



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

**CITY OF FOREST PARK
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 28, 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 Hector Gutierrez

The Honorable Allan Mears

The Honorable Delores A. Gunn

The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells

Latosha Clemons, Interim City Manager

Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

MINUTES

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTICE

Council Meetings will be live-streamed and available on [Forest Park's YouTube Channel](#)

- I. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME** - The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ellison.
- II. ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** - Mayor Gwendolyn Ellison, Councilmember Kimberly James, Councilmember Delores Gunn, Councilmember Latresa Akins-Wells, Councilmember Allan Mears.

Absent – Councilmember Hector Gutierrez
- III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS** - Councilmember James made a motion to adopt the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

Mayor Ellison stated that as the mayor, she will be presiding over tonight's proceedings, which concern the appeal filed by Ms. Randy Rainey in response to the City Manager's decision to terminate her employment as the city clerk. She stated that Ms. Rainey has exercised her right to appeal within the required ten-day appeal period, and this hearing is being held to review the termination. Mayor Ellison stated that before they begin, she wants to note that she and the city council have already received and reviewed the records related to this matter, including the official termination notice and all related documents submitted as part of the administrator process. This prior review is intended to ensure that each council member enters the hearing with an understanding of the issues and the basis for the city manager's decision.

Mayor Ellison outlined how the appeal hearing would proceed so that all parties would understand the order and expectations. The parties will have 30 minutes to present. First, the

city manager or her designate will present the grounds for the termination, explain the investigation process, and provide any additional evidence and testimony not already in the record. Next, Ms. Rainey or her representative will present. During these presentations, both sides may submit documents or other evidence for the council's consideration. She stated that they may also call witnesses to provide relevant testimony. All materials and testimonies should relate directly to the basis of the termination. After both sides have conducted their presentations, the city council will have the opportunity to ask questions. These questions may concern the documents submitted, the testimony offered, or any other matter relevant to their review of the city manager's decision. Once questioning has concluded, Ms. Rainey will be given an additional ten minutes to offer a closing statement. After the closing statement, the evidentiary portion of the hearing will be closed, and the counsel will then move into deliberations. The city codes do not require that a decision be made immediately at the close of this hearing. However, please note that when the council does render its decision, the city manager's action may be overturned only by three affirmative votes of the mayor and council. If the council upholds the termination, the termination becomes effective immediately upon the council's decision. If the council overturns the action, Ms. Rainey will return to duty under the conditions established by the city council. Our goal tonight is to ensure a fair, orderly, and transparent process consistent with the city codes and respectful of all parties involved. Mayor Ellison asked that everyone maintain professionalism and adhere to the procedures as outlined, and with that, they will begin.

Interim City Manager Chief Clemons presented to the council:

Greetings, Madam Mayor and Members of City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to present and document the basis for the Interim City Manager's recommendation to terminate the employment of City Clerk Randi Rainey. This justification is submitted to formally outline the rationale for the recommendation and to provide relevant historical context leading up to this action.

The City Clerk is a critical executive-level position responsible for ensuring effective support of the governing body, compliance with statutory requirements, accuracy and integrity of official records, timely execution of City business, and coordination of Council operations. The City's ability to function efficiently, lawfully, and transparently relies heavily on consistent and reliable performance in this role.

The recommendation for termination is based on a sustained and well-documented pattern of performance deficiencies. These concerns are not isolated incidents and are not limited to the Interim City Manager's tenure.

Ms. Rainey's personnel file reflects that substantially similar performance issues were documented under the former City Manager, including deficiencies related to:

- Operational efficiency and responsiveness
- Timely execution of Council-related and City business matters
- Follow-through on time-sensitive directives

- Attention to detail in matters impacting statutory compliance and governance

These concerns were determined to be sufficiently serious that the former City Manager initiated the following actions:

- A Last Chance Agreement dated October 10, 2024
- A drafted letter of termination addressed to the Mayor and Council dated August 21, 2025

These records establish a clear and documented history of unresolved performance deficiencies predating the Interim City Manager's appointment.

Following the transition, on September 3 and September 15, 2025, the Chief of Staff and Interim City Manager met with Ms. Rainey to mentor, coach, and counsel her, providing an opportunity for professional improvement. The Chief of Staff additionally offered ongoing coaching sessions to reinforce accountability and ownership of the City Clerk role.

On November 3, 2025, Ms. Rainey received a formal disciplinary action in the form of a final written reprimand due to repeated errors in Council agenda packets and meeting minutes, including matters that resulted in expressed concerns from Council Members and Forest Park residents regarding the elections process.

On January 5, 2026, Ms. Rainey received an additional disciplinary action in the form of a suspension to be scheduled pursuant to City Charter Section 3.14, due to continued work quality issues and inaccuracies, including failure to follow through on critical and time-sensitive information impacting City operations.

Following the January 5 meeting, and prior to finalizing the suspension, additional performance deficiencies were identified. These issues were publicly articulated during the January 5, 2026 City Council meeting when meeting minutes were read aloud, further demonstrating a lack of corrective improvement and contributing to the recommendation for termination.

During the five-month transition period under the Interim City Manager's leadership, Ms. Rainey was afforded the opportunity to demonstrate improvement and operational reliability. Throughout this period, her performance was directly observed in real time as it related to:

- Support of Council operations
- Responsiveness to executive direction
- Execution of core City Clerk responsibilities

Despite these opportunities, the same deficiencies persisted without sustained or measurable improvement, resulting in ongoing operational disruption and inefficiencies affecting the governing body and City administration.

Pursuant to City Charter Section 3.14, the City Manager is authorized to supervise appointed officers, evaluate performance, and take appropriate personnel action, including the recommendation of termination, when such action is determined to be in the best interest of the

City. The Charter does not require a minimum supervisory period by a specific City Manager prior to taking disciplinary action.

Employment decisions may properly consider:

- The employee's complete personnel record
- Documented deficiencies under prior administrations
- Current performance and operational impact

City personnel policies, including Rule VI and Rule XI, further support management's authority to take corrective action, up to and including termination, when performance deficiencies are ongoing, and prior corrective measures have failed to achieve improvement.

The recommendation to terminate Ms. Rainey's employment is based on:

- A sustained history of documented performance deficiencies
- Continuation of those deficiencies during the Interim City Manager's tenure
- The absence of demonstrated corrective improvement
- The critical nature of the City Clerk's role in supporting effective governance

Continued employment under these circumstances is not aligned with the City's operational needs or governance responsibilities.

Conclusion

The Interim City Manager's recommendation to terminate the employment of City Clerk Randi Rainey is reasonable, supported by the record, and consistent with the authority granted under the City Charter and applicable personnel policies. The recommendation is grounded in performance-based considerations and the best interest of the City, not the duration of supervisory oversight by the Interim City Manager.

IV. New Business

1. Personnel Appeals Hearing - R. Rainey - City Attorney

Randi Rainey stated that she has submitted a written appeal for the record. Today, she would like to briefly highlight the core issues that brought her before the council. She was appointed to the office of city clerk by formal vote of this council based on recommendations of the city attorney as reflecting and approved meeting minutes. Under the city charter, appointment authority rests solely with the council, and so does the authority to remove her from office. No council vote occurred prior to or following her termination; instead, the actions were taken administratively. Respectfully, the action exceeded the authority granted under the charter and bypassed the process required for the council-appointed position. Beyond the issue of authority, the termination also lacked fundamental due process. She was not provided with

specific allegations tied to measurable standards, no active or progressive discipline was in place, and she was not given a meaningful opportunity to respond before the decision was made. The performance improvement plan issued in 2024 was limited to a 30-day period, concluded without any findings, extensions, or resolution, and was not active at the time of her termination. During the same period, the city was aware that she was undergoing cancer treatment, while some limited flexibility was provided, her workload increased, telework was revoked, and no alternative support or reassignment options were explored. Other employees were reassigned when challenges arose; that option was not offered to her. Additionally, on the day of her termination, she was presented with a severance agreement that contained no terms and was given approximately three hours to decide whether to resign or to be involuntarily terminated. No council discussion or approval of the severance term has occurred. Under those circumstances, the option presented did not constitute a meaningful or informed choice and further underscores the procedural deficiencies surrounding her removal. She stated that she does not stand before the claiming perfection, as no public servant is; she stands before them asking that the rules governing this body and its appointed positions be applied consistently, lawfully, and fairly. For these reasons, she respectfully requests that the council reverse this termination or remand the matter for proper action consistent with the city charter and establish procedures. Thank you for your time and consideration. She asked if there were any questions.

Councilmember Gunn stated that she had a question. During the calendar year of 2024, she said that she had 30 days that were presented to her, and this was for paperwork that was put in for her performance, and she had 30 days to enhance and prove upon that measure. Ms. Rainey stated that she was correct. Councilmember Gunn asked Randi if she was saying in those 30 days of improvement of those posing discretions, there was nothing put into place to measure her by and from the ongoing measures of what she has been seeing and what she jotted down, of improvement and what the city is seeing and how it has been documented, even from the 30 days of her getting this performance there seems to be a lack of expanding and moving forth. Councilmember Gunn stated that just from coming in, in March, her first interaction was not with Ms. Rainey, it was with the deputy clerk, and one of the things Ms. Rainey stated in her letter was “upon her medical dealing” and she wants Ms. Rainey to know that she has empathy and compassion, her brother, her mother, and her 36 year old daughter all have been impacted, so she wants Ms. Rainey to understand that she understands from a daughter, from a sister, and from a mother what it feels like and how to walk that journey, but at the recovery stage of what she had to move into, she is saying that she did not have any support and she had a full deputy clerk that was her assistant. So, from her coming in, she saw support from a deputy clerk that she had never experienced from her coming into this building, and she has been a resident. Also, this aspect of her was not given a chance to improve. When she came in, she was so embarrassed because she was being signed in as her coming into this seat in March, the package, and how Ms. Rainey displayed to her and her transitional team had to have in place, they complied with all of that, but when she got here, the day of be sworn in, there was no judge and it was reflected upon her team that some kind of way they dropped the ball and that was not the case. She stated that they were following instructions given by the city clerk of Forest Park. Councilmember Gunn stated that she really thought what took place was unfair. It was a very nerve-wracking day, and she really thought that it was not legal; she questioned some things, and she had to go back and call some people because she really thought that this city was doing a very grievous and unjust thing to her, but that fell in Ms. Rainey’s lap. So, she knows what it looks like coming in, and something very small, such as a signature, could make a difference with her being legally appointed in this position. So that was the first occurrence that she experienced. The second occurrence with Ms. Rainey being a city

clerk was during the time of the election. There was confusion that went out for all of them that were coming back in to run; it was a legal expectation that was put out by the state for all candidates. The date was wrong, and it conflicted with the day, which brought confusion. She stated that she is sitting up there and she is still confused about that date, so with her coming in, she has experienced two very prevalent things that allowed her to come in to put her hand in to be a servant to this city, and it was at Ms. Rainey's hand that she was supposed to provide and guide her. She stated that she is going to see and stand on those two factors in what she experienced that was legal and that should have taken place. She experienced someone who assisted Ms. Rainey, who was the deputy clerk, and the experience was wonderful, but the first time coming in, being sworn in was nerve-wracking, and she was thinking, "Is this how the city operates?" She stated to Ms. Rainey that if she were the initial contact for the council and if she dropped the ball, she would be looking at the whole city being incompetent at that time. Councilmember Gunn stated that this is what she would like to say about her experience with Ms. Rainey being the city clerk, and it has been noted.

Randy Rainey stated to Councilmember Gunn that she would like to address what she said. Ms. Rainey stated that what she refers to when she stated that she did not have any help, she is referring to the last six months, once the deputy city clerk left, she left in July. So, from August up until January, she did not have help. She stated that she had requested help, and when the deputy clerk left, they had the position out and over 400 applications were submitted. She and HR sat down and looked through the applications. She asked Interim City Manager Chief Clemons if she could proceed, and she was told no, she had to see how well she does. So, yes, she did not have any help for the last six months she has worked here. She stated that, as far as the election, per the charter, either a judge or the mayor can swear the councilmembers in.

Councilmember Gunn stated that that was not conveyed, and when she was being sworn in, Ms. Rainey had a deputy clerk, so she had help, she had an assistant during that timeframe, and that was in 2025. So, with her experience coming in, Ms. Rainey had an assistant, and she was hearing grievances that year, even with her having an assistant. She stated that there were documents of Ms. Rainey not measuring up to the job description, even in 2025, with her having the support.

Ms. Rainey stated that that is understandable, she is just here to ask about how the termination was done and if it was lawful and legal because, as an appointed position, looking in the minutes, they have the city attorney who recommended that you have a council vote. According to the charter, you must have a vote for appointed positions. So, she is really just here asking whether it was a lawful termination.

Attorney Matricardi stated that the appointment is made via the charter, the termination will become effective if affirmed by a vote of the city council, so it is substantially the same action. The way that it was done via the city manager, the interim city manager, was an effort to avoid a public process as of this, but due process has been afforded, and they are in full compliance with the city charter.

Randy Rainey asked the council if she could ask a question if they did not mind. She asked about the severance package that she was presented with on the 16th; it was empty, and there were no terms or agreements. She asked if that was brought to their attention beforehand because she would think that someone who was presented with an agreement would have

already been talked about, discussed, and filled out so that someone could make the proper decisions.

Councilmember James thanked Randy for what she has done for the city, and they appreciate her service to them. She stated that in full transparency, they were made aware and are aware of some of the defensives and because they selected the city manager to try to avoid this process, because she knows that it is difficult to come out in front of everyone. So, to answer Ms. Rainey's question, no, they did not know of the specifics. It was something that she was going to bring to them to allow for that to occur, but since she selected not to go through that process, this is why they are here today. But again, she wanted to thank her for what she has done, and she knows that she tries really hard, but she does feel like it is in the best interest of the city to move in a different direction.

Ms. Rainey stated that she understands and respects that, again, her fight and flight is the how and not the why, but the way it went about. She asked Attorney Matricardi to correct her if she is wrong. With appointed positions, they must be voted out before any type of agreement is presented; they have to be discussed, correct?

Attorney Matricardi told her that it was discussed in executive session, so the city manager was acting per the direction of the majority consensus, as she mentioned, the final action is not effective until there is a mayor and city council vote. So it is in accordance with the city charter. She stated that she understands what Ms. Rainey is saying about the appointed positions but as she referenced, it was to ensure that there could be a discussion outside of the public form so that is the reason why it occurred in that manner.

Randy Rainey asked if she could ask another question, as far as her signing a suspension, how could it go from a suspension to a termination?

Attorney Matricardi stated that from suspension to termination, she knows that there were other things that occurred, and it was per the direction that was received by the city manager.

Randy Rainey asked if it was a PIP that was put into place.

Attorney Matricardi stated that she is not required to be on a PIP for this disciplinary process. Everyone is an at-will employee here. There is a progressive disciplinary process; however, it is specifically noted in the handbook that appointed officials, per the charter, can be terminated for cause or without cause, and there doesn't have to be a performance improvement plan in place. There is sufficient evidence, even though it does not have to be, and it is not required to have evidence of any deficiencies. Randy asked about the last chance agreement or anything like that. Attorney Matricardi told her that she is not required to have the last chance agreement. She stated to Randy that if she did look at the letter from November 3rd, she believes from the interim city manager, that was the final warning, so the suspension and other write-up were an addition to the last chance, the last final warning. So, it was an excess of that requirement.

Randy stated, even though in the employee handbook, they have a disciplinary action on how you are supposed to do things, it really wasn't done that way, and again, that is why she is here, to express how and not the why, but the way it was done. Attorney Matricardi told her that her opposition in that is noted in the record, and it will be preserved.

Councilmember Akins-Well stated that she just wanted to say to kind of take the heat off Chief Clemons a little. Chief Clemons came to the council and advised them of her direction that she wanted to go in, and it was not a termination. She stated that it was the governing body that decided that would be the best route to go. So she did not want it to seem as if Chief Clemons was coming in all hey wilding, but it was the council's decision because of the repeated levels of performance issues, and not just when Chief Clemons came, but when Mr. Clark was here, and fortunately, Chief Clemons just came in and listened to what the council wanted. But again, her recommendation was not termination.

- V. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** - Councilmember James motioned to enter executive session to discuss personnel, litigation, and real estate, seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

Councilmember Gunn made a motion to exit the executive session and reconvene the special-called meeting, seconded by Councilmember James. The vote was unanimously approved.

Councilmember James made a motion to appoint Director Shalonda Brown as interim city clerk while the council continues to deliberate on the interim city manager's recommendations to terminate, seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The vote was unanimously approved.

(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)

- VI. **ADJOURNMENT** - Councilmember Gunn made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. 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 404-366-4720 at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Prepared By: _____

Deputy City Clerk, Latoya McCants-Rice

Approved By: _____

Mayor, Gwen W. Ellison