

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 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 arrived late at 5:35 p.m. The invocation was given by Pastor Darren Neal, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the May 8, 2025 and May 22, 2025 Regular Meetings were approved by unanimous consent (7-0).

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2024.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that Davey King, Auditor with Mauldin & Jenkins, will present the Municipal Audit for Fiscal Year 2024.

Davey King, Manager with Mauldin & Jenkins, stated that the purpose of an annual audit is to review the financial statements, footnotes, and supplementary information to ensure compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and to provide an opinion on the financial statements. The audit of the City of Valdosta's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) was conducted by the firm of Mauldin & Jenkins in accordance with governmental auditing standards. They are issuing a clean or unmodified opinion of this year's report. This is the highest level of assurance that they can provide as the external auditor. It is their opinion that the financial statements are fairly stated in all material respects in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The City's General Fund accounts for the majority of the revenues received and funds expended in the operations of the City. This includes general government, public safety, public works, and economic development and assistance. Property taxes represent a key component of revenue. As of June 30, 2024, the City reflected a fund balance of approximately 193 days. This represents a strong fund balance capable of providing the necessary resources until tax collections begin in November/December of the next Fiscal Year. The City's assets recognized a decrease during the year ending June 30, 2024. Assets decreased approximately \$9,044,000 from \$205,260,000 to \$196,216,000. The City's liabilities decreased during the year ending June 30, 2024. Total liabilities decreased from approximately \$57,422,000 to \$50,672,000. The decrease is primarily attributed to the change in the Bonds payable and due to other governments and agencies in the current year. The City's equity position decreased from approximately \$147,838,000 to \$145,544,000. This decrease is reconciled on the City's Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changed in Net Position. It should be noted that a very large portion of the City's net position is capital assets net of related debt. In the end, the statement of net position reflects the fact that the City has invested heavily in itself over the history of the organization. Total operating revenues of the City increased from the prior year from \$34,624,000 to \$43,516,000. Total operating expenses of the City increased 29% from approximately \$28,272,000 to \$36,578,000. The effect of the increased revenues and expenses resulted in a \$586,000 increase in operating income from \$6,352,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 to \$6,938,000 in Fiscal Year 2024. The City reported a net cash provided by operating activities of \$17,020,000. The operating cash flows were used to fund certain significant capital and related financing activities such as the purchase of capital assets of approximately \$5,355,000 and paying the principal on notes and Revenue Bonds of approximately \$6,112,000. The City reflects a decrease in cash and cash equivalents of approximately \$651,000 to a balance of approximately \$5,874,000 at the end of Fiscal Year 2024. Finally, there is certain information that the auditing standard requires that they communicate to the City. There was a clean opinion and no audit findings. There were no difficulties or disagreements in dealing with management. They had no uncorrected mis-statements and they are independent of the City as required by Government Auditing Standards. Mr. King thanked the City of Valdosta Staff for their hard work this year and for the opportunity to be of service to the City of Valdosta.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-10, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A MACHINE AND WELDING SHOP IN A HIGHWAY-COMMERCIAL (C-H) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a machine and welding shop in a Highway-Commercial (C-H) Zoning District as requested by Mills Permanent Metal Decking Company (File No. CU-2025-04). The property is located at 821 and 823 South Lee Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Mills Permanent Metal Decking (PMD) Company is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a reinstated machine and welding shop in a Highway Commercial (C-H) Zoning District. The subject property consists of two small parcels totaling 0.24 acres located at 821 and 823 South Lee Street. This is at the northeast corner of South Lee Street and Youles Street and is directly across the street from Ella's Top Corral Restaurant. The properties contain two existing buildings (4,200-sf total) which formerly housed the "Walker's Welding & Fabrication" business for about 40 years. It became a grandfathered-in non-conforming use in 2006 when this property was annexed into the City as part of the "islands annexation." The business later lost its grandfathering status soon after it closed a few years ago. The property has recently been sold to the applicant who is now wanting to renovate and utilize this property as part of their existing metal fabrication business - thus requiring the CUP approval. The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The applicant's letter of intent describes their business as primarily a heavy construction civil subcontractor which operates in several states. Their proposed use of this property is to use it as a "logistics hub for storing equipment and tools, as well as a facility for maintenance and field support" of their equipment, which will include some degree of welding for repairs, etc. Most of the applicant's operation can be classified as a Permitted Use in C-H Zoning under the heading of a heavy construction Contractors Office. However, it is the non-office portion of the use as a "logistics hub and maintenance facility" that crosses into the light industrial category that requires CUP approval in C-H Zoning. Nonetheless, the subject property has a long history of being "Walkers Welding & Fabrication" which operated without any known complaints, and in many ways, this request is simply to re-establish the previous use of the property. Although this is one of the most intensive forms of commercial use, the property's small size (0.24 acres) greatly limits the overall scope of the operation and any potential impacts that did not occur in the past. Therefore, approval should be granted but in the name of the applicant only. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval with the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility in conjunction with the applicant's heavy construction business. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 27, 2025 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 (8-0 Vote).

Hayley Mills and Chuck Mills, President of Mills Permanent Metal Decking (PMD) Company, spoke in favor of this request.

No one spoke in opposition to this request.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman McIntyre to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a machine and welding shop in a Highway-Commercial (C-H) Zoning District for property located at 821 and 823 South Lee Street as requested by Mills Permanent Metal Decking Company with the following two conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility in conjunction with the applicant's heavy construction business. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date. Councilman Howard seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-10, the complete text which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-11, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A MACHINE AND WELDING SHOP IN A HIGHWAY-COMMERCIAL (C-H) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a machine and welding shop in a

Highway-Commercial (C-H) Zoning District as requested by Walter Fletcher (File No. CU-2025-05). The property is located at 1313 South Troup Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 27, 2025 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Walter Fletcher is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a reinstated machine and welding shop in a Highway-Commercial (C-H) Zoning District. The subject property consists of 1.45 acres located at 1313 South Troup Street, which is along the east side of the road immediately north of the intersection with South Patterson Street. The property contains an existing small two-story office building in the front with an attached 8,400-squad feet warehouse building behind. This building housed a previous machine and welding shop business for several decades. It became a grandfathered-in non-conforming use in 2006 when this property was annexed into the City as part of the "islands annexation." The business later lost its grandfathering status soon after it closed a few years ago. The property was recently sold to the applicant, who is a descendant (grandson) of the business founder, and is now wanting to resurrect the old family business. The applicant has already begun an extensive cleanup and renovation of the site but is not proposing any major changes to the site at this time. The property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The applicant's letter of intent describes this original business history, as well as the currently proposed scope of operations. The property has a long history of being a machine and welding shop for many years without any known complaints, and this request is simply to re-establish the previous use of the property. The surrounding land use pattern is dominated by fairly intensive commercial uses. There is also a very large (grandfathered) junkyard on the property immediately to the north. The applicant's proposed use will simply maintain the status quo of the subject property, which is considered perfectly acceptable for the foreseeable future. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommended approval with the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 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 (8-0 Vote).

Walter Fletcher and Reese Fletcher spoke in favor of this request.

No one spoke in opposition to this request.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman McIntyre to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a machine and welding shop in a Highway-Commercial (C-H) Zoning District for property located at 1313 South Troup Street as requested by Walter Fletcher with the following two conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility in conjunction with the applicant's heavy construction business. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire one year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date. Councilman Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2025-11, the complete text which will be found in Ordinance Book XV.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the Knights Mill Lift Station Repair and Upgrade Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the extreme storm event of November of 2024 caused damage to the Knights Mill Lift Station. In addition, ongoing residential development in the northeastern area of the City requires increased sewer collection capacity. This Project repairs and upgrades the existing Knights Mill Sewage Lift Station to address both of these issues. Construction plans were completed, and the Construction Project was sent out for bids. The work for this Project consists of the demolition and reconstruction of an existing sewage Lift Station, installation of +/- 230 linear feet of new gravity sanitary sewer, reconnections to 4" inch sanitary sewer force main with the associated water main fittings and appurtenances, and other related grading, demolition, repair and patching, grading, and grassing. All of the related work invitation for bids were posted on the City's website and on the Georgia Procurement website in accordance with State law and City policies. Four firms attended the pre-bid meeting on May 6, 2025. Two bids were received and opened at 10:00 a.m. on May 22, 2025. The low bid

was considered both responsive and responsible and was submitted by RPI Underground in the amount of \$947,908.00. By adding a 20% contingency (\$189,581.60) for unknown field conditions, the total Project cost is \$1,137,489.60. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by RPI Underground in the amount of \$947,908.00 plus a 20% contingency in the amount of \$189,581.60 for a total Project cost in the amount of \$1,137,489.60.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve the low bid was submitted by RPI Underground in the amount of \$947,908.00 plus a 20% contingency in the amount of \$189,581.60 for unknown field conditions for a total Project cost of \$1,137,489.60 for the Knights Mill Lift Station Repair and Upgrade Project. Councilman Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

Consideration of a request to approve an adjustment to the Contract Item Agreement for the utility relocation cost for the Jerry Jones Drive and Eager Road Widening Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that on December 9, 2021, the City Council approved an Agreement (Resolution No. 2021-25) to pay the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for City utility relocations associated with the Jerry Jones Drive and Eager Road Widening Project (P.I. No. 0014134). During that Council Meeting, former Utilities Director David Frost stated that this item would be brought back to Council if the amount for relocation costs increased above \$3,076,727.11. The GDOT Project was bid and awarded in late 2024. The final utility relocation cost is \$4,270,098.13, representing an increase of \$1,193,362.02 over the amount approved in December, 2021. It is important to note that Engineering Staff petitioned GDOT to reconsider the 2024 bid amount of utility relocation costs of \$5,892,545.92. That effort resulted in a cost reduction of \$1,622,447.79. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the adjustment to the Project Cost for utilities relocation in the amount of \$4,270,098.13 for the Jerry Jones Drive and Eager Road Widening Project.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve an adjustment to the Georgia Department of Transportation Contract Item Agreement for the utility relocation cost for the Jerry Jones Drive and Eager Road Widening Project.

Consideration of a request to approve a License Agreement with Georgia Southern and Florida Railway Company (Norfolk Southern) for Sugar Creek emergency sewer repairs.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that during inspections of the City's utility infrastructure following the 2024 storm events, City Staff discovered sections of compromised sewer mains along Sugar Creek. This area requires prompt repair. With the City Council approval, this repair work has been designed, and the construction has been bid and awarded. Additional permits are required to accomplish this work on Norfolk Southern right-of-way. The City of Valdosta has a 36" inch gravity sewer line that was constructed in 1976 within the railroad right-of-way. The adjacent stream bank has eroded over time, and a recent flood event exposed the sewer pipe and caused the pipe to fail. This Project will relocate the compromised section of the sewer trunk line to the other side of the railroad and just outside of the railroad right-of-way with a single crossing to tie back into the existing trunk line. LEA, in accordance with their Proposal of Services, submitted the appropriate application information and paid \$11,500 for expedited permit review fees. The City has provided insurance certification. The City Manager will complete the application process through Norfolk Southern's online submission portal upon Council's approval and the final outstanding occupancy fees in the amount of \$33,865.00 will be paid at the time of final submittal. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the License Agreement with Georgia Southern and Florida Railway Company (Norfolk Southern) and the payment of the associated occupancy fees in the amount of \$33,865.00 for emergency sewer repairs at Sugar Creek.

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the License Agreement with Georgia Southern and Florida Railway Company (Norfolk Southern) and the payment of the associated occupancy fees in the amount of \$33,865.00 for emergency sewer repairs at Sugar Creek.

Consideration of a request to approve a Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant Agreement for Emergency Watershed Protection Funding for damages from Hurricane Helene.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City has submitted a request for an Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Federal Assistance Grant for Hurricane Helene damages. FEMA Staff have visited Valdosta to review site conditions and have provided guidance on what plans and documents are required and on what is involved in the application process. In summary, Federal Grant Funding is available to clean and clear obstructions caused by Hurricane Helene from streams and drainage features with the City. The total Grant is in the amount of \$1,128,750. Of that amount, \$1,050,000 is for construction activities and \$78,750 is for Technical Assistance. There is a "sister" Agenda Item for Design Services to accomplish the Technical Assistance portion of the Grant. A Budget document was provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). With Council approval, additional documents will be received and executed in accordance with the Grant requirements. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the FEMA Grant Agreement in the amount of \$1,128,750 for the Emergency Watershed Protection Grant.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant Agreement in the amount of \$1,128,750 for Emergency Watershed Protection Funding for damages from Hurricane Helene.

Consideration of a request to approve a Proposal with Innovate Engineering for Professional Design Services in support of an Emergency Watershed Protection Federal Assistance Grant Application.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City has submitted a request for an Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Federal Assistance Grant for Hurricane Helene damages. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff have visited Valdosta to review site conditions and have provided guidance on what plans and documents are required and what is involved in the overall application process. In support of our Grant Application, Construction Plans are required which describe the work to clear and clean the streams. NRCS Staff has provided a sample design for the construction plans needed. A Project location layout has been completed by the City Engineering Staff for critical stream debris clearing. The next step is design, 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 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 Professional Service Firms in the library can provide Professional Services to the City when a need arises and the Professional Services Firm is available and qualified. Innovate Engineering & Surveying is in our 2023/2024 library and is qualified to perform this scope of Design Services. The Innovate Design Services Proposal is attached, and the total amount is \$11,500. The work includes Surveying and Engineering Design as needed to prepare plans and documents that meet NRCS's requirements for EWP Construction Plans. Staff is recommending approval of the full Technical Assistance Grant approval in the amount of \$78,750.00 as a "not to exceed" amount in the event additional survey data and design detail are required to accomplish the Project. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Proposal with Innovate Engineering & Surveying for Professional Design Services related to EWP Construction Plans in the amount of \$78,750.00 (not to exceed),

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a Proposal in the amount of \$78,750.00 (not to exceed) from Innovate Engineering & Surveying for Professional Design Services in support of an Emergency Watershed Protection Federal Assistance Grant Application.

Consideration of a request to approve an Encroachment Agreement with Georgia Power for sewer main repairs at Sugar Creek.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that during inspections of City's utility infrastructure following the 2024 storm events, City Staff discovered sections of compromised sewer mains along Sugar Creek. This area requires prompt repair. With the City Council's approval, this repair work has been designed, and the construction has been bid and awarded. Additional permitting is required to accomplish this work within Georgia Power Company (GPC) easements. The City of Valdosta has a 36" inch gravity sewer line that was constructed in 1976 within the GPC transmission lines' easements. The adjacent stream bank has eroded over time and a recent flood event exposed the sewer pipe and caused it to fail. This Project will relocate and rebuild the compromised sections of the sewer trunk line, and this construction within GPC easements require an Encroachment Agreement. The City

has submitted appropriate application information and there is no cost associated with this Encroachment Agreement. The City Manager will execute the Encroachment Agreement and process upon Council approval. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Georgia Power Encroachment Agreement for the sewer main repairs at Sugar Creek.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Georgia Power Encroachment Agreement for the sewer main repairs at Sugar Creek.

Consideration of a request to approve a Proposal for a comprehensive evaluation of the City of Valdosta's Industrial Pretreatment Program and Sewer Use Ordinance.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that as part of an on-going effort to ensure compliance with Federal and State regulations, the Environmental Services Division initiated a review of the City's Sewer Use Ordinance. During this review, it was discovered that the supporting programs had not been evaluated or updated since 1996. This lack of updates diminished the effectiveness of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP) and its ability to protect the Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) from harmful discharges and potential regulatory violations. To address this issue, a decision was made to engage a qualified third-party Contractor to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the existing system. The goal was to bring all applicable standards and procedures up-to-date with current Federal and State requirements, helping to prevent pass-through events, ensure on-going regulatory compliance, and protect the integrity of the POTW. The City's Sewer Use Ordinance and pollutant discharge limits were outdated, negatively impacting the effectiveness of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP) and its ability to regulate industrial discharges and safeguard the POTW. Updated regulatory limits and Ordinance revisions will also enable the City to better assess and apply surcharges, allowing for more appropriate revenue recovery from industries with non-compliant discharges. Review of limits is required every five years under Federal Code. A Proposal in the amount of \$50,000 was submitted by Turnipseed Engineers. The Scope of Work includes the following: (1) Comprehensive review of the current Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP), including the evaluation of potential impacts from current and proposed industrial users. (2) Calculation of headworks loading for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). (3) Development of new local discharge limits based on updated regulatory requirements and existing industrial user discharges. (4) Full update of the Sewer Use Ordinance to reflect the revised local limits. (Updated Enforcement Response Plan, Enhancements to all other relevant aspects of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP). (5) Compilation of all findings and delivery of training for Utilities and IPP Staff to ensure successful implementation and compliance. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the Proposal submitted by Turnipseed Engineering in the amount of \$50,000.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Proposal submitted by Turnipseed Engineering in the amount of \$50,000 for a comprehensive evaluation of the City of Valdosta's Industrial Pretreatment Program and Sewer Use Ordinance.

Consideration of a request to approve an increase to the Construction Contract with Southland Contractors, Inc. for stormwater drainage improvements at Oakdale Drive and Sherwood Drive.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City performs annual maintenance on our stormwater drainage system through contracting of pipe, culvert, and structure replacement and repair work. Funding for this work is from both the City's Stormwater Utility User Fees as well as Budgeted Funds from SPLOST VIII. Council awarded the Project in March, 2024 to Southland Contractors. The +/-50-year-old deteriorated corrugated metal pipe system for the street drainage system at Oakdale Drive and Sherwood Drive has been replaced and construction work is completed. The original Project Budget approved by Council in March, 2024 was in the amount of \$354,292.13. Due to field conditions and unmarked utilities, revisions to the scope were necessary bringing the Project total cost to \$370,284.05. This Project is being accomplished with SPLOST VIII Funding, and the Project was performed in support of our Stormwater Division. The Stormwater Division has adequate Funds to cover the \$15,991.92 overrun within the Stormwater Division Budget. Although approval of this amount is within the Purchasing Policy threshold for a Department Head, Finance asked that this be presented to Council for approval. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve an increase to the Construction Contract with Southland Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$15,991.92, resulting in a revised total Project Budget amount of \$370,292.13.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve an increase to the Construction Contract with Southland Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$15,991.92, resulting in a revised total Project Budget amount of \$370,292.13 for stormwater drainage improvements at Oakdale Drive and Sherwood Drive.

Consideration of a request to approve a Contract Proposal (Amendment No. 1) for additional Design Services for the new Water Treatment Plant Project.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that the Consultant, CDM Smith assisted the City in 2021 to apply and receive Georgia APRA Funding for a new Water Treatment Plant (WTP). In early 2023, Phase 1 (Test Well) was currently completed. Currently, in Phase 2, a well-driller was selected and awarded in April, 2024 for the two new water supply wells to drill, test, and commission the new water supply wells in accordance to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) requirements. The wells were completed in April, 2025, producing the desired water quality for the selected process. The Consultant has restarted the Design phase in order to advance it to the final Design and permitting phases. The Project is now in the final stages of Design, regulatory review, and approval before moving forward into bidding the Project (anticipated in July, 2025). Throughout the last 12 months, the Design was paused while well drilling commenced to completion to verify Design parameters and water quality prior to finishing Design. Staff requested a Proposal from the Engineer of Record, CDM Smith, for additional Design services following the restart of the Design Project in March, 2025. Additional Design elements were needed based on added hydrogeological oversight on completion of the new source wells, the City's operational and Design preferences for the new WTP, and additional Design features needed to complete the Project to meet regulatory requirements. Additionally, the City will need to complete a Corrosion Study required by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) on the new source water and how it impacts the new WTP planned operation and blending of water qualities within the City's distribution system with the current WTP No. 1. CDM Smith submitted a Proposal (Amendment No. 1 to their original Contract) in the amount of \$298,660 for additional services the City needs. Because CDM Smith has been engaged as our primary Consultant for WTP No. 2 Design and the hydrogeology of the new source wells throughout all phases, Staff determined CDM Smith is the most logical and best option to provide these additional services. This Project is the overall alternative water supply program under the secured State Fiscal Recovery Funds and Bond 1 for Phase 2 and has been on-going since August, 2023. The need for completing these additional services is critical for having the Project ready for bidding in the new Fiscal Year and to be shovel ready for construction by Fall of 2025. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the Proposal submitted by CDM Smith, Inc. in the amount of \$298,660 for additional services.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Proposal submitted by CDM Smith, Inc. in the amount of \$298,660 for additional services for additional Design Services for the new Water Treatment Plant Project.

Consideration of a request to approve a Local Government Memorandum of Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for safety improvements at the Hightower Street railroad crossing.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) Railroad Safety Program has proposed to install safety improvements at the Hightower Street railroad crossing. This will be a GDOT Funded Project and will be completed through a Force Account Agreement with Norfolk Southern Railroad. The scope of the Project is to add 60 feet of centerline curb with delineators on both approaches to deter motorists from driving around the gates. Attached is an undated Local Government Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Valdosta and GDOT supported by the accepted plans and estimate for the roadway improvements at this location. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Local Government Memorandum of Agreement for safety improvements at the Hightower Street railroad crossing.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Local Government Memorandum of Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation for safety improvements at the Hightower Street railroad crossing.

Consideration of a request to approve a Proposal for cost-sharing for the water main relocation associated with the new Grand Oak Villas Development.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that in accordance with the City of Valdosta Ordinance, Developers may request that the City participate in the cost of utility extensions generally when those extensions are required to be more substantial than the minimum requirement to serve their development when required by the City's water and sewer planning objectives. Grand Oak Villas is a new proposed residential development located just northwest of the Cherry Creek Road and North Oak Street intersection. The Developer for this neighborhood has received all necessary permits and approvals for construction, and the City has requested a public/private participation in the cost to relocate the water main which will run along the frontage of their development. As part of the development review process, the City identified the need for this water main relocation in preparation for future intersection improvements. Accomplishing this relocation now will save construction costs associated with re-work of other infrastructure in the future. A cost Proposal from the Developer's licensed underground utility Contractor was submitted in the amount of \$107,500.00 for construction of this utility infrastructure. If approved by Council, the City would pay the Developer or the Developer's Contractor the amount of \$107,500.00. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Proposal in the amount of \$107,500.00 for cost-sharing for the water main relocation associated with the new Grand Oak Villas Development.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Proposal in the amount of \$107,500.00 for cost-sharing for the water main relocation associated with the new Grand Oak Villas Development.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Bobbie McKenzie, 5148 Northwind Boulevard, stated that grass and garbage extending the width of the channel is 20-30 feet long is trapped in numerous areas in Sugar Creek. In 2010, the City paid a company, CDM, to do an assessment of the waterways. Here is the state of that assessment. Trash and sewage sediment compromise the quality of Sugar Creek. In some reaches, it was not possible to do an assessment due to the thickness of the garbage. Streams are natural attractors for children. Pollution in the stream poses a serious risk of disease and injury. Children should be strongly discouraged from playing in the stream until the trash and sewage is eliminated. The garbage should be removed from the creek and an Education and Enforcement Program to prevent further pollution should be implemented. This has been the advice to the City of Valdosta for 15 years. Stormwater has done nothing to remove the trash or to prevent it. The Enforcement Plan has been non-existent. It has been five years since Stormwater has had a Deputy Enforcer to issue citations. Even the water goats that stop it were opposed by Stormwater. It was not even their idea to research it and find those devices. Stormwater Management turned the creek into a floating basement. Citizens have started volunteering to clean up the rivers. Code Enforcement is not picking up the slack. They are not citing property owners for litter. He heard that there was Log Jam Grant that Council approved and he appreciated that.

John Robinson, 3227 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he wanted to commend the City Manager for doing an outstanding job in the City. Council has an obligation to uphold the rights of everyone and just one particular group. They stood up and wanted to file litigation against the City and they had an agreement. The terms were met and they backed down but that does not mean they stop. We want to work together in unity and harmony and if you don't work together how can you see about the people that you are obligated to. The people of Hudson Docket and Ora Lee West don't see it the way you do. They are almost forgotten and left out of the system. People want to do better but they can't because they don't have anything to do better with. When they did their investigation of the City, they found that there are elite groups of businesses that were receiving the majority of the funds. That was too one-sided and we want you guys to work together and do the things that are right for everybody in the City. We are going to stand on our issues and do everything possible to work together. If you have disputes among yourselves, work it out so you can focus on the betterment of the people you serve. We have the bridge issue coming up on the southside and we need money. We need something economically changed. There's a lot of hope here in the City but if you don't do the right thing and you can't work together here you can't get anything done out there.

Gracie Bacon, 708 Holly Drive, stated that she has been up here many times and nothing changes. If you go down Holly Drive right now there is so much junk piled up. She doesn't know why the City will not pick it up or if they have called for a special pickup. It is getting hot and the snakes are coming. She is a citizen and pays taxes though she does not know why. You all are not doing anything. You should work for all the citizens and you are not. This situation has been going on for years. The Valdosta City Council will not address it or do anything.

You will not even come look because then you would have to face. You all like to spend a lot of money and what she is asking for does not cost a lot of money. You all spend thousands of dollars in taxpayers money and you can't do anything for one street in Valdosta. That street is going down. There was a shooting last week with teenagers and someone is going to get hurt. There is prostitution and drugs. They need more than prayers for Holly Drive. You all need to address Holly Drive. There is junk and trash and no individual should make her property value go down. You all will not address it because it is not your neighborhood. When she was out of her home for a year and two months, the City gave her all kinds of tickets and she had to come and explain to the City why her house was messed up. His is messed up every day. She is not doing anything illegal, but can you say the same about him.

Darren Neal stated that he wanted to commend Council for the work that they are doing. There are times when they come here adversarially and then there will be days that they sit on the same side. He wanted to put aside his partisan mindset and political views tonight. We are continuing down the same road and doing the same things but expecting a different outcome. The City of Valdosta is made up of everyone whether they are black, white, green, or yellow. We need a better Valdosta, a total Valdosta and that encompasses all of us. He can go to another side of town and it will look nothing like the other side. He has walked in the neighborhood behind the Fire Station and it will flood. The signs will say City of Valdosta, but the trenches have not been touched and are filled with grass and have not been inspected. How long do we stand by and see the problems in the City and not do anything about it? This is a total Valdosta and you are going to have to listen to each and every group that comes up and work together as a Council and truly look at what the City needs. There are 33 gangs in the City with shootouts every week. We are in the hole hiring Police Officers and something needs to be done.

George Boston Rynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that it bothers him because he has been doing this a long time. He watched Sonny Vickers listen pour out his heart about the problem on Holly Drive. He does not understand why Ms. Bacon feels you are not addressing her situation. He has been addressing many things in the City. He uses his videos as documentaries about Valdosta and south Georgia. He has so much information in his archives and people tell him he needs to do something with it. He is on this third book which will address this city. He does not just talk in the wind. He talks the truth. St. John 8:32 states, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. That's all he ever uses. You can go from Quitman to all around the State of Georgia. You can go to Warrington, Georgia and then to the other side of Homerville and to Madison, Florida. His reputation and the work he has done is well-documented. Valdosta is like a beam, beaming in on Valdosta. A lot of people are looking at Valdosta and some don't like what they see. Some say there are no racial issues here and others say it is the most racist city in the State of Georgia. He has been talking about putting up the Georgia flag for the past 10-15 years. We have one up right here because he fought for it. The City Schools put them up because it was the right thing to do. Valdosta High School and Lowndes County High School don't have one. The City Courthouse, Museum, and VA Clinic do not have one. It is all connected. When you see it on TV, don't say he lied and didn't give you a chance to correct it.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that there were approximately 13 Agenda Items tonight and a presentation and he thanked Staff for putting these together and Council for approving them. On Saturday, June 7, 2025, there will be an Affordable Housing Town Hall in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. There will be a Give Burns the Boot Event which is a State-wide event to send children with burn injuries to a special camp. The Valdosta Fire Dept. will be collecting on Thursday, June 5, 2025 at both Piggly Wiggly stores, Winn Dixie, and the Valdosta Mall Food Court from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and on Saturday, June 7th and June 14th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. There will be a Stand Against Youth Violence (S.A.Y.V.E.) initiative on July 7-11, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room which will focus on bullying, gang awareness, drug education, firearm safety, mentoring, and more. There will be a Makers Market on Saturday, June 14, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse in Downtown Valdosta. The annual Goodwill Tour will take place on June 17, 2025 and youth will visit key City facilities followed by a lunch in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room. There will be no City Council Meeting on July 19, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. due to the Juneteenth Holiday.

Mayor Matheson stated tomorrow is Frist Friday in Downtown Valdosta and Saturday is the Third Annual Gospel Music Festival from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Unity Park.

Councilman Howard stated that this Saturday is the Annual Eastside Committee will be a Vallotton Park.

Councilman Harden stated that there will be a Blood Drive next Wednesday.

ADJOURNMENT

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

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Gibbs to adjourn the June 5, 2025 Regular Meeting at 6:55 p.m. and enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing litigation. Councilwoman Miller-Cody seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6-1) with Councilman Carroll voting in opposition.

Mayor Matheson reconvened the Regular Session at 7:05 p.m. and stated that there was discussion of litigation in the Executive Session and no action was taken.

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the June 5, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 7:05 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, July 10, 2025.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta