



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

**CITY OF FOREST PARK
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION MEETING**

Monday, November 17, 2025, at 7:00
PM Forest Park City Hall | Council
Chambers 745 Forest Parkway,
Forest Park, GA 30297

The Honorable Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA

The Honorable Kimberly James
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez
The Honorable Allan Mears

The Honorable Delores A. Gunn
The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells

Latosha Clemons, Interim City Manager
Randi Rainey, City Clerk
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

APPROVED MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Mayor Butler called the meeting to order at 7:19 p.m.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE

Dr. Payton provided the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK

Present

Councilmember Kimberly James
Councilmember Delores Gunn
Councilmember Hector Gutierrez- **Via Zoom**
Councilmember Latresa Akins-Wells
Councilmember Allan Mears

Absent

Others in attendance: Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Josh Cox, IT Director; Rodney Virgil, Level 2 Support Engineer; Javon Lloyd, PIO; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director; Shalonda Brown, HR Director; Diane Lewis, HR Deputy Director; Beverly Moultrie, Risk Manager; Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director; Charise Clay, Main Street Manager; SaVaughn Irons, Senior Planner; Dorothy Roper-Jackson, Municipal Court Director; Tarik Maxwell, Director of Rec and Leisure; Alton Matthews, Public Works Director; Geoff May, Deputy Fire Chief; Brandon Criss, Police Chief, Onesia Scott, Code Compliance Manager, and Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney.

Not in Attendance: Interim City Manager, Latosha Clemons

IV. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**

It was moved to approve the agenda as printed.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Mears.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez,
Councilmember Akins-Wells, and Councilmember Mears.

V. **ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**

It was moved to approve the consent agenda as printed.

The motion was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells and seconded by Councilmember James.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez,
Councilmember Akins-Wells, and Councilmember Mears.

VI. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. **Council Approval of Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes from November 3, 2025- Executive Offices**

It was moved to adopt the minutes of November 3, 2025, as printed.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez,
Councilmember Akins-Wells, and Councilmember Mears.

VII. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

(All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

There were two (2) Public Comment Speakers.

Mr. Cotten addressed the Mayor and Council and stated that he has lived in Forest Park for approximately 25 years, having first purchased a home in 2001, moved away in 2008, and returned in 2020. He noted that he currently works for the Public Works Department in the Street Division and takes great pride in his work, as do his coworkers. Mr. Cotten expressed concern about declining morale within Public Works. He referenced a comment he heard suggesting that the Mayor and City Council were “way up here” while Public Works employees were “way down here,” which made him feel undervalued. He stated that the department performs difficult and unpleasant tasks, including removing dead animals, cutting down trees, and responding to emergencies, and he believes employees deserve acknowledgment and support. He shared that, although he is nearly 68 and previously retired, he returned to work because he enjoys his job and serving the city. Mr. Cotten requested that the Mayor and Council consider visiting Public Works to

address departmental concerns and help improve morale.

Dr. Folami stated that after listening to the work session discussions, she believes the City needs to take a deeper look into several issues. She said that it may be necessary to conduct a thorough review of the City's audit, amend areas of concern, and work closely with staff to ensure the city is operating properly and transparently. She raised concerns regarding recent matters involving the liquor store approval process, stating it appeared to have occurred without clear communication and felt like a "back-door" process. She noted that churches and local spiritual leaders were heavily involved and impacted, and she believed the situation should have been handled more openly.

Dr. Folami also commented on development along Forest Parkway and questioned how decisions were made between property owners and tenants regarding rebuilding. She sought clarity on how those processes work. She referenced previous conversations her pastor and First Lady had with the prior administration regarding certain nonprofit documentation and noted that supporting records could be found through IRS filings. She encouraged the Mayor and Council to amend outdated ordinances, so that they are clearer, more transparent, and easier for officials and residents to understand.

Dr. Folami congratulated the recently elected and re-elected officials but expressed disappointment with procedural issues that occurred during the election process. She urged the city to strengthen and update its ordinances to prevent future confusion. She further stated that some discussions between departments, such as procurement and economic development, should not be taking place publicly during meetings, as it prolongs proceedings and reflects poor preparation. She echoed the Mayor's earlier statement that continuity had "slipped" and suggested that someone within the process was "dropping the ball." She concluded by reiterating her hope that the City would address the issues raised and show proper respect to churches and congregations who are seriously engaged in worship and community service.

VIII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

2. City Manager's Report – Executive Office

Ms. Warrior presented the City Manager's Report on behalf of Director Brown and in the absence of Interim City Manager Chief Clemons. She stated that each department is engaged in a variety of ongoing projects and activities, and the purpose of her presentation was to highlight the top five accomplishments from October 2025.

She reported the following:

- **Public Works Department**

Public Works demonstrated a rapid response to a potentially serious situation involving a broken water line that caused damage to Longleaf Road. The incident received media attention. Public Works coordinated with Clayton County to implement detours and road closures and ensured repairs were completed with minimal disruption to residents.

- **Information Technology Department / Police Department Collaboration**

Under the direction of Director Cox, the IT Department partnered with the Police Department to implement a mobile warrant unit system. This new software allows officers to request warrants directly from the scene, removing the need to return to the station and improving operational efficiency.

- **Economic Development Department**

Director Dennis oversaw a groundbreaking ceremony for the Spinel Forest Park Logistics Center at the Hills property. The facility will total nearly 300,000 square feet on 22 acres along Moreland Avenue. The event was well attended by all project stakeholders.

- **Recreation and Leisure Department / Senior Program**

Director Maxwell, along with the Senior Program's Senior Managing Coordinator, hosted a costume contest for the City's legacy residents. The contest was judged by Code Compliance Supervisor Scott and Mr. Woods from Recreation and Leisure. Ms. Pat Johnson won the contest, appearing as Wonder Woman.

- **Police Department – Drone First Responders Program**

The Police Department reported ongoing activity under the drone first responder program. For October, there were 338-unit events, 19 Flock hits, an average response time of approximately 32 seconds, and 15 arrest assists. Ms. Warrior concluded by stating that the full October 2025 City Manager's Report would be available on the City's website through Issu the following day.

IX. PRESENTATIONS

3. **Financial Reporting of FY2025-2026 Monthly Financial Report-** Finance Department

Mr. Patterson, speaking on behalf of Director Wiggins, presented the monthly financial report. He explained that the report provides an overview of revenues and expenses for October, which concludes the first quarter of the fiscal year.

He noted the following key points:

- **Revenues**

The City's revenues are budgeted at \$43 million. Year-to-date revenues total approximately \$18 million, placing the City about \$17 million ahead of projected collections at this point in the fiscal year. He added that property tax revenues will begin coming in throughout November, December, and January, following the issuance of tax statements.

- **Expenses**

All departments are operating within budget, with only minor adjustments needed due to cost increases for certain goods procured during the previous budget cycle. Overall expenditures are approximately 33%, which is in line with the end of the first quarter. Fleet Services and the Police Department were noted as outliers, though he stated this was expected and not a cause for concern.

- **Budget Overview Charts**

He briefly referenced the accompanying charts, which illustrate fund performance and department spending levels, emphasizing that the data aligns with the narrative overview he provided.

Mr. Patterson concluded by stating that there were no major issues to report and welcomed any questions from the Council.

X. PUBLIC HEARING

4. Council Approval on Case # RZ-2025-03- Rezoning Request for 4652 Jonesboro Road- Planning and Community Development Department

It was motioned to close the regular meeting to open the public hearing for the Rezoning Permit.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn. Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

In Favor:

Butch Springerson — owner of the property

Dr. Folami- in favor

Opposed:

None

It was motioned to close the public hearing and reconvene back into the work session meeting for the Rezoning Permit.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn. Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

It was motioned to approve RZ-2025-03- Rezoning Request for 4652 Jonesboro Road.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA- APPROVED

5. **Council Approval to enter into a contract with Dr. Christopher Edens to serve as the City's Medical Director-** Fire and EMS Division

XII. OLD BUSINESS

6. **Council Approval of an Ordinance Amending the Charter of the City of Forest Park, Georgia, to Revise Section 2.15 ("Inquiries and Investigations") of Article II ("Governmental Structure")-** City Attorney's Office

It was moved to approve an Ordinance Amending the Charter of the City of Forest Park, Georgia, to Revise Section 2.15 ("Inquiries and Investigations") of Article II ("Governmental Structure").

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

XIII. NEW BUSINESS

7. **Council Approval on the Beautification Committee Appointments—**Code Compliance Department

It was moved to appoint Cynthia Bacon (Ward 5) to the Beautification Committee. The motion was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells and seconded by Councilmember James.

Councilmember James called for a point of order and mentioned the appointment of existing wards.

It was moved to reappoint the previous committee members and to appoint Cynthia Bacon (Ward 5) to the Beautification Committee.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Mears.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

8. **Council Approval of a Partnership Agreement with The Rock Church of Atlanta, Inc. and the City of Forest Park-**Legislative Office

It was moved to approve the Partnership Agreement with The Rock Church of Atlanta, Inc., and the City of Forest Park.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn. Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

9. **Council Approval to Confirm the Establishment of a Development Impact Fee Program and Consider Appointment of the Development Impact Fee Advisory Committee** -Planning and Community Development Department

It was moved to table the Establishment of a Development Impact Fee Program and Consider Appointment of the Development Impact Fee Advisory Committee.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

10. **Council Approval on the ReForest Park Pilot Program**- Public Works Department

It was moved to approve the ReForest Park Pilot Program.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

XIV. **CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY**

Councilmember James thanked everyone for attending and reminded residents that the Ward meeting would take place on the third Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m. at the Hartsfield Community Center, 696 Main Street. She noted that the dinner provider for the meeting had not yet been finalized.

Councilmember James addressed earlier comments about employee morale and respect. She shared that during the City's Thanksgiving staff event, she was briefly booed by an unidentified staff member when she took the microphone. She stated that she was not offended but wanted employees to understand that she consistently advocates for them. She highlighted several actions she has supported during her tenure, including wage increases, approval of the pension plan, enhanced medical and dental benefits, and initiatives focused on securing housing opportunities for City employees. She encouraged employees to get to know her personally rather than rely on outside negativity or misinformation, noting that if individuals have a history of dishonesty, that pattern tends to persist. Councilmember James shared her personal ties to Forest Park, stating she has lived in the community for more than 30 years and has raised her children and grandchildren here. She emphasized her love for the community, its residents, and its employees.

Councilmember James clarified that she does not view herself as "above" anyone and believes strongly in mutual respect, even when people disagree. She reaffirmed that her

actions, not her words, demonstrate her commitment to the workforce. She referenced an earlier incident involving a planned community ride with Director Matthews that was cut short due to a scheduling conflict and expressed full confidence in Director Matthews's leadership and expertise. She also discussed the importance of workplace safety, referencing past challenges with the City's insurance coverage due to accidents and claims. She noted that the implementation of risk-management procedures, such as proper equipment use and securing City property, is necessary to protect employees and the City's financial stability.

Councilmember James closed by reiterating her appreciation for all employees, especially those performing difficult field work. She acknowledged that departmental morale naturally fluctuates with organizational change but stated that every change undertaken is intended to move Forest Park forward. She encouraged respectful communication and emphasized that, although opinions and personalities may differ, the goal is to continue improving the City for the benefit of employees and residents alike.

Councilmember Gunn thanked everyone for attending and addressed earlier comments regarding employee morale. She expressed disappointment that some staff believed members of the governing body viewed themselves as "above" City employees, stating that such impressions were either misheard or told to them by others. She cautioned against relying on rumors or misinformation and noted that such conduct can be harmful.

Councilmember Gunn described several positive interactions she has had with Public Works staff. She spoke about a conversation with an employee responsible for cleaning bus stops and commended staff who maintain streets, curbs, and various areas throughout the City. She noted recently observing crews working along Main Street and Forest Parkway and expressed deep appreciation for their efforts, stating that the City would not function properly without their work. She firmly stated that the idea that elected officials see themselves as "up here" while Public Works employees are "down there" is untrue. She emphasized that such a claim is inaccurate and reiterated that all departments are interconnected and essential to the City's success.

Councilmember Gunn shared that she continues to learn about the depth and complexity of the Public Works Department, including the mechanics who maintain City vehicles. She referenced her own background in carpentry and construction-related work and stated that she understands the nature of hands-on labor. She expressed sincere appreciation to Mr. Cotten and all Public Works employees for their commitment and service, stating that they are valuable, needed, and a vital part of the City's operations. She encouraged employees to feel comfortable speaking directly with elected officials and reiterated her respect for their contributions. She concluded by thanking the department for its continued hard work on behalf of Forest Park.

Councilmember Gutierrez thanked the Mayor and all attendees. He stated that he was unsure whether recent confusion stemmed from a previous comment he made about a "pyramid," where he referenced constituents being at the top and elected officials being accountable to them. He clarified that his remarks were intended to highlight that the power lies with the people who elect their representatives, and not to imply that staff were "at the bottom" in any negative sense.

Councilmember Gutierrez thanked Mr. Cotten for speaking and noted that it takes courage for an employee to come forward publicly. He stated that such openness reflects the transparency and environment the City strives to maintain. He added that each department should regularly evaluate its internal culture to ensure employees feel supported. He acknowledged that, ideally, these concerns should be handled internally, but if an employee feels unheard, leadership must take that seriously and examine the workplace environment. He expressed appreciation for the work performed by Public Works and stated that their contributions are essential to the community.

Councilmember Gutierrez also addressed his earlier exchange with the Directors of Economic Development and Planning, Building, and Zoning. He apologized if any of his comments came across as disrespectful, explaining that he had been confused by the back-and-forth discussion. He agreed that such disagreements should not occur publicly during meetings but noted that transparency remains important so the community understands what is happening.

Councilmember Gutierrez informed the body that he was participating in a housing conference in Savannah, where Forest Park would be recognized as a GICH recipient later in the week. He discussed homelessness within Ward 3, especially around Starr Park and the Calvary Refuge Center, and noted that several constituents had contacted him about concerns. He expressed empathy for unhoused residents and explained that he hoped the conference would help him learn about effective initiatives, available funding, and regional collaboration strategies to address homelessness.

He concluded by stating he would return on Thursday and was proudly representing Forest Park while attending the conference. He thanked everyone for their public comments and expressed hope that the issues raised regarding the church and the associated application process would be resolved, noting that the community needs supportive institutions rather than additional barriers.

Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked the Fire and Police Departments for their response to the recent fire incident on Austin Place in Ward 4 and expressed sincere appreciation for their continued service to the community. She announced that the Wells Workout program resumed the previous week and takes place every Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the gym, led by instructor Larry Malone. She also shared that this year marks the 10th annual turkey giveaway for Forest Park residents. The event began with 25 turkeys, grew to 75, and now provides up to 300 turkeys each year. She noted that 200 turkeys have already been donated and invited residents to attend the giveaway on November 25 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the amphitheater.

Councilmember Akins-Wells responded to Mr. Cotten's earlier remarks by affirming her longstanding support for Public Works employees during her 13 years in office. She stated that Public Works staff have often been treated as if they are "lower" or less respected than other departments, and she remains committed to consistently advocating for their value and dignity. She emphasized that departmental morale is directly tied to leadership, noting that supervisors, directors, and elected officials all influence workplace culture. She referenced the Police Department as an example of improved morale under effective leadership. She stated that when morale is low, it is appropriate to evaluate leadership at every level, including the governing body.

Councilmember Akins-Wells stressed that her title does not define her and that she remains approachable and grounded. She shared that she regularly visits various departments, including Recreation, Economic Development, and Public Works, to listen to employees and understand their concerns. She stated that employees deserve leaders who listen and follow through, not leaders who speak for appearance's sake and then walk away. She commended Mr. Cotten for having the courage to speak publicly, acknowledging that employees in the past have faced retaliation for doing so. She stated that his willingness to speak sets an example for his coworkers and reinforces that no employee is beneath anyone. She noted that she was raised to treat the janitor the same as the CEO and upholds that principle in her service.

Councilmember Akins-Wells added that her actions, not just her words, demonstrate her commitment to employees. She stated that someone messaged her during the meeting asking whether they could speak, and she consulted with the Mayor to ensure permission was granted. She clarified that employees may indeed speak, provided they do so respectfully. She added that disagreements or tension among elected officials should not affect how employees are treated or perceived. She also addressed an ethics complaint filed against her, stating that it stemmed from her advocacy for employees. She noted that such complaints are public record and can be accessed through an open records request. She stated that it is her responsibility to inquire into issues so she can perform her job effectively and will continue doing so.

Councilmember Akins-Wells closed by thanking everyone for attending, expressing love and appreciation for City employees, and wishing all residents and staff a happy Thanksgiving. She offered blessings to their families and reiterated her commitment to supporting employees and ensuring they feel valued within the City of Forest Park.

Councilmember Mears thanked everyone for attending and expressed appreciation for the large turnout, noting that Council meetings are the place where the community's business is handled. He mentioned that he intended to call on Mr. Finch to speak, but noted that he was not present.

Councilmember Mears reminded attendees to always thank the Police Department, Fire Department, and Public Works, emphasizing that all three departments work together to protect and serve the community. He reported that while riding through his ward earlier in the day, particularly in the Longleaf area, he encountered two separate groups of deer. He advised residents to be cautious when driving early in the morning or at dusk, stating that deer can cause significant damage to vehicles and pose serious safety hazards. He noted that at least five deer are routinely seen in that area of Ward 5.

Councilmember Mears concluded by thanking everyone again for coming and encouraged residents to reach out if they need assistance. He wished everyone a good weekend.

Councilmember Akins-Wells extended her condolences to Ms. Hartsfield and the entire Hartsfield family. She noted that Ms. Hartsfield's son, a long-time Forest Park resident known throughout the community, recently passed away, and his funeral was held on Saturday. She encouraged anyone who knows Ms. Hartsfield or the family to stop by, offer support, and show love during their time of loss. She concluded her remarks by reiterating

sympathy and compassion for the family.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted that it was the previous City Manager's birthday and extended well wishes to him. He also offered condolences to the last City Manager on the recent loss of his father, expressing sympathy on behalf of the governing body. He began to recognize a young woman who wished to speak, indicating that additional comments or acknowledgments were forthcoming.

Mayor Butler stated that allowing an additional speaker at that moment was unorthodox, but she wanted to provide clarification. She emphasized that the opportunity to come forward was being granted solely to address comments that had already been made during the meeting. She stressed that no derogatory remarks or personal attacks would be permitted. She noted that her decision aligned with the concerns previously raised, including those mentioned by Councilmember James.

A City employee came forward and stated that she has worked for the city for two years and three months. She explained that she previously worked in a larger city and was the first and only female in Public Works there. She shared that her role in Forest Park had been fully changed from the position she was originally hired for, and expressed that the situation has been difficult. She stated that most of the time, she is scared to come to work.

Mayor Butler stated that Attorney Matricardi would speak with the employee regarding her concerns. She explained that if the matter proved to be part of a larger issue, the appropriate channels would be followed to ensure it was properly addressed. She emphasized that established procedures are in place for handling employee concerns and that it is essential for individuals to express their issues directly to the appropriate person when given the opportunity. She noted that, in the past, concerns were brought forward and investigated, but the information provided to the investigating party did not always match the information initially presented to leadership. This discrepancy has created challenges in fully resolving matters.

Mayor Butler reiterated that the governing body takes concerns seriously and is committed to addressing them. She emphasized that employees must be honest and transparent when reporting issues so that the City can properly evaluate and respond. She stated that no one should feel their concerns are being ignored. Still, accurate information must be provided throughout the process to enable the City to take effective action.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(When an Executive Session is required, one will be called for the following issues: Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate) OCGA is §50-14-1(A)(2).

It was moved to recess into Executive Session at 8:19 pm. for Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

It was moved to reconvene in the regular session meeting at 9:30 pm.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Gunn.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez,
Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Butler adjourned the meeting at 9:31 p.m.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for Council meetings should notify the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours before the meeting at 404-366-4720.

City Clerk Signature

Mayor's Signature