

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 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, and Tim Carroll. Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody was absent and Councilman Nick Harden arrived late at 5:36 p.m. The invocation was given by Councilman Gibbs, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the February 20, 2025 and March 6, 2025 Regular Meetings were approved by unanimous consent (5-0).

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

Mayor Matheson stated that if there was no objection from Council, Agenda Items 3(a) through 3(e) would be considered under a Consent Agenda. There were no objections from Council.

John Burton, Motor Pool Superintendent, stated that all of the items up for bid were approved by Council in the current year Budget and asked Council's consideration in following his recommendation if all of the following bids were accepted at one time: (1) Item 3(a) Consideration of bids for five, one-half ton Crew Cab Trucks for various City Departments (Bid No. 8-25) - the low bid meeting specifications was submitted by Langdale Ford in the amount of \$44,333 for each vehicle for a total of \$221,665, (2) Item 3(b) - Consideration of bids for two, one ton Regular Cab Service Trucks for the Utilities Department (Bid No. 6-25) - the low bid was submitted by Langdale Ford in the amount of \$65,538 for each vehicle for a total \$131,076, (3) Item 3(c) - Consideration of bids for two, one-half ton Regular Cab Trucks for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 7-25) - the low bid meeting specifications was submitted by Phil Brannen Ford in the amount of \$39,505 for each vehicle for a total amount of \$79,010, (4) Item 3(d) Consideration of bids for one, 3/4 ton Regular Cab Truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 5-25) - the low bid meeting specifications was submitted by Phil Brannen Ford in the amount of \$44,464, (5) Item 3(e) Consideration of bids for one, 3/4 ton Crew Cab Truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 4-25) - the low bid meeting specifications was submitted by Phil Brannen Ford in the amount of \$47,975.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to follow the recommendation of the Motor Pool Superintendent and approve the low bids under a Consent Agenda for Agenda Items 3(a) through 3(e). Councilman Howard seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0).

Consideration of a request to approve a new Contract for Public Transit Services for the City of Valdosta.

Larry Ogden, Public Works Director, stated that on March 17, 2021, the Mayor and Council approved a Contract with River North Transit, LLC, a subsidiary of VIA Transportation (New York, NY), to provide transit services for the City of Valdosta. Valdosta on Demand (VOD) was launched on April 27, 2021 with an option to renew the Contract for three additional one-year terms with this one being the last year. The Contract has ended and we are currently operating with a Contract Extension. The last day of the current Contract Extension, which totals eight months, will be March 31, 2025. The reason for the Contract Extension is because the City of Valdosta received a notification from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) on Friday, March 8, 2024, stating that our Request for Qualification (RFQ) is only allowed for Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Services and not for Non-A&E Service Procurements. As a result, it was determined that we had to re-advertise using the Request for Proposal (RFP) competitive bid process for our on-going solicitation for a Third-Party Operator (TPO). The RFP's were distributed by the City of Valdosta's Purchasing Agent and three companies, River North Transit, LLC., HBSS Connect Corp., and RMS, Inc., responded. The responses were reviewed and assigned scores by a Committee consisting of City Manager Richard Hardy, Assistant City Manager Catherine Ammons, Finance Director Chuck Dinkins, Councilman Andy Gibbs, Councilwoman Sandra Tooley, and Public Works Director Larry Ogden. The Committee scored the Proposals which was done in compliance with GDOT recommendations

for the 5307 Funding Grant. Four attributes were scored by the Committee which included the following: (1) High Advantageous, (2) Advantageous, (3) Disadvantageous, and (4) Unacceptable. The scores were submitted to the City of Valdosta Purchasing Agent who then totaled the scores. At the end of the scoring period, River North Transit, LLC ("River North"), a subsidiary of Via Transportation, was scored as the highest. River North Transit, LLC was selected and agreed upon by the Committee to continue to provide transit services for the City of Valdosta. The City was approved for FTA 5307 Grant and congressionally- directed spending to fund the Transit Program for FY25. The City's match is included in the proposed FY25 Budget. Larry Ogden, Public Works Director, recommended that Council approve a new Contract with River North Transit, LLC ("River North"), a wholly owned subsidiary of VIA Transportation, Inc. ("VIA"), for public transit services for the City of Valdosta.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve a new Contract with River North Transit, LLC for Public Transit Services for the City of Valdosta.

## LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to rebuild two, 385 Horsepower FLYGT pumps located at the Gornto Road and Remer Lane Force Main Stations.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that pumps were commissioned in 2016 at the Withlacoochee Water Pollution Control Plant and are responsible for pumping wastewater from Gornto Road (YMCA) and Remer Lane (Remerton) through a six plus mile Force Main to the Withlacoochee Water Pollution Control Plant. Without these pumps, the Withlacoochee Water Pollution Control Plant would not receive any flow causing 70% of the City of Valdosta's wastewater to go into the river. As the pumps get older, the wear items must be replaced, as well as replacing seals and bearings to lower the risk of failure during operation. The two pumps up for rebuild are out of service due to excessive wear and are required to be rebuilt before being put back in service. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the sole source proposal submitted by Xylem Water Solutions in the amount of \$124,192.31 for the rebuild of pumps at the pumps located at the Gornto Road and Remer Lane Force Main Stations.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the sole source proposal submitted by Xylem Water Solutions in the amount of \$124,192.31 to rebuild two, 385 Horsepower FLYGT pumps located at the Gornto Road and Remer Lane Force Main Stations.

Consideration of a request to approve payment for the emergency sewer system repairs to the Sugar Creek Basin.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that on January 6, 2025, City Staff discovered that the Sugar Creek 30" gravity trunk line had deteriorated and failed which caused the sewer to run over into the Sugar Creek Basin. RPI Underground's services were solicited to establish and maintain an emergency bypass to isolate the damaged portion of the City's gravity sewer system. The scope of work completed by RPI Underground for the invoiced work period is as follows: (1) Plug existing gravity sewer main, (2) Provide, install, and maintain emergency bypass, (3) Provide, install, and maintain  $\pm$  2400 feet of 12" force main, and (4) Pump rental, pipe rental, and maintenance from 01-07-25 to 02-07-25. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve payment to RPI Underground in the amount of \$49,410 for the emergency bypass installation and first month rental for the Sugar Creek emergency sewer system repairs.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve payment to RPI Underground in the amount of \$49,410 for the emergency bypass installation and first month rental for the Sugar Creek emergency sewer system repairs.

Consideration of a request to approve payment for emergency repairs for the Sugar Creek Armoring and Gornto/Force Main Stabilization.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that on January 6, 2025, City Staff discovered that during the severe rain event which occurred on November 7, 2024, the stream bank of Sugar Creek had destabilized and eroded. This rapid bank destabilization and erosion exposed the 30" ductile iron Gornto Road Force Main in such a way that put

the City at substantial risk of an environmental disaster. The decision was made by City Staff to reconstitute and armor the bank to protect the Force Main adequately from damage and failure due to impact of weathering. RPI Underground's services were solicited to make the necessary repairs to the City's utility system in conjunction with work performed nearby to this location where the City's 30" gravity sewer trunk line had failed. The scope of work completed by the RPI Underground for the invoiced work period is as follows: (1) Clear/grub existing brush and debris to access the creek bank, (2) Provide and install one, 30" bell restraint to ensure adequate closure of ductile iron Force Main during and following bank reconstitution operations, (3) Provide and install approximately 576 cubic yards of sandy clay fill to reconstitute creek bank, (4) Provide and install  $\pm$  6,510 square feet of Flexamat Armor System, and (5) Provide and install seed and mulch through disturbed areas in order to stabilize the work area. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve payment to RPI Underground in the amount of \$164,900 for emergency repairs to the Sugar Creek Armoring and Gornto/Force Main Stabilization.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve payment to RPI Underground in the amount of \$164,900 for emergency repairs to the Sugar Creek Armoring and Gornto/Force Main Stabilization.

Consideration of a request to abandon a public Utility Easement along the Inner Perimeter Road right-of-way.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City of Valdosta is pursuing the extension of water and sewer service to a northeast area of the City. Design is nearing completion for this Project and the City is working with one of the local land owners and Ace Electric for utility easements needed for this Project. This Agenda Item is to abandon an older utility easement that is not needed. This assists the City in obtaining the utility easement at another location which does support the current Project. The brief history of this location is as follows: (1) The original 20' drainage and utility easement was conveyed and described as part of the subdivision plat for Brayland Development recorded 12/5/1995 in plat book H page 212. (2) The Stalvey's (Ace Electric) bought the property subject to the easement in November of 1997. (3) The easement has never been utilized the City or any other public utility. (4) The Stalvey's have plans to develop the property where the existing easement lays, and the City has plans to construct a lift station and sewer line at another location on adjacent Ace-Stalvey property. (5) Ace-Stalvey has agreed to grant an easement to City in a more suitable location for both parties in exchange for abandonment of the original easement. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the abandonment of the unused existing utility easement on the Stalvey (Ace Electric) property. Councilman Harden left at 6:02 p.m. prior to the vote.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the abandonment of the unused existing utility easement on the Stalvey (Ace Electric) property.

## CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Bobby McKenzie, 5148 Northwind Boulevard, stated that he wanted to talk about SeeClickFix. There is a huge disconnect on the push for the City to encourage citizens to use it and the Department agencies who are in charge of executing those SeeClickFixes when they are reported. He has 21 SeeClickFixes that he did himself on a gas station over a period of four years. Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development/Community Protection Manager, had deliberately closed out several of these with no action taken. He also noted that Angela Bray, Stormwater Manager, has also done something very similar. There is a litter problem and it starts at Fire Station No. 2 on East Park Avenue and it goes down One Mile Branch and along behind the gas station on Vallotton Drive and Lee Street. One of the See ClickFixes of the 21, Angela Bray had commented the following: "The City Marshal and I went on-site and spoke to the property owner. She is aware of the problem and vowed to keep the area and property in better condition. This, of course, is a very high pedestrian area and so daily and hourly clean-ups may be difficult for the owner. A Marshal will keep an eye on the property." This was August 11, 2022. That was several years ago. Nothing happened to the property and nothing was issued on the citation. He has several more instances of the 21 that were reported where nobody went out there and issued a citation. No one followed up and that place is still trashed to this day. In that same area, if you go to the Fire Department that we talked about, Angela Bray has said that there is a City contractor that has paid \$200,000 to clean the canal. She spoke about how they cleaned it up and it took a day and a half to pick up the trash because they typically do not do it. You are paying somebody to pick up trash and they are not doing it. There is a SeeClickFix from Richard Carlton where

they kicked it back and forth from Angela Bray to Anetra Riley to Sharah Denton and it is still sitting open from July 7, 2023. Carlton Richard reassigned this issue to Angela Bray. If you are encouraging people to use SeeClickFix, you might want to look at the Supervisors in those Departments and ask them to do the job that they get paid to do.

Gracie Bacon, 708 Holly Drive, stated that she has been out of her house for a year and two months due to the storm tearing her house apart. She had to have it redone inside and outside. She has stayed in a motel for over a year. She thought that by the time she got back to Holly Drive things would have changed. The only thing that has changed on Holly Drive is her taxes. That mess on Holly Drive that she has been talking about for 20 years is still there and you have done nothing. Her house has a six foot fence around it. She also has locks and cameras. There is trash and junk in her neighbor's yard and noise goes on all night long. Cars are down there all night long. There is stuff going on and nobody cares. Her neighbor will not call for a pickup because he does not want to pay for it. He has all kinds of trash and furniture piled up. She asked that Council drive down Holly Drive today after the Council Meeting and see what a mess the residential area is. She asked them to do something about it.

### CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that on Saturday, March 22, 2025, there will be a Love Where You Live Road Cleanup. Volunteers will meet at 2145 Bemiss Road to begin the cleanup. The route will cover Bemiss Road to Melrose Drive. Also on Saturday, there will be a Touch a Truck Event from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at SGMC Health. There will be City of Valdosta vehicles from Public Works, the Fire Department, and the Police Department on display. Ending that evening, 2025 Azalea City Civic Club will host the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Pub Crawl in Downtown Valdosta. Proceeds will benefit CASA of Lowndes and Echols Counties.

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Matheson stated that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bluesberry Festival will be held April 11-12, 2025 at Unity Park. It will start at 5:00 p.m. on Friday and 11:00 a.m. on Saturday. We hope to see 30,000 people in our Downtown area.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the March 20, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:13 p.m. to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation. Councilman Harden returned during the Executive Session at 6:21 p.m.

Mayor Matheson reconvened the Regular Session at 6:32 p.m. and stated that no action was taken in Executive Session.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the March 20, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:32 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, April 10, 2025.

---

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

---

Mayor, City of Valdosta