

**MINUTES  
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL  
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2025  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Pro Tem Andy Gibbs 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, Nick Harden, and Tim Carroll. Mayor Scott James Matheson and Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody were absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes from the August 7, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting are forthcoming.

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

Consideration of bids for electrical improvements to Wells 1 and 5 at the Guest Road Water Treatment Plant.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that the City of Valdosta implemented a Well Field Evaluation and Rehabilitation Program to improve the reliability and capacity needs of the well fields. The Program elements included the assessment and minor civil and electrical improvements of Wells 1 and 5. The Utilities Department Staff developed the Contract documents, project specifications, and provided general coordination. The work to be performed includes the following: (1) Replacing the existing electrical and control components, (2) Painting, (3) Minor civil improvements, (4) Installing a new generator connection box, and (5) Pole-mounted lighting. On July 8, 2025, the Utilities Department advertised for bids for the Project to upgrade the electrical systems for Wells 1 and 5 and to provide minor civil improvements. A mandatory pre-bid conference was held on July 16, 2025, with two potential bidders attending. Instructions were given to the bidders to submit a Base Bid that included both Wells with SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisitions) System and services included under the General Contractor (GC). One sealed bid was received on July 29, 2025. The Base Bid was submitted by Standard Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$997,006.50. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the Base Bid submitted by Standard Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$997,006.50 which includes a 5% allowance for unforeseen circumstances.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the Base Bid submitted by Standard Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$997,006.50, which includes a 5% allowance for unforeseen circumstances, for electrical improvements to Wells 1 and 5 at the Guest Road Water Treatment Plant.

Consideration of a request to approve a Proposal for Phase 3 of the Flow Monitoring Program Support Project.

Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, stated that in 2020, as part of the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Consent Order, the City of Valdosta was required to perform an assessment of the entire wastewater collection system. The City purchased 15 flow monitors and leased an additional 15 temporary monitors to perform two phases of flow monitoring with Phase 1 being the Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant Basin (2020) and Phase 2 being the Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Basin (2021). The City of Valdosta contracted with Barge later in 2020 to provide Professional Engineering Services in support of complying with the Consent Order requirements. In 2024, the original Meter Contractor (ADS Environmental Services) was contacted to perform field visits on the 15 City-owned meters and replace batteries as needed. This field visit revealed that 13 out of the 15 meters were in disrepair due to corrosion or damage over the last four years and would incur a more significant cost for replacement. These flow meters are the first step in improving our collection system and reducing spills and overflows. This is possible because we can take the data provided by the flow meter and apply it to our lift station flow data in order to be able to zone in on problem areas throughout the City. Using an iPlants and monitoring system, like what is installed by ADS, we will be able to locate failing piping and infrastructure that

## **BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES (CON'T) 08/21/25 CONTINUED**

would potentially take years to find otherwise, reduce flow to the lift stations and subsequently to the Wastewater Treatment Plants, and reduce spills and overflows. The next step for the City is reinstatement of the flow monitoring network (Phase 3). Barge Design Solutions will contract with ADS Environmental Services to perform diagnostics on the existing network and make repairs if needed or replace any meters that are not salvageable. The total cost for another 12 months of flow monitoring will depend on how many of the 15 meters can be repaired and not require replacement with a new meter. A proposal was submitted by Barge in the amount of \$121,750.00 for these services. Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the Proposal submitted by Barge Design Services in the amount of \$121,750 for reinstatement of the flow monitoring network (Phase 3).

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the Proposal submitted by Barge Design Services in the amount of \$121,750 for the Flow Monitoring Program Support Project.

Consideration of a request to approve the proposed SPLOST IX Agreement.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that SPLOST is a voter-approved tax on sales within the County. The proceeds are divided among the County and its subdivisions. SPLOST is limited to five years or six years with tiered Projects or Intergovernmental Agreements. The Referendum providing the tax must specify what Projects the proceeds will fund. The ballot language will generally provide broad categories such as street maintenance. The tax is collected at the point of sale and remitted to the State which distributes the proceeds. The City will account for the tax in a separate fund which will pay for eligible Projects until exhausted. Projects must be capital in nature such as buildings, parks, land improvements, infrastructure, road work, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and debt repayment. Attached is the proposed SPLOST IX Agreement for the City of Valdosta, Lake Park, Hahira, Remerton, Dasher, and Lowndes County. This Agreement must be approved by the Mayor and Council and submitted to Lowndes County prior to August 22, 2025. Richard Hardy, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the proposed SPLOST IX Agreement.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Harden, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the proposed SPLOST IX Agreement.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve a Consultant for a comprehensive Compensation Study for the City of Valdosta (Bid No. 18-25).

Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, stated that a Request for Proposal (RFP) process was conducted to secure a Consultant to perform a comprehensive total compensation study for the City of Valdosta. The selected Consultant will work with City Staff to evaluate pay structures, benefits, and other non-financial rewards, benchmark all City positions against comparable employers, review job descriptions for accuracy and compliance, and provide recommendations to ensure the City remains competitive in attracting and retaining qualified employees. The City received 11 qualified, sealed RFPs. The Proposals were independently reviewed by a Committee which was comprised of the Human Resources Director Jennie Boyer, Finance Director Chuck Dinkins, Assistant City Manager Catherine Ammons, Councilman Tim Carroll, and Councilman Nick Harden. Upon completion of the independent evaluations, the Committee scores were tabulated, and three Consultants were invited for on-site presentations. Upon completion of the on-site presentations, Evergreen Solutions was selected by the Committee as the preferred partner to complete the compensation study. Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, recommended that Council approve the recommendation for Evergreen Solutions as the preferred Consultant to complete the Compensation Study.

Councilwoman Sandra Tooley stated that she had quite a few questions about this and wanted to table it until the next City Council Meeting.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilwoman Tooley to table the request to approve a Consultant for a comprehensive Compensation Study for the City of Valdosta until the September 11, 2025 Regular Council Meeting. Councilman McIntyre seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs inquired about the timeframe if this was tabled. Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, stated that every day that we don't move this forward is a

day that we lose. Moving it to the next Council Meeting would not invalidate their bid. This is simply to pick our partner and not about the specifics of the Study and what they are going to look at. We could answer those questions; however, not knowing what Councilwoman Tooley's questions are and if they are specific to the process, then she would recommend not tabling the request. That is not in her purview but if they are specific questions about the vendor then that is up to Council to take up. Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs stated that we have a Special Called Meeting next week and inquired as to whether they could table it to that Meeting. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she might need a couple of days, but that date would be fine with her. Jennie Boyer stated that she and Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, would be out of the office most of that week at Conferences and they would not be available to answer Councilwoman Tooley's questions. The motion failed (2-3) with Councilman Howard, Councilman Harden, and Councilman Carroll voting in opposition.

**A MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to approve the request for Evergreen Solutions to conduct a comprehensive Compensation Study for the City of Valdosta. Councilman Harden seconded the motion. Councilwoman Tooley stated that the last time they had a Committee and inquired if this was one of their action items. Jennie Boyer, Human Resources Director, stated that this was one of the Mayor and Council's action items from the Strategic Initiatives Summit this past spring to undertake an RFP for a Comp Study. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she thought they would put a Committee together and be given a timeframe as to how long it would take to do this. She did not get any information about that. Also, some of the things that you were considering they did not talk about. They did not discuss any of the specifics on this. It could have been a biased situation putting people on the Committee like that because it was not discussed. Jennie Boyer stated that with all due respect, if there was bias, she would like to know what that means. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to who the people were and who selected the people to be on the Committee. Jennie Boyer stated that she and Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, did. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to why they selected the ones that they did. Jennie Boyer stated that they selected Councilman Carroll because he is a senior member to the Council and has been through a Comp Study before. He has history and experience. They selected Councilman Harden because he is the newest member of the Council. He has business experience and has fresh eyes and a fresh perspective. Councilwoman Tooley stated that is what she was looking at. Councilman Carroll has been on there before. She was looking at the situation and the decisions that were made. It looked like it did not go well for the City. Maybe some of the decisions that were made were not the best decisions. Jennie Boyer stated that there were no decisions made other than to embark on a Comprehensive Study, and we received the RFPs for that. We went through a competitive bidding process as we do any RFP. Councilman Harden stated that there were 12 or 13 companies that they actually vetted. They went through each company here thoroughly and then went back again and had a one-on-one, in person, with them. They chose Evergreen and they will come before Council with their recommendations. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether the Committee would decide on certain things such as income. Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that we sent out an RFP for a company to come in and evaluate the City and do a Comprehensive Study. Currently, all we have done is to select a vendor. Once they complete the Comprehensive Study, they will bring it back before Council. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to why the City had to get a Consultant and why could we have our City Staff to do the Comprehensive Study. Jennie Boyer stated that while we are subject matter experts for the City of Valdosta we are not subject matter experts for the wider region where it is comparable cities around the State and the employers we compete with in the region. Also, Compensation Consultants have access to what everyone is doing. We know what we do and what we provide. We provide a very robust benefits package with a pension. We know that our medical and insurance benefits are very generous. We know that our pay is probably not where we would like for it to be. What we do not have the expertise to do is to put the entire package together and say here is the benchmark against all these organizations and cities. We know what we are, but we don't know what everyone else is. This is an outside, independent Consultant making the recommendation. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she has worked with Staff and they have come to Council many times. Staff has gone out and gotten data and put something together and it was Staff who made the decision rather than having someone else consult and say this is what we need. That is why she was questioning why we need to go out and get a Consultant. Why can't we get our Committee to go out there and look at other cities in the surrounding region and find out what the median income is? Our Staff can do that. Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that our Staff does not have the capability to perform that function. Councilwoman Tolley stated that if someone is telling them something then how will they know what is right. She thinks they can do it and they can compare what is going on in other places. They have done it before when we asked them. Our Staff has done this before and they did not ask for a Consultant. They got the information, put it together, and looked at what we have going on with our City and what we needed. Jennie Boyer stated that we have not done that for a Comp Study. That is the standard to have it done outside. Additionally, in total

## **BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES (CON'T) 08/21/25 CONTINUED**

transparency and frankness, she does not want to stand in front of you and say, “City Staff, this is the path that we should move forward” and then have questions on how did you decide, what makes you the expert, and why didn’t we ask someone else. Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to when was the last time we had a Comp Study. Jennie Boyer stated that it was in 2015. Councilman Howard stated that the reason we don’t allow Staff to do it is because is to avoid bias. If you have Staff to pick it out and they say this Department deserves a raise and another Department does not, then they will be asked why they picked that Department. That’s the reason we get someone from outside. Councilman Howard stated that there is a motion on the floor and inquired if they could act on it. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she did have some more questions.

Councilman Howard stated that they only have a certain amount of time, Robert’s Rules of Order. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether that was in the form of a motion to suspend discussion on the floor and go to the vote. If so, he seconded the motion. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she had a question. Councilman Carroll stated that they had a motion and a second. Councilwoman Tooley questioned that and inquired as to why they would not let her ask questions. She is only trying to ask questions that would help the City and the citizens. So, if you make another motion she is going to question every one of them. Councilman Howard stated that the question has been asked and answered. All we are doing is selecting a company to do a Comp Study. The company is going to bring the information back before the Council. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she was not going to agree with it because she thinks it is a bad decision. Councilman Howard stated that her vote would tell them. Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs called for the question. Councilman Carroll stated that there was motion to suspend the discussion that they need to vote on first. The motion was adopted (4-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs stated that they were back to the original motion which was to approve Evergreen Solutions to conduct a comprehensive Compensation Study for the City of Valdosta. The motion was adopted (4-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

## **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

Cecil Hardy, 1006 River Street, stated that he wanted to get some assistance from the City on his street. It is noisy and over-crowded, and he has to listen to the noise from the Construction Company and the train. He has lived in his house since 1969. The Construction Company moved into the neighborhood in 1963, and they have grown over him. The City is trying to improve the streets and everything but doing nothing for the citizens. They came through and made it a super highway with double yellow lines but no one respects the speed limit, and they pass each other. Nobody seems to care and come out and do anything. He has asked the City to move his house back from the street. They have put up with this for 50 years. He would like for the City to reach out and do something. There was a child who was almost killed on that street by a drunk driver. It is terrible over there. Mr. Hardy asked for someone to come out and do something.

## **CITY MANAGER’S REPORT**

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that the Citizens Fire Academy will be held on August 26, 2025 through October 28, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Fire Training Center located at 137 Blanchard Street. There will be a Town Hall Meeting hosted by Councilman Nick Harden to discuss Disaster Preparedness on August 26, 2026 beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room. The Valdosta High School Homecoming Parade will be held on August 29, 2025. Participants will line up at East Brookwood Drive and Drexel Park. Congratulations to the Valdosta Police Department for receiving CALEA Accreditation for the 9<sup>th</sup> straight year.

## **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Harden stated that he wanted to give a shoutout to Police Chief Manahan and all of our Staff. He also wanted to acknowledge Jason Barnes, Utilities Director, for his presentation last week at the Rivers Joint Task Force Meeting. He also wanted to invite everyone to attend the Town Hall Meeting on August 26, 2025 to discuss what our community is doing for storm preparation.

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs thanked Leadership Lowndes for being with us tonight and all the citizens as well.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the August 21, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:04 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, September 11, 2025.

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City Clerk, City of Valdosta

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Mayor, City of Valdosta