



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

**CITY OF FOREST PARK
CITY COUNCIL RETREAT**

Friday, May 2, 2026, at 9:00 AM
Kimpton Overland Hotel
Two Porsche Dr. Hapeville, GA 30254

The Honorable Mayor Gwendolyn 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 (not in attendance)
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney (not in attendance)

SUMMARY MINUTES

FACILITATED BY: Lisa Benjamin with Lexicon Strategies

- I. **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME** – Mayor Ellison called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M.
- II. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were in attendance for Roll Call except Councilmember James and Councilmember Gunn. Councilmember Gunn joined the meeting at 9:20 A.M.
- III. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA** – Motion to adopt the agenda was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember Mears. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.

Ms. Benjamin congratulated the Mayor and Council on a productive Day 1, noting that each response to the question of “why” reflected a love for the city and a heart for service.

Ms. Benjamin noted that the SWOT analysis identified key city priorities and the need for a strategy centered on good governance. She stated that conflict has hindered the city’s ability to conduct business for residents and business owners and emphasized the need for greater collaboration, attention to homelessness, and a focus on shared vision and shared values.

Discussion focused on continuing to build Forest Park’s brand and improve residents’ quality of life. Participants also discussed changing how the Council works by putting the Pillars of Civility into practice, maintaining decorum, remembering QTIP, working for the good of the city, respecting differences, listening, de-escalating conflict, and acknowledging each member’s perspective.

Ms. Benjamin led a video activity in which the group was asked to focus on a specific detail. After the video, members shared their responses. Only one member was able to identify both the requested item and the distraction that appeared in the video. The exercise demonstrated that, although the distraction was clearly visible, most participants focused on the single detailed item, rather than the big picture.

Ms. Benjamin asked each member of the governing body why people come to Forest Park. Responses included easy access to the airport and development opportunities. The group was also asked where they would take visitors. Suggested destinations included the Farmers Market, Starr Park, Spivey Hall, the Porsche Experience, and the new arena at Southlake.

Ms. Benjamin presented information and statistics about the City of Forest Park, including crime, population, and school performance data. Many of the figures were considered inaccurate and will need to be corrected. A key point of emphasis was the city's location and its proximity to the world's busiest airport.

The group participated in several team-building activities and discussions regarding individual and collective agreements. Members were also asked to comment on commitment statements and action planning items to be included in the consultant's summary report.

Ms. Benjamin closed by asking how the governing body felt overall about the retreat.

Responses indicated that the retreat was eye-opening and beneficial. Members said they learned a great deal about their differences, recognized that differing views can both be valid, and emphasized the importance of setting aside differences to work as one unit for the good of the city.

V. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** - Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate or Cyber Security OCGA § 50-14-1
None

VI. **ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 3:30 P.M.

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.

Respectfully submitted by:

Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk

Gwendolyn Ellison, Mayor