



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

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

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Forest Park City Hall | Council Chambers
745 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, GA 30297

The Honorable Mayor Gwendolyn Ellison
The Honorable Kimberly James The Honorable Delores A. Gunn
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells
The Honorable Allan Mears
Latosha Clemons, Interim City Manager
Shalonda Brown, Interim City Clerk
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ellison at 7:13 PM.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE

The invocation was done by Dr. Joesph Durham followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK

Present	Absent
Mayor Gwendolyn Ellison	
Councilmember Kimberly James	
Councilmember Delores Gunn	
Councilmember Hector Gutierrez	
Councilmember Latresa Akins-Wells	
Councilmember Allan Mears	

Others in attendance: Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Josh Cox, IT Director; Rodney Virgil, Level 2 Support Engineer; Javon Lloyd, PIO; John Wiggins, Finance Director; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director; Talisa Adams, Procurement Manager; Shalonda Brown, HR Director; Diane Lewis, HR Deputy Director; Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director; SaVaughn Irons, Senior Planner; Dorthy 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, and Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS

Councilmember Gunn moved to adopt the agenda, with amendments to Item 6 and the removal of Item 9. The motion was seconded by Councilmember James and approved unanimously.

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

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilmember Gunn made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2026, work session and regular session meetings, which was seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion was unanimously approved.

1. **Council Approval of Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes from January 5, 2026-** City Clerk - Executive

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

(All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

The Interim Clerk read the decorum statement. (All speakers will have 3 minutes)
There were five (5) public comment speakers.

Dr. Lawanda Folami - She requested a point of privilege and addressed how motions were handled at the January 5, 2026, meeting. She commended the Mayor for her performance at her first meeting and thanked the Interim City Manager for her outstanding work. She also provided an update on her volleyball team.

Daphne Wynn - She expressed support for the Mayor, stating that she is honored to back her leadership in the City and is grateful that she was chosen for her role at this time. She encouraged everyone to move forward in unity.

Latron Price — He expressed he is honored to in the city. He is a business owner with a black-owned produce and food distribution center in Forest Park. He's looking forward to serving and being part of the community. He gave accolades to Dr. Folami and her comment made about community stewardship moved him. He stated they are the people who have the responsibility for stewardship, and they elect folks to do that job. That taught not only him but others in the room how to act and respond under their stewardship.

VIII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Interim City Manager Clemons presented her monthly report, which reflected momentum across multiple departments, and expressed appreciation to the department directors and staff for their efforts.

IX. PRESENTATIONS

2. **Introduction to Five New Hires for the Fire Department-** Fire & EMS Department

Background/History:

The Forest Park Fire & EMS has onboarded two (2) new Paramedics and (3) Firefighter EMTs to the Department:

Christian Pruitt – Paramedic
Johnny Parish II – Paramedic
Montavious Whitters – EMT
Erick Granados – EMT
Senatus Cherichel - EMT

Deputy Chief Geoff May will present the introductions. - Fire/EMS

Deputy Chief Geoff May presented an introduction of the five newly hired Fire Department

employees.

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

The Finance Director presented the FY 2025–2026 Monthly Financial Report to the Council.

4. **Presentation: Transforming Code Compliance through Integration with the Police Department** - Police Department

Background/History:

Code Compliance operates within the Police Department to improve coordination, officer safety, and accountability, shifting the division from a reactive model to a proactive, service-driven approach. Since integration, the division has added body-worn cameras, radio communication with Police Dispatch, and is developing standard operating procedures to improve consistency, training, and documentation. - Police

Chief Criss presented Transforming Code Compliance through Integration with the Police Department to the Council with a PowerPoint presentation.

Councilmember Mears asked a question about multi-tenants living in single-dwelling housing and is there a way to keep track of that and since Code Enforcement leaves a certain time, he notices it after hours. Chief Criss stated he will be having code compliance officers assigned to specific wards and if he needs to alter their schedule, that may be an option.

Councilmember Gunn shared her concerns about some houses in her ward as well about which she is getting complaints. Chief Criss asked her to provide addresses and he will address. Attorney Matricardi explained the difference between the crash pad and a boarding house, which the ordinance states.

Councilmember James thanked Chief Criss and then stated she believes this was a great move by the city manager. She loved the presentation.

Councilmember Gutierrez thanked Chief Criss for the presentation, and said he loves the idea of assigning staff to one ward.

X. **CONSENT AGENDA**

XI. **PUBLIC HEARING**

Councilman motioned to recess the regular meeting for the purpose of entering into the Public Hearing, seconded by Councilwoman Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

Councilwoman Gunn moved to close the public hearing and reconvene the regular meeting, seconded by Councilwoman James. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. **Council Approval of Case #TA-2025-04 Text Amendment for Title 8. – Planning and Development, Chapter 8. Zoning, Article A. – General Provisions Text Amendment for Title 8. – Planning and Development, Chapter 8. Zoning, Article F. – Boards and Commissions, section 8-8-160 Rules and Procedures, of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances to amend such section, adding subsection (d) Exemption for Single Family Home Alterations-** Planning and Community Development Department - Planning and Community Development

Councilmember Mears made a motion to recess the regular meeting and enter into the public

hearing, it was seconded by Councilmember James. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Lawanda Folami was in favor of the single-family home request. No one spoke in opposition. Councilmember James made a motion to end the public hearing and reconvene the regular meeting, it was seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion was approved unanimously. Councilmember James moved to approve Case #TA-2025-04 Text Amendment for Title 8, Chapter 8, title 8, Chapter 8, section 8-8-160, and D, seconded by Councilwoman Gunn. The motion was approved unanimously.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

6. Council Approval of a Resolution to Approve a Revised Public Safety Incentive Policy- Human Resources Department - Human Resources

Councilwoman James moved to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilwoman Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

7. Council Approval to Consider Appointments of the Development Impact Fee Advisory Committee- Planning Community Development Department - Planning and Community Development

Councilmember James informed Mayor Ellison that the Council would discuss the appointment of members to the Board in executive session.

8. Council Approval to consider Appointments of the Public Arts Review Board— Planning and Community Development Department

- Planning and Community Development

Councilmember James informed Mayor Ellison that the Council would discuss the appointment of members to the Board in executive session.

9. Council Approval of a Resolution to adopt the Personnel & Policies Manual-Human Resources Department - Attorney

XIII. CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY

Councilwoman James thanked residents for attending the meeting and announced that the January Ward meeting information will be posted to the City's website. She recognized and thanked Forest Park businesses that partnered with the school cluster for a successful business breakfast connecting ten (10) schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools. She expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the business community and local schools. Councilwoman James welcomed new City employees, specifically acknowledging those joining the Police and Fire Departments, and expressed optimism for their contributions.

Councilwoman Gunn recognized Ward 2 resident and Beautification Committee Chair, Ms. Ann Keith, for her longstanding service to the community and congratulated her on traveling to Italy to work with NBC covering the Olympics for the 18th time. Councilwoman Gunn expressed appreciation for the positive community response and engagement at the Legacy Dog Park, noting increased resident participation and fellowship. She acknowledged local food pantries and community partners serving residents, including: Gateway Restoration (Dr. Leon Beeler), held the second Monday of each month from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 4981 Phillips Drive, Liberty Ministries Worship, located at 654 Main Street, for their continued service to the community. She announced the cancellation of the Ward 2 Town Hall meeting scheduled for

Thursday, stating it will be reconvened in February. Councilwoman Gunn concluded by encouraging residents to exercise caution during inclement weather and avoid unnecessary travel. Councilmember Gunn apologized for being unable to attend a recent ward event due to travel and expressed appreciation that it was still successfully held. He welcomed new City employees and offered his support. He shared personal reflections during MLK weekend as a war veteran, explaining his decision not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the meeting due to concerns regarding national issues affecting marginalized communities. He affirmed his commitment to professionalism while conducting City business.

Councilmember Gutierrez commended the Mayor for strong leadership and performance during recent meetings. He congratulated Ms. Ann Keith on her Olympic coverage opportunity and encouraged her to represent Forest Park proudly. He announced upcoming community initiatives, including: A Pilates class scheduled at 696 on the 21st, and a knitting program for seniors to be launched this month. He noted that Food Truck Friday has been canceled due to weather conditions. He shared that he plans to transition to quarterly ward meetings and mentioned ongoing park improvements, including progress at Theater Park. He thanked residents for their public comments and acknowledged a resident who was peacefully exercising his rights outside the meeting.

Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked residents for attending and reiterated strong support for all City employees. She emphasized her commitment to treating all employees with equal respect and encouraged staff to use their voices while following the established chain of command. She praised the Mayor for effective leadership and growth and expressed appreciation to the Mayor's transition team. She formally recognized and thanked Council Aides Tenisha and Andre for their dedicated service and behind-the-scenes work supporting Council initiatives. She acknowledged Chief Criss and Tariq for their leadership and continued efforts to move the City forward. She concluded by encouraging continued community pride and engagement.

Councilmember Mears thanked everyone for coming out and had concerns about the public bathrooms in his ward at the park and addressed the Public Works Director. Director Matthews stated he would look into that and provide an update.

XIV. 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)

Councilwoman Akins-Wells motioned to enter into executive session to discuss personnel, litigation, and real estate, seconded by Councilwoman James. The vote was unanimously approved. Mayor and Council entered into executive session at 8:28 pm

Councilwoman James made a motion to exit the executive session and reconvene the regular meeting at 9:57 pm, it was seconded by Councilwoman Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Councilwoman Akins-Wells made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

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 prior to the meeting at 404-366-4720.

