Planned Development approval two years ago still remain valid and applicable today. The only proposed substantive changes to the Planned Development are the addition of two small land areas totaling 0.30 acres (zoned R-6), the replacement of a 1,467 square foot old house with a new 1,860 square foot residential style building, and the installation of a small parking lot with a dozen parking spaces. These changes do not really add much capacity to the overall facility, but they do relieve some of the existing site congestion as well as enhance the site’s overall design. This new Planned Development should, therefore, be approved with mostly the same conditions as before. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Planned Development Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the following conditions: (1) This approval shall replace and supersede the applicant’s previous approval under File No. VA-2021-11. Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only for a mixed-use Child Daycare and School facility on property that is split-zoned Office-Professional (O-P) and Single-Family Residential (R-6). The majority

of the "Daycare" facility shall remain on the O-P portion of the site in accordance with the submitted Master Plan. Total indoor gross floor area of all buildings on the site shall not exceed 20,000 square feet. (2) All existing tax parcels included in this Planned Development approval shall be combined into one parcel. (3) All new proposed buildings shall be residential in appearance with building materials and design on all sides being consistent with residential or institutional style construction. Exterior wall materials shall not include any sheet metal, unfinished concrete or concrete block, or vinyl siding. (4) The entire perimeter of the site where it abuts private property shall include a minimum 6' tall opaque fence in accordance with LDR standards for fencing in Residential Districts. This perimeter area shall be fully landscaped with a minimum 10' wide buffer yard with a minimum of 5 small trees, 1 canopy tree, and 25 shrubs per 100 linear feet, installed in accordance with LDR Chapter 328 and whose design is approved by the City Arborist. Existing trees and shrubs may count toward this landscaping requirement. (5) All site lighting shall be directed downward and away from adjacent residential areas. (6) Permanent freestanding signage at the East Adair Street main access driveway shall be unlit and limited to a maximum of 3 feet in height and 6 square feet in area. Signage within the O-P Zoning area of the site shall follow O-P standards. (7) All other development standards and general building requirements for non-residential development, including regular commercial plan review and permitting, shall be followed for the entire site as applicable. Matt Martin stated that the important thing to note is that the maximum square footage of the facility is being increased from 16,000 to 20,000 square feet which is more than double what the new building will be and also importantly, the removal of an expiration date that is customarily put at the end. That was because the Planned Development from two years ago has already been activated and this is simply an amendment to that. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their July 31, 2023 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Planned Development Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same seven conditions as recommended by Staff (8-0 Vote).

Jonathan Irvin, Applicant, 2831 McCoggie Road, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Irvin stated that he would be glad to answer any questions that Council may have.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION was made by Councilwoman Tooley to grant Planned Development Approval for a Mixed-Use Child Daycare and School Facility in Office-Professional (O-P) and Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning for property located at 510 and 512 North Barack Obama Boulevard as requested by Jonathan Irvin with the seven conditions as recommended by Staff and the Planning Commission. Councilwoman Miller-Cody seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2023-23, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-9, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) TO PROCEED WITH THE DESIGN OF A NEW GENERAL AVIATION TERMINAL AND THE DESIGN OF RECONFIGURING THE GENERAL AVIATION PARKING

Consideration of a request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority to approve a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to proceed with the design of a new General Aviation Terminal and the design of Reconfiguring the General Aviation Parking.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority desires to proceed with the design of a new General Aviation Terminal and design of Reconfiguring General Aviation Parking. The total amount is \$625,010.84. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has offered to fund 90% of the allowable costs at the Valdosta Regional Airport which is 78% of the total. There are portions of the General Aviation Terminal that are not eligible for Airport Improvement Program Grant funding such as exclusive use space. This space makes up the difference in the percentage amount. There will be no City of Valdosta funds required for these projects. The remaining amount will be funded partially by the State and the rest by the Airport Authority and from SPLOST VIII funds through Lowndes County. The FAA has prepared a Grant in the amount of \$625,010.84 for the Projects. The Grant has been delivered to City Hall. The agreement must be executed and returned to the FAA by August 25, 2023. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing Mayor Scott James

Matheson to accept the Grant in order to process the documents. Richard Hardy, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the Mayor to accept the Grant in order to process the document.

A MOTION by Councilman Norton, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2023-9, a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to proceed with the design of a new General Aviation Terminal and the design of Reconfiguring the General Aviation Parking, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids to replace the basketball court floor at the Mildred Hunter Center and provide new lighting for their Administrative Building.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the Mildred Hunter Center has provided recreation services, including basketball, to the youth of Valdosta for many years. The Center has been operated and maintained by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPRA) and the neighborhoods surrounding the Center have come to rely on its programs. The existing synthetic floor system of the Mildred Hunter Center's basketball court has reached the end of its useful life and is in need of replacement. The VLPRA is requesting the City's assistance with the Project. Council anticipated this Project in the latest American Rescue Plant Act (ARPA) allocation and included \$245,000 for the Mildred Hunter Center courts and lighting at the Administrative Building. VLPRA has obtained a quote from CBA Sports to replace the floor with hardwood. The quote was obtained under a SourceWell contract (#031022-GER-2). It includes installation and disposal of the existing flooring but does not include slab remediation. The total quote from CBA Sports is \$225,250. This would leave \$19,750 for lighting assuming no slab remediation is needed. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the CBA Sports bid in the amount of \$225,250 to replace the basketball court floor at the Mildred Hunter Center and provide new lighting for their Administrative Building.

Mayor Matheson inquired as to whether the \$19,750 would be adequate for the lighting. Chuck Dinkins stated that it will be borderline. They may possibly have to identify some additional funding which would be available in SPLOST VIII as part of the allocation.

Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether anyone has looked at the subflooring to make sure that the new wood floor will attach well to it. Chuck Dinkins stated that they will have to get the floor up before they can look at it to determine that. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether they would need to have a contingency for this. Chuck Dinkins stated that it might not hurt to do a contingency but any contingency would reduce what is available for the lighting. You could either to that or we could look at the SPLOST VIII allocation or the Parks and Recreation Authority might be able to handle it. Councilman Carroll stated that if they get into it and it has to be remediated, then they will have that expenditure because otherwise the flooring cannot go down. Chuck Dinkins stated that was correct.

George Page, Executive Director of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks & Recreation Authority, stated that the gentleman with CBA Sports met with Andre Newsome from the Mildred Hunter Center and gave them the pricing on the flooring. There was never any mention of any issues that they would possibly have after the existing floor was taken out. Obviously, when you are dealing with floors there may be something that comes up. The other piece of the lighting was around \$11,000 - \$12,000 more and it was his understanding that they could pull that from SPLOST VIII funds. He is hoping that there are no issues. Councilman Carroll stated that he serves on the Conference and Tourism Authority and they are looking re-doing the floors in the main Exhibit Hall. They are having it tested for moisture because they will be putting carpet down and want to be sure that the carpet sticks. He was just curious because he did not see that included. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that if the company came out and did not see a problem then she did not think they should add to it and make it a problem. If there is a problem, then SPLOST VIII has funds to help enhance this. George Page stated that he thought that would work. He could not say that there will not be an issue, but the guy who came out never mentioned anything about that. Councilman Howard inquired as to whether they would be allowed to do a contingency since these are ARPA funds that were already allocated. Mayor Matheson stated that this will be a "wait and see" thing. George Page stated that they would follow-up with CBA Sports. Councilman Norton inquired as to whether they have currently seen any evidence of moisture under the floor. George Page stated that they have only seen the normal wear and tear.

They will make sure that if they need to do a test to ensure that moisture is not an issue they will do that. Councilman Carroll stated that he would certainly ask the question. Councilwoman Tooley stated that they will need to spend some of the money on lighting. George Page stated that was correct.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid submitted by CBA Sports in the amount of \$225,250 to replace the basketball court floor at the Mildred Hunter Center and provide new lighting for their Administrative Building.

Consideration of bids for the purchase of playground equipment for the Shannon Hill Park.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the Shannon Hill Park provides outdoor recreation space, picnic areas, and limited playground equipment to the surrounding area. The Park is need of additional playground equipment to expand its functionality and provide additional recreation opportunities to the children in the surrounding neighborhoods. The Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPR) has obtained a quote for playground equipment from Miracle Recreation Equipment Company in the amount of \$81,097.44. The quote was obtained under a SourceWell contract (010521-LTS). It includes equipment, freight, and installation. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Miracle Recreation Equipment Company in the amount of \$81,097.44 for the purchase of playground equipment for the Shannon Hill Park.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Norton, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the bid submitted by Miracle Recreation Equipment Company in the amount of \$81,097.44 for the purchase of playground equipment for the Shannon Hill Park.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that silence gives consent. He was sitting at home this afternoon and was listening to the news. They were talking about an American citizen threatening the Judges, the District Attorney, and some witnesses coming up in his particular case after he was indicted. If everybody did that in this country, then our democracy will soon fall. It is something for us to think about. He could not just sit at home tonight because he wanted to talk about the Quitman City Council and the County Commissioners. They will now be meeting every quarter because they say they need to work together on behalf of the voters. That is a good gesture for both the City and County to come together. He has put up five videos during the last week concerning no State flag. He is doing this because silence gives consent and he does not agree with disrespecting members of our Armed Forces, especially the men and women stationed at Moody Air Force Base. He is going to stay on that issue because he is 100% correct and he knows that there are other cities, counties, and states in the United States that fly a flag and they are no better than us. Eventually that flag over the government buildings here in the City and County will go up. It is just the right thing to do. He wanted to let them know that he stands for truth and justice and for what is right. He will not be silent and give consent. He went to Payton Park this week and children had to use the bathroom behind the Park because the doors were locked. He went to Scott Park and it was the same thing. He believes that if Thomasville, which is where he was born, has a place for the little children to use the bathroom where the doors are not locked then we should too. They do not know better than us and he is not going to sit here in Valdosta as a citizen and retired military Veteran who served his country for over 24 years. He is going to keep talking about it. Maybe in 50 or 100 years somebody will finally listen to this man who is only concerned about others and not necessarily himself.

Maria Willoughby stated that she wanted to put forth an endeavor to get the community more connected to help fight against homelessness and crime in Valdosta. As it stands, there is 9.9 people out of 10,000 homeless in Georgia and in our small City of Valdosta, she was sure it is a lot higher. She is the founder of a small organization called The Art of Good, Inc. which caters to the muted members of society (homeless). They are victims of the criminal justice system and may have mental health issues. A lot of times these members do not have a voice to be heard and there is a lot of untapped talent there. She is currently working on a community outreach with the churches to get them more involved because they are not working to their full potential. She is proposing a residential shelter in District 1 and it would serve Districts 1 through 3. There is an Ordinance that has to be met for that to take place and for it to be legal. She would also like to request that Council get involved in the initiative to give the homeless population a voice. They could partner once a quarter with one of the members to monitor

their progress and see how they are coming along. She would like to personally work directly with the Budgeting Department and the City Manager because they have the power and funding to make this happen. She would like to send her proposal that she is suggesting to the City Council and her E-mail address is as follows: info@theartofgoodincorporated.com. It is called The Art of Good because there is an art to being good. A lot of times we try to feed out of both sides of the pocketbook but we cannot do that. If we are taking the initiative then we have to go full speed ahead and she is willing to do that. She has a draft proposal and would appreciate it if the City Manager and Budgeting would contact her so that they can work on this initiative together. Again, churches and the City keep our City of Valdosta beautiful. There are many resources to help the people who are side-lined and stagnant. They can be reintegrated successfully in our society and build our City even more.

Sementha Mathews, Executive Director of the Turner Center for the Arts, 4069 Conway Circle, thanked the Mayor and Council on behalf of the Turner Center for the Arts for their continued support of the arts in Valdosta and Lowndes County. She also wanted to invite them to the music in the Art Park this Friday to hear some great Blue Grass from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. They also have the Levitt Amp Concert Series coming up. They won the Levitt Grant in the amount of \$180,000 for three years. They have a wonderful line-up of ten concerts in a row that start on August 17, 2023. These are completely free to the public. They try to look for things at the Turner Center to gather our community together for good. This a place where it does not matter who you are, what you look like, and what you do for a living. You can bring your lawn chairs and pets and just come out and have a good time with us. Also, they will be having a groundbreaking for the Children's Imagination Station on Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. and Council is invited to attend. They will close the street down and have a Ribbon Cutting. They are going to mark the lines on the ground where the footprint of that beautiful building will be. They are going to ask them to imagine with us as you look at the markings on the ground what the children will be doing inside those walls in 2025. Following that event, there will be a Levitt concert across the street. The last thing that she wanted to mention is that the Presenter Series will kick off on October 5, 2023. She cannot stand to hear people say there is nothing to do in Valdosta. We have such a culturally rich and arts community and people need to get involved. She thanked Council for their service.

Becky Crosby, 1012 Cherry Creek, thanked the Mayor and Council for the funds that they came up with for the Pickleball Courts. There has been some progress in the last six weeks and people are getting very excited. She had two more calls today from people who live out-of-town wanting to know when they are playing. She is asked almost every day about a timeline for completion of the Pickleball Courts. The weather has been good lately even though it has been hot. There have been some disgruntled people who say 2024 and she inquired as to whether Council might know. Mayor Matheson stated that the last timeline he heard was by the end of the year. Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that they would put the timeline on the City's website.

Louis Gordon, 2 Shanna Circle, stated that he realized the last time he spoke to Council he was a little vague and that was not fair. He spoke about the decriminalization of marijuana in Valdosta but did not give a clear reason why so he wanted to do that today. First of all, there are 11 cities in Georgia that have decriminalized marijuana. Some of those cities are Athens, Atlanta, Clarkston, Forest Park, Fulton County, Macon-Bibb County, Savannah, South Fulton, Stonecrest, and Tybee Island. A lot of people do not understand what that looks like. He was stationed at Kingsland, Georgia and he did not know they had decriminalized marijuana. They say it should be unlawful for any person to possess one ounce or less of marijuana within the corporate limits of the City of Kingsland. Any person found guilty of violating this section shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$150. For the Court fines, if the defendant is without the financial means to pay the fine, then the Court may direct the defendant to perform community service pursuant to the fine that would otherwise be imposed. In no event shall any person convicted of marijuana possession pursuant to this section be punished by imprisonment of any term. He understands that there might be a reluctance to move forward on this because there is a little bit of fear of social collapse; however, the evidence has shown in other places in the country that is not what happened. The evidence also bears that everyone prospers from it. He does not partake and does not plan to do it; however, just because you do not partake does not mean that we should not be progressive in these moments and realize that these issues do affect people that we live next to every day. Their organization is doing a Petition all throughout Georgia to get some traction behind the legalization and decriminalization. They have approximately 600 signatures that they have collected in the past few months. There are people from Valdosta who have signed it. The people who go to the polls each year are very interested in this and want to see some progression. He is proposing a talk with people who are interested in this and figure out what moving forward on this issue would look like. It would go a long way for a lot of people and it is about time.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, there will be a celebration to send the Valdosta High School Wildcats football team off to play the number four team in the nation. This will be held at Unity Park from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Citizens are encouraged to dress up in their Wildcat colors and celebrate this event. On Saturday, August 19, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., there will be a hot spot clean-up at 1508 East Park Avenue. The Citizens Police Academy will be held every Thursday from September 4, 2023 through November 2, 2023. The application deadline is September 8, 2023. On Friday, September 22, 2023, there will be a Valdosta State University Family and Fun Night at Unity Park from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. There will be food trucks and bands.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman McIntyre stated that it would be prudent to ask the Citizens Advisory Board Members to take the Citizens Police Academy.

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 August 10, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:04 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, August 24, 2023.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta