

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024
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, Nick Harden, and Vivian Miller-Cody. The invocation was given by Councilman Tim Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Presentation of the Valdosta State University Social Media Awards.

Mayor Matheson stated that the City of Valdosta is delighted to announce the special presentation of the Valdosta State University (VSU) Social Media Awards, recognizing the outstanding achievements of students from the VSU Social Media Class. Under the guidance of Professor Dr. David Nelson, these students have demonstrated exceptional creativity and innovation in their collaboration with the City of Valdosta Public Information Office (PIO). For eight plus years, Dr. Nelson has fostered a fruitful partnership with our PIO, resulting in valuable academic assignments and actionable ideas for our City. These assignments not only serve as educational endeavors for the students, but also provide them with real-life work experience, contributing to their professional growth. During the Fall 2023 semester, VSU Social Media students were paired with the PIO and tasked with generating insightful ideas for engaging citizens via social media, as well as proposing innovative strategies for enhancing our online presence when it came to promoting and educating residents on SPLOST/TSPLOST. Beginning with an immersion into the City's current social media platforms, the students diligently crafted realistic social media plans which formed a significant component of their coursework. Their project this past year was how to engage community members in educating them on SPLOST and TSPLOST through social media channels. Following rigorous evaluation by the PIO, the winning group, which consisted of Tyree McGhee, Neveah Wallace, Teon Stanley, and Genesis Collins, was selected for their outstanding presentation on Social Media Management and Analytics. Their winning proposal showcased effective goal-setting techniques and comprehensive analytics tracking, alongside targeted strategies for engaging younger demographics, particularly college students at VSU. This ongoing partnership with VSU exemplifies the City's dedication to providing practical experiences for our VSU students and engaging them in matters concerning their local government. Mayor Scott James Matheson and the City Council extend their heartfelt congratulations to the winners of the Social Media Project and commend all students for their creative contributions to our community. Mayor Matheson asked everyone to join us in celebrating the success of these talented individuals and their invaluable contributions to the City of Valdosta.

Consideration of the February, 2024 Employee of the Month Award (Dan Robinson and Albert Anderson, Public Works Department).

Larry Ogden, Public Works Director, stated that Dan Robinson was hired in April 2023 as a Heavy Equipment Operator for the Public Works Department. He has consistently demonstrated exceptional dedication and proficiency in his duties as a Heavy Equipment Operator for the City of Valdosta. On the morning of December 5, 2023, Dan's exemplary qualities shone brightly. After arriving at work early, Dan began to prepare for his work-day. While preparing, Dan heard a concerning noise from behind the Public Works main building. Dan went to investigate and discovered that the ice machine was on fire. Without hesitation, he dropped his belongings and promptly informed his Supervisor, Albert Anderson, about the situation. Furthermore, Dan took immediate action by calling 911 and efficiently utilizing fire extinguishers from nearby City vehicles to combat the fire. Dan's quick thinking and courage were pivotal in preventing what could have been severe damage or the complete destruction of the Public Works building. He persevered until the arrival of the Fire Department, successfully extinguishing the fire and saving valuable City property and equipment. Albert Anderson began his journey with the City in the Parks and Recreation Department, demonstrating hard work and dedication in every role he undertook. He transitioned to the Stormwater Division in November of 2014 and later joined the Public Works Department in November of 2021 as a Heavy Equipment Operator. Over time, Albert's exemplary work ethic led to his promotion as the Supervisor over the garbage crew, a position he currently holds. On the morning of December 5, 2023, around 5:30 a.m., Albert was diligently working in his office,

preparing daily work orders and routes for the team. When alerted about a fire in the ice machine by Dan Robinson, Albert demonstrated incredible courage and quick decision-making skills. Despite the potential danger, he promptly used fire extinguishers and even resorted to using a water hose when extinguishers were exhausted. What truly sets Albert apart is his fearless act of using his bare hands to remove the front and side panels of the ice machine, preventing the fire from spreading further. This selfless and courageous move played a crucial role in preventing the potential destruction of the building, as acknowledged by the Valdosta Fire Department personnel who arrived on the scene. The actions of Dan and Albert on this day were above and beyond the expectation. They are not, however, surprising, as these two gentlemen go above and beyond every day. They are a true asset to the City of Valdosta, and we are honored to recognize them as the February Employees of the Month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 11, 2024 were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-1, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN A RESIDENTIAL-PROFESSIONAL (R-P) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Financial Institution in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District as requested by Fairway Independent Mortgage (File No. CU-2024-01). The property is located at 201 Woodrow Wilson Drive. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a proposed Financial Institution in the form of a mortgage-origination services office in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District. The property consists of 0.41 acres located at 201 Woodrow Wilson Drive, which is at the southeast corner of Woodrow Wilson Drive and Slater Street. The property contains an existing professional office building (2,922-sf) that is already occupied by a financial consulting firm (Legacy Partners). The applicant is proposing to simply co-occupy the building with their own office, with only very minor interior renovations. There are no significant changes proposed for the exterior of the building or the site. The applicant’s business license application is currently pending. The property is located within an Institutional Activity Center (IAC) Character Area which is associated with the South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC) across the street to the north. The existing R-P Zoning is compliant with this Character Area designation. The property is part of the well-established office institutional corridor along Woodrow Wilson Drive that is associated with South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC). All of these properties along the south side of Woodrow Wilson consist of offices, many of them medical-related. Despite all of the properties being zoned R-P, there are virtually no residential uses along this corridor. Based on this land use pattern, this is really more of an O-P type corridor than R-P. If the property was zoned O-P instead, the proposed mortgage services office would be a “permitted use” and no CUP would be required. In this particular case with the property, it was a simple choice of either requesting the CUP or rezoning the property to O-P (slightly higher fees but the same Public Hearing process). Because there is no existing O-P Zoning anywhere else in the area, it was recommended the CUP be requested instead. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval to the City Council subject to the following conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for any form of a financial-related office such as a brokerage or other financial planning/consulting firm where such professional services are rendered. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire two years from the date of approval if no Business License application for this kind of use has been submitted by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same two conditions as recommended by Staff (8-0 Vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Gibbs to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Financial Institution in a Residential-Professional (R-P) Zoning District for property located at 201 Woodrow Wilson Drive as requested by Fairway Independent Mortgage subject to the following two conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for any form of a financial-related office such as a brokerage or other financial planning/consulting firm where such professional services are rendered. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire two years from the date of approval if no Business License application for this kind of use has been submitted by that date. Councilman Carroll seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-1, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-2, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR AN ANIMAL BOARDING AND DAYCARE FACILITY IN A COMMUNITY-COMMERCIAL (C-C) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an Animal Boarding and Daycare Facility in a Community-Commercial (C-C) Zoning District as requested by Harden Rental Network LLC (File No. CU-2024-02). The property is located at 2607 Bemiss Road. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to two conditions (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Harden Rental Network LLC is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a proposed Animal Boarding & Daycare facility in a C-C Zoning District. The property consists of 5.93 acres located at 2607 Bemiss Road, which is along the east side of the road about 600 feet north of Northside Drive. This is also diagonally across from the intersection of Bemiss Road and Connell Road. This includes the same property which was rezoned from R-P to C-C at the request of the applicant back in November of 2023 (File No. VA-2023-17). The front portion of this property contains an existing single-family residence which is currently vacant. The remainder of the property is currently undeveloped and heavily wooded. The applicant is proposing to redevelop the entire property as a dog kennel/boarding & daycare facility with 30+ dogs. This includes converting the existing residence to a business office, constructing a dog kennel building (10,000-sf) in the rear portion, with animal outdoor play areas in the center. The applicant is also seeking ZBOA Variance approval from the LDR supplemental regulations for Pet Boarding; specifically, the requirement for outdoor animal yards to be at least 200 feet from a property line (File No. APP-2024-05). The property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The existing C-C Zoning is compliant with this Character Area designation. The property is part of a much broader commercial area along the Bemiss Road corridor, which is dominated by various levels of commercial zoning, as well as a mostly commercial land use pattern. Although there is an existing single-family neighborhood to the east, there is no physical connection or access to the neighborhood from the property. The City's general development standards will require substantial buffering between these different zoning areas, and fortunately, there is already dense vegetation throughout this required buffer area. The City's supplemental standards for dog kennels also require greater setbacks from property lines. The minimum required distance between buildings and property lines is 100 feet. The applicant more than meets this requirement by proposing 200 feet from the neighborhood boundary to the east, and 115 feet from the side property lines to the north and south. The minimum required distance for outdoor animal areas is 200 feet from any property line. The applicant is proposing more than 300 feet from the neighborhood boundary to the east, but less than 50 feet from the commercial side property lines, and hence, the Variance request that is currently pending before Zoning Board of Adjustments (ZBOA). It should be noted that this proposed outdoor animal area is not a concentrated animal enclosure, but an open yard which allows the dogs to run freely, and therefore, the impacts of such an area will be much less concentrated. This is the first known facility of this kind (at this scale) in the City and there seems to be little basis for accurate comparison; however, Staff believes the abundant size of this site (nearly six acres) with relatively little development surrounding it, and the adjacent neighborhood being more than 200 feet away from the kennel operation, all together makes this location a very good candidate for this use within a non-rural setting. There should, however, still be some upward limits on its initial allowable size to see if the proposed use indeed establishes a positive track record. If later the applicant wants to expand this facility to accommodate more animals, then that would be a future CUP request than can be more accurately analyzed to determine the level of actual impact. 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 for a household animal boarding and pet daycare facility with no more than 50 animals on site at any one time, and developed in general accordance with the submitted site plan. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire two years from the date of approval if no building permit has been issued for

the new proposed building by that date. The Zoning Board of Appeals added a third condition which is that the wooded area around the proposed building to remain as an undisturbed forest area to augment the buffer. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same two conditions as recommended by Staff (8-0 Vote).

Stacy Denmark, Owner, spoke in favor of the request and stated that she would be glad to answer any questions that Council may have.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an Animal Boarding and Daycare Facility in a Community-Commercial (C-C) Zoning District for property located at 2607 Bemiss Road as requested by Harden Rental Network LLC subject to the following two conditions: (1) Approval shall be granted for a household animal boarding and pet daycare facility with no more than 50 animals on site at any one time, and developed in general accordance with the submitted site plan. (2) Conditional Use approval shall expire two years from the date of approval if no building permit has been issued for the new proposed building by that date. Councilman Gibbs seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-2, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-3, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 1.94 ACRES FROM SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-10) TO COMMUNITY-COMMERCIAL (C-C) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 1.94 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Community-Commercial (C-C) as requested by Richard Hill (File No. VA-2024-1). The properties are located at 308 Nan Street, 310 Nan Street, 1621 River Street, and 1625 River Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (8-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Richard Hill is requesting to rezone a total of 1.94 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Community-Commercial (C-C). The property consists of four existing contiguous parcels located at 308 Nan Street, 310 Nan Street, 1621 River Street and 1625 River Street. These are clustered at the southwest corner of the intersection of River Street and Nan Street, which is located about 650 feet west of North St. Augustine Road. All of the properties are currently owned by the applicant or his family members. Three of the parcels each currently contain a single-family residence. The applicant is proposing to simply market all of these properties for sale as future commercial or office development. The request is speculative and the submitted site sketch is purely conceptual in nature and simply demonstrates a potential magnitude of commercial development. The properties are located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of C-C Zoning. It should be noted that the existing R-10 Zoning on the property is “non-compliant” with the CAC Character Area (not intensive enough). The properties are part of a residential neighborhood that was one of the unincorporated islands that were annexed by the City in 2006. These properties had R-10 Zoning in the County and were given R-10 Zoning in the City upon annexation. This area originally developed decades ago as a low-density semi-rural residential neighborhood before the widening of North St. Augustine Road and the explosive commercial growth that occurred on the vacant lands to the west (Norman Drive and Enterprise Drive area). The southerly portions of this neighborhood still retain its quiet sparsely residential character; however, the northerly portions are dominated by very old but non-conforming RV and mobile home parks, as well as the beginnings of commercial development along River Street. Because this area is completely surrounded by intensive commercial corridors, it was designated as part of the Community Activity Center (CAC) character area with the updated Comprehensive Plan in 2006. As a result, all of the existing R-10 Zoning areas became non-compliant because they were “not intensive enough” for the CAC character area. The overall future land use pattern for the surrounding commercial corridors is abundantly clear, and this includes the River Street corridor to transition to all-commercial since it is currently the only pathway that traverses the area connecting Norman Drive with North St. Augustine Road. However, with the abundance of commercial development around the perimeter, Staff believes the interior side roads such as Nan Street and the residential areas to the south should transition to high-density residential and perhaps some offices located closer to the outer edges. The questions then become “where to draw the line” between the exterior/interior portions, and when should this infill transition of land uses actually occur and

in what manner? Because there has been very little transition or infill development in this area over the past 20+ years, Staff views the R-10 Zoning as an obstacle to this and believes that perhaps a limited rezoning to serve as a small catalyst might be a good idea to get the redevelopment process started. For this neighborhood, it would be good to start this on the northerly edge along River Street and let the transition then work its way southward in logical but controlled manner. There is also the immediate concern that Nan Street is a substandard local street with narrow inverted crown pavement that is not conducive for commercial traffic. Good site planning will help alleviate this, but it should also be weighed as a limiting factor for the short term. The applicant’s rezoning proposal is truly speculative. It has the potential to be a catalyst for the kind of redevelopment/infill that is being sought, but it’s size (proposed depth) also has the potential to allow commercial development that is perhaps too large or intrude too deeply into the existing neighborhood or too prematurely. Staff believes the parcels fronting River Street have the strongest argument in favor of commercial zoning but believes the Nan Street parcels need to be protected at least a little while longer or until there is a non-speculative proposal being put forth. Placing office or multi-family residential zoning on these parcels would greatly enhance their marketability from R-10, but still protect the remaining neighborhood from an over-intrusion. Staff found a combination of C-C and R-P Zoning consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval for the rezoning of the existing parcels fronting River Street (1.18 acres) to C-C, and the parcels solely fronting Nan Street (0.76 acres) to R-P. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their January 29, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval of C-C Zoning (8-0 Vote).

Richard Hill, 2419 South Forty Road, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Hill stated that when he approached the Zoning Administration, they were convinced that they should have a C-H Zoning because the property is surrounded on three sides by C-H. Approximately 80 feet to the north is Highway-Commercial and an automobile shop. There are a number of C-H Zonings to the north. To the west through a wooded lot is C-H and to the east approximately 360 feet is C-H. To the south, there is a vacant lot. The property is surrounded by mobile homes, C-H, or vacant property. This was an island that was annexed into the City. The reason for the annexation was for improvements. They feel like C-C Zoning is an improvement to the property. The design that he did was what he felt as the best use for the property other than a complete condominium project. In the design, they have oriented everything to River Street and turned their back on the vacant lots. The parking is all towards River Street. They were convinced by Staff to ask for C-C Zoning because of the differences between C-C and C-H. Mr. Hill asked for Council’s consideration in approving the request for C-C Zoning on all of the properties. Councilman Carroll stated that it should be noted that Mr. Hill was once a City Council Member and he and Ron Borders were the ones who got him started in public service.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-3, an Ordinance to rezone 1.94 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Community-Commercial (C-C) for properties located at 308 Nan Street, 310 Nan Street, 1621 River Street, and 1625 River Street as requested by Richard Hill, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-4, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ORDINACE FOR THE PROMOTIONAL PROCESS OF THE VALDOSTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend the Ordinance for the Promotional Process of the Valdosta Police Department.

Police Chief Leslie Manahan stated that the Valdosta Police Department (VPD) currently has an internal promotional process that has been successful over the years promoting employees; however, the current promotional process needs to be updated for the overall needs of the Department. The Promotional Ordinance currently used by the Department was presented to Mayor and Council by former Police Chief Frank Simons and was signed by Mayor James H. Rainwater on April 24, 1997. Since being signed by Mayor Rainwater, the Police Department has added new specialized positions and Ordinance Number 97-20 is no longer found in the current Ordinance Book. Current practice that was established by Ordinance Number 97-20 allowed for the Chief of Police

to promote by using either a competitive or a non-competitive process. The competitive process was for the ranks of Sergeant and Lieutenant, while the non-competitive was for leadership positions of Bureau Commanders, Captains, members of our Training Unit, and the Crime Scene Unit Supervisor. The non-competitive leadership/supervisory positions in the Training Unit and the Crime Scene Unit are considered to be specialized by nature. The changes being proposed to the competitive process is that the City of Valdosta Human Resource Director shall post the date of the written test at least 60 calendar days prior to the test. The previous time was 30 days, so this amendment allows for more study time for candidates. Another change would be to remove the section stating that a passing score shall be announced prior to the date on which the written test is administered. Unfortunately, we do not use the same testing company so the scores are not set prior to the test being administered. The amendment being proposed to the non-competitive process, are the leadership positions of the Bureau Commanders and Captains, as well as supervisory positions in specialized areas in the Training Unit, Professional Standards Unit, Informational Technology Unit, Crime Scene Unit, and K9 Unit, shall not be subject to the competitive examination and promotion as for Sergeants and Lieutenants. These units are considered to be specialized by nature. Due to specialized training needed for personnel to be a member of these specialized units, not everyone competing in the competitive promotional process would have the experience, knowledge, or training to supervise one of these units. Police Chief Leslie Manahan recommended that Council approve an Amendment to the Ordinance to outline the promotional process for the Valdosta Police Department.

Councilman Carroll stated that everyone on the Council has had ample time to look over this Agenda Item and Councilman McIntyre has provided some comments. Chief Manahan has since responded to those comments. They do not have any issues with a change in the Procedures and Policy of this request; however, as he mentioned on Tuesday regarding it being in Ordinance form, it makes it very cumbersome. He would like to ask that the Ordinance 97-20 be abolished.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to abolish Ordinance 97-20 for the Promotional Process of the Valdosta Police Department and allow the Police Chief and the City Manager to make necessary changes to the Policy and Procedures as outlined. Councilman Gibbs seconded the motion. Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether the changes would come before the Council prior to implementation. Mayor Matheson stated that he did not believe they would come back before the Council. They can be discussed with Council if you reach out to the City Manager. Four Council Members can stop anything they want but he did not think they wanted a thick Manual in every Department. Councilman Carroll stated that Council Members have always been able to call the Chief and ask how they would handle a certain type of situation. Then they would E-mail the Policy and Procedure on that. They have always had the ability to provide input and comments on any Policy and Procedure. Councilman McIntyre stated that he was concerned that they would not have the ability to comment until after something is already implemented. He would like to know about it before it is implemented. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she wanted to know what was wrong with what the Chief asked for. The Chief has asked for one thing and Council is trying to change it to something else. The motion has been changed to something different than what the Chief asked for. What Councilman Carroll is asking for is something different than what the Chief wants. Mayor Matheson stated that the Chief will put exactly what she wants in the Policy. Councilwoman Tooley stated that the Chief is asking to amend the Ordinance. Mayor Matheson stated that they are thinking that a Policy at that level should not come before the Council. Councilman Tooley inquired as to whether an Amendment is different than an Abolishment. Mayor Matheson stated that was correct. The Chief will do exactly as what was just stated in the Policy Manual. By CALEA Certification Standards, the Chief has to have that exact Policy in place. Councilman Gibbs stated that Councilman Carroll is asking to abolish the Ordinance but not the Procedure. They are not changing what the Chief is asking for because she will get what she wants. Councilman Carroll stated that we have less than one percent of Policies and Procedures in the City of Valdosta that are in Ordinance form. It just seems silly to keep this one in Ordinance form. You can look at any Department's Policies and Procedures. It is the idea that this is cumbersome with it being embedded in an Ordinance form. Councilwoman Tooley stated that they should be respectful of what the Chief has asked for rather than change what she wants because she did ask for an Amendment. Councilman Carroll stated that they would be abolishing the Ordinance but not the Procedure and Policy. Councilwoman Tooley stated that it is two different things. To her, this is not what the Chief asked for and it has caused a lot of discussion. They need more time to discuss it rather than do it now. They should be respectful of what the Chief has asked for which was to amend the Ordinance. This could come up again with another Ordinance. The motion failed 2-5 with Councilwoman Tooley, Councilwoman Miller-Cody, Councilman Howard, Councilman McIntyre, and Councilman Harden voting in opposition.

Mayor Matheson entertained another motion from Council.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Howard to amend the Ordinance for the Promotional Process of the Valdosta Police Department. Councilwoman Tooley seconded the motion. The motion was adopted 5-2 with Councilman Carroll and Councilman Gibbs voting in opposition to enact Ordinance No. 2024-4, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-3, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A CONTRACT FROM THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO PROCEED WITH CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER AT THE VALDOSTA REGIONAL AIRPORT.

Consideration of a request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority to approve a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Contract from the Georgia Department of Transportation to proceed with construction of a new Air Traffic Control Tower at the Valdosta Regional Airport.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority desires to proceed with the construction of a new Air Traffic Control Tower at the Valdosta Regional Airport. There are multiple funding sources for the tower including Transportation Investment Act funds, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funds, and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Aviation funds. There will be no City of Valdosta funds required for the project. GDOT is preparing a Contract for limited participation by GDOT Aviation in the Project not to exceed \$500,000. The Contract will be delivered to City Hall. The Contract must be executed in an expeditious manner and returned to GDOT. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing Mayor Scott Matheson to accept the Contract in order to process the document. Richard Hardy, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing Mayor Scott Matheson to accept the Contract in order to process the document.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2024-3, a Resolution authorizing acceptance of a Contract from the Georgia Department of Transportation to proceed with construction of a new Air Traffic Control Tower at the Valdosta Regional Airport, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids to purchase new body armor for the Tactical Operations Unit (TOU) at the Valdosta Police Department.

Police Chief Leslie Manahan stated that the members of the Tactical Operations Unit (TOU) respond to high risk situations such as armed/barricaded subjects, high risk warrant service, active shooter situations, or any other situation that requires specially equipped and highly trained/skilled personnel. Due to the types of situations that members of the TOU are asked to respond for, they require a higher level of protective gear. Their current body armor, which includes level III vests, abdominal armor, and shoulder armor, were purchased in 2018. The armor has a five-year warranty which expired this past year. On October 19, 2023, Mayor and Council approved the Department to move forward with a purchase from Verco Materials, LLC. When the company came to the Police Department in November, 2023, representatives advised the Department that their gear did not meet the regulations set by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) which govern the safety equipment for law enforcement. Due to not meeting these regulations, we could not purchase the approved body armor. The Department received three more quotes, which outfit 15 team members: (1) TYR Tactical in the amount of \$67,615.50, (2) Verco Materials in the amount of \$51,181.50 (which are not NIJ compliant, and (3) Smyrna Police Distributors in the amount of \$50,790. Mayor and Council approved \$62,000 in the FY24 Budget to replace the TOU gear. We are requesting to move forward with the purchase from Smyrna Police Distributors in the amount of \$50,790.00 which comes in under Budget. Our Staff has met with Smyrna Police Distributors in person and have confirmed that the body armor is NIJ compliant. Police Chief Manahan recommended that Council approve the purchase of new body armor for the Tactical Operations Unit (TOU) at the Valdosta Police Department from Smyrna Police Distributors in the amount of \$50,790.00.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilwoman Tooley, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by Smyrna Police Distributors in the amount of \$50,790 for the purchase of new body armor for the Tactical Operations Unit (TOU) at the Valdosta Police Department.

Consideration of a request to approve the Professional Design Services Agreement for a Utility Extension Project in northeast Valdosta.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that with the private development occurring in northeast Valdosta in the areas of Park Avenue and Inner Perimeter Road, there is a need for the City to extend water and sewer mains to serve this area. These extensions have been included in the City's long range Utility planning with timing dependent upon customer/development needs and City funding. A conceptual layout has been completed by the City Engineering Staff for the water mains and sewer mains to serve this area of the City around the intersection of Park Avenue and Inner Perimeter Road. 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 firms in the library can provide professional services to the City when need arises and the firm is available and qualified. Innovate Engineering & Surveying is in our 2023/2024 library and is qualified to perform this scope of design services. The Innovate Design Services Proposal is attached and totals \$97,574. The work includes surveying and preparation of easement plats for land acquisition (easements), Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) permitting, and design as needed to prepare construction plans and documents for the construction of the water and sewer extensions. Upon Council approval, the Design Consultant will be engaged and upon completion of their work, the Construction Project will be advertised for competitive bidding. Those bids will be presented to Council for consideration to complete this Water and Sewer Utility Extension Project. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve Design Services Contract Agreement from Innovate Engineering in the amount of \$97,574 for a Utility Extension Project in northeast Valdosta.

A **MOTION** by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Professional Design Services Agreement submitted by Innovate Engineering in the amount of \$97,574 for a Utility Extension Project in northeast Valdosta.

Consideration of a request to award a new Banking Contract for the City of Valdosta.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the recommended practice is that a local government or agency disseminates a Request for Proposal (RFP) for banking and treasury services every four to nine years. The City last went through this process in 2013 and in an effort to stay within the guidelines, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was distributed to banking institutions for these services. RFP's were distributed to banking institutions in Valdosta and four responded. They were Ameris Bank, Bank of America, Colony Bank, and Synovus. The responses were reviewed and assigned scores by Councilman Tim Carroll, Accounting Manager Crystal McGhin, Finance Director Chuck Dinkins, Deputy City Manager Catherine Ammons, and City Manager Richard Hardy. Seven attributes were scored by the panel which included the following: (1) earnings/cost, (2) ability to meet service requirements, (3) daylight overdrafts, (4) availability schedule, (5) electronic banking services, (6) e-commerce, and (7) references. At the end of the scoring and review period, Bank of America was scored as the highest institution and agreed upon by the panel. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the award to Bank of America for a new Banking Contract for the City of Valdosta.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the award of a new Banking Contract for the City of Valdosta to Bank of America.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to approve a cost-sharing with a Developer for a new 12" PVC gravity sewer main.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that in accordance with 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. Park Place is a new proposed residential development located north of the Valdosta High School entrance onto Park Avenue. The Developer for this neighborhood has received all necessary permits and approvals for construction and has requested that the City participate in the cost of the upsized gravity sewer main which will run along the frontage of their development. As part of the development review process, the City made the Developer aware that a new 12" gravity sewer would be required to serve their development in order to achieve appropriate depths for service to their development as well as to accommodate future flows from development to the northeast along Inner Perimeter Road. The existing gravity sewer which would serve the proposed development does not have adequate depth to serve the development by gravity and does not provide sufficient capacity based on the likelihood of increase flows in this area as the Inner Perimeter Road corridor continues to develop. There were two cost proposals submitted for construction of utility infrastructure from the Developer's licensed underground utility contractor. The first proposal, in the amount of \$196,523.81, is the cost for the minimum improvements which would theoretically meet the flow requirements to serve just this development. The second proposal, in the amount of \$220,521.85, is the cost for the improvements which the City requires to accommodate flows from future growth and to provide adequate depth for gravity sewer to serve this residential development. If Council agrees, the City would pay the Developer or the Developer's Contractor the difference in cost in the amount of \$23,998.04. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the proposal for cost-sharing.

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a cost-sharing with a Developer in the amount of \$23,998.04 for a new 12" PVC gravity sewer main.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, & ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of appointments to the Central Valdosta Development Authority.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Central Valdosta Development Authority has two members, Edward J. Cochran and Michael Cooper, whose terms expired on December 31, 2023. Mr. Cochran and Mr. Cooper did not express an interest in being reappointed. Another member, Rhett Holmes, submitted his resignation in November of 2022. The term for that vacant slot will expire on December 31, 2023. Qualifications for these slots are as follows: Slot (1) - The slot vacated by Rhett Holmes must be an owner of an interest of at least a life estate or greater in real estate located in the Central Valdosta area or an officer at the time of appointment of a corporation or other association owning such real estate. Slots (2) and (3) - These two slots must be merchants or professional people operating a business or practicing professions within the Central Valdosta Area. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: Slot (1) - Sarah (Christie) Moore - President & CEO of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, and Slots (2) & (3) - Stacy Denmark - Owner, Merchant Home Medical Services, LLC and Kasandra Hasenauer - Owner, The Southern Cellar. Mayor Matheson stated that only two applicants qualified for Slots (2) and (3) and recommended that Council proceed with those two appointments.

Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether Mayor Matheson would consider moving Stacy Denmark to Slot (1) that was formerly being considered for Christie Moore. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she thought they should go along with the Mayor's recommendation or either table it to get a better understanding of these positions. Councilman Gibbs stated that for Slot (1) the applicant has to be an owner and Slot (2) the applicant would have to be a professional operator/officer. Councilman Carroll was trying to make Slot (3) available to be open for anyone and they would not have to be a property owner. Councilman Carroll stated that was correct. Teresa Bolden, City Clerk, had previously sent an E-mail out to the Council regarding this and gave four options. This was one of the four options for simplicity sake. Councilman Harden asked the Mayor to review the options. Mayor Matheson stated that Option (1) was that Council could proceed with the two appointments (Slots 2 and 3) of Stacy Denmark and Kasandra Hasenauer as Merchants/Property Owners in the Downtown Area. Option (2) was that Council could move Stacy Denmark to Slot 1 (Officer at the time of appointment of a corporation or other association owning such real estate), Slot 2 would be considered vacant, Kasandra Hasenauer would stay in Slot 3, and Council could proceed with those two appointments. Option (3) was that Council could table the request for appointments to the CVDA to a date certain (May 9, 2024 Regular Council Meeting) which would allow the City Clerk Teresa Bolden

to re-advertise for all three slots in March and April with appointments to be made in May. We would retain the current Board Applications for Stacy Denmark, Kasandra Hasenauer, and include the Board Application that was submitted after the deadline by Michael Cooper for Council's consideration along with any others we receive in March and April. Option (4) was that Council could postpone the request for appointments to the CVDA to allow time for more discussion and then bring back before Council at a later date.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Gibbs for Option (1) to fill Slots (2) and (3) and leave Slot (1) open for appointments to the Central Valdosta Development Authority. Councilman Carroll seconded the motion. City Attorney Tim Tanner stated that they have nominated Stacy Denmark and Kasandra Hasenauer for Slots (2) and (3). Councilman Gibbs stated that Slot (1) is open and the applicant will have to be an owner or an officer. They were trying to make it where you did not have to be. The motion was unanimously adopted (7-0) to appoint Stacy Denmark and Kasandra Hasenauer for Slots (2) and (3) to serve a term of two years on the Central Valdosta Development Authority.

Consideration of appointments to the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission has three members, Dr. Charles "Alex" Alvarez, Sandie Burkett, and Celine Gladwin whose terms will expire on February 13, 2024. Dr. Alvarez, Ms. Burkett, and Ms. Gladwin have all expressed an interest in being reappointed. These appointments were advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that were adopted by Mayor and Council. The applicants are as follows: (1) Dr. Charles "Alex" Alvarez - Principal/Education (Valdosta City Schools), (2) Sandie Burkett - Retired Teacher, and (3) Celine Gladwin - Architect (Gladwin Vaughn Architecture). Mayor Matheson stated that there are three slots and three applicants and if there was no objection from Council, they would all be reappointed by acclamation to serve a term of three years on the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission. There was no objection from Council.

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

Mayor Matheson stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority has a member, H. Burke Sherwood, Sr., whose term expired on January 31, 2024. Mr. Sherwood has expressed an interest in being reappointed. This appointment was advertised according to the Boards, Commissions, Authorities, and Advisory Committees Policy that was adopted by Mayor and Council. The only applicant to apply was Mr. Sherwood. The Mayor will make this appointment. Mayor Matheson stated that he would like to reappoint H. Burke Sherwood, Sr. to serve a term of four years on the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Phyllis Jackson, 703 East Cumming Street, stated that she wanted to address the issue again about speeding on Fry Street coming off of Lake Park Road and Statenville Road. She brought this up before because the students who attend Pinevale Elementary School have to jump up on the curb from the road. People still speed up and down Fry Street.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that there will be a Valentine's Day luncheon hosted by a local organization for all City of Valdosta employees on February 14, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. at the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority Office located at 1901 Barack Obama Boulevard. Also, there will be a Growing Citrus Tree Workshop at 10:00 a.m. at Valdosta State University, University Center, Cypress Room, that is hosted by the Engineering Department's Stormwater Division. On February 15, 2024, the Annual Arbor Day Ceremony and Proclamation will be held at 10:00 a.m. at Sunset Hill Cemetery. On February 19, 2024, National Engineering Week will host a Proclamation Ceremony at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall on the front steps.

Councilwoman Sandra Tooley stated that February is considered Black History Month and the City of Valdosta changed its government structure from Wards to Districts back in the early 1980's (1984). At that time, an At Large District was formed. This is significant history behind that and after 40 years of existence, the City of Valdosta has its first black At Large Councilman in 2024. Everyone here tonight is part of history being made in Valdosta because we have our first black At Large City Councilman, Nick Harden.

Councilman Harden thank Councilwoman Tooley for that acknowledgement and stated that it is amazing and a blessing. Valdosta is definitely growing and he loves to see the change. He also wanted to thank the City Engineer Ben O'Dowd for working with him on lighting issues in the City. They received an update and Georgia Power is working on some of that. He would also be remiss if he did not mention some of the crime and things going on in the City. He does not see a lot of people in the audience today but he urges some of our community leaders to get out and get involved. They need to work together because there are a lot of young people under the age of 18 committing crimes and it is disturbing. It will take all of us to help and he will always speak on that.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody thanked the Mayor and Council, the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, the Community Relations/Marketing Manager Sarah Denton, and others who helped put the signs out front to honor the fallen soldiers. She would also like to see more flags out there to make it more noticeable to those people traveling through town. She also thanked Governor Brian Kemp for asking that flags be lowered to half-staff in honor and remembrance of the fallen soldiers.

ADJOURNMENT

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 February 8, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:29 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, February 22, 2024.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta