CITY OF FOREST PARK

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Monday, March 2, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Forest Park City Hall | Council Chambers
745 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, GA 30297

The Honorable Mayor Gwen W. 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 6:00 PM.

II. 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	

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS

Mayor Ellison informed the Council that she has an item that she would like to add to the work session agenda as item number seven, to Authorize Submission of FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Application and Acceptance of Award. Councilmember James made a motion to accept the agenda with that addition, seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The vote was unanimously approved.

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

Councilmember James made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The vote was unanimously approved.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Council Approval of Four (4) Task Orders for A&E Design Services for the Forest Park Administration Complex (Re-Design - Three Phases)** - Public Works

Background/History:
At the February 16th 2026 Council Meeting, Council approved the proposed re-designed Forest Park Administration Complex project to proceed under a phased implementation approach. In alignment with that direction, the Public Works Department requests Council approval of the associated Task Orders necessary to advance each phase of design, construction documentation, and contract administration services for the Forest Park Administration Complex project. The phased delivery strategy allows the City to prioritize critical facilities while aligning expenditures with available funding across fiscal years, as outlined below:

Phase 1 – Recreation & Leisure building (FY2026)
Task Order# PPI-2026-01 - FDCC Master Plan: $110,225.00
Task Order # PPI-2026-02 - FDCC Construction Documents & Contract Administration: $1,878,330.00

Phase 2 – City Hall (FY2027)
Task Order # PPI-2026-03 - FDCC Construction Documents & Contract Administration: $1,069,790.00

Phase 3 – Police Headquarters (FY2028)
Task Order # PPI-2026-04 - FDCC Construction Documents & Contract Administration: $938,280.00

The total authorization requested for A&E Re-Design and phase-specific services is **3,996,625.00.**

Director Matthews provided the Mayor and Council with an overview regarding the background and history of the Four (4) Task Orders for A&E Design Services for the Forest Park Administration Complex (Re-Design - Three Phases).

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

Council Discussion to Authorize Submission of FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Application and Acceptance of Award — Mayor Ellison

Mayor Ellison provided the Council with an overview of the FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Application and Acceptance of Award, including the background and history.

2. **FY2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)** - Finance

Background/History:
The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) of the City of Forest Park for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, provides an in-depth look at the city's financial health and operations. This report is a key tool for ensuring transparency and accountability to the public, detailing the city's financial status in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The requirement to issue this report within six months of the fiscal year-end ensures timely and accurate financial information for both citizens and government stakeholders.

The report will be audited by Mauldin & Jenkins, a certified public accounting firm, following auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. The audit serves to verify the accuracy and integrity of the financial statements, reinforcing trust in the city's financial management.

Director Wiggins informed the Council that Ryan Jones from Mauldin and Jenkins will be going through the audit results for the June 30, 2025, audit. Ryan Jones informed the Council that he is a partner with Maulin and Jenkins. He presented the results of the FY 2025 Audits to the Council.

Councilmember James discussed the audit report, noting that the general fund decreased from $14 million in 2024 to $10 million in 2025, while other governmental funds increased. She asked Mr. Jones to explain the change and the difference between the general fund and other governmental funds. Mr. Jones explained that governmental funds track separate revenue sources, such as SPLOST and grants, while the general fund primarily supports the City's daily operations through property tax revenue. He stated that auditors review financial trends to issue an audit opinion, but do not always determine the exact cause of specific changes. Director Wiggins explained that the decrease in the general fund was mainly due to salary increases, lower-than-expected property tax collections (about $3.7 million less than projected), and a $1.3 million land purchase in the Springdale area. He also noted that ARPA funds covered some salary increases, while the general fund covered ongoing salary costs. Councilmember James asked whether moving money from the general fund requires Council approval. Attorney Matricardi explained that if an item is already included in the approved budget, additional approval is not required, but unbudgeted expenses may be used by the general fund. Director Wiggins stated that department budget overages, including Public Safety and Public Works, were largely due to salary increases and the land purchase. He offered to provide the Council with a budget-to-actual salary report for FY 2024–2025 to give more clarity.

Councilmember Gunn referenced the Summary of Auditor Results and acknowledged that the City met expectations in most areas, but expressed concern about the significant deficiencies identified in the audit. Mr. Jones explained that the issue involved internal controls, specifically that journal entries were sometimes posted without proper review and approval by multiple staff members, which is required for strong financial oversight. Councilmember Gunn noted that the audit showed 21 of 25 journal entries lacked evidence of review, raising concerns about segregation of duties. Director Wiggins explained that many of these issues occurred before his tenure and that the Finance Department has since implemented corrective measures, including additional oversight and requiring that the person who prepares a journal entry cannot approve it. While acknowledging improvements, Councilmember Gunn stated that she remains concerned about past issues, including the movement of approximately $4 million between accounts, and emphasized the need for strong accountability and proper documentation to ensure all City funds are fully accounted for.

Councilmember Gutierrez asked Director Wiggins about the last tax sale for delinquent property taxes and whether another one would occur this year. Director Wiggins stated that a tax sale was held last year and the City is currently evaluating whether another sale will be needed in April, noting that most residents have been doing well in paying their property taxes. Councilmember Gutierrez also discussed budget accountability, asking how often departments exceed their approved budgets. Director Wiggins explained that he holds monthly budget meetings with department directors to review financial activity and address any concerns. Gutierrez emphasized the need for greater accountability and clearer information in budget amendment agenda items, stating that the Council would benefit from seeing the full financial impact of amendments before approving them. He noted that more detailed explanations could help the Council better understand how changes affect the City's budget overall.

Councilmember Akins-Wells agreed with her colleagues and emphasized that financial accountability should be shared among department directors, not placed solely on the Finance Department. She expressed concern about **s**pending on City-issued credit cards, stating that she discovered charges that appeared to be for personal use, such as items from Coach and hotel expenses, and questioned why such issues were not identified during the audit process. She suggested that the City should consider rotating audit firms periodically to ensure fresh oversight and prevent potential issues from being overlooked. She also stressed that credit card or P-Card transactions should be carefully reviewed so that all departments remain accountable for how City funds are spent. Director Wiggins explained that the City has transitioned from credit cards to P-Cards, which have stricter usage rules for supplies, travel, and training. He also clarified that the "Coach" charge referenced was **r**elated to a bus trip, not a purse. Mr. Jones further explained that auditors provide **r**easonable assurance rather than reviewing every transaction. He stated that auditors sample P-Card transactions to confirm receipts, approvals, and that purchases appear to be legitimate business expenses, and they would question any charge that appeared inappropriate.

Councilmember James asked what OPEB was. Mr. Jones explained that it stands for "Other Post-Employment Benefits," which refers to the post-retirement health plan. Councilmember James stated that council members were mentioned in the report and that they were included, even though they are not supposed to be included. Mr. Jones responded that there was one Councilmember included in their sample. He stated that this was one of the items they identified and brought to the attention of management.

Councilmember Mears stated that he agrees with his colleagues. He noted that he was at the end of the line, and most of the important questions had already been asked and discussed by the time they reached him. He stated that he appreciates the presentation and believes that the concerns and questions raised by his colleagues, as well as his own, were addressed.

Interim City Manager Clemons stated that she had one positive comment. She noted that over the last two years, the Finance Department has made great headway. She explained that when this process first began, there were 56 recommendations from Mauldin & Jenkins, and currently, there is only one remaining. She commended the department for the great progress that has been made and for all the work they have done.

3. **Council Discussion on Case # RZ-2026-01- Rezoning Request for 5002 Park Ave.** - Planning and Community Development

Background/History:
The subject property consists of approximately 0.22± acres, is currently zoned Single-Family Residential (RS), and is located in Ward 2, directly behind City Hall. The Applicant is requesting to rezone the property to Multiple-Family Residential (RM) to allow continued use of the site as a quadruplex. The property currently operates as a triplex within the primary structure, along with a smaller detached single-family accessory structure on the same lot.

Staff research indicates this multifamily configuration has existed since prior to 2008, though it was not formally established through zoning approval. The Applicant purchased the property in 2021 and was advised that rezoning is required to address the existing nonconforming use and to proceed with any future improvements. The City's Future Land Use Map designates the property as Medium Density Residential, which supports consideration of multifamily use.

On February 19, 2026, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request with conditions. The request does not propose additional dwelling units but seeks to formalize the existing residential configuration. The matter is presented for the Mayor and Council's consideration.

Interim Director SaVaughn Irons provided the Council with an overview of Case #RZ-2026-01, a rezoning request for 5002 Park Avenue, including the background and history of the request. She also provided the Council with additional information regarding further research that she and her staff had conducted.

Councilmember Gunn asked Interim Director Irons for her recommendation.

Mayor Ellison stated that the Council would discuss the matter further during the executive session.

4. **Council Discussion and Decision on Case # CUP-2026-01- Conditional Use Permit Request for 87 Royal Drive.** - Planning and Community Development

Background/History:
The subject property at 87 Royal Drive, consisting of approximately 0.88± acres, is located in Ward 4 and is zoned Heavy Industrial (HI). The applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit to operate a towing, wrecking, and impound service from the existing industrial building on site. Pursuant to Section 8-8-46 of the City Code, towing, wrecking, and impound services within the Heavy Industrial district require approval of a Conditional Use Permit and are not permitted as a by-right use.

The Conditional Use Permit process provides the City an opportunity to evaluate the operational characteristics of the proposed use and ensure compatibility with surrounding industrial properties. The applicant proposes to utilize the existing structure for administrative office operations associated with vehicle recovery activities. The site will include accessory vehicle storage and staging, along with limited internal maintenance and minor repair of company-owned fleet vehicles only. No vehicle sales, dismantling, salvage operations, or public-facing repair services are proposed. This request allows the City to establish appropriate operational conditions to ensure the site remains orderly, well-maintained, and consistent with the intent of the Heavy Industrial zoning district as redevelopment and economic growth continue within the area.

Interim Director Irons provided the council with an overview of Case # CUP-2026-01-Conditional Use Permit Request for 87 Royal Drive, including the background and history of the request.

5. **Council Discussion and Clarification of the City's Current Permit Fee Structure.** - Planning and Community Development

Background/History:
At the request of Council, this item has been placed on the agenda to allow for discussion and clarification of the City's current permit fee structure. The City's adopted fee schedule assesses building permit fees based on project valuation, meaning fees are calculated according to the cost and scope of construction rather than applicant type.

This framework is intended to align fees with the level of administrative review, plan examination, and inspection services required for each project. Certain fee categories, including Certificate of Occupancy and rezoning applications, do differentiate between residential and commercial uses. This item is presented for discussion and informational purposes.

Interim Director Irons provided the Council with an overview of the City's current permit fee structure, including its background and history. She also provided additional context regarding the item.

Councilmember Akins-Wells and Councilmember Gunn expressed concerns about the permit fees. Councilmember Gunn asked Interim Director Irons if she could provide the Council with a comparison of the permit fees for commercial projects.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated that he would like to table the item so that the Council can review the information further.

Interim Director Irons stated that the Council previously approved the permit fee structure and the associated fees on January 6, 2025. She explained that the Council conducted a review at that time, approved a text amendment, and adopted the updated fees, noting that the fee structure had not been changed since 1959.

Mayor Ellison stated that the Council would discuss the item at a later time.

6. **Council Discussion to Authorize Submission of FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending Application and Acceptance of Award** - Public Works

Background/History:
The City of Forest Park is seeking Council approval to submit up to four project applications for FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) funding through Senator Jon Ossoff's office, with corresponding submittals to Senator Warnock's office to ensure full coordination with the City's federal delegation. The proposed projects align with the City's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) goals and focus on pedestrian safety and connectivity improvements.

Projects under consideration include the Rockcut Road sidewalk & drainage improvement project (approximately $600,000 for construction phase), the Waldrop Drive sidewalk & drainage improvement project ($600,000 for construction phase), and Starr Park playground and outdoor gym equipment replacement/renovation ($300,000 part of Phase 1 of 18 acre park renovation). Approval of this item will authorize staff to formally pursue federal funding for these priority infrastructure and community improvement initiatives.

Director Matthews provided the Mayor and Council with an overview regarding the background and history of the Authorized Submission of the FY2027 Congressionally Directed Spending Application and Acceptance of Award.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

VIII. 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)

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember James made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The meeting adjourned at 7:16 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 prior to the meeting at 404-366-4720.