



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

**CITY OF FOREST PARK
CITY COUNCIL BUDGET RETREAT**

Friday, May 15, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Atlanta Gas Light Company
510 GA Hwy. 138 Riverdale, GA 30274

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

Staff in attendance: John Wiggins, Finance Director; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director; Tony Lamar, Senior Accountant, SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Director of Planning & Community Development; Shalonda Brown, Human Resources Director; Alton Matthews, Public Works Director; Joshua Cox, Information Technology Director, Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Samaria McCoy, Executive Assistant, Tarik Maxwell, Recreation and Leisure Director; Rochelle Dennis, Economic Director; Andreas Smith, Deputy Police Chief; Dorothy Roper-Jackson, Court Director

- I. **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME** – Mayor Ellison called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- II. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were present for Roll Call except Councilmember Akins-Wells, and Councilmember Gutierrez, who joined the meeting at 9:15 a.m.
- III. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**
Motion to adopt the Agenda was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.

FACILITATED BY FINANCE DIRECTOR, JOHN WIGGINS

COMMENTS FROM INTERIM CITY MANAGER/FIRE CHIEF CLEMONS

Interim City Manager thanked everyone for their attendance, highlighting the successes and accomplishments during the last nine months as she led the operations of the city in the absence of a permanent city manager, and looks forward to a productive retreat for the upcoming FY26-27 Operating Budget.

Welcome / Strategic Visioning / Budget Objectives: Finance Director Wiggins

Director Wiggins welcomed everyone and thanked each member for being here today and continued as follows: As we begin this budget meeting, our purpose is clear: to make thoughtful, responsible decisions that align our resources with our priorities.

A budget is more than a financial document. It reflects our goals, our values, and our commitment to the people and work we serve. It shows where we invest, where we must be disciplined, and how we plan for both immediate needs and long-term success.

This year, we face both opportunities and challenges. Economic conditions continue to evolve, expectations are rising, and we must remain adaptable while staying focused on our strategic objectives. That means balancing fiscal responsibility with innovation, efficiency with effectiveness, and short-term demands with long-term sustainability.

Today's discussions are an important part of that process. I encourage open dialogue, careful analysis, and collaborative thinking. Our goal is not simply to allocate funds, but to ensure that every dollar supports our mission and delivers meaningful value.

I appreciate the preparation and dedication each of you has brought to this process. Your insights and expertise are essential as we work together to develop a budget that is both prudent and forward-looking.

With that, let's begin our discussions and focus on building a financial plan that positions us for continued success in the year ahead.

Human Resources – Director Shalonda Brown

Director Brown reviewed the Department's Organizational Chart consisting of six (6) positions, with no request for added personnel at this time, and presented as follows:

Department's Vision & Strategic Direction

- 1) Strengthen organizational effectiveness through employee engagement, workforce development, compliance, and strategic leadership support.
- 2) Focus on employee relations, professional development, policy education, wellness initiatives, and operational alignment.
- 3) Create a more engaged, informed, and productive workforce while ensuring consistency and accountability across departments.

Transition Toward Centralized HR Operations

- Historically, several HR functions operated in a decentralized manner, resulting in inconsistencies in communication, policy interpretation, and operational practices.
- The HR Department is now strategically centralizing core HR functions to ensure all personnel processes and procedures are aligned citywide.
- Centralization improves consistency, accountability, compliance, efficiency, and equitable treatment for all employees.

Importance of Centralizing HR Functions

- Ensures consistency in employee relations practices and policy application.
- Reduces liability and compliance risks through standardized procedures.
- Creates stronger accountability and communication across departments.
- Enhances operational efficiency and strengthens workforce planning.

- Positions HR as a strategic organizational partner.

Strategic Priority: Employee Relations

- Strengthen workplace culture and employee engagement initiatives.
- Provide proactive support in conflict resolution and communication.
- Increase leadership support and employee accessibility.
- Continue to promote a collaborative, respectful, and productive work environment.

Strategic Priority: Training & Development

- Requested increased funding for training and development for the six member HR team.
- Training opportunities will include employment law, investigations, leadership development, payroll administration, compliance, and employee engagement.
- Investing in professional development strengthens departmental expertise and service delivery.

Lunch & Learn Educational Series

- Expand Lunch & Learn initiatives to provide ongoing employee education and awareness.
- Topics that will include Risk & Safety, Employee Wellness, Financial Literacy, Retirement preparation, Professionalism, and Workplace Culture.
- Continue educating employees on policies and procedures that govern the City.

Employee Engagement & Wellness Initiatives

HR supports initiatives that improve morale, teamwork, appreciation, and organizational culture.

We will continue to plan & coordinate the following activities:

- Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon
- Employee Health & Wellness Fair
- Employee Fun Day Event

Holiday Gala Transition

- The HR Department will no longer coordinate the Employee Holiday Gala.
- Recommendation for future oversight and coordination to transition to the Executive Office.
- This allows HR to focus more strategically on workforce development, employee relations, and organizational alignment.

Expected Outcomes & Strategic Outlook

- Improved employee morale, engagement, and workplace culture.
- Greater consistency and accountability across departments.
- Enhanced compliance with policies and procedures.
- Continued evolution of HR as a strategic operational partner.
- Support long-term organizational success through workforce alignment and development.

Councilmember James stated her support for training for staff; noted there needs to be buy in from all departments for the wellness program to assure participation.

Councilmember Gunn stated she is in full support of moving forward with training to allow staff to gain full understanding of policy and operations, and to be able to execute with sound direction, and improve the workplace culture.

Interim City Manager Clemons stated Human Resources has an employee handbook, and executes per the handbook policy, and the Governing Body need support HR; noted there needs to be more participation at events from staff, and that it starts at the top of the department with leadership.

Councilmember Gunn asked for the cost of the Holiday Gala.

Director Brown estimated the cost to be \$25,000, and the gifts were from sponsorships, and recommended the Holiday Gala to be managed by the Executive Office.

Director Brown was asked to elaborate on the changes in the hiring process, and noted all applications for Director positions were submitted to the City Manager, who solely selected which applications would be selected for interviews, and the Directors also selected their candidates; and the centralized process will allow the HR team to vet all candidates assuring they meet the minimum qualifications, and there will be no question about selective hiring.

Councilmember James asked if the department is adequately staffed.

Director Brown noted there may be a need to increase staff later, however, the staffing is sufficient at this time.

Councilmember James asked if Lunch & Learn initiatives are currently budgeted under Professional Services?

Director Brown noted this will be the first time funding has been placed in the budget for Lunch & Learn and needs the Directors to support to improve employee morale.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated there needs to be data regarding morale, opposed to assumptions, perhaps with surveys from employees.

Director Brown noted that any survey would need to provide honest, factual data while maintaining confidentiality.

Ms. Warrior stated she would review the cost to develop the survey.

Recreation & Leisure Services – Director Tarik Maxwell

Director Maxwell expressed his support for the vetting by the HR Department, noting it will greatly improve the process of recruiting lifeguards.

Director Maxwell reviewed the Department Mission and Vision Statements:

Mission Statement: It is our mission at the Recreation and Leisure services department to contribute to the quality of life for the citizens of Forest Park, by providing safe and accessible recreational facilities and a diversified program of recreational activities for all citizens. We are committed to enhancing the lives of individuals and families by contributing to the City's economic development, while bringing us together as a community.

Vision: Recreation and Leisure Services have the power to increase the quality of life and strengthen the foundation of the city. Our vision is to provide affordable recreational, physical and cultural opportunities for all our residents, with a focus on family, youth development, adults, and building healthy communities.

Director Maxwell reviewed the current department Organizational Chart, and the Proposed FY26-27 Organizational Chart noting the request for an additional employee in the Senior Services division, an additional Maintenance Worker, a position change from Park Foreman to Senior Maintenance Worker, (15) Additional Summer Camp Counselors, (15) Seasonal and (3) Part-time Lifeguards.

Director Maxwell presented the Proposed Operational Budget Request:

FY26 Budget (\$3,093,337)	FY27 Proposed Budget (\$2,207,090)	Decrease of (\$886,247)
Salaries (\$1,883,907)	\$999,679	\$884,228
Eqpt Maint/All Departments	\$0	\$40,000
Facility Maint. & Repair	\$70,000	\$50,000
Athletic Program	\$77,500	\$87,000
Special Events	\$175,000	*\$175,000*

Could be a possible increase once we receive the bids

Director Maxwell noted several maintenance issues and repairs have been addressed in the current FY25-26 budget, and therefore the Repairs and Maintenance expenses will be less, and noted the remaining department budget items are similar or the same as the current year.

Director Wiggins noted the Travel/Training line items will be combined citywide.

Councilmember James asked about the position requested for the Senior Center and asked if there will be salary changes.

Director Maxwell noted the current staffing level does not allow time off for staff, noting there needs to be backup personnel.

Director Wiggins noted the salaries are based on the Employee Work Study, noting a few salaries were inflated as the analysis revealed there were several employees included in the study that did not align with approved positions.

Councilmember James stated the Organizational Chart and approved staffing must match, and referenced the request for the title change, noting that based on the study, the city has a good compensation and pension plan, and offered that no official on any level should not have to create work or create jobs for employees.

Councilmember Gunn asked Director Maxwell if the department will require any additional staffing for FY25-26.

Director Maxwell noted he will proceed with current staffing for this fiscal year; and noted with several maintenance repairs being completed in the current budget, there has been \$1 million dollars in savings for the city.

Planning & Community Development – Interim Director SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah gave an overview of the presentation noting the priorities, with the goal to become more well-rounded, gaining more knowledge through training opportunities, with a focus on professional certifications, and provide great customer service:

Presentation Overview

- Department Overview
- Organizational Structure
- Budget Priorities & Operational Highlights
- FY 2026–2027 Budget Overview
- Strategic Vision & Department Goals

Department Overview

The Planning & Community Development Department oversees:

- Zoning & Land Use Planning
- Development Review
- Permitting & Inspections
- Business Licensing
- Special Licenses & Permits
- Board & Commission Administration

As a team, we are committed to operating with:

- Trust
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Responsive Customer Service

Department Focus

Our goal is to provide efficient, high-quality service while supporting responsible growth, operational excellence, and community investment throughout the City of Forest Park.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah presented the Department Organizational Chart for seven (7) approved positions, requesting approval to reclassify a position for Permitting, noting there are more than 800 businesses in the City of Forest Park, and the position would serve a dual role.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah stated the department will conduct a housing assessment, noting the City of Forest Park has been designated as a BIC Community, noted she has been working with Clayton County and KPI Advisory Group; and noted the Professional Services line item has been reduced from \$200,000 to \$100,000 in the proposed budget.

Councilmember Gutierrez referenced the Mayor’s Community Town Hall where complaints were submitted for poor customer service, noting his expectation is professionalism be granted to each

citizen and business owner, in -person or on the phone, they should always have a pleasant experience when requesting service from the city, noting employees are receiving good wages.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah acknowledged there have been frustrations relating to software and is excited about OpenGov will remedy many of the issues and will be more beneficial to processes; and also noted she meets with staff reminding everyone to always remain courteous and professional.

Councilmember Gunn stated she is excited about the changes that will alleviate the frustrations with the system and asked when the software will be operational and up and running.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah noted the projections are July 1.

Assistant Finance Director Patterson noted the city has been working with OpenGov for more than a year, noting the implementation team has been very responsive and hands for a Go Live date, and noted a huge plus for the city is that there are unlimited users, opposed to Tyler, who has been the monopoly for financial software for local governments, and OpenGov is now a major competitor.

Director Dennis requested Film Permits be included under the Permits category, noting the process is currently manual, and this would make it an ideal one-stop shop.

Attorney Matricardi noted the contract for Tyler was recently renewed.

Finance Director Wiggins noted onboarding of OpenGov will happen in phases, with the Finance being Phase I.

Council member James asked for clarification of the reclassified position that has been, and if this will be a lateral move with a salary increase.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah stated the request is a title change only with no salary increase and noted the need for a new Permit Technician.

Economic Development – Director Rochelle Dennis

Director Dennis noted her three-year tenure with the City, and one of her first questions when she took on the role was, where is the marketing collateral, and found that it was non-existent; noted the recently approved CID Expansion, where Forest Park is leading the way; noted the film industry is picking up, with OpenGov being a resource to streamline processes.

Director Dennis presented the Organizational Chart where the department currently consists of (3) three staff members.

Director Dennis highlighted the city as Affordable, Accessible, Asset Rich and Open for Business.

Director Dennis requested approval to reclass the Main Street Manager to Project Manager and add a Business Engagement Coordinator position.

Councilmember Gunn referenced the recent Mayor & Council Retreat where the facilitator googled information as if they were a developer seeking to do business in the City of Forest Park, and the results in real time were not favorable, and were extremely negative, embarrassing, and the information posted was inaccurate and needs to be updated.

Director Dennis noted the department has been collaborating with the Public Information Office to gain more visibility for the city and will work with the office on the information and metrics for the city.

Councilmember Gunn noted during the Retreat, the officials were able to comprise great information for the City of Forest Park and is certain staff can clean up the bad data and promote with more positive information.

There was discussion on the Main Street Manager vs Project Manager position, and whether it had to be one or the other.

Clerk Holiday noted the position could be like that of the City Clerk, who also serves as the city's Election Superintendent, with the primary title of City Clerk.

Councilmember Gunn recalled the Main Street Program and Manager would assist obtaining grants for the designated area.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated the title can be confusing, noting certification is required for the Main Street Manager, and noted it was his understanding that the lead on city projects or Project Manager was the Public Works Director.

Attorney Matricardi noted there needs to be a Main Street Manager who can also serve as the Project Manager, and manages the Main Street Program, noting the city has that designation, and having a Main Street Program is beneficial to the downtown area, which aligns with the DDA (Downtown Development Authority) members and map.

Clerk Holiday requested the Main Street Program information and map to add to the records; Director Dennis confirmed.

Director Dennis reviewed the request for the Business Engagement Coordinator position, noting the Economic Development Business Engagement Coordinator is an entry- to mid-level professional position that supports the growth, retention, and expansion of the local business community. This role assists with business outreach and engagement efforts, supports workforce development initiatives, and contributes to economic development marketing strategies. The coordinator plays a role in building and maintaining relationships with local businesses, partners, and stakeholders, while promoting programs, and opportunities that drive economic growth and strengthen the community's overall development goals.

Business Engagement & Support

- Support business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts through outreach, site visits, surveys, and direct engagement with the local business community.

- Promote available programs, incentives, and opportunities that encourage business growth and investment within the community.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with local businesses, industry partners, workforce organizations, and community stakeholders.

Workforce Development Support

- Assist in implementing workforce development initiatives by connecting employers to training programs, talent pipelines, and employment resources.

Marketing & Communications

- Assist in coordinating business outreach communications, including newsletters and digital content.
- Support marketing efforts promoting economic development initiatives.

Data Management & Reporting

- Maintain and update business databases, CRM systems, and site/property inventories.
- Assist with research related to site selection, industry trends, and economic conditions.
- Track and report on business engagement metrics, trends, and outcomes.
- Support surveys, data collection, and reporting for internal leadership, boards, and external partners.

Director Dennis referenced the collaboration with the Forest Park Business Association, introducing a soft introduction to the Vacant Commercial Registry to address blighted areas in a non-gratuitous manner, with further consultation with Legal.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated is excited about more efforts being put into place to work with the businesses in the city.

Councilmember James agreed, noting there also needs to be data tracking in place as well.

Directed Dennis reviewed the Economic Development Department Proposed FY26-27 Budget, noting there are shared expenses with the Planning & Community Development Department.

Municipal Court – Director Dorothy Jackson

Director Jackson referenced the Municipal Court Organizational Chart noting her position as Court Administrator and three Clerks, I, II & III, noting the backlog 2nd Notice for Failure to Appear matters, and has caused a strain on staff; and referenced the Department Mission Statement; noted the Department; noted there is a lack of space for probation staff, and is operating in the hallway.

Interim City Manager Clemons noted there is a plan to expand the court.

Director Jackson noted Judge Freeman serves as the Chief Judge of Forest Park and Union City, and will alternate expenses with Union City; noted the importance of staff training and GCIC certification.

Councilmember Gunn asked if the County has mandates for court staff.

Director Jackson responded that Georgia Municipal Court Clerks are required to be certified; and referenced Goals & Objectives of the Court:

- Deploy AI assistants to answer frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding court hours, locations, and procedures, reducing call volumes.
- Strengthen the court's engagement with community agencies to expand access to mental health resources, to address the underlying causes of offenses and supporting more effective outcomes.

Director Jackson made a request for a Warrant Clerk position, noting the Court receives over 1,000 citations monthly, noting Failure to Appear (FTA) court takes place on the first and 3rd Thursday of each month; and is seeking a Warrant Clerk to address the backlog of more than 5,000 FTA citations.

Councilmember Gutierrez referenced the Jonesboro Mock Trials, noting it would be a great to see the Mock Trials taking place at Forest Park High School, and asked the Court staff to look into coordinating this effort.

Information Technology – Director Joshua Cox

Director Cox thanked the Council for supporting the IT Department's Technical Audit; noted from a financial perspective, the contract with InterDev was renegotiated and more of the services will be performed internally; noted a department goal is to implement the KnowBe4 training that will be integrated with the city's HR Handbook Policy; noted all computers have been updated within the 5-year cycle, and plans to continue under that guideline if the budget allows; and noted the staffing level is sufficient with the approved Technology Innovation Engineer that has been added.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted there needs to be a follow up for the OneClick application per Ward; and asked about installing Wi-Fi in the parks.

Director Cox noted the prior estimate came in around \$150,000 and will follow up.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted there is a great opportunity to tap into the Intern program offered by the City to include the IT Department.

Director Cox stated he is open to the suggestion.

Public Works – Director Alton Matthews

Director Matthews presented the Public Work Department 2026-2-27 Budget Highlights as follows:

- OPTIMIZING PUBLIC WORKS EQUIPMENT
- UPDATING FLEET DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT
- CITY INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENTS
- FILLING VACANCIES
- FOCUS ON TRAINING FOR ALL STAFF
- FILLING ALL POTHOLES WITH THE POTHOLE RANGER BRIGADE

- Inventory the City Assets
- Sidewalk (LF)
- Road Conditions Assessment
- Signs and Post

Director Matthews reviewed the Department Personnel, requesting training for required CDL driver(s), Certified Fleet Professionals, Flagging Certifications, and Herbicide Certifications; noted the Assistant Public Works Director was recently hired and will begin on May 26th; noted a Work Order System is being put in place, and referenced a possible obstacle course as a criteria of employment, upon legal review.

Director Matthews noted the Forest Park Public Works Department is a team of dedicated professionals serving the citizens of Forest Park. The department is made up of six division including: Street maintenance, Sanitation, Fleet maintenance, Parks and Grounds Maintenance,

Building Maintenance, and Administration; and presented the Public Works Department Organizational Chart.

Director Matthews presented the 2026-2027 Capital Funding Request:

Pavement Assessment	\$ 15,000.00
City Rover Pothole App	\$ 6,000.00
Chevrolet 2500 - Grounds	\$ 48,082.00
Salt Dogg, Salt Spreader	\$ 5,690.00
Brine Tank 325 gallon	\$ 3,113.00
Flooring PW-Main Bldg	\$ 27,250.00
Flooring PW-Fleet Bldg	\$ 66,000.00
PW resurfacing streets	\$100,000.00
Ford F-2500 - Sign Shop	\$ 57,200.00

TOTAL CAPITAL FUNDING: \$328,335.00

Director Matthews presented the 2026-2027 Fleet, Street, Grounds, and Sanitation Budget Requests; noting it is the Council’s decision to determine, based on the rating %, the order of the repair on the list, and what is available in the budget; noted the request for \$450,000 for vehicle repairs, noting that amount will increase if police and fire are incorporated.

Director Wiggins noted Council needs to take into consideration funding the account in the event vehicles cannot be repaired and must be replaced.

Director Matthews noted the Sanitation fund is operating in a deficit.

Director Wiggins noted Waste Management increases their fees annually, based on a contract approved by the previous Council; however, the increases are not being passed along to the residents.

Councilmember James state she was under the impression it was a wash between the fees paid by residents, and fees from Waste Management, and suggested the contract be renegotiated.

Director Matthews stated there is a misconception about the Transfer Station located in the city that is being used by commercial companies from all over, not just Forest Park.

Councilmember James referenced the city's Vehicle Take Home Policy, and asked for a report on fuel usage, and recommended the city look into at electric vehicles to its fleet.

Fire Department – Chief Latosha Clemons

Chief Clemons reviewed the Fire Department Mission Statement: To ensure the safety of the community by continually providing the highest quality of service through preparedness, education, and action

Chief Clemons referenced the (6) Department Divisions:

1. Fire Administration
2. Fire Support Services/Logistics
3. Fire Operations
4. Fire Prevention
5. Office of Professional Standards
 - a. Emergency Medical Services
 - b. Health and Safety
 - c. Fire Training
6. Emergency Management Services

Police Department (E911, Code Compliance, Animal Control) – Deputy Chief Andreas Smith

Deputy Chief Smith presented the Police Department Organizational Chart reviewing the current positions, staffing needs and vacant positions, and noted the department is 87% filled, with the goal of getting back to above 95% operational.

Deputy Chief Smith stated the City of Forest Park Police Service Department will deliver effective and responsive law enforcement services to all citizens of the City of Forest Park in a fair and equitable manner; reviewed the Department Mission, Vision, and Core Values, and reviewed the Budget Highlights:

- Proposing the addition of one Police Major position (Pay Grade PP26) to the Police Department budget. Funding for this position would come from the salary savings associated with the reclassification of the Director of Code Compliance position (Pay Grade 121).
- Maintain department staffing levels with a target of remaining above 95% staffed.
- Expand community events and engagement efforts to further strengthen true community policing initiatives. Proposed increase for crime prevention measures.
- Continue supporting advanced technology systems, including Flock, FUSUS, the Drone Program, and Axon Body Worn Cameras (BWC) and In-Car Cameras (ICC), to assist in crime prevention, improve public safety, and enhance case solvability.
- FY 25-26 Accomplishments: Training- 61 sworn officers completed more than 100 hours of training. Total departmental training hours: 12,353. Crime Reduction FY24-25 compared to FY25-26: Part 1 offenses reduced by 8.9%.

Deputy Chief Smith reviewed the Communications & E-911 Organizational Chart; noted there will be an increase in apparel to outfit dispatchers, and reviewed the Budget Highlights:

- Increase training opportunities and professional certifications for dispatch personnel.
- Maintain full staffing levels.
- Implement Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)
- FY25-26 Accomplishments: Maintaining a 3.0-second or lower average answer time for 911 calls over the last several months. Current stats: Answered 911 within 10 seconds: 98.56%. Average Answer Time: 2.7 seconds. PD Dispatch Time: 1:43. Fire Dispatch Time: 1:01.

Deputy Chief Smith reviewed the Animal Control Organizational Chart, noting it has been difficult to maintain staff in Animal Control, and will place the division under the Captain; noted one vacancy; and referenced the expenses to outfit, and provide equipment; and reviewed the Budget Highlights:

- Update Equipment and Uniforms.
- Strengthen Interagency Partnerships
- Enhance Training and review of current Ordinances.

Deputy Chief Smith reviewed the Code Compliance Organizational Chart, noting the Director position in Code Compliance will be dissolved, and replace with a Captain, and currently has one vacancy; and reviewed the Budget Highlights:

- Update Equipment and Uniforms
- Proposed addition of Police Major oversight to improve communication, strengthen workplace operations, and promote effective practices throughout the department.
- The Major manages and performs complex professional work, including planning, directing, and coordinating the operations of the Code Compliance Department.
- FY25-26 Accomplishments: Outfitted with Axon Body Worn Cameras to assist with case management and transparency. Policy revisions are currently in progress. Radios and ongoing training were provided to improve safety and communication.

Deputy Chief Smith noted FY26-27 Proposed Capital Projects relating to improvements to parking to the grassy area, and PD building renovations.

Councilmember Gunn asked about the phasing out of the Director to Major position, asking if there was an incentive for the Captain, and asked if the process was vetted through HR as a Major, or a promotion, or placement in the roles.

Attorney Matricardi stated that if an employee has been doing the role for 30 days, the new position is assumed.

Councilmember Gunn if the Chaplain position is paid and is being phased out.

Deputy Chief Smith stated he cannot justify the need for a Chaplain in-house and paid, noting there are other agencies who volunteer those services.

Councilmember Gunn note there were three (3) Chaplains who rotated in and out.

Interim City Manager Clemons stated mental health is a priority.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted the City of Forest Park has 20,000 residents and requested data on whether or not the city aligns with the correct ration of officers/residents, and requested a flow chart and budget comparisons of prior year vs. current budget, and proposed budget, and requested all positions listed on all Organizational Charts where staff was hired and were not approved on the Organizational Chart.

Deputy Chief Smith stated an analysis will be provided; and noted the Medicaid Jail Match rate was negotiated and will be less.

Councilmember James asked if there is staff dedicated to Real Time Crime.

Deputy Chief Smith confirmed that the Real Time Crime Center uses Flock cameras and drones.

Councilmember Gutierrez asked that the city review the rehire policy and referenced a reserve officer wanting to return to assist with the Hispanic population and gaining trust, as this would be a great trusted resource for the community.

Councilmember Gunn noted there are 128 PD personnel, and the City of Forest Park is 9.5 square miles with a \$12 million dollar budget and asked if the 128 number of personnel meet the standard for a city of this size.

Deputy Chief Smith note there has been a significant number of events that require more officers to secure the area, officials and the public.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted the crime rates online are outdated and needs to be corrected; noting the numbers cited during the Mayor and Council Retreat shows high crime rates, and the research needs to be done and corrected.

Mayor Ellison noted the Retreat Facilitator googled the City of Forest Park the night before the Retreat.

Councilmember James stated the city's Public Information Officer was charged with reviewing and correcting the information.

Director Jackson, Court Administrator, asked why there are (9) nine Administrative Assistants within the Police Department, noting the Fire Department has (2) two Assistants.

Deputy Chief Smith responded that he needs to evaluate the department, noting this is an inherited department.

Councilmember James asked if Deputy Chief Smith shares any of the Administrative Assistants; Deputy Chief Smith responded he did not have an Administrative Assistant.

Finance – Director John Wiggins

Director Wiggins reviewed the department Mission and Vision Statements, and Organizational Chart currently staffed at (10) with a (1) vacancy.

Director Wiggins noted the Finance Department Goals as follows:

- CONTINUE MONTHLY CLOSE OUT PROCESS TO ENSURE ACCURATE FINANCIAL REPORTING.
- CONTINUE TO SUBMIT ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT BY DUE DATE.
- IMPROVE BUDGET PROCESS WITH OPENGOV.
- CONTINUE TO ENHANCE FINANCIAL AND PROCUREMENT PROCESSES WITH OPENGOV.

Director Wiggins presented the Proposed FY26-27 Finance Department Budget, noting the increase for Legal Fees from 250,000 to \$300,000; and also increase the Liability Insurance from \$200,000 to \$500,000, noting the City is self-insured.

Attorney Matricardi noted there are a number of employment related claims, motor vehicle accidents, lawsuits, plus legal fees.

Councilmember Gutierrez asked why the City of Forest Park is self-insured.

Attorney Matricardi noted there is a significant history of claims.
Director Wiggins noted the request for \$500,000 is conservative.

Councilmember James asked if the Risk Management is removing driving privileges for employees when the city is at fault.

Director Wiggins noted the Accident Safety and Review Committee meets monthly to review claims, and has a Risk Manager on staff within HR.

Attorney Matricardi noted most of the claims submitted to the Committee are vehicle claims, and the city needs to look at more risk strategies.

Councilmember James inquired about the line item for utility bills, asking which buildings are included in the number.

Director Wiggins responded that all buildings except Public Works, Fire and Police, and noted the city is also paying for streetlights throughout the city.

Director Wiggins presented the SPLOST list, noting the Capital Projects total \$1,266,753.
Strategic Capital Priorities:

- Development of the New City Center Complex
 - Phase 1 – Recreation Center Complex
 - Phase 2 – Administrative Complex
 - Phase 3 – Police HQ Complex
- Starr Park Renovation
- Road & Sidewalk Improvements
- Long-term Infrastructure Strengthening

Fire Capital Total - \$492,000

- Computers - \$15,000
- Suppression - \$90,000

- Styker Life Packs - \$72,000
- Training Facility Building - \$315,000

Police Capital Total - \$437,300

- Drone Docking Station - \$80,000
- Flock Safety Falcon - \$63,500
- Axon Fusus - \$75,000
- Resurface (Paving) Police HQ - \$150,000
- Repainting of Police HQ - \$24,000
- Police Gate - \$20,000
- Roof Repair - \$5,300
- Police Room Upgrades - \$13,500
- Animal Control Vehicle Upgrade - \$6,000

Public Works Total - \$337,453

- Resurfacing Streets - \$100,000
- Pavement Assessment - \$15,000
- Public Works Building - \$27,250
- Fleet Floors - \$66,000
- Vehicles - \$114,400

Interim Irons-Kumassah requested the Pedestrian Bridge be included, noted staff did not apply for a grant with Senator Ossoff's office because the required funding of 20% match was not available, noting the estimated bridge cost to be approximately \$7 million dollars and the city's match being approximately \$1.4 million dollars. Mayor Ellison asked if the city did not apply solely because of the match and asked if funding was and is available.

Director Wiggins noted the URA (Urban Redevelopment Agency) has in excess of \$30 million dollars, and the pedestrian bridge is located within the URA boundary.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah noted Norfolk Southern has submitted \$50,000 to apply towards the Pedestrian Bridge project.

Director Wiggins noted there is an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a Grants Writer/Administrator coming forward soon to assist the city with writing and administering grants.

Assistant Finance Director Patterson recommended combining all current projects to include the Pedestrian Bridge project.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah noted Georgia Power was prepared to provide the transformers, however, because the city was not ready to proceed with the project had to pause, and has advised contacting them once the project is officially moving forward.

Director Dennis noted the URA Expansion is scheduled for their June meeting Agenda.

Director Cox indicated there may be available funds in the IT Budget to assist with the 20% match.

Executive Office – Interim City Manager Clemons, Executive Assistant Samaria McCoy & Chief of Staff Pauline Warrior

Interim City Manager Clemons thanked Ms. McCoy and Ms. Warrior for their assistance in preparing the Executive Office Budget presentation, and presented the Proposed FY26-27 Organization Chart, noting a separation of the Clerk's Office as a Division similar to Animal Control; noted the Public Information Office request has been included in the Executive Office budget; and noted the Employee Appreciation line item will be included in the Executive Office budget. Key Budget Highlights:

Office Personnel Changes:

- Interim City Manager
- City Clerk
- Records Management Specialist
- BUDGET IMPACT: \$21K (executive search contract - City Manager)

Office Restructure:

- Reorganization to formalize Clerk's Office as a standalone division reporting to the Executive Office with Council Aides matrixed to the City Clerk.
- BUDGET IMPACT: Proposed Redirected Operational Funds

Recalibration of City's Performance Management Reporting Platform:

- BUDGET IMPACT: Operational professional services add-on to OpenGov existing contract.

Executive Office Technical/Furniture Upgrades:

- BUDGET IMPACT: Proposed Redirected Operational Funds

Executive Assistant McCoy noted a proposed City Hall building refresh to include painting, window blinds, and the replacement of Executive Council Chambers and Conference Room chairs, noting the upgrade cost is estimated at \$18,000.00.

Chief of Staff Warrior referenced the Performance Management Recalibration in accordance with the recommendations by the city's Auditor, Mauldin & Jenkins; noting the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are the first to be done in Clayton County.

Councilmember James noted the city recently upgraded the Council Chambers, noting the chairs and desktop don't fit, and the city needs to make sure it is a good use of taxpayer money.

Attorney Matricardi confirmed the chairs should be replaced.

There was discussion around the clutter, stating items are unsightly, and can be seen by the public from the Chamber; and also discussed the need for technology upgrades in the Chamber.

Executive Assistant McCoy referenced an interactive TV, and video conference tool to be added at no cost.

Councilmember James asked for clarification regarding the City Clerk's Office structure, asked about laptops and power outlets on the dais; and requested a list of all budget requests for new, and reclassified positions and financial impact.

Interim City Manager Clemons noted Clerk Holiday will expand upon and provide more information following this presentation; Director Cox advised outlets were placed under the counter on the dais; and Interim City Manager Clemons confirm a list would be provided as requested.

There was discussion of an Executive Assistant position for Mayor Ellison, noting Ms. McCoy is currently serving as Executive Assistant to the Mayor and City Manager, noting that the Mayor has a heavy calendar that involves numerous meetings and appearances, and requires assistance, noting the position could be part-time, or professional services.

Office of the City Clerk – Vanessa Holiday

Clerk Holiday noted the request for the Clerk’s Office to be established as a department, and not a division noting, the city clerk is one of the oldest and most essential roles in local government, acting as the central hub for transparency, record-keeping, and administrative coordination. Having the clerk’s office as a standalone department ensures that this critical function is properly resourced, protected, and prioritized; noted a dedicated department can invest in technology, streamline processes, and standardize procedures for agenda preparation, records management, and public communication. This improves efficiency and service quality.

Clerk Holiday gave an overview of the City Clerk duties:

Centralized Record-Keeping and Transparency

- The City Clerk maintains the official record of all city actions — ordinances, resolutions, meeting minutes, contracts, and legal notices — which are the authoritative source for disputes and accountability. A dedicated department ensures these records are preserved, accessible, and managed according to legal standards, supporting public trust.

Coordination Across Departments

- The clerk’s office serves as the “glue” between city departments, the council, and the public. The Clerk’s Office prepares agendas, distributes materials, records minutes, and provides official documentation to all stakeholders. This coordination is too complex to be handled by a single department without a dedicated team.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the role of the Council Aides within the Office of the City Clerk:

Administrative Support

- Members of the Governing Body receive constituent services through Council Aides, who serve as essential links between the council and the community. By addressing constituent needs, supporting the council’s administrative operations, and strengthening communication channels between elected officials and the public, they fulfill a vital function.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the newest position request for a Records Management Specialist

New Position Records Management Specialist

- Records management is often an overlooked issue; however, this task is becoming more vital every day. In this information age, everyone, from the average citizen to the government, must find a way to preserve, manage, store and organize their records. Whether your city has a population of 1,500 or 650,000, it is necessary to keep good and accurate records.
- Proper records management not only conveys organizational and management benefits to an organization, but also, for local government offices, it is a vital task, necessary for fulfilling important legal requirements and duties.

Clerk Holiday noted the proposed staffing for the Office of the City Clerk include the City Clerk, Deputy City Clerk, (2) Two Council Aides, and Records Management Specialist; and noted the software used within the department.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the proposed FY26/27 Operating Budget for the Clerk's Office noting the transfer of the Elections Line Item from the Governing Body; and the increase that will be required for software; and noted training is essential for the Clerk's Office as training boosts productivity and performance, increases employee engagement and satisfaction, reduces turnover, and helps organizations adapt to technological changes. Training equips employees with the necessary skills to excel, prepares them for future growth, and ensures compliance with regulations, ultimately leading to a more skilled, motivated, and successful workforce.

Clerk Holiday summarized the request for the Office of the City Clerk as a department of the City: and reviewed the Top 3 Goals:

- The city clerk's office is a core governance and transparency mechanism. By having its own department, the city ensures that the clerk's vital role in record-keeping, coordination, elections, and public service is sustained, secure, and effective, ultimately strengthening the city's accountability and public trust.
- FY26/27 Goals
 - Improve Records Management
 - Reduce Paper
 - Digitalization of Records

Director Jackson requested clarification on the Records position as it relates to records within the Municipal Court.

Clerk Holiday noted there will be a staff member assigned from each department who will coordinate with the Records Management Specialist to manage, coordinate and destroy paper and/or digital records, noting the Office of the City Clerk remains the Official Custodian of Records.

Legislative Office - City Clerk Vanessa Holiday

Clerk Holiday gave an overview of the Legislative Department, noting the Governing Body provides strategic direction and oversight for the City of Forest Park, setting goals, establishing policies, and monitoring performance to ensure the city operates effectively and meets its objectives. The main role of the Governing Body is strategic decision-making, ensuring legal and financial compliance, and holding management accountable.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the Mission and Vision Statements, and highlighted the Values approved by the Administration:

Mission Statement

- It is the mission of the City of Forest Park to enhance, strengthen, and grow our city by collaborating with our community to provide the highest level of service. Striving to be recognized as a diverse community that values and respects all members. We will strive to provide fair, professional, and courteous service through transparency and open communication. As we work to achieve this mission, we will have integrity beyond reproach while employing fiscal discipline and innovation. In this work there are no praises and raises for mediocrity.

Vision Statement

- Our vision is to be a welcoming, safe, family-oriented, fiscally sound city with an emerging urban vibrancy that maximizes its geographic location to be the most attractive residential and commercial destination in the state.

Values

- Collaboration: We will work to maximize impact by incorporating diverse community stakeholders' feedback, expertise, and resources.

- Creativity: We will work to encourage imaginative and innovative solutions to foster positive changes in our community.
- Strategy: We will work to engage in strategic thinking that allows for efficient planning, objective data driven decisions, and flexibility to meet community needs.
- Integrity: We will operate transparently with the highest level of professional and ethical behavior in our endeavors and encourage the spirit of generosity.
- Respect and Equity: We will operate justly, without discrimination, to ensure equitable access to all. We celebrate the unique attributes of individuals and treat each other with sensitivity and respect.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the Legislative Department Budget noting the transfer of the Election Expense to the budget of the City Clerk, otherwise, the proposed FY26/27 budget will remain the same.

Director Wiggins explained that a percentage of the Ft. Gillem sale was being used to pay off debt services and to fund the Governing Body’s Capital Projects, noting the annual amount remains the same.

Clerk Holiday noted that funds not used within a budget year from General Fund are transferred to the city’s Fund Balance annually, and therefore although unused, the remaining funds serve a purpose as the funds are transferred to Fund Balance to help fund any unexpected expenses. Councilmember Gutierrez stated officials need to do a better job of collaborating.

Clerk Holiday reviewed the FY26/27 Mayor & Council Scheduled Events, noting 114 events are currently proposed:

Wellness with Wells	Teens in Action
Ward 1 Meeting	Clayton County Day at the Capitol
Community Closet	Annual Career Day
Gateway Restoration Food Giveaway	Built by Her - Women's History Month
Beignets & Brew	Food Truck Friday/Taste of Forest Park
Community Town Halls	Re-Entry Community Summit
Homemade Hooks	Community Feeding Day
365 Black Health & Wellness Fair	FPHS Graduates Caravan
Police/Code Compliance Forum	Veterans Breakfast
Teacher of the Year	Harlem Meets GA Back to School Block Party
Hunger Walk/Run	COFP Back to School Supply School Event
Senior Panthers in Action	Gift Giveaway / Christmas in July
Chat Chew & Connect	Forest Park Safety Day
Hispanic Heritage Festival	Fall Festival
Day of the Dead	Turkey/Ham Food Giveaway
Ugly T-shirt Christmas Party	Faith & Wellness

Councilmember James stated she will be more conscious of the Council Aide's time and ask for assistance from volunteers after standard work hours.

Councilmember Gutierrez proposed transferring the Teens in Action and Senior Panthers in Action to City Events under the Parks and Recreation Department.

VI. **ADJOURNMENT** - With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 5:00 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