

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024
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, Tim Carroll, Nick Harden, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Mayor Scott James Matheson and City Manager Richard Hardy were absent. The invocation was given by Pastor James White, Saving Grace Ministries, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 9, 2024 Regular Meeting and the May 15, 2024 Special Called Meeting are forthcoming.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-12, AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET (SECOND HEARING)

Public Hearing for the Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. (Second Hearing)

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that in accordance with Georgia Code 36-81-3, each local government shall adopt and operate under an annual balanced budget for the General Fund, each Special Revenue Fund, and each Debt Service Fund in use by the local government. The annual balanced Budget shall be adopted by Ordinance or Resolution. A Budget Ordinance is balanced when the sum of estimated revenues and appropriated fund balances is equal to appropriations. Nothing contained in the above-mentioned Code precludes a local government from adopting a Budget for any funds used by the local government other than those specified in paragraph one. These funds include Enterprise Funds, Internal Service Funds, and Permanent funds. The Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed City of Valdosta Budget has been reviewed and discussed at previous meetings, and a Public Hearing has been conducted to afford citizens the opportunity to make comments on funding levels. The proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget does include a 5% utility rate increase based upon the water rate analysis and sufficiency study adopted by Mayor and Council as well as a 3.5% additional increase to fund anticipated debt service. This increase is also anticipated across the City's other two utility services. The General Fund Budget presented is balanced with a projected millage rate equal to the FY 23 rate. The proposed Budget also includes a 4% cost of living adjustment for career employees effective July 1, 2024. The City's medical clinic continues to be funded in this proposed Budget, with no increase in employee contributions for any City benefit offered. The consolidated proposed Budget (uses) increased \$0.77 million (or 0.58%) when compared to Fiscal Year 2024. There are increases in personnel due to new positions and the 4% COLA that are partially offset by smaller cuts across the City.

No one spoke in favor of the request

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. Councilman Carroll seconded the motion. The motion was adopted 4-2 to enact Ordinance No. 2024-12 with Councilwoman Tooley and Councilwoman Miller-Cody voting in opposition, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-13, AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) FOR A PERSONAL CARE HOME IN A SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-6) ZONING DISTRICT

Consideration of an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Family Personal Care Home in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning District as requested by Roche Kempson (File No. CU-2024-04). The

property is located at 1206 West Magnolia Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 20, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval subject to four conditions (5-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Ms. Roche Kempson is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for an expanded Family Size Personal Care Home with five residents in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning District. The subject property is located at 1206 West Magnolia Street, which is along the north side of the street halfway between Scott Drive and Hightower Street. The property contains an existing single-family residence (3 BR, 2 bath) (1,510 sf) which currently houses a three-person Personal Care Home for disabled adults that has been operated by the applicant since June, 2023. The applicant is now proposing to increase the occupancy of the facility to five residents which triggers the need for CUP approval. The applicant has no plans to increase the physical size of the facility nor make any physical changes to the site or the building interior. The property is located within an **Established Residential (ER)** Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Family Sized Personal Care Homes are licensed by the State and they are defined locally as having six or fewer residents in a single-family home setting. The smaller sized facilities with up to three residents are a Permitted Use (or a use by right) in all of the City’s Single-Family Residential Zoning Districts, while those with four to six residents require CUP approval. The allowable maximum occupancy of a PCH is generally and initially determined by physical size (floor area) of the overall facility, its number and sizes of bedrooms and floor plan design as dictated by State licensing requirements as well as the International Fire Code and Life Safety Codes, etc. However, it is also possible for the City Council to set a more restrictive size limitation based other considerations such as site conditions, overcrowding, or over-institutionalizing a given facility or surrounding neighborhood. The whole intent of a “Family” Size Personal Care Home, at both the State and local level, is for the facility to generally blend in and operate in the same manner as a regular household unit within the surrounding neighborhood. In this case, the applicant has already been operating a three-person Personal Care Home on the property for the past 12 months, and Staff is not aware of any complaints or concerns being raised regarding the facility thus far. The subject property is part of a well-established single-family neighborhood, with many of the immediately adjacent houses being owned and managed as rental units by the Valdosta Housing Authority. Therefore, continued operation of the facility while blending-in as a regular household within the neighborhood should be deemed fully acceptable. However, in this case there have been some concerns raised about the facility itself not being able to safely accommodate more than four residents, or perhaps seem over-crowded with its limited floor area (1,510-sf) and limited parking in the driveway (two cars maximum), or otherwise give an impression of it being more “institutional” rather than “residential” in character. However, given its positive track record so far, and with proper conditions of approval and the installation of a fire sprinkler system etc., Staff is supportive of increasing the allowable size of this facility to four persons. 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 for a Personal Care Home with up to four residents, that continues to meet all State and local licensing requirements. (2) All parking for the facility shall be on fully paved surfaces as approved by the City Engineer. (3) Install a fire sprinkler system and alarm monitoring system as approved by both the Fire Marshal and the Building Official. (4) Conditional Use approval shall expire after two years from the date of approval if no amended Business License for the increased size in the facility has been approved by that date. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their May 20, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommended approval subject to the same four conditions as recommended by Staff (5-0 Vote).

A MOTION by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-13, an Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Family Personal Care Home in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) Zoning District as requested by Roche Kempson, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-9, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE PATTERSON STREET RESURFACING AND UTILITY ADJUSTMENTS PROJECT

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the execution of a Contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation for the Patterson Street Resurfacing and Utility Adjustments Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is performing resurfacing of the State Route 7-ALT (Patterson Street) from Smithbriar Drive to Magnolia Street (approximately 1750'). Part of that work involves the necessary adjustment of City water valve boxes and sewer manhole tops in the construction area. The City executed a Memorandum of Understanding in May of 2023 agreeing to this work and the cost of this work. Attached is the updated Contract Item Agreement for the adjustment of the City's utilities. GDOT has provided this updated Contract Item Agreement which sets forth the conditions under which the State agrees to have its Contractor perform the work and by which the City of Valdosta will reimburse GDOT for this work. As outlined in Article 8, the non-binding Pre-let estimate for this work is \$188,900 of which the City of Valdosta will bear \$188,900 or 100%. Also, attached is a cost estimate supporting the Agreement. To keep this Project on schedule, and to support these needed traffic improvements, Staff recommends approval and execution of this Agreement. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the execution of the updated GDOT Contract Item Agreement for Water and Sewer Facilities in the amount of \$188,900 for the Patterson Street Resurfacing Project.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Carroll to approve the Resolution authorizing the execution of a Contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation for the Patterson Street Resurfacing and Utility Adjustments Project. Councilman Howard seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (4-2) with Councilwoman Tooley and Councilwoman Miller-Cody voting in opposition to enact Resolution No. 2024-9, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for the resurfacing of streets in the City of Valdosta through the SPLOST VIII Funding and GDOT Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City performs annual major maintenance on our 323 miles of streets through contracting road resurfacing and repair work. Funding for this work is from both the City's SPLOST VIII and a Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG). LMIG funding for 2024 is \$691,899.50 with a minimum local match requirement of 10% (\$69,189.95). In recent years, the City has matched 100%+ of the LMIG funding in order to better repair and maintain our local road system. Approximately 3.7 miles of streets were identified which need significant repairs. These road selections were presented to Council for review and approval in November, 2023. The Road Maintenance Project scope was refined based on that approved list and the final scope of work was advertised both in the local newspaper and on the City's website. Two bids were received and opened at 10:00 a.m., on May 23, 2024. The bids were considered both responsive and responsible bids. The low bid was submitted by The Scruggs Company, Inc. with a total base bid amount of \$2,769,010.28. Adding a 10% contingency (\$276,901.03) for unknown field conditions would bring the total project cost to \$3,045,911.31. We continue to see inflationary increases in construction costs, and this cost is significantly above the anticipated budget for the Project. From collected revenues, the State legislature has allocated additional funding for local governments (Local Road Assistance administration funds - LRA). The initial allocation for our City is \$856,845.74 with no local match required, and there is the likely potential for additional LRA funding in 2025. Given a) this additional funding, b) available SPLOST VIII funding for resurfacing, and c) our street infrastructure needs, Engineering recommends awarding this Project as presented. Our final SPLOST VIII Resurfacing Project scope for 2025 will be adjusted to match the available LRA, LMIG, and SPLOST VIII funding. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by The Scruggs Company, Inc. in the amount of \$2,769,010.28 with a 10% contingency of \$276,901.03 for a total Project Cost of \$3,045,911.31.

Councilman Tim Carroll left the Council Meeting at 5:59 p.m. and returned after the vote was taken at 6:01 p.m.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve the low bid submitted by The Scruggs Company, Inc. in the amount of \$2,769,010.28 with a 10% contingency of \$276,901.03 for a total Project Cost of \$3,045,911.31 for the resurfacing of streets in the City of Valdosta through the SPLOST VIII Funding and GDOT Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant.

Consideration of a request to amend the Contract with River North Transit, LLC and extend Via On-Demand Transportation Services for the City of Valdosta.

Larry Ogden, Public Works Administrator, stated that on March 17, 2021, the Mayor and Council approved a Contract with River North Transit, LLC, a subsidiary of Via Transportation (New York, NY) to provide transit services to the City of Valdosta. Valdosta on Demand (VOD) was launched on April 27, 2021 with an option to renew the Agreement for three (3) additional one-year terms and this one being the last year. Since the launch, the demand for service has exceeded the capability of the vehicle fleet and the contracted hours. Currently, Valdosta on-Demand is providing an average of 400 rides daily with a demand in the upwards of 500. In order to contend with the demand for service, an increase in contracted driver hours are required. The City of Valdosta received a Notification from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) on Friday, March 08, 2024, stating that our Request for Qualification (RFQ) is only allowed for Architectural and Engineering (A&E) Services and not for Non-A&E Service Procurements. As a result, it was determined the we had to re-advertise using the Request for Proposal (RFP) Competitive Bid Process for Our On-Going Solicitation for a Third-Party Operator (TPO). The City was approved for FTA 5307 Grant and congressionally-directed spending to fund the transit program for FY24. The City's match is included in the proposed FY24 Budget. The attached Amendment agree to extend the Term of the Agreement by a further period of 3 months starting on the Effective Date and ending on October 31, 2024 (inclusive) with the option to further extend on mutual agreement of the Parties by a period of 3 months. Larry Ogden, Public Works Administrator, recommended that Council approve the Contract Extension with Via for public transit services.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the request to amend the Contract with River North Transit, LLC and extend Via On-Demand Transportation Services for the City of Valdosta.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to authorize payment for an emergency bypass and sewer repairs on Pebblewood Drive.

Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, stated that on January 13, 2024, James Warren Associates (JWA) was contacted to mobilize to establish and maintain a by-pass for the 18" gravity sewer main that had been blocked/possibly collapsed. Once the bypass was established and operating, many attempts were made to identify the cause of the blockage. Video work showed that the structure of the pipe had not been compromised and the problem was a blockage. Several attempts were made to remove the blockage from the existing manholes. These attempts were unsuccessful. Following discussions with JWA, the City agreed that the best cost-effective solution was to clear the vegetation within the easement and remove the blockage. Once this was handled, JWA removed approximately two yards of granite rock, asphalt, plastic boxes, cable wire and stringy cloth materials. The pipe was repaired and placed back in normal operation. The emergency bypass was concluded on January 19, 2024 at 9:30 p.m. The scope of work which has been completed so far can be generally described as follows: (1) Install and operate emergency bypass from 1/13/24 at approximately 2:30 a.m. until 1/19/24 at 9:30 p.m. (2) Clear ROW to gain access to the blockage. (3) Excavate to an approximate depth of 14' to remove blockage. (4) Raise manhole in wetlands to prevent future flooding. (5) Fill low area around the manhole to allow future maintenance. (6) Grade the area affected. (7) Replace fence and gates. Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the request to authorize payment in the amount of \$78,805.35 to JWA for Pebblewood emergency repair work.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the request to authorize payment in the amount of \$78,805.35 to JWA for an emergency bypass and sewer repairs on Pebblewood Drive.

Consideration of a request to authorize payment for Phase III final billing for emergency sewer repairs at Knights Creek near the intersection of U. S. Highway 84 and Blanchard Street.

Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, stated that on February 16, 2023, a significant reduction in flow was detected at the Mud Creek Water Pollution Control Plant. Utilities Department Staff immediately commenced

an investigation to identify the location of the system loss. A collapsed 21" diameter sanitary sewer trunkline was located near the intersection of Hwy. 84 and Blanchard Street on the southside of the CSX railroad. Utilities Department Staff selected RPI to perform any emergency repair work necessary to repair the deteriorated lines. The existing 21" ductile iron pipe was deteriorated due to sewer gases that corroded the top portion of the pipe. The ductile iron pipe has been a common problem of corrosion due to the sewer gases. The scope of work for this emergency repair are as follows: (1) Maintain and remove bypass already in place. (2) Provide, install, and maintain bore shaft. (3) Provide, install, and maintain receiving shaft. (4) Provide and install +/- 300 linear feet 36-inch casing by method of jack-n-bore. Provide and install +/- 800 linear feet 24-inch standard dimensional ratio 26 PVC sewer main. (5) Provide, install, and maintain dewatering system. (6) Provide and install 3 ea. 6' diameter manholes w/raven epoxy lining. (7) Install +/- 300 linear feet 8-inch ductile iron 11 within existing 21-inch sewer main with flange adapters at each end within manhole cones and covers. (8) Grout fill annular space within existing 21-inch sewer main. (9) Remove top section of existing manholes x3 within CSX/GDOT ROW and fill with grout/sand. Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the request to authorize Phase III final payment to RPI in the amount of \$2,890,788 for emergency sewer repairs at Knights Creek.

Councilman Tim Carroll left the Council Meeting at 6:06 p.m. prior to the vote that was taken at 6:10 p.m.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to approve request to authorize payment for Phase III final billing to RPI in the amount of \$2,890,788 for emergency sewer repairs at Knights Creek near the intersection of U. S. Highway 84 and Blanchard Street.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Consideration of the selection of a third Member to serve on the Ethics Complaint Board.

Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, stated that the City of Valdosta Mayor and Council first adopted a Code of Ethics Ordinance in 1995. This Ordinance served as a guide for governing authority and reinforced the basic principle that elected officials are holders of public trust. The Ordinance, which has been amended several times since its creation, has deemed it essential to the proper creation of democratic government that public officials be, and give the appearance of being independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policies be made in the proper channels of the government structure; and that public office not be used for personal gain. On May 21, 2024, an official Ethics Complaint was issued against Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody by Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development/Community Protection Manager. The Ethics Complaint was then officially delivered by the City Clerk to Councilwoman Miller-Cody and to each Council Member electronically on May 22, 2024. At the Special Called Meeting of May 28, 2024, Councilman Eric Howard brought forth the name of J. D. Rice for consideration to serve on the Ethics Complaint Board. Council approved the selection of Mr. Rice to serve on the Ethics Complaint Board with Councilwoman Miller-Cody abstaining. Mayor Matheson then announced that his selection to serve on the Ethics Complaint Board was Dr. Alvin Payton, Jr. Mr. Rice and Dr. Payton have since discussed a qualified third member of the Ethics Board, who must be in good standing with the Georgia Bar Association, for consideration to serve on the Ethics Complaint Board. The name for Council's consideration at the June 6, 2024 City Council Meeting is Attorney Roy W. Copeland, Copeland, Haugabrook & Walker. Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, recommended that Council approve the selection of Attorney Roy W. Copeland as the third member on the Ethics Complaint Board.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve the selection of Attorney Roy W. Copeland, Copeland, Haugabrook & Walker, to serve as the third member on the Ethics Complaint Board. Councilman Harden seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (4-0-1) with Councilwoman Miller-Cody abstaining from the vote.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Stacy Young, 4747 Hummingbird Lane, stated that the citizens could use some help with the LDR as it sits right now. He is building a new building that is costing him thousands of dollars that he should not have to be spending. The Sign Ordinance also needs some work. There is a citizen on Bemiss Road who is trying to open a Daycare Center and the City sent her a letter about the banner that she put on her fence because it is illegal.

However, VSU can stretch a banner all the way across Oak Street. He did \$10,000 in curbing that they did not need. They have \$8,000 in landscaping that most of it will not be seen by anybody because it will be down the north and south property line of the new building. There was \$20,000 in the stucco because the City does not like a metal-sided building which is a waste of money as well. They have been told that the retention pond has now been inspected but he is not aware of any other retention ponds that are going to have to be inspected. He may be wrong but he asked some questions that no one can tell him that their ponds have to be inspected but apparently his does. Also, he spent \$6,000 for a sidewalk that the City of Valdosta now owns that he had to put in. When he brought up the fact that we have T-SPLOST, which he thought would pay for sidewalks, he was told that they didn't care if you put the sidewalk in or not but you will not get the CO for the building until you do. That sounds like extortion to him. You are forcing him to spend \$6,000 to put a sidewalk in on the City's property that goes nowhere. It does not connect to anything. It is just money that is thrown away because of the LDR. The LDR may have a use or purpose but somebody has to pay for it and that is the citizens who are trying to start businesses in this community and create jobs and generate taxes. We need some relief from it. Councilman Harden inquired as to the address of the building. Mr. Young stated that it is located at 2613 Bemiss Road.

Mary Moye, 620 Magnolia Street, stated that she is concerned about the property at 715 East Magnolia Street, where her sister, Christine Williams, lives. She has seen houses built after her sister put in her application. There are houses on Lamar Street, Monroe Street, and several other locations that look like they have been fixed up. She was wondering what was happening with her sister's house. She put in the application before her father passed in 2013 and it has been almost 11 years. She is here to see what is going on. She spoke with Ms. Riley and she said that you would have to apply every year in January. She also talked to others who had complaints. She was told that those houses in 2023 would be taken care of in 2024. She is here today to ask the Council to please consider talking with them and to have a meeting concerning these house. She would also like to speak with Richard Joyner.

Lauren Camareno, 3521 Knights Mill Drive, stated that when they mow the yard and trim trees it sits out on the lawn for a month or longer. She called and was told that they are a couple of days behind. It got picked up today but it was out there for over a month. She would like to know the City's schedule because she lives in a HOA neighborhood and she does not want to get fined by the HOA President. The next thing has to do with recycling. When the blue recycling bins were taken away from the citizens of Valdosta, they were told it would be temporary. However, a couple of years later it looks like that is permanent. She inquired as to whether the City will ever go back to picking up recyclables from the actual residents. She hates taking her recycling to Five Points every week.

Beatrice Simmons, 112 Pendleton Avenue, inquired about the Grant money and how the City goes about doing it. She wondered why the City lets someone get a roof on their house that owns nine houses. Some people who need a roof cannot even get a roof. The person who owns nine properties should not even be entitled to get the Grant money. When you keep calling they say they will call you back. Something is not right about the paperwork. She fought hard for her mother and kept calling. She doesn't know the name of the lady who helped her but she knows Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody fought hard for her mother to get her house.

Silver Minix, 612 Monroe Street, stated that she has an elderly Aunt who lives at 920 West Street and she has been calling for two years to try and get her house repainted. Every time she calls, Ms. Riley tells her that they do not have any funds and to call back. She sees other people who have gotten their houses painted and she does not understand that.

John Robinson, 3227 San Juline Circle, Lake Park, stated that he wanted to talk about the economic inequality. Everything is always one-sided, He has heard a lot of issues today but no one has mentioned the name of little Wesley White. They are sick and tired of hearing the reports where their children are killing each other because of the lack of economic equality. He tried to get on the Agenda to express some things because three minutes is not enough for them to express how they really feel. He abandoned that idea. He met twice and he is not going to meet again. It is a shame that this body may have to defend itself for something that occurred prior to their time in office. They are not going to stand by and allow this to keep going on over and over. You form Committees and spend time on the Ethics Board; however, no one is thinking about the little boy that laid down in the park. The ones that took his life are victims and their lives have gone down the drain. This young man was a human being and was somebody. It is a shame that we failed him because we allowed this to take place. We have

to change economic things in the City. It must change. They are going to put forth all of their efforts to see if they can bring about some change in the City.

John Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, Hahira, stated that he wanted to compliment the Council and Staff and hear about all the details for emergency bypasses, particularly the one at Knights Creek. The part he likes the best is that the rest of it will be replaced before it breaks. They are getting ahead of the problem which is a good thing. In the Budget, he saw a \$67 million bond for Water and Sewer Projects and he is looking forward to hearing about what those are going to be. The City could also put out a Press Release about these things because you have a perception problem. There are a large number of people who think the City is doing nothing. He does mention from time to time what the City is doing. He would also like to invite the Council to a paddle on the Withlacoochee River on Saturday, June 8, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. starting at Sullivan Launch which is the first public access on the Withlacoochee River in Florida. They will paddle down past a bunch of springs including Madison Blue Springs.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, stated that on Friday, June 7, 2024 there will be the First Friday After Five in Downtown from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. On June 8, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., there will be the Memorial Headstone Cleaning at Sunset Hill Cemetery. Also, there will be a Community Road Cleanup on June 8, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Cypress Street. The cleanup areas will be from Hollywood Street to Robinson Street and Mildred Street. Volunteers will meet at 2010 Cypress Street. On June 10-14, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the Valdosta Police Department will be hosting their Stand Against Youth Violence Education Camp at the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room. On June 12, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., the Young Game Changers will hold the Mayor's Paddle at Langdale Park. On June 14, 2024, there will be the Juneteenth Family Reunion Day at McMullen Southside Library at 6:00 p.m. On June 15, 2023, there will be Juneteenth Festivities from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Unity Park along with a joint Proclamation at noon. City of Valdosta offices will be closed on Juneteenth.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Harden stated that he was listening to Mr. Robinson and what he was saying about the young gentleman Wesley White, that is very unfortunate for our community. It plagues the United States with youth violence but more specifically, it is getting worse in Valdosta. We definitely need people to step up. It is not going to happen just with the Council but we need community involvement. He encourages citizens to apply for the open testing with the Police Department. We are definitely understaffed and we need more people in those areas. We need more resources and we all have to help. When he ran for office, he always said he wanted to make sure that we govern with common sense and some things in the LDR does not make sense. We want to be business friendly and encourage business yet we prohibit our businesses from striving. We put more onto our businesses than we should. We need guidance but there are some things that need to be looked at. We also need to look at some of our practices. We have an amazing Staff and they are very capable of getting things done; however, a lot of times they get ridiculed about small things. We do have some things that are going very well and he commends our Staff. We need to continue to do things together and not bring each other down.

Councilman Howard stated that he wanted to talk about where we direct our anger at. We have a lot of people who are angry at the Police Department. The Police Department goes out and arrests people who commit crimes which is what they are supposed to do. They are not letting these people out. We need to talk to the Judges and District Attorneys. If you commit a crime, the Police are going to arrest you. If you get back out, do not get mad at the Police. They did not do it. The Sheriff does not want to let anyone out. If you want to get a group of people together and go find out why they are letting people out who just shot up a house, go talk to the District Attorney and Judge. They are the ones who are letting them out so do not direct your anger at the Police Department. They are doing what they are supposed to be doing. He does not think that anyone grew up poorer than he did but he did not shoot up houses and rob stores. We are not going to give anybody excuses for doing this type of stuff. It is going to take a community and also the parents doing what they need to do with these children. These are not all babies and some are adults so we can't ask parents to do a thing with adults so when you have these events, we need people to come out to them and participate so we can help get crime down. Money is always going to be an issue so we cannot always blame it on money; however, a lot of this stuff we can do ourselves.

Councilman McIntyre stated that the success of Police work is based largely on people helping them. Every two days we get a Police Report Summary and we see where suspects shot will not cooperate. On the flip side, we are saying we need to do something about the crime but the Police have to have our cooperation. There are even parents who were hiding murder suspects a couple of weeks ago. These suspects were on the loose because of the community hiding them. With the LDR, he agrees that we need to stop kicking this can down the road. We need to come up with a date and time to sit down and review it with the people who are out there. The LDR does not particularly affect him but he hears from the community how negatively they are affected. It is ridiculous to be fined \$250 for cutting a \$50 tree does not make sense. He would like to know when Council is going to do something about it. He is ready.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that she would like to echo that as well. They have requested to get together and go over some of the LDR and they do need to set a time. They hear a lot from the citizens about it. One business decided to go to Hahira because of the rules in the LDR. It was just not worth it. They are trying and are going to make some changes. They are going to work with the citizens. Also, to the citizens, this is your Council. You do need to come and talk to them and let them know things. Sometimes you keep coming with the same things. You need to write it and bring it to the City. If you really want something done about it, write it down and present it to the City is one proper way. Maybe we can find some solutions to get some of these things taken care of. A lot of times when we can see we can put it probably put it down like data and have and check it and adjust that way. We are working towards helping our citizens enjoy living in Valdosta. We want you to be here and be economically happy. We are trying to make Valdosta better and it calls for us all to work together. Council has to give and the citizens have to give. We are working with our Staff to work with you. We hear you and we will get trying. Keep coming and write what you are talking about and bring it to us.

Councilman McIntyre stated that he wanted to thank everyone who came up and spoke about the sprinkler system and Codes. He is glad that you know what is going on because we just want to make sure the citizens are treated fairly and safety is a priority. It looks like that is what we are doing.

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs asked those citizens who spoke under Citizens to be Heard to stay over after the Council Meeting so we can answer your questions so we can at least try to better understand what your situation is and have a better answer for you if we do not have it tonight. Also, in attendance tonight are members of the 2024 Leadership Lowndes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (5-0) to adjourn the June 6, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:44 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, June 20, 2024.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta