



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

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

Monday, May 4, 2026, at 7:00 PM
Forest Park City Hall | Council Chambers
745 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, GA 30297

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
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

SUMMARY 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 at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **INVOCATION/PLEDGE** - Elder Justin Cook
- III. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were in attendance except Councilmember Mears.
- IV. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**
Motion to adopt the agenda as presented was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 1. **Council Approval of Work Session Minutes from April 20, 2026**
Council Approval of Regular Session Minutes from April 20, 2026
Motion to approve the Minutes was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.
- VI. **PUBLIC COMMENTS - (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)**
Mr. Carl Evans stated that he loves the officials with all of his heart, noting he previously had to provide security to officials of the city who received threats and referenced the proposed ordinance for security details, noting that in the city's 118-year history, this has never been needed; he stated that he understands personal things happen, noting the incident that occurred to Councilmember Gunn, a citizen at the time, and stated the police department should investigate these incidents and decide on how to proceed. Mr. Evans stated he has been contacted by city employees, past and present, and citizens because they are afraid of

the governing body and fear speaking up, and he will do so on their behalf, and called for the immediate termination of the Interim City Manager, Public Works Director, HR Director, and to look into financial irregularities relating to the city's finances; stated they are fed up with the intimidation and corruption, and noted that he has stated before that there are too many lawsuits for wrongful terminations and settlements, and stated the people who contacted him are asking for a recall of the entire governing body; stated there are policies that need to be reviewed and updated, and referenced the situation regarding Chief Criss, stating there was not a handbook to go by; and referenced a previous councilmember being terminated for ethics violations, who was then appointed by members of the governing body to the Ethics Board; and stated that if that person could be given a second chance with multiple ethics violations, then Chief Criss deserves a second chance as well.

Ms. Jay Evans stated her appreciation for the lighting at Bill Lee Park, and thanking Councilmember Gunn for the Dog Park; referenced an event hosted by Councilmember Gutierrez, noting it was great to see the area so well-lit and bright like Christmas, noting she loves how it looks, and she felt very safe, and invited residents to come out to enjoy; and commended the Public Works Director Matthews for the work that is being done by the public works department.

VII. CEREMONIAL - Proclamations: National Public Safety Telecommunications Week, Professional Municipal Clerk's Week

Mayor Ellison presented proclamations to members of the city's E911 Team for Telecommunications Week, and the City Clerk for Professional Municipal Clerk's Week; and also recognized for the month of May, National Mental Health Awareness Month, Public Service Recognition Week, National Military Appreciation Month, Asian-American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Haitian Heritage Month, Jewish-American Heritage Month, and Native American & Alaskan Heritage Month.

VIII. CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Holiday reported Early Voting is underway and will continue through May 15th, noting the Forest Park early voting location is the Senior Center 5087 Park Avenue, and referenced other locations throughout the County, and cited the voting hours: Monday – Friday 8am – 7pm, Saturday 9am – 5pm and Sunday 12pm – 5pm; and stated that on Election Day, May 19th, voters can only vote at their assigned polling location, and to check the MyVoterPage website or contact the Clayton County Elections Office for more information.

Clerk Holiday also offered congratulations to Council Aides Tenisha Dixon and Andre Henry for completing the Georgia Municipal Association HRAC (Human Resources Administration Certificate) program.

IX. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Interim City Manager Clemons reported as follows:

Greetings Madam Mayor and Council,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to our Leadership Team and all City employees for their continued dedication, professionalism, and commitment to service. The progress we are making as an organization is a direct result of their hard work, collaboration, and shared commitment to excellence. Each department continues to demonstrate resilience and focus as we move the City forward during this period of transition. I am truly grateful for their leadership and the pride they take in serving the residents of Forest Park.

Nine-Month Progress Update

As we approach the nine-month mark of this interim administration, we have made significant progress in stabilizing operations and strengthening the organization:

- **Operational Stability:** Departments continue to deliver reliable and consistent services while reinforcing internal processes, accountability, and performance expectations.
 - **Fiscal Awareness:** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of departmental budgets have strengthened our ability to identify risks, manage expenditures, and plan responsibly.
 - **Leadership Engagement:** Director roundtables and leadership discussions continue to promote collaboration, problem-solving, and strategic focus across the organization.
- These efforts have laid a strong foundation for continued growth, stability, and operational effectiveness.

Administrative & Organizational Update

- **Director Evaluations:** Performance evaluations for all Department Directors have been completed or are nearing completion. This process reinforces accountability, provides meaningful feedback, and supports ongoing professional development within the Leadership Team.
- **Budget Review Process:** Budget discussions and reviews have been conducted with all Department Directors to ensure alignment with organizational priorities and fiscal responsibility. These efforts position us for the upcoming Budget Retreat with the Mayor and Council, where priorities and financial strategies for the upcoming fiscal year will be further discussed.
- **360 Leadership Evaluation:** A 360-degree evaluation of my role as Interim City Manager has been completed by the Leadership Team. This feedback is instrumental in strengthening leadership effectiveness, enhancing communication, and ensuring continued transparency and accountability in my role.
- **Department Collaboration:** Cross-departmental collaboration continues to be a driving force in improving operational efficiency. Departments are working collectively to streamline processes, share resources, and deliver services more effectively under the “One Forest Park” philosophy.

Permanent City Manager Recruitment Update

The recruitment process for the permanent City Manager is actively underway in partnership with our executive search consultant. At this time:

- A total of 13 candidates have been identified and will be interviewed by the consultant.
- Following the initial vetting process, the consultant will present the top three (3) to five (5) candidates.
- These finalists will then be submitted for review and consideration by the Mayor and City Council.

This structured approach ensures a thorough, transparent, and competitive selection process to identify the most qualified candidate to lead the City of Forest Park into the future.

Fire Department Highlight

Anthony Gallman’s selection as the 2026 recipient of the Georgia Arson Control Scholarship for Fire Investigator Conference and Training recently held in Helen, Georgia.

This recognition honors his commitment to professional development and excellence in fire investigation while representing Forest Park Fire & Emergency Services. The scholarship supported advanced investigative training, current legal and case analysis updates, and strengthened collaboration with fire investigators and public safety partners across the state.

This achievement reflects both individual dedication and the department's continued commitment to maintaining high investigative standards and serving the community with professionalism and integrity.

Closing

In closing, I remain committed to ensuring operational stability, supporting our employees, and maintaining the delivery of high-quality services to our community during this transition. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2. **Airport South Community Improvement District Expansion** – Presented by: Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director
Background/History: Formal Request for approval of the Airport South Community Improvement District (CID) Expansion, and to appoint Mr. Steve Lackley as the city's commercial property owner representative.
Motion to approve the expansion of the Airport South Community Improvement District (CID) Expansion, and to appoint Mr. Steve Lackley of Estes, as the city's commercial property owner representative was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.
3. **Council Consideration to approve a policy governing security detail for elected officials from the city's police department.** – Presented by: Attorney Matricardi
Background/History: The request is to adopt a policy governing security detail for elected officials from the city's police department.
Motion to approve the Security Detail Ordinance was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion Failed 2-1-1 (James/Gunn In Favor), (Guttierrez Opposed) (Akins-Wells Abstained). Councilmember James requested the item be placed on the May 18, 2026 meeting Agenda.

XI. PUBLIC HEARING

4. **Council Consideration to approve Case # CUP-2026-02- Conditional Use Permit for 4959 and 4965 West St. to establish a childcare center within the Single-Family Residential District (RS).** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Planning and Community Development Director
Background/History:
The applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit to establish a childcare center within the Single Family Residential (RS) District in Ward 2. Pursuant to Sec. 8-8-28 of the City of Forest Park Zoning Ordinance, pre-k facilities and daycare centers require a Conditional Use Permit to operate within the RS District.
On April 16, 2026, the Planning Commission reviewed the request and voted to recommend approval with conditions. The conditions are as follows:
 1. Parking Compliance
The property owner and operator shall comply with the City of Forest Park Zoning Ordinance parking standards as outlined in Section 8-8-90.
 2. Consistency with Approval
This approval is based on the existing site layout and operational characteristics as presented. Any expansion, site modification, or intensification of use, including but

not limited to increased enrollment or extended hours of operation, shall require additional review and approval by the City.

3. General Compliance

The property owner shall ensure the use remains in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, including licensing requirements for childcare facilities.

The subject property previously received approval for daycare use under a prior tenant. This request has been submitted by the property owner to establish the Conditional Use Permit with the property rather than a specific tenant. Approval will allow the property owner to lease the space to future childcare operators without requiring each tenant to seek separate approval from Mayor and Council, provided the use remains consistent with the approved conditions.

Attorney Matricardi cited the Public Hearing Rules

Motion to open the Public Hearing was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Speakers in Favor: Ms. Felecia Davis and Ms. Bonita Allen (tenant)

Speakers Opposed: None

Motion to close the Public Hearing was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Motion to approve Case # CUP-2026-02- Conditional Use Permit for 4959 and 4965 West St. to establish a childcare center within the Single-Family Residential District (RS) was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

5. **Consideration of an Ordinance Amending Title 9 (Licensing and Regulation) to Clarify Regulatory Standards, Improve Administrative Processes, and Address Ambiguities in Existing Provisions.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Planning and Community Development Director.

Background/History: Staff has conducted a review of Title 9 (Licensing and Regulation) and identified several provisions that are outdated, unclear, or lack sufficient detail to ensure consistent interpretation and enforcement. These ambiguities have created challenges for both staff administration and public-facing processes, particularly with respect to licensing requirements, application completeness, and regulatory compliance.

The proposed amendments are intended to streamline existing procedures, establish clearer standards for applicants and licenses, and align the City's Code with current operational practices and enforcement needs. Updates include clarifying application requirements, strengthening compliance and reporting obligations, and modernizing regulatory language across multiple chapters.

This ordinance represents the first phase of a broader effort to comprehensively update Title 9. Additional amendments are anticipated and will be presented to Mayor and Council in future phases to further enhance clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of the City's licensing and regulatory framework.

Motion to approve amending Title 9 (Licensing and Regulation) to Clarify Regulatory Standards, Improve Administrative Processes, and Address Ambiguities in Existing Provisions was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XIII. CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY

Ward 1 – Councilmember James commented that the city's ordinances and policies are in place, similar to the bible, for the city to operate and govern, and made reference to the Rules of Decorum, read prior to public comments, noting statements outside of the governing body's jurisdiction and personnel matters should not be allowed, and the meeting should be brought into order when such comments occur; noted there are time limits in place for seven residents and/or business owners to speak (3 minutes each) for a total of twenty-one minutes, noting she was instrumental in expanding the time limit, and that when non-residents or business owners request to make public comments, the process is to submit the request to the City Clerk to be placed on the Agenda, to ensure the residents and business owners have proper time to speak during public comments.

Councilmember James addressed the Security Detail Ordinance, noting she was disappointed that it did not pass tonight, noting the item will be brought back to the next Council meeting for consideration, stating the reason that a policy needs to be put in place is for the city to be accountable to the residents on how taxpayer funds are being spent, noting she is not in favor of a 24/7 security detail; and referenced the incident that occurred in November 2025 where a rock was thrown at an elected officials home, and six months later, the city continues to pay for security detail.

Councilmember James read portions of the proposed Security Detail Ordinance: This Policy applies solely and exclusively to elected officials. The Chief of Police is authorized to implement and administer this Policy and to assign security details in accordance with its terms. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to limit the Chief's authority to respond immediately to emergencies or imminent threats to public safety consistent with law enforcement responsibilities. Definition: A "credible threat" means a threat that is specific, articulable, and verified through law enforcement investigation, intelligence, or reliable evidence. Security Details: A "security detail" means the assignment of one or more sworn law enforcement officers to provide protective services. Authorization of Security Details: When a credible, verified threat exists, the Chief may authorize a security detail for an elected official for a period not to exceed thirty (30) consecutive days. Extension of Security Details: Any security detail extending beyond thirty (30) days shall require approval by a majority vote of the City Council. Termination of Security Details and Limitations and Cost Responsibility: If the need for a security detail arises from criminal activity, illegal conduct, or personal actions of an elected official that are unrelated to official City business, the City may determine, to the extent permitted by law, that the elected official shall be responsible for all or a portion of the costs associated with the security detail.

Councilmember James gave an example that it should not be on the taxpayers to provide protection if an official is involved in a personal altercation, and then seeks security detail paid for by the city, as a result of that altercation, stating that is why there needs to be a policy in place to regulate elected officials, noting having a policy in place would be how elected officials are held accountable, and if not in place, how would the elected officials be held accountable; noting she understood Councilmember Akins-Wells' abstention, as she may have taken this policy to be aimed at her, and it is not. Councilmember James stated she had only learned about the 24/7 security provided for Councilmember Akins-Wells—costing more than \$97,000 so far due to a rock being thrown at her home—when a resident informed her.

Ward 2 – Councilmember Gunn asked that everyone take notice of Bill Lee Park where there are wonderful renovations and improvements being made to include a new playground and other amenities, and thanked Parks and Recreation Director, Tarik Maxwell and his team for all that they are doing to assist; reminded everyone about the Free Food Pantry taking place on the second Monday of each month from 3-5pm at 4891 Philips Dr. (Gateway Restoration Church); referenced the upcoming Mother's Day Tea Party, in partnership with the Senior Center Operator, Ms. Anne Foster, noting the event has been well received, and all eighty seats are sold out, and looks forward to Mayor Ellison's attendance; thanked everyone for coming out, and to enjoy the remainder of the evening.

Ward 3 - Councilmember Gutierrez thanked everyone for coming out today; referenced the Selena Day event, noting the threat of rain may have caused some people to shy away, noting the event was a great success and thanked everyone for attending; thanked Mayor Ellison for supporting a recent event that was held at an extended stay hotel where assistance was provided to residents; referenced the Keep Forest Park Beautiful initiative to help keep the city litter free, asking those groups/organizations that are interested to please sign up; and noted the final Pilates class is taking place on Wednesday, May 13.

Ward 4 – Councilmember stated that her life outside of politics is being a proud mom who has raised very productive children, and gave a special shout out to her son, Jaquez Akins, and his baseball team at Benedict College, for their playoff appearance in Macon, GA, and praised the team for an amazing baseball season; commended her son, Jaquez, noting his combo sports and academics success with A/B Honors, and noted Jaquez is eligible for the upcoming Major League Baseball draft this year.

Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked Mayor Ellison and Clerk Holiday for putting together the Mayor & Council Retreat, noting it was very much needed, and that even with the driving back and forth between baseball games and the Retreat, it was well worth it.

Councilmember Akins-Wells referenced the upcoming Chat, Chew and Connect Initiative, giving a voice to the residents to express their issues and concerns, and will begin visiting neighborhoods throughout the community beginning June 12 at Breckenridge on Old Dixie Hwy., and will be open to all residents in Ward 4.

Councilmember Akins-Wells referenced the security detail, first thanking the officer who has been present at her home, making sure that she and her family are safe; noted she does not take the matter lightly as we are in different times, politically; addressed the cost, stating the officer was on duty and would have been paid whether on security detail or patrolling the city, and stated there has been no adverse impact to response times nor has there been an increase

in crime in the city as a result of the security detail; requested copies of the contracts for 24/7 security for Kroger at Ft. Gillem that will be addressed at the next meeting, noting officers have been providing security; and thanked everyone for coming out.

Interim City Manager Clemons stated she makes sure she defers to the Mayor and remains in compliance with the rules of decorum; and noted both Finance and HR departments are doing a great job, noting there are no missing funds, highlighting that the Finance Department just completed the city's audit with only one finding for correction out of 58, and noted the HR department operates by policy; noted she is serving in the capacity of Interim City Manager under the authority granted by the governing body in accordance with the City Charter; and stated that the responsibilities of the remain the same, and that she will continue to execute those responsibilities with professionalism to the best of her ability.

Ward 4 – Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked the Clerk Holiday for recognizing Council Aides Tenisha Dison and Andre Wells, noting it is not known just how much they do, an appreciates them for their work.

Mayor Ellison wished Councilmember Mears a speedy recovery and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

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

XV. **ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 7:53 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