



CITY OF  
**FORESTPARK**

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

Monday, May 18, 2026, at 7:00 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  
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk  
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

## SUMMARY MINUTES

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** – By: Elder Justin Cook
- III. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were present.
- IV. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**  
Motion to adopt the agenda as presented was made by Councilmember Wells; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  1. **Approval of the Mayor & Council Retreat Minutes for May 1 & May 2, 2026**  
**Approval of the City Council Work Session Minutes from May 4, 2026**  
**Approval of the City Council Regular Session Minutes from May 4, 2026**  
Motion to approve the Minutes as presented was made by Councilmember Wells; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- VI. **CEREMONIAL - Proclamation: Public Works Week; GMA Presentation - Municipal Leader Community and Workplace Culture Certificate Program**  
Mayor Ellison presented the Proclamation to the Public Works Department for National Public Works Week. Freddie Broome with GMA presented Certificates of Completion of the Municipal Leader Community and Workplace Culture Certificate Program to: Sandra Davis, Samaria McCoy, and Anthony Gallman.

## VII. CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Holiday announced Election Day voting at your regular polling place tomorrow, May 19, 2026, from 7am -7pm, and to contact the MyVoterPage [mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://mvp.sos.ga.gov) for more information.

## VIII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Interim City Manager Clemons referenced the recent Budget Retreat facilitated by Finance Director Wiggins; commended everyone for a job well done, noting the city is moving ahead.

## IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS - (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

Ms. Ann Keith stated that she could not attend Chief Criss's appeal hearing, expressed her support for him, and asked the Council to do what is right for the police department and the city by returning him to work.

Dr. Lawanda Folami referred to a violation of the meeting rules during the last meeting and encourage the Council to follow Roberts' Rules of Order.

Mr. Duane Thomas stated his concern for the political climate in the city, noting that the citizens of Forest Park deserve professional and fair leadership who are united, not divided. Commented legacy matters. And referenced a prayer rally in support of Chief Criss, and that prayer matters.

Ms. Donna Barkley commented on the blight and vacant buildings along the main corridor asking what the city is doing about it; stated she had heard there would not be public comments after June 4; and stated the Public Works proclamation should have been presented in a setting with all of the workers present.

## X. OLD BUSINESS

### 2. Council Consideration to approve a policy governing security detail for elected officials from the city's police department. – Attorney Matricardi

**Background/History:** The request is to adopt a policy governing security detail for elected officials from the city's police department.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated he agrees there should be a policy; however, he is not in favor of taking action while there is an active investigation.

Motion to approve the Resolution for Security Detail was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed 3-2. (James, Gunn, and Mears Approved) (Gutierrez and Akins-Wells Opposed).

## XI. NEW BUSINESS

### 3. Council Consideration to approve a Resolution requiring all city-owned vehicles to have official City of Forest Park decals installed upon receipt. - Legislative

**Background/History:** Fleet Department to have city-owned vehicles installed with official City of Forest Park decals.

Councilmember Akins-Wells asked for confirmation that the directive discussed during the Work Session includes the directive for the Interim City Manager to direct staff to have the decals installed on all city-owned vehicles, except certain police vehicles.

Attorney Matricardi confirmed the language would be included in the Resolution.

Motion to approve with the Directive for the Interim City Manager to direct the City's Fleet Department to have decals placed on all city-owned vehicles, excluding certain police vehicles was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed 3-2. (Akins-Wells/Gunn/Gutierrez Approved) (James/Mears Opposed).

## XII. CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY

**Ward 1** - Councilmember James thanked everyone for coming out; congratulated staff on their award from GMA; noted the Senior Class Parade was successful, in spite of the wrong date being given by the school's seniors counselor, and thanked Price Skills of the Magnolia Lounge, and thanked the City of Forest Park Police Department and Fire Department for their support; noted the baccalaureate was a great service as well, and thanked Mayor Ellison for presenting the proclamations to the class Valedictorian and Salutatorian at New Vision Church; reminded everyone of Election Day tomorrow, and the monthly Ward 1 meeting on Thursday at 696 Main Street at 5pm; and responded to those who made public comments, noting it is important to get the whole truth during the Appeal Hearing tomorrow; noted her agreeance with the comments made regarding the vacant buildings and blighted areas, as she recalls a vibrant downtown, and noted the city's Main Street Master Plan is in the works with development coming, and noted the URA (Urban Redevelopment Agency) is presenting an item on an upcoming agenda to expand its boundaries to include these areas using URA funding.

**Ward 2** - Councilmember Gunn thanked everyone who came out, and for those who made public comments at the podium, noting their comments and statements are heard and that there are two sides to a story, and the truth lies in between; noted the City Council has to be about the business of the city, not emotional fortitude, and asked members of the community to come out tomorrow, and if you believe in the power of prayer, to come out tomorrow and to align yourself strategically in what you are asking, noting the Council on the dais is moving forward to be about the business of the city without being emotionally engraved, and thanked God for grace; referenced the recent Mother's Day Tea Party event that was amazing, noting it was a very uplifting event, with an opportunity to serve the mothers; and gave special thanks to the Council Aides Tenisha and Andre, as well as the Ms. Foster who operates the Senior Center, noted she did wear a hat, and plans to continue to do so; and asked that everyone stay prayed up, noting this is not easy.

**Ward 3** - Councilmember Gutierrez thanked everyone for their comments, and echoed the comments from colleagues where the truth will come out during the hearing tomorrow, stating that's inevitable, and welcomed everyone to attend if they are able to make it and hear everything during the hearing; gave a shout out to Officer Duane Thomas, noting he is missed by the residents, highlighting his impact on the community outside of his officer duties, he mentored over 150 children in the community with his non-profit at no cost to anyone, and impacted the lives of those who participated noting they are thriving, and is certain he is impacting lives somewhere else, and can hopefully someday have him back in Forest Park; thanked Ms. Keith for her comments, and reminded everyone to go vote tomorrow, noting that's how you put people into place who reflect our values and have the best interest for your community, noting if you don't vote, you can't complain, and encouraged everyone to vote and voice your opinion tomorrow.

**Ward 4** - Councilmember Akins-Wells addressed the rumor regarding public comments ending June 4, as it was confirmed public comments will continue; stated that everyone was asked to take their emotions out it, noting she does not know Chief Criss personally, and that she grew

up in Forest Park, having been here since age four, and that she never knew who the police chief was before becoming elected, because there was no sense of community when it came to the police department; cited the high crime rate prior to Chief Criss; noted that under the leadership of Chief Criss, in three years the crime rate decreased 60% in the city, the department was fully staffed, and public trust restored was restored; noted this has all affected his family and career, and stated the action is personal, as things were okay until he upset someone, and stated they tried to put it off on her, implying that if you make her mad, she will vote to get rid of you, further stating, no, that you will be removed for not doing your job; stated others have come to the city not knowing the city's history, and that while it is him today, it could be you tomorrow; stated the issue surrounding Chief Criss centers around stealing time, noting there is no schedule or policy in place, and there could have been a reprimand; and asked everyone to come out tomorrow to support Chief Criss; and agreed with Ms. Barkley regarding the vacant properties in the downtown, and referenced the property sold by the City to the developer noting per the agreement, the property does not have to be developed for 15 years.

**Ward 5** – Councilmember Mears apologized for missing the last meeting due to illness; thanked everyone for coming out, and noted that until you have been given all of the facts and heard all of the facts, know the whole story, and read the information for yourself, then once you get the information you will be able to make a determination on whether or not there was an injustice.

**Ward 1** – Councilmember James announced the Gifts at the Park event July 15 – 18, a huge community giveaway, noting registration is required for shopping time slots and to visit the city's Facebook page for the QR Code, or contact the Council Aides for more information on registration; noted families will have the opportunity to shop on July 17<sup>th</sup> for free, selecting new items that were returned to Amazon, the sponsor who is donating \$200,000 - \$350,000 of various items, and supplies.

**Mayor Ellison** referenced the Community Prayer Rally taking place at city hall tomorrow, and asked for prayer for the right thing; noted the recent Budget Retreat was good and the Council Retreat was excellent, as the group learned a lot about each other, and asked that the community bear with us as positive things are in the works for Forest Park; and thanked everyone for their attendance.

**Ward 4** – Councilmember Akins-Wells announced that her son, Jaquez Akins, recently participated in the All-Star game in Alabama, where he was named MVP, and has been invited to participate on the National All-Star baseball tour to participate in tournaments in Georgia, North Carolina and Detroit, as stated that he remains eligible for the MLB draft.

**XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate or Cyber Security OCGA § 50-14-1**

Motion to convene Executive Session at 7:51 p.m. for Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate or CyberSecurity was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session at 8:52 p.m. and sign an Affidavit with no action was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 8:52 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:

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Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk

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Gwendolyn Ellison, Mayor