

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 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 Mayor Pro Tem Andy Gibbs, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) Champion of Georgia Cities Award.

Mayor Matheson introduced Larry Hanson, CEO and Executive Director of the Georgia Municipal Association, and stated that he was recently recognized as the Most Admired CEO in the State of Georgia. He also introduced Jim Thornton, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Georgia Municipal Association, and stated they are here to honor Georgia State Representative John LaHood for the presentation of the Champion of Georgia Cities Award.

Jim Thornton, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), stated that GMA is a voluntary, non-profit, membership organization and all 536 cities in Georgia, including Valdosta, chose to be a member of GMA. GMA provides a number of services to our member cities, but the reason GMA was founded and one of the principal things we still do to this day is to advocate on your behalf. They advocate at both the State and Federal level for issues that affect the City of Valdosta as well as all the other 536 cities across the State. In doing so, he manages the advocacy effort and his team spend a lot of time at the Gold Dome working with members of the General Assembly. They are here tonight to honor one of the members of the General Assembly who is your Representative at the Gold Dome. The General Assembly meets on a two-year cycle and they meet two sessions during that cycle. They have just concluded the 2023-2024 cycle of the Georgia General Assembly. At the end of that two-year cycle, they recognize Legislators who have made a significant difference in advocating and supporting cities across the State. There is no one more deserving of this Award than State Representative John LaHood. In addition to serving as your Representative and one of the members of the House of Representatives, John LaHood also serves as Chairman of the House Government Affairs Committee. The House Government Affairs Committee is probably the busiest Committee under the Gold Dome. They hear a lot of Bills and the Bills that directly affect Georgia cities. If a Bill is introduced that deals with the way you operate a city, the powers that you have as a city, the opportunities that you have to expand and grow your community, and to serve the needs of your citizens, many of those Bills are going to the House Government Affairs Committee. Chairman LaHood sees members of the GMA team every time they meet and he is always very receptive. He hears our concerns and understands, and he wants to know about the Bills. He comes to the GMA team and inquires as to how the Bill is going to affect Valdosta and the other cities across the State. That helps shape the legislation to make sure it is most beneficial to you and your residents. Over the past two years, GMA has worked very closely with Chairman LaHood in that capacity on a number of Bills that addressed housing issues, pre-emption issues, and other types of concerns that are shared by member cities. We wanted to make sure that whatever is advanced is beneficial to you and the residents and would not just serve the special interest needs of other constituencies. In every one of those instances, Chairman LaHood was eager to learn and understand how this was going to play out on the ground here in Valdosta and the other cities that he represents. Some of that legislation was improved and advanced and other legislation that was going to be very damaging to Valdosta, they were able to hold and not advance it. Throughout the entire process, Chairman LaHood was an advocate for his constituents in Valdosta. The other issue that he worked on was Service Delivery Strategy. As you know, there has been Service Delivery disputes between cities and counties which plays out all over the State. Chairman LaHood Co-Chaired a Study Committee last fall that did a deep dive into these issues. He worked closely with the GMA team as well as ACCG and what came out of that Study Committee and the Bill as it moved through the process, was House Bill 1407 which he introduced and sponsored in the House. It passed the House overwhelmingly as well as the Senate and was signed into law by Governor Kemp. Even though it has a delayed effective date of January, 2026, and even though it is not everything that GMA or ACCG asked for, we think it is a good compromise piece of legislation that

is going to improve city and county relations here and across the State and provide meaningful dispute resolution processes, and make it easier for you to do your job and serve the needs of your constituents in Valdosta. GMA is delighted to work with him and he is a true Champion for Valdosta and all Georgia cities. Jim Thornton called on Larry Hanson, CEO and Executive Director of GMA and former City Manager of Valdosta, for some remarks.

Larry Hanson thanked Jim Thornton for the introduction and stated that it was great to be here and see everyone. It is certainly nostalgic to be on this side of the podium. As he was driving to Valdosta today, he calculated that he sat in the City Manager's chair over 800 times for Council Meetings and Work Sessions. It was pleasure to serve the citizens of this community and many of the Council Members. As Jim Thornton said, it is certainly a pleasure to be here to night to recognize Chairman John LaHood who is really doing a fantastic job representing Valdosta, Lowndes County, and the south Georgia area. From having walked those halls for many, many years now and particularly now as the Executive Director of GMA, he has become a real person of influence under the Gold Dome. Clearly his party has recognized his talent and his ability and he is being elevated to a Committee Chairmanship of one of the most influential Committees very quickly. It is the Committee that most local government Bills go to so it is certainly influential for GMA. Larry Hanson stated that what has impressed him the most is Chairman LaHood's integrity. You can count on him and he is a great listener. He is going to hear you out and be honest with you and he is going to do what he says he is going to do. He does not always agree with GMA 100% of the time but GMA is working on that. No one knows better than Valdosta and Lowndes County about the challenges of the Service Delivery Strategy since the Legislation was passed in 1999. That was a tough thing because everyone wants to make it better but no one wants to give up any ground. To Chairman LaHood's credit, he asked me and Jim Thornton to come down and meet with him and they spent about three hours together. His wife was kind enough to bring them some lunch and it was an amazing meal of fried fish and fried shrimp. Jim said he thought this was where he wanted to retire at The Fellowship Home. Chairman LaHood listened intently and asked questions. He became a real advocate for better government as people began to oppose different things. He said we need to fix this. It has been a law for 25 years and we can do better than this. We can create better negotiations and minimize conflict. He committed himself to that and carry it through and cross the finish line. He held GMA and ACCG accountable as cities and counties to come to the table and negotiate in good faith. He worked hard on some housing Bills to prevent some pre-emption that could have been harmful to many cities in this State. Larry Hanson stated that he was pleased to be here tonight and be a part of this and to let everyone know that we have someone who is doing extremely well representing our community. We should all be proud of that and we should recognize him and support him.

Jim Thornton stated that at this time, they would like to present the GMA Champion of Georgia Cities Award to Representative John LaHood.

Representative LaHood thanked Jim Thornton and Larry Hanson for coming from Atlanta to present him with the Champion of Georgia Cities Award. It was not all him but it was a team effort for sure and communicating frequently with Mayor Matheson, Councilman Carroll, and Councilman Gibbs. Lowndes County was very vocal and involved in this as well. There are 536 cities across the State and they don't all agree on some of the legislation that they hear. A lot of times at his own house they don't agree and what to have for supper. It requires good leadership and relationships with people who can bring good data to the conversation. That is exactly what GMA has done and brought their experiences and conversation to the room. Like Larry said, we don't always agree but that's OK. We still respect each other and at the end of the day we are still friends. We work very hard together to make the best decisions for all the cities in Georgia but his heart is right here in Valdosta. He is thankful that they were able to achieve what they did and he thanked everyone for their support. They are not done yet and have a lot more work to do. He is looking forward to working with the Mayor and Council and the citizens of Valdosta. They will continue to make good progress for the greater good and everybody who lives here. This is a great honor and he looks forward to doing more.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 8, 2024 were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

REQUEST TO APPEAL THE DECISION ON A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS BY THE VALDOSTA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FOR DEMOLITION OF TWO HOUSES LOCATED AT 210 AND 222 EAST PARK AVENUE

Consideration of a request to appeal the decision on a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission for demolition of two houses located at 210 and 222 East Park Avenue.

Mayor Matheson stated that the applicant has withdrawn this request.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-13, A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A CONTRACT WITH THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (GDOT) TO PROCEED WITH THE REPLACEMENT OF RUNWAY 4-22 LIGHTING 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 with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to proceed with the Replacement of Runway 4-22 Lighting at the Valdosta Regional Airport.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority desires to proceed with a Project for Replacing Runway 4-22 Lighting. The total amount is \$800,000 (tentative allocation of funds). This allocation will be based upon pre-approved design, planning and engineering costs, and/or competitive bids received to accomplish the Project. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has offered to fund 75% of the allowable costs at the Valdosta Regional Airport. There will be no City of Valdosta funds required for this Project. The remaining amount will be funded by the Airport Authority. GDOT has prepared a Grant in the amount of \$600,000 for the Project. The Contract for this Grant will be delivered to City Hall. The Contract must be executed and returned to GDOT expeditiously. A letter has been prepared and sent to Russell R. McMurry, P.E., Commissioner of GDOT, on August 26, 2024 confirming the Airport’s intent to proceed with and partially fund the Replacement of Runway 4-22 Lighting. A proposed Project schedule will be submitted to the GDOT Project Manager no later than October 1, 2024. A Resolution has been prepared authorizing Mayor Scott James Matheson to accept the allocation in order to process the documents. Richard Hardy, City Manager, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the Mayor to accept the GDOT allocation in order to process the documents

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2024-13, a Resolution authorizing the acceptance of a Contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to proceed with the Replacement of Runway 4-22 Lighting at the Valdosta Regional Airport, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Mayor Matheson stated that if there was no objection from Council Agenda Items 6(a) through 6(c) would be considered under a Consent Agenda. There was no objection from Council.

John Burton, Motor Pool Superintendent, asked Council’s consideration in following the recommendation for the following bids: (1) Consideration of bids for two towing/dump trucks for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 08-24-25) - the low bid meeting specifications submitted by Solid Waste Applied Technologies in the amount of \$259,000, (2) Consideration of bids for a rear loader refuse truck for the Public Works Department (Bid No. 07-24-25) - the bid submitted by Solid Waste Applied Technologies in the amount of \$299,985, (3) Consideration of bids for the purchase of a backhoe for the Utilities Department (Bid No. 10-24-25) – the low bid submitted by Yancey Brothers in the amount of \$138,765 (Buy Back Price of \$62,000 and the Net Price of \$76,765).

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bids submitted for Agenda Items 6(a) through 6(c) on the Consent Agenda.

Consideration of bids for office supplies for the City of Valdosta.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that office supplies are used throughout the City by all departments in the daily function. This bid contains items classified as high use such as printer and copy machine paper, specific printer cartridges, and many other items typically used by the Departments. When furniture is needed, the City obtains State contract pricing through Lee Office Equipment with delivery and installation. An estimated usage list was prepared using the prior 12-month sales report for bid purposes. This is a one-year contract with options to renew. Sealed bids were received on July 18, 2024 with the low bid submitted by Sheffield Office Products in the amount of \$21,893.07 up to 35% discount (non-high use items). Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the low bid submitted by Sheffield Office Products.

A MOTION by Councilman Gibbs, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the low bid submitted by Sheffield Office Products in the amount of \$21,893.07 up to 35% discount (non-high use items) for office supplies for the City of Valdosta.

Consideration of bids for the Dogwood Drive Area Improvements Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that this neighborhood was one of the annexed islands in the mid-2000 decade. Since annexation, the City has installed water mains, sewer mains, and paved the streets. This work was accomplished within the substandard street right-of-way and retained the roadside ditches for stormwater drainage. This Project was identified in 2020-2021 to upgrade the paved streets to underground stormwater drainage, curb and gutter, and sidewalk. Additional street right-of-way and easements were required for these improvements. The survey and design were completed in 2021, and property acquisition was pursued with the final property acquisition process concluded by the City Attorney in June/July 2024. This Project was advertised in the local newspaper, Georgia Procurement Registry, and the City's website. Five construction companies attended the mandatory Pre-Bid meeting, and one bid was received and opened at 10:00 a.m., on August 22, 2024 (see attached bid tabulation). The bid is considered both responsive and responsible. Reames & Son Construction Company submitted a bid in the amount of \$6,700,348.00. Adding a 10% contingency (\$670,034.80) for unknown field conditions would bring the total Project cost to \$7,370,382.80. We continue to see inflationary increases in construction costs, which are significantly above the anticipated budget for the Project. The limited work area, the complications of relocating existing utilities, and maintaining traffic access within a residential neighborhood contribute to the high bid. A large backlog and upcoming construction project workload for roadway and utility contractors in our area also contribute to the high bid. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council reject the bid submitted by Reames & Son Construction Company in the amount of \$6,700,348.00 plus a 10% contingency (\$670,034.80) for a total Project cost of \$7,370,382.80.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Harden, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to reject the bid submitted by Reames & Son Construction Company in the amount of \$6,700,348.00 plus a 10% contingency (\$670,034.80) for a total Project cost of \$7,370,382.80 for the Dogwood Drive Area Improvements Project.

Consideration of an equitable adjustment to the Contract for the West Street Area Improvements Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that this Project was identified in 2020 to upgrade West Street from River Street to Gordon Street and add sidewalks, underground stormwater drainage, and curb and gutter. For these improvements, minor additional street right-of-way and easements were required. Survey and design were completed in 2021, property acquisition was completed by the City Attorney in 2021, and the Project was bid and awarded in March and April of 2022. For these improvements, relocation of a high-capacity gas main owned by Atlanta Gas & Light (AGL) was required. Following extended communications with and provision of information to AGL, they began the relocation work in spring of 2024 and completed their work on West Street in August of 2024. Given the changes in the construction industry materials costs and pricing that we have experienced over the past several years, the Contractor awarded this Project, Southland Contractors, has submitted a request for an equitable adjustment of the Contract amount. The original bid amount was \$1,154,792.00, and the requested modified Contract amount is \$1,388,022.00, an increase of \$233,230 or 20.2%. Given the inflationary construction costs we have experienced on recent bids, this is not an unreasonable amount for a two-year delay in Contract

execution and notice to proceed. With the modified Contract cost of \$1,388,022.00 and adding a 10% contingency (\$138,802.20) for unanticipated field conditions, this brings the total Project cost to \$1,526,824.20. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve an equitable adjustment to the Contract with Southland Contractors to \$1,388,022.00 with a 10% contingency (\$138,802.20) for a total Project cost of \$1,526,824.20 for the West Street Area Improvements Project.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether they were going to have to extend the area that they are going to be repairing to the other street. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer stated that as part of the scope of work that AGL submitted to them as part of the right-of-way encroachment permit request, the eight inch main has been replaced and they are now operating on the side streets that connect to West Street. They are performing line loops and trying to improve connectivity and service flow to users in the surrounding area. Essentially, AGL took a replacement of a main and a lot of times when you are replacing a pressurized main through utility distribution system, there are side line inner connections that you can either reconnect the old deteriorated lines that were most likely installed around the same time as the main or you can perform a more robust rehabilitation of the system in the area which is the course of action that AGL chose to take. That is why they are operating in the surrounding neighborhoods.

A MOTION by Councilman McIntyre, seconded by Councilman Carroll, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve an equitable adjustment to the Contract with Southland Contractors to \$1,388,022.00 with a 10% contingency (\$138,802.20) for a total Project cost of \$1,526,824.20 for the West Street Area Improvements Project.

Consideration of a request to approve a Professional Services Contract with Advanced Engineering Services for design of the Knights Academy Road Lift Station and Sanitary Sewer Transmission Improvement Project.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City of Valdosta is experiencing increased regional growth within the Cherry Creek basin along the Bemiss Road corridor. New sanitary sewer improvements are required to facilitate growth and new connections to the public sewer system. Development in this area has historically been constrained due to the available capacity for distribution at critical nodes within the system, such as gravity sewer transmission mains and various lift stations. The City of Valdosta Engineering Department solicited a Proposal for survey, design, and consultation services from Advanced Engineering Services (AES) for the proposed upgrades which are to begin near the intersection of Knights Academy Road and Forrest Street Extension and pump south to the intersection of Inner Perimeter Road and Barack Obama Boulevard. A Design Proposal was prepared by Advanced Engineering Services (AES) to facilitate survey, design, and consultation necessary to construct the associated lift station. The portion of the Project under design by AES is estimated to cost approximately \$2,194,000.00. AES has submitted a percentage of the Construction Contract in the amount of 6.5% of the total cost of construction. The estimated cost of design services for this Project is \$142,610.00. Should the Council choose to approve the signature of this Contract, 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 the Council for consideration prior to construction. Additionally, a plan of finance that dictates the proposed public/private share of cost for the Project will also be presented to the Council for review and approval prior to the bid award. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Professional Services Contract Agreement with Advanced Engineering Services to facilitate the design of the Knights Academy Road Lift Station and Sanitary Sewage Transmission Improvement Project.

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Professional Services Contract with Advanced Engineering Services for the design of the Knights Academy Road Lift Station and Sanitary Sewage Transmission Improvement Project.

Consideration of Professional Design Services Agreement for Scott Park and Vallotton Park upgrades.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that the City of Valdosta proposes upgrading the facilities at two existing outdoor parks, Scott Park and Vallotton Park located within the City Limits of Valdosta. At Scott Park, the upgrades would include constructing two new dual-purpose tennis/pickleball courts with lighting, installing outdoor fitness equipment along an existing walking trail, improving an open athletic field into a 300-foot baseball/softball

field, and installing a scoreboard to service this field. At Vallotton Park, the upgrades include installing dugouts, new fencing, and score boards at seven existing baseball/softball fields, installing new outdoor fitness equipment around the park, installing a skateboard park, and repaving the front parking lot of the Park. The City submitted two applications for ARPA Grant Funds for the upgrades to Scott Park and Vallotton Park described above. The grants have been awarded for construction and equipment in the respective amounts of \$1,152,800 and \$1,665,400 (total = \$2,818,200). 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 the need arises, and they are available and qualified. LEA is in our 2024/2025 library and is qualified to perform this scope of design services. The LEA Design Services Proposal for Scott Park is attached. This is an hourly rate contract with an estimated total cost of \$78,925. LEA's initial Proposal was only for Scott Park, and was submitted without having the Grant Agreement requirements available. The Grant requires compliance with multiple State and Federal Acts such as historical, environmental, archeological, clean air, clean water, etc. Therefore, to include design work for Vallotton Park and for Grant compliance, Engineering Staff recommends setting the design services budget at \$170,000. This is approximately six percent (6%) of the construction costs which aligns with nationally accepted practice. The Contract is based upon hourly rates for services performed; therefore, payment will only be made for services performed. Upon the 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 these Park upgrades. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the Design Services Agreement with LEA for upgrades to Scott Park and Vallotton Park.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the Design Services Agreement with LEA for upgrades to Scott Park and Vallotton Park.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request for extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services for property located on Inner Perimeter Road in Lowndes County.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that periodically, the Utilities Department receives water and sewer service requests from entities outside or bordering the City Limits. In these cases, those entities must present an extraterritorial service request to both the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County. Upon approval of both City and County governing authorities, the water and/or sewer systems may then be constructed and connected to the City water distribution and sewer collection systems. The property is depicted in the attached image and is a portion of Tax Parcel 0156D 005. This property is owned by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority (VLIA) and will be occupied by a Walmart Dairy Product Processing Facility. The property lies outside of the City Limits and within Lowndes County, and in support of the Project, the City is extending both the water main and gravity sewer main of sufficient size to serve this industrial Project. The 2022 Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) Agreement provides, "Any party may make an extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services upon approval of the affected party." Pending County approval of an extraterritorial extension of Valdosta water services, the property will be in Valdosta's water service area. The owner/developer has requested water services from the City of Valdosta. The City has adequate infrastructure and capacity to provide services to the property. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the extraterritorial water and sewer service request by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority to connect to City water services, followed by the appropriate request to Lowndes County for approval based on the language in the SDS Agreement.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request for extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services for property located on Inner Perimeter Road in Lowndes County.

Consideration of a request for extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services for property located on Hunt Road in Lowndes County.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that periodically, the Utilities Department receives water and sewer service requests from entities outside or bordering the City Limits. In these cases, those entities must present an extraterritorial service request to both the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County. Upon approval of both City and County governing authorities, the water and/or sewer systems may then be constructed and connected to the City water distribution and sewer collection systems. The property is a portion of Tax Parcel 0156D 004. This property was owned by The Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority (VLIA) and was sold to PRINSCO, a manufacturer of High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) and Polypropylene (PP) pipe. The property lies outside of the City limits and within Lowndes County, and in support of the Project the City is extending both water main and gravity sewer main of sufficient size to serve this industrial Project. The 2022 Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) Agreement provides, "Any party may make an extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services upon approval of the affected party." Pending County approval of an extraterritorial extension of Valdosta water services, the property will be in Valdosta's water service area. The Owner/Developer has requested water services from the City of Valdosta. The City has adequate infrastructure and capacities to provide services to the property. Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the extraterritorial water and sewer service request by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Industrial Authority/PRINSCO to connect to City water services, followed by the appropriate request to Lowndes County for approval based on the language in the SDS Agreement.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the request for extraterritorial extension of water and sewer services for property located on Hunt Road in Lowndes County.

Consideration of a request from Acelecom Telecommunications to register with the City of Valdosta in order to provide telecommunication services.

Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, stated that since 2008, in accordance with Georgia law (O.C.G.A. 46-5-1), all telecommunication and telephone firms are required to register with the City in order to serve residents within the City. Following registration, the firms must follow the City's permitting procedure for work within the City's street right-of-way. Acelecom, a telecommunications company based in Sandy Springs, Georgia has submitted documentation to register with the City of Valdosta (see the attached application). It is complete in accordance with the requirements of (O.C.G.A. 46-5-1), which states: "Any telephone company chartered by the laws of this or any other state shall have the right to construct, maintain, and operate its lines and facilities upon, under, along, and over the public roads and highways and rights of way of this state with the approval of the county or municipal authorities in charge of such roads, highways, and rights of way." Ben O'Dowd, City Engineer, recommended that Council approve the registration request from Acelecom Telecommunications to serve the residents of the City of Valdosta.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a request from Acelecom Telecommunications to register with the City of Valdosta in order to provide telecommunication services.

Consideration of a request to approve the revised American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) proposed Projects and allocation amounts.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFR), a Part of the American Rescue Plan, delivered \$350 billion to State, Local, and Tribal Governments across the Country to support their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The City of Valdosta received a total allocation of \$16,254,692 from this Program. The City has expended a total of \$13,935,856 of these funds with \$2,318,836 remaining. The current total expended reflects a reduction of \$98,400 from the prior update due to the reclassification of a portion of the Valdosta Police Department's HVAC improvements (the bulk of the Project was paid through a Grant with general fund bearing the balance). The reallocation of ARPA funds is to provide additional funding for the new Public Safety Center and to ensure that all ARPA funds are obligated by the December 31, 2024 deadline. The proposed reallocation includes the following: (1) South Patterson Property Acquisitions - \$282,900, (2) ARPA Manager - \$250,000, and (3) City Facilities - \$1,186 for a total of \$534,086. The total would be reallocated to the new Public Safety Center's renovation to allow Fire Station 8 (housed in the new Public Safety Center) to begin operations on schedule. Chuck Dinkins,

Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the proposed reallocation of unobligated ARPA funds to the new Public Safety Center.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve the revised American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) proposed Projects and allocation amounts. Councilman Harden seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

Consideration of a request to approve an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for the City of Valdosta.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the City is renovating the building purchased as the Public Safety Facility. The new Facility will incur both construction and operating costs before the end of FY25. Grant funding to cover construction has not materialized, and significant costs will need to be absorbed in FY25 to remain on schedule. The current Budget anticipated \$500,000 for engineering and other costs. Additional costs would have been funded from grants. Costs are anticipated to total approximately \$1.5 million in FY25 if this phase of the Project is to be completed on schedule. Additional staffing attributable to the new Station is projected to total approximately \$805,765 with 25% of that budgeted in FY25 leaving approximately \$604,324 in additional operational costs (at present levels) to be funded in FY26. In order to remain within Budget for the current Fiscal Year without delaying construction, the Budget will need to be amended. The recommended amendment consists of the following: (1) Increase the property tax budget - \$ 600,000.00, (2) Increase the transfer from ARPA - \$534,086.37, (3) Increase the current year construction budget - \$1,134,086.37, (4) Net Impact to General Fund Budget – 0. The increase in property taxes will fund construction in the current year as well as operational costs in future years. The increase in ARPA receipts represents ARPA dollars that remain unencumbered (the funds need to be obligated by December 31, 2024). Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the Budget amendment as presented.

A MOTION was made by Councilman Howard to approve an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for the City of Valdosta. Councilman McIntyre seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (6-1) with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

Consideration of a request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority to deed the property located at Fresno Street and Forrestwood Drive to the City of Valdosta.

Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, stated that the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority (LBA) is requesting to deed property located at Fresno Street and Forrestwood Drive to the City. The property is a retention area that the City currently maintains, and the LBA has never maintained it. The property surrounds the cul-de-sac and has a barrier for traffic, and there appears to be a water main located in this area. If the property is deeded over to the City, it would allow City Staff to fully control the storm drainage area and possibly re-configure the traffic obstruction to keep traffic from driving over this area and causing potential damage to the water main. Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, recommended that Council approve the request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority to deed the property located at Fresno Street/Forrestwood Drive to the City.

Councilwoman Miller-Cody stated that there used to be a fence there and inquired as to whether the curb and island would be removed. The citizens were asking her. Catherine Ammons stated that we have spoken with the Engineer as well and it will be reconfigured so that the Public Safety vehicles will be able to get through there.

A MOTION by Councilman Harden, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve a request from the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority to deed the property located at Fresno Street and Forrestwood Drive to the City of Valdosta.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Sementha Mathews, Executive Director of the Turner Center for the Arts, 4069 Conway Circle, thanked Rep. John LaHood for his support of the General Assembly Funding for the Children’s Imagination Station. She also wanted to give the Mayor and Council an update on the Children’s Imagination Station. They sent out the RFP

on August 30, 2024 and hope to have bids back by September 30, 2024. It will be a wonderful development on the corner of Webster Street and Ashley Street. It will be 10,000 square feet of hands-on engaging learning experiences that stimulate the curiosity and creativity in children as well as fostering essential foundational skills. They are currently in the fund-raising phase and the economic impact of children's museums on a community is more than \$5.5 billion annually nationwide. More than 40% of that occurs outside of the museum walls. This is happening in the retail industry, graphic design, and different hospitality services. Approximately 90% of a child's time is spent outside the classroom. This is exciting for them because they get to have that time with the children. Research shows that play is learning for children and we are grateful to be a part of this. Also, a Beautification Project will take place on Saturday, September 7, 2024 from 7:00 a.m. to noon at the Turner Center. There is a classical music concert on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. featuring Julian Gargiulo who is an exceptional pianist. They will have 2River Station playing on Friday, September 13, 2024 in the Art Park. There will be a Literary Fair on Saturday, September 14, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Arts Center.

Dale Flucas, #5 Verbena Circle, stated that he is concerned about one of his neighbors. She is turning her house into an "After Hours Event" on the weekend and he was wondering if that was legal and if there was anything that the City Council could do. The neighbors in the area have complained about it.

A citizen stated that he was here to speak about his neighborhood on Willow Way. They have a problem with a neighbor on their street. They call it a clubhouse and she is using the house to have parties from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. She is disturbing the neighborhood. There was a recent shooting a couple of weeks ago at a party which included young adults and children. They have called about the disturbance and there is a City Ordinance about noise. They are not obeying the Ordinance. When the neighbors call the Police, people who are partying have a lookout and they turn the music down. As soon as the Police leave they turn the music back up. He saw on Facebook where she was planning to have a rapper come and play. The backyard is set up like a nightclub with tables and drinks. People pay for food and drinks and she does not have a liquor license to be holding that kind of party in the neighborhood. Most of the citizens in that neighborhood are between the ages of 60 and 90 years old. There are some people who have health issues and it has become a big problem. He has been living in this neighborhood for 64 years and he has never encountered anything like this. She was on the news recently talking about an incident and she said that the Valdosta Police Department took \$800 of her money. They are trying to get somebody to do something about this. They have always had a safe neighborhood with no gun shots or drugs in the area and they would like for it to remain that way.

Lakisha Byron Mazion, 2513 Orlando Drive, stated that on September 3, 2024, her daughter was murdered and the victim's family feels like they have been left behind. They have to deal with people who are out on the street and who murdered their love ones. This causes a problem because it brings tension when you try to be humble and keep everything down. She has been trying to get in touch with different people in the City to discuss it but she has not received a call back.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that there are a lot of upcoming events taking place. On September 6, 2024, there will be First Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Downtown area. On Saturday, September 7, 2024, the Fire Department will host the 9/11 Run starting in Downtown Valdosta at 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. On Tuesday, September 10, 2024, the Citizens Fire Academy will begin at 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Station 8 at 4434 North Forrest Street. On Saturday, September 21, 2024, there will be a Love Where You Live Clean-up on East Mary Street from North Ashley Street to North Troup Street. Volunteers will meet at 1101 North Ashley Street. The City of Valdosta Movie Night will start back up on Saturday, September 21, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. at Unity Park. The movie will be "Remember the Titans."

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Howard stated that he knows that they are not supposed to direct comments to anyone in the audience, but to all of you who came up here and spoke tonight, he wanted to let them know that they have been heard. He also wanted them to realize that all our Police Chief and Police Officers can do is to arrest people who break the law. They need for citizens to reach out to the Judges who give them bonds and let them get out on probation. Those people are elected just like the City Council. It is not the Police Chief's fault. All she can do is

to arrest them when they do something bad. He is glad Representative LaHood is here tonight because he would like to talk to him about speaking with Governor Kemp about trying to do something with DJJ rules. Our Police Officers go out and arrest someone and they release them right back to the parents. Their hands are tied and we are tired and frustrated too. It is leaving it like the Council does not care but they do.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the September 5, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:25 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, September 19, 2024.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta