

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
5:30 P.M., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 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. City Attorney Tim Tanner was absent and Attorney Annika Register of Coleman Talley, LLP filled in. The invocation was given by Councilman Tim Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

Consideration of the September, 2024 Employee of the Month Award (Traffic Signal Technicians Grady Padgett, Thomas Keen, and Danny Rickman, Engineering Department).

Bo Bewley, Traffic Manager, stated that on August 16, 2024, at approximately 8:15 a.m., the Traffic Signal Technicians were in the process of repairing a traffic signal at the intersection of Inner Perimeter Road and Hill Avenue. During this operation, a semi-truck was approaching the intersection on East Hill Avenue traveling westbound. As the driver attempted a left turn onto Inner Perimeter Road, the semi-truck overturned, coming to rest on the asphalt in the middle of the intersection. Traffic Signal Technicians Grady Padgett, Thomas Keen, and Danny Rickman swiftly responded to the emergency and rushed to the semi to assist the driver and then contacting 911 for immediate help. Upon arrival of first responders, the three Traffic Signal Technicians vacated the area and promptly began setting up a safe work zone to detour traffic around the accident and to ensure the intersection was secure for incoming traffic. We wish to extend our heartfelt commendation to the Traffic Signal Technicians for their remarkable and courageous actions in aiding the driver and ensuring the safety of the intersection.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Meeting held on September 5, 2024 were approved by unanimous consent (7-0) of the Council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-14, A RESOLUTION FOR THE ADOPTION OF A PUBLIC TRANSIT TITLE VI PLAN FOR THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of a Resolution for the adoption of a Public Transit Title VI Plan for the City of Valdosta.

Larry Ogden, Public Works Director, stated that the City of Valdosta applied for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Grant through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to assist in the funding of a Public Transit System. In order to receive Federal Funds, the recipient (City of Valdosta) must have a Public Transit Title VI Plan in place. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act requires that “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The City of Valdosta’s Transit Director collaborated with both GDOT and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to develop this Plan. Larry Ogden, Public Works Director, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the adoption of the Public Transit Title VI Plan in order to meet both FTA and GDOT requirements to receive Federal financial assistance.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2024-14, a Resolution authorizing the adoption of a Public Transit Title VI Plan for the City of Valdosta, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-15, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF VALDOSTA TO APPLY FOR THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 5307 GRANT FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 TO CONTINUE THE VALDOSTA ON-DEMAND PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM

Consideration of a Resolution authorizing the City of Valdosta to apply for the Georgia Department of Transportation 5307 Grant Funding for Fiscal Year 2026 to continue the Valdosta OnDemand Public Transit System.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that the City of Valdosta identified a need for public transit and is working with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to continue to fill this need annually. The City of Valdosta has applied for 5307 Grant Funding from GDOT for Fiscal Year 2026 to continue the Valdosta OnDemand Public Transit System. Current funding is available for expenses incurred during the current year. In order to maintain Grant Funding, the City must make application for a new 5307 Grant each Fiscal Year. A Resolution has been prepared which authorizes the City to apply for GDOT Grant Funding for the upcoming Fiscal Year. The Grant will cover 50% of operational costs as defined by the Grant as well as 80% of capital costs. In addition, the State will cover 10% of certain costs until funding is exhausted. The City's total share of the Project should be approximately 30%. The remaining 70% would be covered by Federal and State participation to a maximum of \$1,620,766. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the Resolution authorizing the City of Valdosta to apply for GDOT Grant Funding for FY26 for the continued operation of Valdosta OnDemand Public Transit System,

A MOTION by Councilman Howard, seconded by Councilman Gibbs, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to enact Resolution No. 2024-15, a Resolution authorizing the City of Valdosta to apply for the Georgia Department of Transportation 5307 Grant Funding for Fiscal Year 2026 to continue the Valdosta OnDemand Public Transit System, the complete text of which will be found in Resolution Book VII.

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND EXPENDITURES

Consideration of bids for improvements to Olympic Park (Bid No. 09-24-25).

Laura Levesque, Grants Administrator, stated that on October 23, 2023, the City of Valdosta received approval for a reimbursement Grant through OPB's Improving Neighborhood Outcomes in Disproportionately Impacted Communities. This Grant was awarded for the improvement/refurbishment of Olympic Park located at 100 West Florida Avenue. The reimbursement Grant was approved with a maximum expenditure of \$243,897.64. This Grant was awarded with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds and the Grant Funds must be expended (reimbursed) prior to December of 2026. This Grant was approved for the replacement of existing playground equipment, resurfacing, and the installation of a concrete curb. The City of Valdosta published an invitation to bid on August 1, 2024 for the subsequent work (Bid No. 09-24-25). Sealed bids were opened on August 29, 2024 through standard procurement procedures. One responsible bid was received by Game Time in the amount of \$227,955.47. The bid must be approved and funding obligated to issue a Purchase Order/Contract and commence work. Once the work has been completed and the vendor paid, the reimbursement request needs to be submitted for payment. Laura Levesque, Grants Administrator, recommended that Council approve the bid submitted by Game Time in the amount of \$227,955.47 plus a contingency in the amount of \$15,942.17 to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$243,897.64 for improvements to Olympic Park.

Councilwoman Tooley inquired as to whether the money would be used to replace equipment at Olympic Park as well. Laura Levesque, Grants Administrator, stated that it would specifically replace the concrete curbs, the rubber mulch that is under the existing equipment, and replace the existing equipment. Councilwoman Tooley stated that she thought the Parks and Recreation Authority was responsible for that. Laura Levesque stated that it is a Parks and Recreation property but we managed to secure the Grant on their behalf at no cost to the City. This will also be for Scott Park and Vallotton Park.

A MOTION by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, seconded by Councilman McIntyre, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to approve the bid submitted by Game Time in the amount of \$227,955.47 plus a contingency in the amount of \$15,942.17 to handle any unforeseen circumstances for a total of \$243,897.64 for improvements to Olympic Park.

Chasity Reid, Representative with the U. S. Small Business Administration Office of Disaster Recovery in Atlanta, stated that she wanted to speak about their Economic Injury Program. Due to the recent Hurricane Debby, the businesses in our County are eligible for that Program. They offer capital to small businesses to meet their financial obligations that they would have met if the storm had not hit their business. A lot of people think that when you hear about a disaster in a business, it only refers to if the real estate was physically hit. In this case, it can also be where you have a business who has customers in Counties outside of your area that were affected and they would also be able to claim those losses if they were getting those clients. They also could have had a small shutdown for either a day or a couple of hours so they could claim that as well. The deadline for the Economic Injury Program, which is a low interest disaster loan which is 4% for businesses with no credit elsewhere, is May 12, 2025. The term is 30 years with the first 12 months being no interest accrued or payment. They have physical locations that applicants can go to and speak with someone in person. They also have an on-line application process that they can go to. All they are asking is that we share it on our website and social media so that everyone will know. She will also be reaching out to Emergency Managers and the local Chambers to get the word out.

Brian Greer, Valdosta Alliance Radio Station, stated that he would like to get the City's support. They serve the Hispanic community and they are the first Spanish Radio Station in the City. They sent a letter to the City Manager requesting a donation or any support that the City can provide to this new, non-profit organization. They serve the Hispanic community and they need help delivering information. They suffered when the Hurricane passed through because there was no communication or information. This Radio Station is serving the community in several ways. They need the support of the City for their new organization. If the City has a vehicle that could be donated that would help them to do their job.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that on Saturday, September 21, 2024, there will be a Car Seat Safety Check Event from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. conducted by the Valdosta Fire Department, the Valdosta Police Department, and the Region 8 Trauma Advisory Committee at Unity Park Amphitheater. There will be a Love Where You Live Clean-up on September 21, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. 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." On September 30, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mayor Matheson will be at the Boys and Girls Club on Toombs Street reading "My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World" by Superbowl Champion and Author Malcolm Mitchell. This event is part of the new Georgia Reads Initiative by the Georgia Municipal Association's Georgia Cities Solutions and Share the Magic Foundation.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Matheson stated the he would like to recognize class members from Leadership Lowndes or the Youth Leadership Lowndes who are in attendance at the Council Meeting tonight. He thanked them for getting involved in our community. Also, SGMC Health held a fantastic Groundbreaking Ceremony today for the \$150 million expansion for the four-story Women's Tower and a new Emergency Room. It is a red letter day for Valdosta for the \$1.1 billion economic impact they have here year end and year out in the region. We support them in any way, shape, or form. If you look all around our City and see its prosperity, it is because of groundwork laid by two gentlemen in attendance tonight, former Mayor John Gayle and former City Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Alvin Payton, Jr.

Councilman Gibbs stated that the Miracle League of Valdosta begins their season on September 24, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at Freedom Park. It will last for six weeks, and they are looking for volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The youth will play on Tuesdays and the adults will play on Thursdays. They also have a full concession stand. There are 92 players now and you can visit their website at valdostamiracles.org.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A **MOTION** by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (7-0) to adjourn the September 19, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 5:54 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 10, 2024.

City Clerk, City of Valdosta

Mayor, City of Valdosta