

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025**  
**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: Thomas McIntyre, Eric Howard, Sandra Tooley, Andy Gibbs, Tim Carroll, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Nick Harden was absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Tim Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE 2024 GREATER VALDOSTA CHRISTMAS PARADE WINNERS**

Mayor Matheson stated that the 2024 Greater Valdosta Community Christmas Parade was held on Saturday, December 7, 2024. Sponsors for the event were the Ossipe Temple #65, the City of Valdosta, and Wild Adventures Theme Park. This year's theme was "A Christmas in Georgia." The Judges for the Float entries this year were Susan Mullis, Naiz McNeill, and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Tret Witherspoon. The announcer was Big L from Hot 102.7 Radio. The Float entries were judged on Originality, Details/Neatness, Artistic Design, and Theme Use. Trophies will be awarded to the top three winners based on their overall scores. The Parade winners were as follows: Third Place – Bank OZK, Second Place – Anchor Auto/Maybeck Portable Building, and First Place – The Home Depot RDC 5085. The proceeds raised by Ossipe Temple #65 through parade entry fees were donated to various charities.

**EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH AWARD FOR JANUARY, 2025**

Consideration of the January, 2025 Employee of the Month Award (Commander Stephen Thompson, Valdosta Police Department).

Police Chief Leslie Manahan stated that on December 12, 2014, Commander Stephen Thompson was inside Walgreens and observed a man who was acting suspiciously in the aisle of the store. Commander Thompson was in plain clothes and, therefore, not identifiable as a Police Officer. Commander Thompson saw the male conceal clothing items and head into the restroom. When the male emerged from the restroom, Commander Thompson stopped him and identified himself while producing his badge. When Commander Thompson asked the male what was going on, the male broke down and began crying. He explained that he and his children were homeless and staying in a nearby motel. He was in desperate need of socks and underwear, along with items (to include food) for his children. The male admitted to Commander Thompson that he was wearing the items he had been observed concealing. Commander Thompson asked the male to retrieve the empty packaging that he had left in the restroom. He then walked with the male throughout the store, allowing him to fill a cart with more clothing, food, candy, etc., for himself and his children. Commander Thompson then took the male to the register and paid for the items. The male again began to cry while thanking Commander Thompson for his kindness. The two shared a moment of prayer for each other before Commander Thompson drove the male and purchases to the motel where he was staying. Commander Thompson is a true servant to his community. Commander Thompson could have made the choice to arrest this male for shoplifting. Instead, recognizing that he was struggling, and perhaps more so due to the holiday season, Commander Thompson saw a man in need. He took money from his own pocket to help this man and his children. This action by Commander Thompson, while especially impactful due to the holiday, is not unique. He performs kind acts on a regular basis. When asked about his kind acts, he responds humbly and states that he followed the calling to be in law enforcement - to serve those in need.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the January 28, 2025 Special Called Meeting are forthcoming.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-1, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR AN ART STUDIO IN A RESIDENTIAL-PROFESSIONAL (R-P) ZONING DISTRICT**

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an Art Studio in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District as requested by Marian Leonard (File No. CU-2025-01). The property is located at 112 West Moore Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to three conditions (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Marian Leonard is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an Art Studio in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District. The property consists of 0.23 acres located at 112 West Moore Street which is along the north side of the street approximately 100 feet east of the intersection with Jeanette Street. This is the same applicant and property which received rezoning approval late last year (2024) from DR-10 to R-P. The property currently contains a 2-story single-family historic house (2,039 square feet) and a rear yard detached accessory garage with a small upstairs apartment (260 square feet). The applicant is proposing to convert the existing downstairs (1,129 square feet) of the house to an Art Studio while retaining the upstairs primarily as a residence for a family member and/or tenant and utilize the rear yard accessory building primarily as storage. The applicant is proposing no physical changes to the site. The existing paved driveways in the front yard are proposed for Art Studio usage while the unpaved parking in the rear yard is proposed for Residential usage by the owner and/or tenant. The property is located within a Transitional Neighborhood (TN) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within the local Historic District, as well as the Brookwood North National Register Historic District. The property is part of the historic neighborhood area directly to the north of the Valdosta State University (VSU) main campus whereby most buildings along this street are classified as a "Contributing Historic Resource" to both the local and the Brookwood North National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Historic Districts. For more than 20 years, both VSU and the VSU Foundation have been acquiring properties along this street and converting most of them to office type uses. This, in addition to the private sector conversion of other properties to offices, has transformed the character of this street from Residential to that which is now dominated by offices. These are some of the rationales that supported the recent rezoning of this property to Residential-Professional (R-P). The applicant's proposal combines both a Professional Art Studio in combination with a single-family residence on the same parcel. The existing land use pattern along West Moore Street has already transitioned to this same mixed pattern and the applicant's proposal fits in very well. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval subject to the following conditions: (1) Conditional Use approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, as owner or proprietor, for an Art Studio in R-P Zoning in conjunction with a single-family residence on the same premises. (2) There shall be no on-street parking and all parking in the front yard shall only be on paved surfaces as approved by the City Engineer and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). (3) Conditional Use approval shall expire two (2) years from the date of approval if no City business license has been issued to the Art Studio by that that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same conditions as recommended by Staff (9-0 Vote).

John Leonard, 2610 Winding Way, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Leonard stated that he owns the property at 112 West Moore Street. They plan to apply for a sign permit next week and would like to continue on with the process if Council approves the request. It is only going to be an Art Studio that has very limited traffic and it will be by appointment only. They are only talking about one or two people a day and there is more than enough parking in the front on the curved driveway. There will never be any cars parked on the street. The employees of the Art Studio will park in back of the house.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Gibbs to approve the request for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an Art Studio in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District as requested by Marian Leonard for property located at 112 West Moore Street with the following three conditions: (1) Conditional Use approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, as owner or proprietor, for an Art Studio in R-P Zoning in conjunction with a single-family residence on the same premises. (2) There shall be no on-street parking and all parking in the front yard shall only be on paved surfaces as approved by the City Engineer and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). (3) Conditional Use approval shall expire two (2) years from the date of approval if no City

business license has been issued to the Art Studio by that that date. Councilman McIntyre seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-1, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

### **ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION IN A HEAVY INDUSTRIAL (M-2) ZONING DISTRICT DENIED**

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Solid Waste Transfer Station in a Heavy Industrial (M-2) Zoning District as requested by Perma-Fix of South Georgia, Inc. (File No. CU-2025-02). The property is located at 1612 James P. Rodgers Circle. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (5-4 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Perma-Fix of South Georgia, Inc. is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Solid Waste Transfer Station in a Heavy Industrial (M-2) Zoning District. The property consists of 3.56 acres located at 1612 James P. Rodgers Circle which is on the north side of the road at the very end of the cul-de-sac. The property contains an existing warehouse and office buildings related to ongoing solid waste transfer operations on a portion of the property. The applicant recently received approval from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to resume hazardous waste "ten-day transfer" operations which had been discontinued about seven years ago. They are now proposing to have assistance from a third party vendor, and they are seeking City approval in order to complete their overall approval process. The property is located within an Industrial Activity Center (IAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within the middle of the very well-established Azalea City Industrial Park which contains a wide variety of Heavy Industrial uses. This property has a long history of operating as a trucking terminal for solid waste transfer as well as other similar industrial activities, including uses that involve the handling of hazardous wastes. Before 2009, all of this was considered a "permitted use" under the City's M-2 Zoning Regulations. With the adoption of the Land Development Regulations (LDR) in 2009, a new line item for "Solid Waste Transfer Station" was added to the Zoning Use Table which requires this use to have Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approval in M-2. As a result, the existing transfer station use of the property became a "grandfathered legal non-conforming use" in 2009. Then in 2013, the site suffered a tragic fire which caused the immediate closure of part of the facility with environmental cleanup and monitoring activities being triggered. The burned portion of the facility was permanently removed; however, the other transfer operations on site still continued, including the ten-day Solid Waste Transfer Operation which was voluntarily terminated by the applicant in 2018. As a result, the grandfathering of that portion of the operation expired a year later in 2019. Now, the applicant is proposing to resume such operations under a new State permit, and this is triggering the need for CUP approval. About a year ago, the applicant received approval from Georgia EPD to resume the short-term storage (ten days max) and transfer operations of hazardous waste at this site. The applicant is proposing to lease the property to Veolia as a tenant for this operation. Many years ago, this site received hazardous waste in separate containers, whereby some were opened so that the contents could be consolidated (mixed) together before shipment to their final destination. This part of the operation is what triggered the tragic fire in 2013. The applicant is now proposing to receive containers, leave them unopened, and then simply have them sorted for re-transfer via truck to their final destination with the mandate that they be stored on site no more than ten days. Final destinations include disposal sites in other States depending on the specific type of material. This property has a long history of industrial uses, including Solid Waste Transfer and related operations. If it were not for the adoption of the LDR regulations in 2009, the applicant could fully re-institute this prior use of the property as an ongoing permitted use; however, this change of regulations is a good thing so that the City can re-evaluate the potential impacts of what could otherwise be an unfettered intensive industrial use with unlimited scale, or perhaps located in an inappropriate location. In this particular case, the overall scope of the use is relatively small and the size of the property is somewhat limiting (no greater than what has existed on the property in the past). The location of the property deep within a Heavy Industrial area is as ideal a location as could be expected, and the proposal does not represent a change to what has existed on this site for many years in the past. The transfer and handling of hazardous waste is strictly regulated and monitored by the State, as it should be, and the applicant (and its vendor) are well-accustomed to these regulations and State oversight. Staff is supportive of the applicant's proposed use so long as the hazardous waste containers remain unopened and all State permitting regulations and procedures are followed. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval subject to the following conditions: (1) Conditional Use approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, as owner of the property, for a Solid Waste Transfer facility in accordance with all applicable State

and Federal permitting requirements and procedures of operation and handling as it relates to hazardous waste and other materials. Any facility reuses or expansions within the site will also be subject to full City plan review procedures and approval by both the Building Official and the Fire Marshal. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire after one (1) year from the date of approval if there is no City business license issued to the applicant or their tenant by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same conditions as recommended by Staff (5-4 Vote).

Kevin Schmuggerow spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Schmuggerow stated that he works for Perma-Fix Environmental Services, which is a publicly traded company, and he is the owner's representative. Mr. Bill Kelly, the Geologist and Engineer for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), is here and they approved the solid waste transfer permit in 2023. Also here is Vince Phillips who is the Manager at the facility here and they have two employees. There has been a lot of questions asked about the previous operation and what happened during the fire incident that occurred in 2013. He was not with the company at that time, but there is history about the site as far as previous owners. They actually purchased the site when it was already contaminated before and they have been working with the Geologist with the Georgia EPD to get it cleaned up over time. He would like for Mr. Kelly to speak on that because he has been involved with it for almost two decades. They do groundwater sampling there twice a year and the reports are submitted to him. The other issue was the activities that they did back when the facility was open in 2013 which had to do with a lot of processing of fuels to be made into an alternate fuel for production of cement instead of using coal. The fire happened in the processing area. This Conditional Use Permit has nothing to do with that operation. That building has been removed and the soil has been removed and replaced. They have no intent to do those activities again. They would like to bring small bread type trucks into the facility and then ship out three tractor trailer loads a week. Running small trucks is not efficient. They currently ship waste materials to Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, and South Carolina. They do service a number of customers in the area who lease trucks from Ryder Transport and they bring oil from Georgia Petroleum. They would like to continue to service those customers and consolidate those loads. It is basically truck-to-truck. The containers that come in are DOT-approved containers and they are sealed. The containers are never opened on-site and they would just go from one truck to another. They cannot be on site according to DOT regulations for more than ten days. That is just enough time to be able to consolidate the trucks for transportation efficiencies. They did this five years after the fire and they had no issues. They received the original transfer in 2006. They did it before the incident and then five years afterwards.

Councilman McIntyre inquired as to what the impact would be to the community and the environment if there was a spill or a container opening. Mr. Schmuggerow stated that the containers are sealed at the point of origin and transported to the facility. It is basically a truck-to-truck transfer process that moves from one vehicle by forklift to another vehicle. It is then moved from there to its final destination for disposal. In the unlikelihood that there is a spill, it will be very contained because it will be a small quantity right between two vehicles. They already have spill kits and response equipment on the property as a condition of the existing hazardous waste permit. The facility was already designed to handle materials and spill responses so they would be doing nothing different than what was done in the past. He wanted to make sure that they understood that this facility is no longer processing wastes. That process was suspended back in 2014 and that section of the building was demolished and is no longer part of the equation. Now they are talking about receiving delivery trucks with sealed containers and transferring the containers from one vehicle to another. The whole idea is for economic benefit, not only for the local community to save a lot of transportation costs, but also for efficiency to reduce the transport of these materials on the highway. They are consolidating it into large tractor trailers which are taken off site to another location. It is not being processed on the property. It basically is just a whistle stop.

Bill Kelly, Geologist with the Georgia EPD, stated that the trucks that the waste is transferred to are on concrete and if there was a container that leaked, it would go onto the concrete. The area behind the concrete pad actually has a sump that does not go anywhere. The biggest container is 55 gallons so if it did run into the sump, it would be contained. There is also spill equipment on the site and they have a contingency plan that is registered with the State. They also have, along with the spill kits, overpacked drums so that a 55 gallon drum will fit inside of an 85 gallon drum. If a drum was leaking, they would overpack it. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether the drum sizes were standardized. Mr. Kelly stated that some customers may have a 5 gallon pail, but it could be overpacked. Councilman McIntyre stated that he has been getting a lot of messages and phone calls from citizens and no one is really in favor of this. One of the questions was whether they would be handling anything nuclear

material. Mr. Kelly stated they would not. They would have to go through the Department of Health because there are all kinds of regulations for that. This is for waste streams that you would see at Home Depot or other customers in the area that generate wastes and have the drums are on their sites. They are just picking those containers up and putting them on a bigger truck. There is no nuclear waste.

Councilman Howard inquired as to whether there were any materials that they would not accept. Mr. Kelly stated that they would not accept anything such as an explosive or any biological waste. They have never accepted either of those wastes. They do get some waste from Moody Air Force Base, the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Albany, and Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins. None of that is nuclear or anything special. Councilman Howard inquired as to where this material be coming from. Most of it would be coming from the South Georgia and North Florida area. The transport trucks would then take it to Arkansas, Texas, South Carolina, Alabama, and Florida. The waste is taken out of state to be disposed of.

Jonathan Manear, Lake Park, spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Manear stated that he works at 1616 James P. Rodgers Drive which is adjacent to property in question. He went to the previous hearing where the recommendation was 5-4 against and the reason being was that there are regulations in place that prevent accidents from happening at the time. Over the last week, he has done some research on Perma-Fix and the gentleman stated that in 2014, they shut down that part of their operations that caused the problem. In 2015, they were fined \$201,000 in the State of Georgia for a hazardous waste violation which would be a year after they supposedly shut down the dangerous part of the operation. He has a list of 20 violations over 20 years equaling about \$2 million for hazardous waste violations, environmental violations, OSHA violations, and for things that this company has done here in Georgia and in other areas of the world. They have had multiple facilities across the country explode. They had a nuclear facility that had a waste spill which contaminated an area in Washington State. They had an explosion at a facility in Tennessee. Their most recent violation was in 2022 in Tennessee. Here in Valdosta when the explosion occurred at the property, many of the businesses in that area had to evacuate and were shut down which caused an economic imprint in the City. He does not see how this facility would benefit the City and have it around other businesses. He does not know why they could not locate somewhere that is further away from other businesses and people. He does not know where they should exist, but he knows it should not exist where it is now. They currently have about 15 employees and will be adding new jobs. Given the nature of the type of work that is done at that facility, he feels that it is something that he does not want in our City. He is not against somebody who is trying to make money and he is all for having a business, but he feels this type of business is better suited somewhere away from them.

Leigh Touchton spoke in opposition to the request. Ms. Touchton just found out about this today and was sent some information from her Councilman. She is opposed to it for one main reason and that is because it is close to a residential neighborhood that is predominantly African American. She knows that Mayor Matheson remembers the Biomass fight that they had years ago and the main reason she got involved with that was that the NAACP felt like it was an environmental justice issue. It was sited in an area that was closest to an African American neighborhood. With all due respect to Perma-Fix and the EPD, what industrial businesses do not understand is that African Americans have been red-lined historically and they end up in areas that are closer to Industrial Parks. African Americans are the most affected by something like this. The prevailing winds are from the west to the east and it is also close to Lowndes Middle School. Another reason why she felt like she needed to be there tonight is because over the weekend, President Trump sent people into all of our government institutions with the latest attack being on the EPA. The EPA oversees the EPD and the President is dismantling all of the environmental justice initiatives. Her main questions would be as to who would be inspecting and how would the EPD provide oversight when the Federal government says you cannot look at environmental justice as an issue any longer. Ms. Touchton stated that she is asking the Council to table this in order to get additional information and have public comments. A lot of citizens did not show up at the Planning Commission Meeting because there was a lot going on with Hurricane Helene. Given the current climate at the Federal level with oversight, this needs to be tabled and a lot more thought should be given before it is approved.

Scott Tyler spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Tyler stated that this is not a hypothetical and if there was another explosion, it is not hypothetical because it has already happened. If you think about how many businesses are in that area and how many people work there, it would shut them down. The previous owners of the property where he now works was shut down for 30 days. That would be economically devastating for those businesses in that area. He asked for Council to take that into consideration. If there was a way to inspect and

verify and know that there will be nothing in there like before, that is something to take into consideration. When you look at the past violations, there needs to be something to ensure safety and meeting of the regulations. He does not feel like it is a good idea.

Dr. Michael Noll, 2305 Glyndale Drive, spoke in opposition to the request. He stated that he supported those people who were in opposition to this and felt like Council should table it so they can take a closer look at it. Lowndes Middle School and some residential areas are located less than a mile away and accidents can happen. They have learned from the gentleman about all of the violations and fees connected with this particular company and they also know what happened in 2013. He is asking that Council table the request in order to look at it more closely.

Councilman Howard inquired as to whether the company could get any materials brought in other than what is on the list if this is approved. Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that it is subject to the ten-day State-wide permit. What is limiting them more than anything else is the limited size of the site and the conditions. They have to have a State permit in order to operate. We are not approving the State permit because this is a Land Use Permit in Heavy Industrial based on the type of use that it is. Permitting is a separate thing and has to be done anyway. If they lose their State permit, they will have to shut down. We have to approve the business license for this type of facility so that is what is before you. If we want to get into the types of materials they can handle, we could do that; however, they would be getting into the realm. Councilman Howard stated that he was just wondering if they could do something without having to come back before the Mayor and Council. Matt Martin stated that it depended on what the something is. They cannot become a processing facility or a long term storage facility. They cannot grow internally or externally either without coming back before the Mayor and Council. They are already there and have been operating all along quietly. He is not aware of any incidents that have occurred in the past since the fire. If this was a larger facility with larger acreage and room to expand, he would look at it a little differently. If this were next to a residential area, which it is not, then he would look at it differently. They can address the details of the permitting and the very rigorous procedures that they go through with monitoring and inspections. They are the experts on that along with the State.

Councilman Gibbs stated that they have a 55 gallon drum that is being stored at Company X right now because that is what they are in. They lift it onto their truck at this facility and put it on another truck that takes it far away. All of this is approved by the DOT. Matt Martin stated that this is a transfer station. Councilman Gibbs stated that if we are concerned about this company then we should be concerned about the other companies that are storing materials. Matt Martin stated that their local customers generate some waste and store it at their facility for 15-20 days or longer. It could be a Paint Store and with items sitting on a shelf without oversight. Councilman Gibbs stated that if that is the case, then we are shutting down a lot of companies. Matt Martin stated that he would look at this as an asset to the community. Their only alternative is to take the material themselves to Texas. Councilman Gibbs stated that he wanted everyone to know that it is not a matter of this company storing it for longer than ten days and the materials are coming from other local companies.

Mayor Matheson stated that this ends the time for discussion and entertained a motion from Council. Councilman McIntyre stated that he wanted to make a quick statement prior to the motion. Mayor Matheson stated that he would need to make a motion and then discussion could follow.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman McIntyre to deny the request for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Solid Waste Transfer Station in a Heavy Industrial (M-2) Zoning District for property located at 1612 James P. Rodgers Circle as presented. Councilman Howard seconded the motion. Councilman McIntyre stated that this was not an easy decision. He is familiar with a lot of different aspects of different businesses and the decision that he is making now was based on what existing businesses in the area are asking. There are organizations that he has gotten phone calls from and they are asking to deny. Then we have the people at large also asking to deny. In his opinion, by and large, they are beholden to the people and the community. That is why he made the decision. The motion was approved (5-1) with Councilman Gibbs voting in opposition.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-2, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 0.73 ACRES FROM SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6) TO COMMUNITY-COMMERCIAL (C-C)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 0.73 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Community-

Commercial (C-C) as requested by James Warren (File No. VA-2025-01). The property is located at 202 Denmark Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that James Warren is proposing to rezone two parcels totaling 0.73 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Community- Commercial (C-C). The property is located in the Little Miami Neighborhood at 202 Denmark Street which is along the north side of the street about 300 feet west of the intersection with Pendleton Avenue. The property collectively contains an existing non-conforming commercial/warehouse building (11,100 square feet). The applicant is proposing the Rezoning in order to market for a future commercial tenant. The property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map (FDM) of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of C-C Zoning. This is mostly the same property which received approval of an FDM Character Area amendment last fall, to change the designation from Established Residential (ER) to CAC (File No. VA-2024-18). Staff was opposed to the Character Area Amendments at that time and remains opposed to this Rezoning request as well for many of the same reasons. The parcels are part of a Residential Neighborhood which was one of the unincorporated islands (No. 85) that were annexed by the City in 2006. These properties had Cluster Residential (R-C) Zoning in the County which was the County's Multi-Family Residential Zoning District at that time. They were given R-6 Zoning in the City upon annexation (which was the City's Multi-Family Residential Zoning District at that time). With the adoption of the LDR, the City's rules for R-6 changed such that Multi-Family is no longer a permitted use in R-6. Despite the previous Zonings allowing Multi-Family development, virtually none of the properties in the Little Miami area developed with Multi-Family uses, but instead remained as mostly Single-Family with some scattered mobile home development occurring while in the County before the time of annexation. There were also a number of existing small commercial or industrial type uses in this area at the time of annexation and most of these were likely in place before the County's initial establishment of Zoning in the early 1970's. These Commercial/Industrial uses were already non-conforming uses in the County at the time of annexation and have remained completely non-conforming ever since. They are now subject to the City's rules for "non-conforming uses" which stipulates that once a non-conforming use is discontinued for a period of at least 12 months, it may not be re-established. For these parcels, there is little to no business licensing history and the exact timeline of business usage is uncertain; however, based on Google imagery, it appears that the South Georgia Garage Door business occupied the premises for a number of years after the time of annexation. South Georgia Garage Door has been gone from the site now for several years. Last fall, the applicant's primary purpose in requesting the Character Area change was to make the property eligible for Commercial Zoning so that the property can be marketed to a wider range of potential uses. The applicant pointed out the subject property being adjacent to the CAC Character Area to the west; however, this portion of the CAC Character Area fronts South Patterson Street which is an Intensive Commercial Corridor along a busy four-lane highway. In the applicant's Rezoning application, there is no statement of the intended/proposed use of the property. It only states that the purpose is to make the Zoning of the property consistent with the CAC Character Area. It should be noted that R-6 Zoning is also a compliant Zoning District within the CAC Character Area as well. With the current use of the property and its relation to C-C Zoning being unclear, and there being no stated alternative proposed use of the property requiring C-C Zoning, the applicant's Rezoning request is deemed to be speculative. In general, it is considered highly inappropriate for Commercial uses (particularly the intensive ones) to have their only means of access through a Residential area, and therefore, such intensive Zoning Districts in these areas should not be approved as part of any redevelopment proposal. In the City's Land Development Regulations (LDR), it gives general purpose statements for each of the City's Zoning Districts. For C-C Zoning (LDR section 206-16(A)), it states that it "should be located on collector streets where they are convenient by car and on foot to surrounding neighborhoods but will not cause excessive traffic on residential streets." Staff understands the history of the property with its commercial/warehouse type buildings, and its currently intensive non-conforming usage, but does not believe this situation justifies the potential negative impacts such a Zoning change could have on the adjacent Residential Neighborhood to the east and south. If rezoned to C-C, any of the allowable uses in C-C Zoning become eligible for the property. Staff would certainly encourage redevelopment of the parcels, and even adaptive reuse of the existing buildings; however, Staff believes there are better alternatives such as an institutional use (many of which are allowed in R-6 with a CUP approval) or perhaps redevelopment as Multi-Family (requiring a rezoning to R-M which is eligible in the CAC character area). This would be generally supported by Staff. Staff found the request inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended denial. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their November 25, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Bill Nijem, Attorney, 1007 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Nijem stated that he represented the applicant and he appeared before the Council a few months ago for the Character Area Amendment. He is here today for the rezoning of the property. The rationale for the rezoning is that it is a commercial property and been there for many years. There is an 11,000 square foot commercial office and warehouse, but it is legally non-conforming right now because it is zoned Residential. It cannot be used as a business because the City will not issue a commercial business license to any business that goes there because of the zoning. They are requesting Commercial Zoning for its intended use and for what it has been used for decades. This property is a good candidate for a specialty trade business or something like that. It could be for a plumbing company or an electrical company. There was a garage door company there in the past. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve it and we are asking that you follow their recommendation and approve it for C-C Zoning.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-2, an Ordinance to rezone 0.73 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Community-Commercial (C-C) as requested by James Warren for property located at 202 Denmark Street, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-3, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 2.06 ACRES FROM SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6) TO MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-M)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 2.06 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Multi-Family Residential (R-M) as requested by Courley LLC (File No. VA-2025-02). The property is located at 1021 West Gordon Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Courley LLC, represented by John Courson and Tripp Talley, is requesting to rezone two parcels totaling 2.06 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Multi-Family Residential (R-M). The property is located at 1021 West Gordon Street which is along the south side of the street between the intersections with Hutto Street and Diana Place to the north. The property is currently developed with an abandoned Single-Family residence on the larger parcel, while the smaller parcel is vacant. The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing residence and redevelop the entire property with an apartment complex consisting of up to 36 dwelling units. The property is located within a Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map (FDM) of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of R-M Zoning. The property is part of a mostly High-Density Residential and Institutional Neighborhood along West Gordon Street corridor. Significant uses along this corridor include the S.L. Mason Elementary School and several small churches a few blocks to the east, the Craig Center facility, public housing complex for the Valdosta Housing Authority (VHA), and several private sector Multi-Family developments adjacent or in proximity to the property. Adjacent to the corridor along the many side streets are established Single-Family residential areas of various development densities. Some of the properties have been going through redevelopment and these trends have been mostly for Multi-Family development. All of this is broadly supported by the Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) and Transitional Neighborhood (TN) Character Area designations along the corridor. Vehicular access through the corridor is centered on West Gordon Street which has a Major Collector classification and is designed/planned to carry a moderate volume of traffic; however, most notably in all of this is that the property sits directly between an existing new apartment complex to the west (already on R-M property), and a proposed complex to the east (on C-C property) which is being developed by the applicant and is already in the plan review process. If this rezoning process is approved, the applicant is proposing to maybe link these two complexes together in order to facilitate a better site design for both. In terms of architectural style, the applicant is proposing to emulate the design of the existing complex to the west. There is also R-M density development on some of the properties across the street to the north, as well as R-M Zoning on vacant properties across the railroad track to the rear of the subject property. All these things together make the applicant's proposed rezoning very logical and consistent with surrounding patterns. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Councilman Howard inquired as to whether this was just standard housing or workforce housing. Matt Martin stated that he thought it was standard housing and it is similar to the apartment complex located nearby.

Tyler Dallas, Attorney, 1007 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Dallas stated that he represented the applicant, Courley LLC, and they are seeking rezoning of the property from R-6 to R-M Zoning. This request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Character Area allows for R-M. It is the best and most economical use of the property. If it was developed as is, the lots would be small and it would not make much sense for redevelopment. The house that is on the property is dilapidated and there is an old sign that is still there. The depth of the property is a benefit because it is very deep. The applicant would like to combine it with the C-C Zoning that is directly next door so that they can develop a more spaced out, aesthetically pleasing look. The street is a Major Collector road so traffic is not much of an issue with the Multi-Family in that area. The Planning Commission approved this unanimously and he asked Council's consideration in approving the request.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that at the Work Session on Tuesday she had inquired about the Fire Department being able to get in and out of the property if there was a fire. Tyler Dallas stated that if they were able to combine with the other lot next door then the plans would obviously change a little bit to allow for more driving space and an easier way for a fire truck to get in and out.

Councilman Howard inquired as to who these apartments are marketed towards. Tyler Dallas stated that it still up in the air right now. They have had experience in the past with subsidized housing but there is also a chance that these could be market rate. They have had discussions with the Developer about potentially combining it with the other property to make it a larger apartment complex, but those are just preliminary discussions. It is a little early to know that. Councilman Howard inquired as to whether the applicant would be opposed to Council asking them to put security cameras up. Tyler Dallas stated that he did not think that would be an issue. Councilman Howard stated that he just wanted to be sure that whoever is out there and if there is an incident that takes place, then we want to have the ability to help our Police Officers if something does go wrong.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-3, an Ordinance to rezone 2.06 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Multi-Family Residential (R-M) as requested by Courley LLC for property located at 1021 West Gordon Street, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-4, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 0.33 ACRES FROM SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-10) TO SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 0.33 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Single-Family Residential (R-6) as requested by Alexander Wynn (File No. VA-2025-03). The property is located at 212 Springhill Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Alexander Wynn and Nicole Richardson are requesting to rezone one parcel comprising 0.33 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Single-Family Residential (R-6). The property is located at 212 Springhill Street which is along the west side of the road approximately 650 feet south of River Street. The property is currently vacant and previously contained a Single-Family residence before it was demolished in 2023. The applicant is proposing to redevelop the property with a new residential duplex. The property is located within a Transitional Neighborhood (TN) Character Area on the Future Development Map (FDM) of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of R-6 Zoning. The property is part of an old remnant residential area that was first developed in the County more than 60 years ago and then annexed into the City 19 years ago. It is well-situated and ripe for redevelopment of infill residential but needs some catalyst and encouragement. The surrounding zoning pattern consists of a mixture of R-10, R-6 and R-M Zonings. The existing land use pattern of the area is also a mixture of residential densities interspersed with numerous vacant lots. Most notably for the property is the abutting large apartment complex (Ashton Park) immediately to the south (zoned R-M), and a large vacant tract across the street to the east (zoned R-6). The applicant's proposal for R-6 Zoning and redevelopment of this property as a duplex fits in very well with both the surrounding zoning and land use patterns.

It may also be a catalyst that is needed for future residential redevelopment projects along this street. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 27, 2025 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Nicole Richardson and Alexander Wynn spoke in favor of the request. Ms. Richardson stated that they are in support of the rezoning from R-10 to R-6.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-4, an Ordinance to rezone 20.33 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Single-Family Residential (R-6) as requested by Alexander Wynn for property located at 212 Springhill Street, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

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

Consideration of a request to approve an Agreement for Professional Design Services for Phase I of the Remer Sanitary Sewer Trunkline Rehabilitation Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the Remer Trunkline, which has diameters ranging from 8" to 30" inches, serves the western central area of the City. It is aging and is in deteriorated condition. The largest diameter portion of the line in question is unreinforced concrete pipe aged between 50 and 75 years old. This section spans from the Valdosta State University (VSU) main campus through the City of Remerton, roughly paralleling One Mile Branch and terminating at the Remer Principal Lift Station. Maintaining our infrastructure assets in efficient functional condition is a key requirement of the City and of our Utilities Department. This Project is one of the "critical need" projects identified during the system-wide assessment process we underwent recently and is required to be completed for compliance with an active Consent Order placed on the City's water/sewer utility. A conceptual layout and routing plan was completed by the City Engineering Staff for the rehabilitation of these sewer trunklines. The next step is to complete survey, design, and easement acquisition, and a Professional Engineering Consultant is required for this work. On an annual basis, the City Engineering Department has developed a list of qualified Professional Services Firms through solicitation of Statements of Qualification (SOQ) for designs of water distribution, sanitary sewer, wastewater collection and treatment, storm water, sidewalk construction, street revisions, transportation studies, land surveying and other miscellaneous tasks. The firms in the library can provide professional services to the City when need arises and the firm is available and qualified. Innovate Engineering & Surveying is in our 2024/2025 library and is qualified to perform this scope of design services. City Engineering Staff met on-site with Innovate's design and survey Staff in December of 2024 and reviewed the Project routing plan and scope of work. The Innovate Design Services Proposal totals \$365,000. The work includes surveying and preparation of easement plats for land acquisition (easements), railroad permitting, and design as needed to prepare construction plans and documents for the sewer main improvements. Upon Council approval, the Design Consultant will be engaged as well as necessary easement acquisition. The Construction Project will be advertised for competitive bidding. Those bids will be presented to Council for consideration to complete this Sewer Rehabilitation Project. Given the complexity of the Project, likelihood of iterative/adaptive design, as well as the quantity of easements needed to successfully deliver the improvement Project, the Engineering Department is requesting a 30% design contingency (\$109,500) to be utilized to fund additional Professional Services as needed during this Project. This would bring the total not-to-exceed amount requested for the design of this Project to \$474,500. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the proposed Design Services Agreement submitted by Innovate Engineering & Surveying in the amount of \$474,500, which includes the 30% contingency.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve an Agreement for Professional Design Services submitted by Innovate Engineering & Surveying in the amount of \$474,500 (which includes a 30% contingency in the amount of \$109,500) for Phase I of the Remer Sanitary Sewer Trunkline Rehabilitation Project.

Consideration of a request for cost-sharing for sanitary sewer improvements with a private residential development.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the Private development continues in northeast Valdosta along and inside of Inner Perimeter Road. The City does not have sufficient water and sewer utilities in this area for current and future development. There is a proposed single-family residential subdivision on Jaycee Shack Road in its final design phases, and the development's Design Engineer and City Staff have worked through several sewer design iterations to arrive at a solution that will best serve the City's current and future interest while accommodating the new subdivision's utility and construction interests. The City has shared in the cost of improvements to the public system in the past in an effort to partner with private investments in our community. Generally, this is done to supplement existing substantial private investment in the public system to achieve a greater public good or to satisfy the City's long-term infrastructure planning goals. Given that the new subdivision must install a lift station and force main to provide sanitary sewer service to the future residents, City Staff recommends cost-sharing in this sewer system expansion in the amount of \$123,340 to modify the improvements such that they facilitate growth from surrounding properties. This cost covers the upgrades needed to serve this local sewer basin beyond the subdivision with gravity sewer. The cost-share, which is being presented for Council's consideration, is based on the differential in cost between the minimum improvements which serve only the subdivision and the improvements which will be to the greatest benefit of the public and which will fully satisfy the objectives of the Utilities and Engineering Departments in this service location. The cost differential prepared by City Staff in conjunction with the Developer's licensed Underground Utility Contractor was presented to and signed by the Developer. This consideration is a unique opportunity for the City of Valdosta to partner with the private development community to bring about the highest possible public good. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the cost-sharing in the amount of \$123,340 for upgrading the sewer in conjunction with a private housing development in order to achieve the City's overall utility service goals.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the cost-sharing in the amount of \$123,340 for sanitary sewer improvements with a private residential development.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve payment for emergency repairs to the Gornto Road Bridge over Sugar Creek.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that on December 19, 2024, a significant void below the western approach slab of the Gornto Road Bridge over Sugar Creek was discovered. Following consultation with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) District Office Bridge Inspections Staff, the bridge was closed to traffic due to safety concerns. The Engineering Department Staff contacted and met onsite with the sole Bridge Contractor in South Georgia, Southern Concrete Construction Co., Inc. of Albany, Georgia, for repair recommendations and a quote. Southern Concrete's recommended repairs, which were presented in a quote dated January 7, 2025 in the amount of \$329,375 (stone rip rap at \$125/ton with estimated quantity of 215 tons), includes the following: (1) Bridge Repair - Remove existing 20'x47' approach slab. Form and pour abutment wall between exposed piling. Haul and install approximately 900 tons of mixed Type I and Type III rip rap backfilling the washed area underneath the existing approach slab. Pump flowable fill in the rip rap backfill reinforce the area. Top backfilled area with suitable soils to the subgrade of a new approach slab. Install new 30'x47' reinforced approach slab. Grade new shoulder slopes and install permanent grassing at the immediate bridge location. (2) Slope Reconstruction and Reinforcement - This work includes reconstructing the erosion of the slope caused by a deficient water main in front of Window World. This area is approximately 75' x 25' and will require approximately 215 tons of rip rap reinforcement. Work includes haul acceptable backfill material and reconstruct the deficient slope and install rip rap along the newly constructed slope. Based upon the impact to the community, the City Manager approved the execution of the contract with Southern Concrete. Repair work was completed January 21, 2025, and the snowstorm and subfreezing conditions necessitated maintaining the bridge closure for icy conditions until January 28, 2025. A final invoice from Southern Concrete has been submitted in the amount of \$319,000. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the payment to Southern Concrete Construction Co., Inc. in the amount of \$319,000 for the emergency repair.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the payment to Southern Concrete Construction Co., Inc. in the amount of \$319,000 for the emergency repairs to the Gornto Road Bridge over Sugar Creek.

Consideration of a request to approve the selected streets list for resurfacing in the City of Valdosta funded through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant and SPLOST VIII.

Ben O’Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City performs annual major maintenance on our 323 miles of streets through contracting road resurfacing and repair work. Funding for this work is from both the City’s SPLOST VIII and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG). LMIG funding for 2025 is \$700,214.83 with a minimum local match requirement of 10% (\$70,021.48). In recent years, the City has matched more than 100% of the LMIG funding in order to better repair and maintain our local road system. In 2025, this will be the final year of SPLOST VIII collections and funding, and due to storms the City has several street repair projects that may impact SPLOST VIII funding. The list of 3.93 miles wide of streets are the remaining streets identified for the initial five-year Street Improvement Program that was established in the 2019 City-Side Pavement Evaluation Program. They are sorted by pavement condition from the worst condition at the top with consideration given to economy of repair. The City must provide a list of streets to GDOT for FY2025 LMIG funding (Local Maintenance Improvements Grant) for FY2025. Acceptance of GDOT LMIG obligates the City to complete the LMIG streets within two years. Staff recommends that the LMIG funding be allocated for the streets that are most likely to need repair, and that SPLOST funding be utilized for additional sections of selected streets so that the start-and-end of resurfacing is logical. This is not the final list for the 2025 resurfacing project of streets. The Engineering and Finance Staff will determine the available SPLOST VIII funding, and Engineering Staff will develop a contract package for 2025 resurfacing for bidding in early spring that matches the available LMIG and SPLOST VIII funding. This is simply the presentation of street segments which Staff recommends submitting in conjunction with the LMIG Grant application. The complete 2025 Resurfacing Project will be bid in the spring and will appear before Council for contract approval. Ben O’Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the revised list of selected streets for submittal with the LMIG application to GDOT.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Tooley, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the revised list of selected streets for resurfacing in the City of Valdosta funded through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant and SPLOST VIII.

**BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has two members, Laura Yale and Sally Querin, whose terms will expire on February 13, 2025. Ms. Querin resigned effective November 4, 2024 due to personal reasons. The HPC also had another member, Dr. Charles “Alex” Alvarez, who resigned due to personal reasons. His term will expire on February 13, 2027. Ms. Yale has expressed an interest in being reappointed. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: Slot #1 (Fill the unexpired Term of Dr. Alex Alvarez) - Victoria English - Research Genealogist and retired Police Officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, Slot #2 (Fill the Term of Sally Querin) - DeRon Johnson - Web Manager/Contracting Officer Representative with the U. S. Department of Interior, Slot #3 (Fill the Term of Laura Yale) - Laura Yale - Interior Designer/Landscape Designer and Owner of MODified Interior Design and Owner of Vito’s Pizzeria.

Mayor Matheson stated that if there was no objection from Council, since there are three slots and three applicants they will be appointed by acclamation to serve on the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission. There was no objection from Council.

Consideration of an appointment to the Valdosta Housing Authority.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Housing Authority has a member, Thompson Kurrie, Jr., whose term expired on December 31, 2024. Mr. Kurrie has expressed an interest in being reappointed. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: (1) George Foreman - Job Development Coordinator, GoodwillSR, and (2) Thompson Kurrie, Jr. - Attorney, Coleman Talley, LLP. Mayor Matheson will make this appointment and Thompson Kurrie, Jr. was reappointed to serve a term of five year on the Valdosta Housing Authority.

Consideration of an appointment to the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County has a member, John Wesley Langdale, III, whose term will expire on February 1, 2025. Mr. Langdale has expressed an interest in being reappointed. This appointment was not advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: (1) Moshe M. Elbaz - Rabbi, Temple Israel, (2) Edgar Cameron Hickman – Retired, and (3) John Wesley Langdale, III - Forest Business, The Langdale Company.

Mayor Matheson entertained nominations. Councilwoman Miller-Cody placed into consideration the name of John Wesley Langdale, III. There being no other nominations, Mayor Matheson closed nominations. John Wesley Langdale, III was re-appointed by acclamation to serve a term of five years on the Hospital Authority of Valdosta and Lowndes County.

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority (LBA) has a member, Councilwoman Sandra Tooley, whose term will expire on January 31, 2025. Councilwoman Tooley has expressed an interest in being reappointed. The LBA also has another member, Burke Sherwood, who resigned due to personal reasons. His term will expire January 31, 2028. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The only applicant to apply was Councilwoman Tooley.

Mayor Matheson stated that if there was no objection from Council, since Councilwoman Tooley was the only applicant to apply she will be appointed by acclamation to serve a term of four years on the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority. There was no objection from Council.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Kelly Saxton, 8 Baldwin Place, stated that she wanted to discuss inclement weather and disaster recovery planning. We still have significant work ahead in developing a Comprehensive Plan for inclement weather and disaster recovery for our citizens. Later this month, there will be meetings regarding CDBG, Disaster Recovery (DR), funding, and long term planning. She strongly encouraged Council to attend and to urge citizens to participate as well. With storm season about six months away, we need a solid, pro-active plan. She hopes that the City will explore additional opportunities to strengthen our response and prepare the efforts. She also wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the community's warming shelter at The Woman's Building. A heartfelt thank you to the City and the City Manager for your support in providing the space for seven days during the recent below freezing temperatures and snow. The support included facilities and public safety resources which made a significant impact. The shelter served an average of 42 people per day ranging in ages from 18 to 81 with over 186 meals provided daily. This effort was a true community collaboration with contributions from non-profit organizations, volunteers, and support network on the local level. While there are still areas to improve, the partnership between the community and the City was effective and demonstrated what we can achieve together. Given these experiences, perhaps the City should consider establishing its own Emergency Management Agency.

Kristen Goin, Legacy Behavioral Health, 3120 North Oak Street Extension, stated that she would like to share some information about the Georgia Recovery Project that Legacy has been partnering with FEMA since Hurricane Helene. The Georgia Recovery Project is designed to support individuals and families affected by the disaster. Their primary goal is to provide free and confidential emotional support to help individuals recover, regain stability, and build resilience in the wake of a crisis through the Crisis Counseling Program offered by Legacy, also known as their CCP Program. The three main categories of services that they are providing are: (1) emotional support and crisis counseling, (2) community outreach and education, and (3) referrals and resources. They are here to ensure that no one in our community feels alone and without support during this difficult time. She wanted to emphasize that all of their services provided through CCP are completely free and confidential. You do not need insurance or eligibility requirements. To make these services as successful as possible, they are working with community leaders, schools, and faith-based organizations to spread the word; however, they need the City's help. They have teams available to come to the neighborhoods and community gatherings to provide on-site support. Together with the support of Programs like CCP and the resilience of our community, there is no doubt that we will rebuild stronger. If you would like to collaborate on outreach efforts, she would be happy to speak to Council after this Meeting. She also has some flyers with her telephone number on them and she thanked Council for their time.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that this is the section where citizens who have questions could talk to the Council about their streets, bills, or anything and they can get up and ask questions at this point.

Cynthia Smith, 800 South Troup Street, stated that she was concerned about her water bill and asked if someone could explain it. Mayor Matheson stated that the City Manager would speak with her after the Council Meeting. Ms. Smith also stated that the Overpass appears to have cracks in it.

## CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that First Friday will be held on February 7, 2025 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Downtown area. There will be a FEMA Housing Resource Fair on February 8, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Lowndes County Civic Center to assist individuals and families in need of housing support. The monthly Love Where You Live Cleanup will held on February 22, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. and volunteers will meet at 1701 Barack Obama Boulevard. They will clean up Ricardo Street from Barack Obama Boulevard to Claudia Circle. Also, on February 22, 2025, the Southern Georgia Black Chamber will hold the Black History Month Parade at noon starting at Pinevale Elementary School located at 930 Lake Park Road.

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Howard stated that as our community continues to grow, he would like to see the LDR brought before Council to make sure that when people are building new developments in the City that cameras are required to be placed there. He would also like to see if it could be a retroactive requirement; however, going forward, he would like to see that anybody coming up with new developments put some security cameras at the entrance and exits. We want to make sure that we keep our community reasonably safe.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that since this is Black History Month, she would like to ask that the Mayor, Council, City Manager, and Assistant City Manager have a picture taken to put on the City's website.

## ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the February 6, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:13 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, February 20, 2025.