

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL**  
**5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JULY 11, 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 Councilman Tim Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Special Called Meetings held on May 15, 2024 and May 28, 2024 were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024-14, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 3.21 ACRES FROM CONSERVATION (CON)(COUNTY AND ESTATE AGRICULTURE (E-A)(COUNTY) TO ALL HEAVY INDUSTRY (M-2)(CITY)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone a total of 3.21 acres from Conservation (CON)(County) and Estate Agriculture (E-A)(County) to all Heavy Industry (M-2)(City) as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority (File No. VA-2024-08). The property is located at 3222 Madison Highway. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority is proposing to rezone a total of 3.21 acres from Conservation (CON)(County) and Estate Agriculture (E-A)(County) to all Heavy Industry (M-2)(City). The property is located at 3222 Madison Highway, along the west side of the road approximately 300 feet north of the intersection with Carroll-Ulmer Road and immediately adjacent to the south border of the Valdosta Regional Airport. The applicant is also seeking annexation of the property, which is being reviewed concurrently under File No. VA-2024-09. The property is currently vacant and cleared, and the applicant has no plans for any development here and just wants to make it part of the Airport property with the same M-2 zoning. The property is located within the Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU) and the Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) Character Areas on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Upon annexation and pursuant to LDR Section 202-8(B), all of the property will be designated with the TCU Character Area, which allows M-2 Zoning. This property was previously developed as a single-family residence in Lowndes County from 50+ years ago. The Airport Authority acquired the property in 2019 as part of a planned expansion of their airfield area. The residence was later demolished, and the property was completely cleared and then fenced to add more protection buffer to the airfield/runway, as well as provide a point of emergency access to the southern end of the airfield from Madison Highway. This rezoning request is in tandem with the proposed annexation request of this same property. Since all of the remaining Airport properties are within the Valdosta City Limits and zoned M-2, it would be logical to have this property zoned the same way. Staff found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP), and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-14, an Ordinance to rezone a total of 3.21 acres from Conservation (CON)(County) and Estate Agriculture (E-A)(County) to all Heavy Industry (M-2)(City) for property located at 3222 Madison

Highway as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024-15, AN ORDINANCE TO ANNEX 3.21 ACRES INTO THE CITY OF VALDOSTA**

Consideration of an Ordinance to annex 3.21 acres into the City of Valdosta as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority (File No. VA-2024-09). The property is located at 3222 Madison Highway. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority is requesting to annex 3.21 acres into the City of Valdosta. The property is located at 3222 Madison Highway along the west side of the road approximately 300 feet north of the intersection with Carroll Ulmer Road and immediately adjacent to the south border of the Valdosta Regional Airport. The property is contiguous to the existing Valdosta City Limits which abuts the remaining Airport property to the north and west. The applicant is requesting annexation to combine this property with the existing Airport parcel, which is already entirely within the Valdosta City Limits. The applicant has no plans for development of this property. It was acquired as a separate parcel for the Airport a few years ago to provide more security and better emergency access to the south end of the existing airfield. Concurrent with the annexation, the applicant is also requesting the rezoning of the property (File No. VA-2024-08). The property is located within the Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU) and the Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) Character Areas on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Upon annexation and pursuant to LDR Section 202-8(B), all of the property will be designated with the TCU Character Area. The Airport Authority acquired this property in 2019 as part of a planned expansion of their airfield area to add more protection buffer to the runway, as well as provide a point of emergency access to the southern end of the airfield from Madison Highway. The property is contiguous to the existing Valdosta City Limits and fully eligible for annexation into Valdosta. This annexation request has been properly noticed to Lowndes County pursuant to State law, and to date, there have been no land use disputes raised by the County as part of the request. Since all the remaining Airport properties are within the Valdosta City Limits and zoned M-2, it would be logical to have this property zoned the same way. It would also be both beneficial and logical to have all Airport contiguous properties under the same local government jurisdiction. Staff found the annexation request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

No one spoke in favor of the request.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-15, an Ordinance to annex 3.21 acres located at 3222 Madison Highway into the City of Valdosta as requested by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2024-16, AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 0.40 ACRES FROM SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (R-10) TO OFFICE-PROFESSIONAL (O-P)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to rezone 0.40 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Office-Professional (O-P) as requested by Lawrence Thomas (File No. VA-2024-10). The property is located at 1611 North Patterson Street. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that Lawrence Thomas is requesting to rezone 0.40 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Office-Professional (O-P). The property is located at 1611 North Patterson Street which is along the east side of the road and approximately 200 feet south of the intersection with East Moore Street. This is also immediately north of the offices of the Greater Valdosta United Way. The property currently contains an existing historic single-family residence which was acquired by the applicant and fully renovated about

one year ago. The applicant is now proposing to convert the residence to a professional office and upgrade the site with a rear yard parking area to accommodate about 11 vehicles for office parking. The property is located within an Institutional Activity Center (IAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of O-P Zoning. The property is also located within the City’s local Historic District, as well as the Brookwood North National Register Historic District. The property is part of the Brookwood North neighborhood which contains a mixture of mostly residential uses in a mostly older built-out historic pattern; however, many of the properties fronting North Patterson Street are either institutional uses, or former residences that have been converted to professional offices. The property is bordered to the north and to the east by existing residential uses; however, to the south and across the street to the west are existing professional offices in historic buildings with rear yard parking areas. The property is part of the North Patterson Street corridor which is dominated by higher volumes of traffic and the presence of the Valdosta State University (VSU) main campus. Continued single-family residential usage of properties fronting this portion of North Patterson Street is becoming an anomaly and it is contrary to the development trends of the area. In terms of conceptual site plan review, it should be noted that in order to convert this property to an office use, the applicant will need to properly pave the rear parking area with an upgraded driveway connection to North Patterson. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval. The Planning Commission reviewed this at their June 24, 2024 Regular Meeting, found it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommended approval (9-0 Vote).

Lawrence Thomas, 4601 Blackwater Drive, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Thomas stated that they purchased the property from Ms. Strickland for the sole purpose of renovating it for the potential use of either Residential or Office-Professional. There was some confusion as to whether it was listed as Office-Professional and they did not find that out until after they got into the Project itself; however, with the United Way next door and other professional offices, they wanted to market it as both. They met with the Historical Society and went through that process to bring it up to Code and the historical requirements. They would just like the opportunity to market it either way. It is a tremendous area and they are not building any more real estate across from Valdosta State University. Mr. Thomas asked for Council’s consideration.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

Councilman Carroll stated that just for clarification purposes, since the property owner has come forward and was talking about using it as either Residential or Office-Professional (O-P), O-P Zoning would not allow a Residential use. Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that it would allow it as long as it is one residence and it is a single-family residence.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-16, an Ordinance to rezone 0.40 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Office-Professional (O-P) property located at 1611 North Patterson Street as requested by Lawrence Thomas, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

**ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 6 – ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, ARTICLE II – LICENSE, AND ARTICLE III – OPERATIONS OF THE CITY OF VALDOSTA CODE OF ORDINANCES AS IT PERTAINS TO CERTAIN PROVISIONS FOR THE DOWNTOWN VALDOSTA ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT (FIRST READING)**

Consideration of an Ordinance to amend Chapter 6 - Alcoholic Beverages, Article II – Licenses, and Article III – Operations of the City of Valdosta Code of Ordinances as it pertains to certain provisions for the Downtown Valdosta Entertainment District (DVED). (First Reading)

Kym Hughes, Main Street Manager, stated that in April of 2021, the Alcohol Ordinance was amended to define and add provisions for the Downtown Valdosta Entertainment District (DVED) which allows off-premises consumption of alcoholic beverages within the DVED-defined area. The following year, there was a proposal from Downtown area property owners and businesses to amend the DVED portion of the Alcohol Ordinance to allow

Beer Only Establishments within this area and also to exempt them from the food service requirements in much the same manner as Wine Only Establishments being exempted from food requirements City-wide. In September of 2022, the City Council amended the Alcohol Ordinance to add these exemptions for both wine-only and beer-only establishments in the DVED. Now, there is additional discussion and a proposal from Downtown area property owners and businesses to add Distilled Spirits (liquor) to this exemption for the DVED. The purpose of the DVED is to help support and sustain Downtown Valdosta's established arts and cultural activities and promote and generate new arts and cultural activities and related commerce. With the DVED's complementary mix of shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues that support these uses, the DVED provisions are expected to generate increasing interest in Downtown Valdosta and attract more arts and cultural events. Even though it has been nearly two years since the adoption of the previous amendments, there seem to be very few establishments in the DVED to take full advantage of those changes which could be perhaps due to lack of publicity. It remains unclear what the long-term effects will be for these exemptions in the DVED area. Kym Hughes, Main Street Manager, stated that this is the First Reading of the Ordinance so no action will be taken tonight.

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs stated that one thing he wanted to bring to Council's attention to think about between now and the next Council Meeting is that the curfew right now is 2:00 a.m. as far as the businesses closing down. Then you have the Brunch Bill that was passed which has been good for our restaurants and it allows them to open on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. If we do have the potential of bars or nightclubs coming into this area, we may want to think about how we would handle those situations with a nightclub wanting to stay open to 2:00 a.m. in the morning. We may want to put some restrictions on it. If it is a bar establishment then maybe it would close down at 12:00 p.m. He just wanted to throw some things out there for Council to think about just in case we do get that. Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that what the Mayor Pro Tem is saying is that it could stay open until 2:00 a.m. and serve alcoholic beverages and serve it on Sunday 11:00 a.m. to midnight. Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs stated that right now most of our restaurants close down around 10:00 p.m. or 11:00 p.m. Downtown Social may stay open to midnight one or two nights during the week. Right now, we do not have that issue and he was just saying that in case it does come up. We can amend it at any time later on. He just wanted them to know that it may be easier to do it now. Councilman Harden inquired as to whether we were anti clubs in the Downtown area. Mayor Pro Gibbs stated no. Councilman Harden stated that he was just making sure. Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs stated that a vote will be taken at the next Council Meeting in case we have any other changes. Kym Hughes stated that Matt Martin has provided a map of the DVED area which would be north from Magnolia, south to Martin Luther King, west at Toombs, and then east to Lee and also includes the Turner Center for the Arts and Georgia Beer. The map will also help people to see where the lines are.

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

Consideration of a Resolution to authorize the adoption and execution of a Facility Encroachment Agreement between the City of Valdosta and CSX Railroad for the installation of a new 20" diameter water main across the Railroad Right-of-Way on the west side of Inner Perimeter Road.

Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, stated that the City is extending a 20" diameter water main along Inner Perimeter Road to serve industrial customers on the east side of the City of Valdosta. The initial industry to be served by this extension is Project Forge, the Walmart dairy products processing facility, and the City engaged Lovell Engineering Associates to design this water main. The final engineering design requires installing a new 20" diameter water main on the west side of Inner Perimeter Road. This Facility Encroachment Agreement pertains only to the utility installation across the railroad right-of-way. CSX Railroad will require a permit fee of \$4,000.00 for the facility encroachment and utility installation, in addition to executing the attached Facility Encroachment Agreement. Jason Barnes, Assistant Utilities Director, recommended that Council approve the Resolution to authorize the adoption and execution of a Facility Encroachment Agreement between the City of Valdosta and CSX Railroad for the installation of a new 20" diameter water main across the Railroad Right-of-Way on the west side of Inner Perimeter Road.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Resolution No. 2024-10, a Resolution authorizing the adoption and execution of a Facility Encroachment Agreement between the City of Valdosta and CSX Railroad for the installation of a new 20" diameter water main

across the Railroad Right-of-Way on the west side of Inner Perimeter Road, the complete text which can be found in Resolution Book VII.

## **LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS**

Consideration of a request to approve the proposed Community Development Block (CDBG) Grant Application Annual Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2024.

Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, stated that each year, as a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement community with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we are required to create an Annual Action Plan. In the Annual Action Plan, we are to complete two tasks: (1) outline proposed activities and (2) the funding amounts associated with each proposed activity for the upcoming program year. This year, our Annual Action Plan is due to HUD by August 16, 2024, or we will forfeit the Grant funding allocations for the upcoming year. In a letter dated May 18, 2024, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) advised the City of Valdosta of their FY2024 Grant allocation for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The City of Valdosta is scheduled to receive \$632,033 as its FY2024 Grant allocation, which is \$1,870 more than the FY2023 allocation of \$630,163.00. The proposed activities for the 2024 program year are as follows: (1) Program Administration - \$126,406.00, (2) Housing - \$435,627.00, (3) Public Service - \$60,000.00, (4) Economic Development - \$10,000.00, (5) Total FY2024 - \$632,033.00. The proposed activities above will be presented to citizens at Public Hearings that will be held on July 15, 2024, and there will be a period of public comment for the proposed spending until August 15, 2024. This is the fifth year of the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan for Valdosta. The FY24 Annual Action Plan will be completed and submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by August 16, 2024. Anetra Riley, Neighborhood Development & Community Protection Manager, recommended that Council approve the proposed CDBG allocation.

Councilman Howard inquired as to whether they would be asking Council for additional amounts for the payment payouts for housing repairs. Anetra Riley stated that housing is \$435,627. Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, stated that Councilman Howard was referring to the E-mail that was sent out yesterday. Anetra Riley stated that was going to be different. That is for the Policies that Council adopted in 2018. They are trying to raise that limit and she will bring proposals before the Council from Contractors regarding emergency roof repairs or any of the housing repairs because labor and materials have increased. She wanted Council's input on how we can move forward with that.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to approve the proposed Community Development Block (CDBG) Grant Application Annual Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2024.

## **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

George Boston Rhynes, 5004 Oak Drive, stated that we have two radio stations, 105.9 FM and 92.1 FM, that are of concerns to some citizens in Valdosta and it is not all of the Black community but the White community as well. He was called by a White individual who is a Professor at Valdosta State University. He did not ask for his assistance, but after he explained to him what it was, he had no other alternative but to lend a hand. Things on the Morning Drive Show, which you all frequent, include the use terms that offend many Blacks and White people as well. Some things mentioned are as follows: "The KKK has been misrepresented and they help Blacks. Blacks were in the Klan. They need a White Man's Month because they have a Gay Pride Month. Black people are stupid voters. They don't want White people playing basketball. Basketball is for Black folks. Black people don't want White people playing the game." You can hear this every morning on 105.9 FM Black Crow Media. He has done five videos and sent them to the Council and to the County Commissioners. They also talk about turning the Flag upside down as justification to prove that America is falling down because of certain Americans. They talk about the NAACP and four White guys and they go much deeper but it is very offensive. He can just imagine how outsiders view Valdosta and Lowndes County when they hear all of this venom. Then you all sit on that Station. He cannot understand it and people are asking him the same question. Why do you all do that? They also talk about Queers are not dangerous and when the Transvestites get mad they kill stuff—the Democrats. Black Lesbians hate Black men and Queers that promote the crazy lifestyle perverted display. Black reparation is getting

to go to College in America but not in Africa. They need to stop talking about reparations. Slaves were brought to this country to work in the factories in the North, but Black folk were too dumb so that is why they put them in the fields in the South. That is very distasteful and he thinks somebody should look into it.

Kelley Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, stated that she has some real concerns that we are seeing more and more in the community. Just last week, they had an individual who was holding up a sign asking for assistance for food. He has been given four citations by the same Officer within the last month. They are \$172 a piece for each citation which equals \$688. He has not robbed a store or stolen food but is simply holding the sign asking for help. With this, he gives back to the community with the money that he does receive. He goes and gets a hotel room and food. They need to know what the rules are for where people can hold signs and how can they stop the war on homelessness. We have Officers who offer assistance with food and rain gear. We recently had a friend who weighs approximately 120 pounds who was hit over the head with a 2 x 4 and robbed. He had a concussion. He fought hard and had a blade and was waiting for help. Someone called the Police and this gentleman spent 20 days in jail for fighting back and trying to survive on the streets. Between the two School Systems, we have 1,100 homeless children. We literally have 100 who are on the street and are homeless. The request today is a meeting with the Mayor and Council to discuss the Ordinances and guidelines, \$495,000 for housing rehab and construction, and the Lela Ellis Tom Town community. Also, there is a job fair in the Annex for individuals who are constantly asking about employment opportunities. She is asking Council what they can do to help resolve this issue and make sure we have justice for all in our community. Not everyone is on drugs. We have School Teachers who have been homeless and living in hotel rooms. The hotels are packed with families living there. She is asking how we can resolve the issue, offer housing first, and offer employment and wrap around services for our citizens who are in need.

Michael Jetter, 4560 Plantation Crest Road, stated that he is the Managing Partner of Stogie's located in Downtown Valdosta along with Tim Harris. He wanted to say a few things regarding the changes to the Alcohol Ordinance that Council is considering. For a long time, they have seen a lot of inactivity Downtown. It has had its good times and its bad times. We were fortunate to be able to start this business approximately nine and a half years ago. They will have their tenth anniversary very soon. During that time, they have had all sorts of different customers come in and enjoy premium cigars and pipes, lounge around, and have an enjoyable evening or afternoon. The most common question they have had over the years is why they do not serve alcohol. They would like to get a good Bourbon or Scotch or something along that line. He then has to go through the whole explanation of it. The things that disappoint them the most is seeing people come in from out-of-town. They are staying in the Bed and Breakfasts and hotels and they are spending money here. It is something that is offered in so many different places and so many people love to have those when enjoying a cigar. It is a big part of the social aspect of their business. They are not a bar and do not pretend to be, but it is a place where you can come and relax and enjoy yourself. They want to be a part of the growth in Downtown by giving those folks a better chance to enjoy and relax and to see another part of our community. They want to talk to the customers who live in the community and spend tax dollars in our community. They also want to promote the Downtown and our City and County.

Daniel Bayman, The McKey and GUD Coffee, stated that he wanted to thank the Mayor and Council for continuing to improve the Downtown Entertainment District. They have had great improvements over the last decade or two. He wanted to inform Council on the discussions of the Downtown business owners that currently own restaurants and properties Downtown. They feel that Council has made great improvements through taking baby steps. The improvement of the open container and being able to walk around Downtown is a great step and they have seen very little negative impacts associated with that. The current Ordinance as presented is very vague on its enforcement and allows for a more open interpretation of businesses coming into Downtown. His understanding of the Noise Ordinance in Downtown is that it begins at 10:00 p.m. They have concerns and that is why the majority of the businesses Downtown stay open until 11:00 p.m. or midnight. They have concerns associated with the Ordinances and the close living quarters, hotels, and Bed and Breakfast if they had businesses stay open later and cause noise issues. They also have concerns about the availability of Police within the Downtown and the ease of access to a Police force. As Mayor Pro Tem Andy Gibbs mentioned, we have the ability to change this Ordinance at any time. In his personal experiences, it is always easier to create limits and restrictions at first instead of reeling it back in the future. His encouragement is as a private business owner and he is not speaking for the entirety of Downtown but do what you have done in the past and take baby steps. See how this develops and then take more baby steps. We have a great vision for Downtown and it is coming along but it is

going to take years to get there. One wrong step, one wrong Ordinance, one wrong enforcement, one bad business, or one bad experience can set them back from all the progress they have made.

Christina Cheek, Founder and Executive Director Sista Girl Birth Initiative, stated that in March she came before the Council to ask for their support for Black Maternal Health Week. She is coming before them again in hopes of getting their support to recognize Black Breast Feeding Week which is held August 25-31, 2024. The reasons why are as follows: (1) Valdosta and Lowndes County has an infant mortality rate of 9% which is way too many babies that are at risk for losing their lives. (2) There are a lot of maternal health inequities which lead to more Black infants being born too small, too sick, and too early which makes them more susceptible to health related issues and could cost them to lose their lives or not be healthy. (3) Many Black residents are at risk for obesity and other nutritional-related diseases and conditions due to the lack of access to healthy foods, quality health care, and other essentials. For the breast feeding Mothers, there are countless benefits for breast feeding and one of the initiatives of Sista Girl Birth Initiative is to highlight these so Mothers can make the best decisions and have evidence-based information to make good decisions for their babies and themselves. She is asking for Council’s support in recognizing Black Breast Feeding Week.

**CITY MANAGER’S REPORT**

Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, stated that the Main Street Christmas in July will be held on July 13, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Downtown area. The Battle of the Badges Blood Drive will be held on July 17, 2024 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room. There will be a Love Where You Live road cleanup on July 20, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Volunteers will meet at 607 East Park Avenue. The cleanup area they will focus on is Marion Street from East Park Avenue to East College Street. The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Photo Contest Awards Reception will be held on July 22, 2024 at the Turner Center for the Arts from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Back to School Community Block Party will be held on July 27, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Unity Park. They will also be having free haircuts for the young boys in the City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Howard stated that our community is very diverse and that is what makes it so beautiful. There are going to be some decisions that they make that not everyone is going to be happy with. That is just part of what we do. The option is to replace them or live with it. There is not enough money to go around for everything. Our Budget is very conservative. The price of everything is going up. He is not to say whose fault it is but we still have to run this City. The most important part about our City is our employees. We have to make sure our employees are taken care of. Our employees make sure you guys have clean drinking water, Police, and Fire, so that is where our main concerns are. Our Budget is stretched so there is not a lot of wiggle room. If citizens will be an ally to us, then we will try to do everything we can and address all of these concerns.

Councilman Harden stated that he appreciated all of the citizens who spoke under Citizens to be Heard. The one big thing is that we do have a homelessness issue and we have been talking about it since he has been on Council. This past month when he was in Savannah, he took a couple of classes where he could obtain information on how to help our City. It is something that we are all trying to tackle. We have to keep on trying and help our community, especially in the Downtown area. It affects the merchants in that area and we need to make sure that everyone thrives.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Gibbs entertained a motion for adjournment.

**A MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the July 11, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:16 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, July 25, 2024.