

adopted (7-0) to approve the purchase of a new Vanguard Belt Screen in the amount of \$85,500 from Nuove Energie USA, Inc. for the Mud Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Ben H. Norton, Councilman - At Large
SECONDER:	Andy Gibbs, Councilman - District 6
AYES:	Miller-Cody, Tooley, Vickers, Howard, Carroll, Gibbs, Norton

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

John Quarterman, 3338 Country Club Road, stated that he would like to thank the Mayor for participating in the recent Mayor's and Chairman's Paddle. They encountered a lot of trash while paddling on the Withlacoochee River and several of the participants were helping to pick up the trash. People from all over are concerned about the litter issue. A lot of the trash is coming out of Sugar Creek and Three Mile Branch. Bobby McKenzie was paddling down from Langdale Park and before he got to Sugar Creek, his boat was full of trash that came out of Three Mile Branch. There are some solutions and the best part is that fixing this problem compared to the sewer system problem is tiny. He also congratulated the City on receiving \$12 million in ARPA money.

Michelle Girtman, Executive Director of The Haven (Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center), stated that they are taking some substantial funding cuts and they are asking the City to look at an ARPA proposal. The Governor's Office is also going to see if they can help but they are in a fix. Washington made a formula error and all of the budgets across the United States were affected. They are going to lose 36% of their funding and for The Haven, that is \$455,000 for two years straight. The formula has been fixed but they cannot replace the money because they work a year in arrears. It will be approximately two to three years before they see the fix and any of that money come back to Valdosta. She was looking at their Budget today and they spent about \$350,000 backing our community in just buying groceries local, relocation of women and children, transportation, utilities, and other things. They have approximately 25 people on staff and they do not want to have to lay anyone off; however, they will if they take a \$500,000 cut. That will reduce services and programs for what they can do. They are required to operate 24 hours a day and during the COVID-19 Pandemic, they never closed their doors. They are at a 141% increase in temporary protection orders and they serve over 800 women and children. They served more women in 2020 in one single year since they opened the doors in 1986. It is very important to keep their program open and they have never been to the City asking for money. Ms. Girtman stated that she has been here for 13 years and has never asked for help; however, she is asking for the City's help with ARPA money. The Haven needs your help and the women and children they serve need your help. Councilman Gibbs inquired as to whether they received any PPP funds. Ms. Girtman stated that they did not because of Federal Regulations. They consider that a duplication of services and supplanting and even though they actually got \$207,000 in PPP, they had to return that to the bank. Councilman Gibbs inquired as to whether they functioned with what was in their Budget during COVID. Ms. Girtman stated that was correct and they have always used Mathis Auditorium for their annual fundraisers; however, Mathis Auditorium was closed down so they could not do their annual fundraisers. They have missed two and a half years of fundraising.