

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 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, Andy Gibbs, Tim Carroll, and Nick Harden. Councilwoman Sandra Tooley and Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody were absent. City Attorney Tim Tanner arrived late at 5:34 p.m. The invocation was given by Boy Scout Troop 491 from St. John Evangelistic Catholic Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentation by Staff on recommendations for revisions to Land Development Regulations, Chapter 328 - Landscape, Buffers, and Screening of the Land Development Regulations for the City of Valdosta.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that he presented the information at the Work Session on Tuesday and he will be glad to answer any additional questions that Council may have. Mayor Matheson stated that there will be no action taken on the presentation tonight.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the February 6, 2025 Regular Meeting were approved by unanimous consent (5-0 Vote). The minutes from the February 20, 2025 Regular Meeting are forthcoming.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-5, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A PLASTICS MANUFACTURING FACILITY IN A LIGHT INDUSTRIAL (M-1) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Plastics Manufacturing Facility in a Light Industrial (M-1) Zoning District as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority (File No. CU-2025-03). The property is located at 1804 Bimbo QSR Boulevard. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their February 24, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (7-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that on behalf of Utility Plastics, LLC, the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority (VLCDA) is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Plastics Manufacturing Facility (heavy manufacturing) in a Light Industrial (M-1) Zoning District. The property consists of 9.92 acres located at 1804 Bimbo QSR Boulevard which is along the north side of the road approximately 950 feet west of South St. Augustine Road. This is also located directly behind the Bimbo Industrial Bakery Facility. The property is currently owned by the VLCDA but is pending transfer of ownership to the private company. This industry is proposing to utilize the site's existing 100,000 square foot spec building, complete the interior buildout, and expand the site's paving to accommodate additional parking and truck access to the rear loading docks. The property is located within an Industrial Activity Center (IAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is part of the Westside Business Park, which is managed by the VLCDA and is a relatively large area (150 acres) that is planned for industrial development (mostly warehousing, distribution, and light manufacturing). Because of its technical classification under plastics manufacturing (NAICS Code No. 326), it is included in the heavy manufacturing line item of the LDR Use Table and requires CUP approval in M-1 Zoning; however, the proposed use and its scope of operation is very much at the lower end of that line item when compared to other heavy manufacturing uses. The applicant's letter of intent states the following: "Utility Plastics manufactures and distributes plastic meter boxes for water, irrigation, and fiber markets. All products are made from polypropylene resins through an injection molding process, which involves heating and applying pressure to resin in a die to form the final part. The manufacturing process produces no off-gassing and does not require water or sewer discharge. Finished parts are palletized, strapped, wrapped, and stored in racking. Shipments of palletized products are sent out daily via truck."

This use has none of the common negative impacts of heavy manufacturing such as air pollution, noise, smell, heavy rail usage, and unsightly storage. Therefore, it fits in very well with the otherwise light manufacturing environment of this planned Industrial Park. Comparatively, there are no identified negative impacts from this proposed use, and it will even generate less truck traffic than the amount of traffic that is already being generated by other industrial uses in the Westside Business Park and the other Industrial Parks a little farther south. Other than a customary expiration date and placing the approval in the type and name of the industry, there is no need for additional conditions of approval. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval subject to the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name only of Utility Plastics, LLC for a Plastics Manufacturing Facility in an M-1 Zoning District in general accordance with the submitted letter of intent. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if the proposed use is not fully completed and operational by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their February 24, 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 (7-0 Vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Carroll to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Plastics Manufacturing Facility in a Light Industrial (M-1) Zoning District for property located at 1804 Bimbo QSR Boulevard as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority with the following two conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name only of Utility Plastics, LLC for a Plastics Manufacturing Facility in an M-1 Zoning District in general accordance with the submitted letter of intent. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if the proposed use is not fully completed and operational by that date. The motion was seconded by Councilman McIntyre. The motion was unanimously adopted (5-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-5, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve a vendor for the City of Valdosta Human Capital Management System (HCMS).

Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, stated that the City of Valdosta currently utilizes Tyler Technologies' New World Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) as its payroll system of record. New World ERP operates in isolation, lacking integration with other programs, which results in significant redundant data entry for the Human Resources (HR) team. This inefficiency increases administrative workload and the potential for human error. Additionally, the system has limited reporting and data manipulation capabilities, requiring many critical tasks to be completed manually, further impacting accuracy and efficiency. To meet its current and future needs, the City requires a robust Human Capital Management System (HCMS). The City engaged OneDigital's HR Technology Consulting team as an external Consultant to facilitate the search for a system that aligns with operational requirements. The Internal Project Team consisted of Assistant City Manager Catherine Ammons, Finance Director Chuck Dinkins, and Human Resources Director Jennie Boyer, with Councilmen Tim Carroll and Thomas McIntyre providing input and guidance as needed. Following an initial needs analysis, OneDigital identified five potential vendors, each of whom conducted initial product demonstrations. The Project Team then narrowed the selection to three vendors and invited them to submit formal Request for Proposals (RFPs). These Proposals were independently scored by each Committee Member with OneDigital compiling and presenting the aggregate results. Based on scoring, Paylocity and Dayforce emerged as the top contenders and were invited to conduct on-site finalist presentations. After evaluating the finalist presentations, the Project Team determined that Paylocity best meets the City's needs. Paylocity offers a comprehensive "hire-to-retire" solution, encompassing recruiting, onboarding, scheduling, timekeeping, payroll, performance management, employee recognition, learning management, and a user-friendly employee interface. The system seamlessly integrates with the City's external vendors for deferred compensation and benefits, streamlining data entry, and reducing administrative burden. Additionally, Paylocity's robust reporting and analytics capabilities align with the City's operational and strategic objectives. Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, recommended that Council approve Paylocity as the selected HCMS vendor.

Councilman Gibbs inquired as to whether employees will be able to download this to their phone to make any changes. Jennie Boyer stated that they would be able to do that. Paylocity comes with a web version and an app version through which employees can log into. Everything that employees need will be at their fingertips. They can request time off, review their pay checks, and review their accrued hours for the week.

Councilman Carroll stated that some hourly employees may have to report to duty in the field and inquired as to whether they could clock in and out at that time. Jennie Boyer stated that they would be able to do that. Paylocity is extremely customizable and they can set it up for employees to clock in from a desk top or a time clock through the app. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether an employee who gets married could make changes through the app. Jennie Boyer stated that currently, employees would have to come to Human Resources with the documentation of their marriage license for them to copy, scan, and upload it. With Paylocity, they would be able to take a picture of it. They could also have an engagement portal to send congratulations to the employee if they wanted that. Their goal throughout this is not to control the employees but to take care of them.

Councilman McIntyre inquired about the storage capacity and if they could put all of the employees records in the system. Jennie Boyer stated that was one of the things they were very careful to ask in the Request for Proposal (RFP) because with each RFP, there was a historical data transition that they would typically do. In the case of Paylocity, they would transition seven years of data. That is great but we currently have to search files in the basement for historical records. We asked Paylocity if they could do better and they came back to the table and said they could import 30 years of data. There is no cap on the storage capacity and the cost was very minimal. They are also going to give us two months free.

A MOTION by Councilman Harden, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve Paylocity as the selected vendor for the City of Valdosta Human Capital Management System (HCMS).

Consideration of request to approve a Proposal for Professional Services submitted by Infrastructure Management Services (IMS) for updated pavement evaluations for City of Valdosta streets.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that maintenance of our local transportation system's streets is a basic responsibility of the local government. There are 294 miles of paved City streets and alleys. Pavement maintenance is essential to the cost-effective preservation and function of the City's streets. In 2019/2020, the City engaged a Professional Consultant to perform the first comprehensive street pavement evaluation, and the City has used that study to allocate funding approved by the City Council for resurfacing and maintaining City streets. Periodic evaluation of pavement conditions is the foundation of efficient allocation of funding for pavement maintenance. As of 2019, the benefit of this process is that it allows for the identification of resurfacing and reconstruction needs before the conditions worsen and cause harm or damage to the public. Infrastructure Management System (IMS) is familiar with the City of Valdosta and provides services to multiple local and state governments in Georgia and throughout the United States. At the request of the Engineering Department, IMS provided a Proposal of Services for an updated City-wide pavement condition evaluation in the amount of \$95,295. Federal, State, and local purchasing policies for the selection of professional services allow negotiation with qualified professional firms; therefore, the selection of IMS to perform these services complies with purchasing policies. Since IMS performed similar data collection and analysis for the City in 2019/2020 and IMS has retained the City street data from that earlier study, IMS is uniquely qualified to assist with an updated evaluation. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Proposal submitted by Infrastructure Management Services (IMS) in the amount of \$95,295 with a 10% contingency (\$9,529.50) for the possibility of unforeseen circumstances for a total cost of \$104,824.50.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve a Proposal for Professional Services submitted by Infrastructure Management Services (IMS) in the amount of \$95,295 plus a 10% contingency (\$9,529.50) to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total cost of \$104,824.50 for updated pavement evaluations for City of Valdosta streets.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Maria Willoughby, resident of the second and third Districts, 741 East Brookwood Place, stated that for the past two years she has developed a business which failed but that means that she has accomplished the first

level of success. She is now on her way to the second level of success. She has been taking the past two years to redevelop and strengthen her organization by updating the defining processes, procedures, and documents. She is here today to promote sponsorship and partnership for the Art of Good which is a ministry of Agape Love. Their goal is to master the art of humanity through inclusion and to provide a voice for the marginalized members of the community. She is client zero in her organization's growth partnership initiative. More about the program is available through the QR code she is going to hand out. So far, she has successfully obtained one growth partner for employee ability skills, word processes, social interaction, and task achievements in an administrative environment. She is continuing to market development skills and her partner base by working to connect the key members of the community. She is hoping that Council will take part in that and help her to grow. There is a screening process and they are not re-creating the wheel. There is a competitive advantage which will be detailed privately if needed. You may know of organizations that provide scholarships for qualified individuals or have may have a targeted interest in certain demographics or individuals. They just ended Black History Month and we are now in Women's History Month. Next month is International Black Women's History Month. May is Asian and Pacific Islander Month. She just qualified for all of these and she is a faith-based woman who believes in the value system of never giving up and people need people. She is inviting Council to be a part of her success and she needs help in getting the word out to get supporters. Your reputation is what other people think of you and your character is who you are. She would like for Council to get to know her and her character and help her to build because she is definitely worth it.

Bobby McKenzie, 5148 Northwind Boulevard, stated that he has spoken with Council about trash and litter in the City of Valdosta. There have been a couple of things that have come up recently with Code Enforcement. They are going to start issuing citations to people who have not cleaned up their rubbish from the hurricane. Chandra McAllister, Community Sustainability Coordinator, just recently did a promotion to encourage people to use SeeClickFix. There is a Trash Can Ordinance that requires each parking lot with X number of parking spots to have X number of trash cans. Academy Sports, Lowe's, Home Depot, and Target all ended up putting in trash cans. The other issues were closed out as fixed by Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development/Community Protection Manager. If you go to the Mall, it covers 60 acres and there are zero trash cans in the Mall parking lot. Trash cans will help with the litter control. He is not asking to add any more laws but just to enforce the ones we have. He can pull up 50 SeeClickFix issues about trash can violations and Ms. Riley closes them all out saying they are all fixed. Clearly they are not fixed. He would like to know if the Trash Can Ordinance is still valid. If it is not then he will drop the issue; however, from his understanding, it still is.

Barry Broome, 808 Pine Pointe Circle, stated that he wanted to applaud the Council, the City Manager, and everyone in the Administration for all the great work they have done in the past 13 months. Collectively, what you have done to bring us back from the hurricane to where we are today is remarkable. With that being said, that is what we as a community want to continue to see. We want to keep Valdosta beautiful. With hurricanes in mind and with regard to blighted properties, our Codes and Ordinances have fallen behind. He is asking Council to consider taking a fresh look at these Ordinances and putting some teeth in them. He lives across the street from a property that is a rental house and prior to Hurricane Helene, he was dealing with an issue with the property not being taken care of. They had an allowance period for the hurricanes to give people some leniency to recover. His point is that we are still seeing many areas in town post hurricanes that are neglected. He would ask Council's consideration in looking at these Ordinances to see if they are outdated and if we need to put more teeth in them. If we don't, this is going to affect property values and it will affect the appeal of this community.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that on Friday, March 7, 2025, there will be a First Friday Event in Downtown Valdosta. On Saturday, March 8, 2025, Azalea After Dark will be held at Unity Park following the Azalea Festival which will take place March 8-9, 2025 at Drexel Park from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There will be a Kids Zone, live music, a food court, a 5K road race, and much more. Also, on Saturday, Joey Travolta returns to Valdosta to screen Lights, Camera, Friendship as part of the 2025 South Georgia Film Festival. The screening will be at the Dosta Playhouse at 7:00 p.m. This event is free to the public. On Monday, March 10, 2025, registration for the 17th Annual People's Choice Photo Contest will open at 8:00 a.m.

Mayor Matheson stated that this weekend will be very busy with Music in the Turner Center Art Park on Friday, March 7, 2025 with Kaylee Rose. The Azalea Festival 5K Road Race will take place on Saturday morning at 8:00 a.m. at VECA, and the actual Azalea Festival will be held on Friday and Saturday. Azalea After Dark will be held on Saturday night with live music and food trucks. Also, Joey Travolta will be back for the South Georgia Film Festival on Saturday. On March 15, 2025, the Mayor's and Chairman's Paddle will take place at Langdale Park but they may have to change it to the Troupville Boat Ramp depending on the water and deadfalls in the river. They will start at 8:00 a.m. with registration and the actual paddling will start at 10:00 a.m. Mayor Matheson also recognized some Leadership Lowndes participants who were in the audience tonight. Part of their requirement is to attend a City Council Meeting and County Commission Meeting.

Councilman Howard stated that now that we are getting back to normal after the hurricane, he asked that our community think about the Federal employees. We have FBI Agents, people who work at Moody, the Social Security Office, and the VA Hospital. These are our neighbors and friends and they shop in our stores and go to our churches. We need to keep them in mind as we go through these uncertain times.

Councilman Gibbs stated that the Miracle League of Valdosta started their games this week and the season will run through April 15, 2025. Also, there are a lot of events going on with non-profit organizations and it is important to support them. He was talking to several of the non-profit organizations recently and we have a close group. They are all trying to figure out how to split the same pot of money with everyone in this community. A little bit goes a long way so anything that we can do to help them would be great whether that is just showing up, volunteering, or spreading the word about their event. We have a lot of great organizations in this community that do a lot of good.

Councilman Carroll thanked Barry Broome and his wife, Shirley, and Judy who all come from a great neighborhood in town around Smithfield and Pine Pointe. They have been immensely patient as the City Code Enforcement addresses some issues in their neighborhood. While there was a pause in Code Enforcement after the hurricanes, there is now a new focus in looking at different ways to make some things happen. If any changes come up before Council for their consideration in regard to how the Ordinance is drafted, he would be happy to meet with each of them to get their input.

Councilman Harden stated that the City will host the Bluesberry Festival on April 11-12, 2025 at Unity Park. Also, on April 5, 2025, he will be participating in Dancing with the Stars Event. He would love to have everyone's support.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the March 6, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:11 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, March 20, 2025.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta