CITY OF FOREST PARK
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION MEETING

Monday, June 15, 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 –** Led by Elder Justin Cook.

III. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK –** All members in attendance except Councilmember Gutierrez.

IV. **ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**
Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

V. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**
Motion to remove Item#3, and Item#4 from the agenda was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah noted there would be requests for consideration from the Council for partnerships/collaboration for Item #3 and Item #4.

Councilmember Akins-Wells rescinded the motion to remove Item #3 and Item #4, and adopt the agenda as presented; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

VI. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. **City Council Approval of Special Called Meeting Minutes May 19, 2026**
   City Council Approval of Work Session Meeting Minutes June 1, 2026

City Council Approval of Regular Session Meeting Minutes June 1, 2026
City Council Approval of Special Called Meeting Minutes June 5, 2026
Motion to approve the Minutes as presented was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

VII. **CEREMONIAL –** Proclamations presented by Mayor Ellison for Municipal Court Clerk's Week.

VIII. **CITY CLERK'S REPORT –** Clerk Holiday referenced Election Day for the General Primary on June 16, 2026.

IX. **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT -** None

X. **PUBLIC COMMENTS - (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)** Rules of Procedure and Decorum read by Clerk Holiday.

Mr. C. Bernard Solomon introduced his business @Work Personnel established in the City of Forest Park in February 2026 and welcomed all who were in search of employment to contact their office for assistance.

Mr. Cliff Pellegrine recommended the City of Forest Park adopt a moratorium on the future development of data centers, offering his assistance in drafting the information; and looks forward to a spirited debate on the mobile showers.

Mr. Duane Thomas commented that Chief Brandon Criss was terminated for stealing time, yet the City of Forest Park paid him $47,000 for PTO time; questioned what Judge provided an order stating Mayor Ellison’s veto was not valid and referenced the veto by former Mayor Butler regarding the veto regarding Fire Chief Don Horton.

Dr. Lawanda Folami congratulated the Leadership Clayton class of 2026 and commended their work; and asked the governing body to review the budget, specifically the request for the New City Clerk’s Department.

Mr. Carl Evans noted concerns regarding the data center citing ethical concerns with a member of the governing body on the URA Board and voting as a councilmember, rather than recusing; commented on public works operations when determining roadwork/repairs; stated the Chief Criss situation was totally mishandled.

XI. **CONSENT AGENDA**

2. **Council Approval to extend the contract term for six (6) months with Hatley Plans, LLC for Impact Fee Study.** - Planning and Community Development
Background/History: The City is currently conducting a comprehensive development impact fee study in accordance with the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act of 1990. The purpose of the study is to ensure that future growth and development contribute proportionately to the capital improvements and public infrastructure necessary to support the city. The study will assess current development trends, projected population growth, infrastructure capacity, and long-term capital improvement needs to determine appropriate and equitable impact fee calculations. The study will evaluate and recommend updated fee schedules, expanded eligible uses of impact fee funds, enhanced administrative procedures, and improved transparency measures for the following service areas and

departments: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space; Roads, Streets and Bridges; Planning and Development; Police and Fire/EMS Services; and any additional public facilities or services identified by the consultant as qualifying under the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act.

The Planning & Community Development Department (PCD), in partnership with Hatley Plans, LLC, (The Consultant), has been working collaboratively to complete the study and ensure compliance with all statutory requirements established by the State of Georgia. The City established an Impact Fee Advisory Committee, which has been formally approved by the Mayor and Council to provide guidance, public input, and recommendations throughout the study process. Additional time is necessary to complete data collection, capital improvement planning analysis, and advisory committee review activities. The extension will allow sufficient time for the Consultant and Advisory Committee to finalize the technical analysis, conduct remaining meetings and public engagement efforts, and prepare the final recommendations and implementation strategy for presentation to the Mayor and Council. The requested contract amendment is for a time extension only and does not increase the original contract amount.

Contract Time Extension ONLY through December 31, 2026

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XII. PRESENTATIONS (Made during the Work Session Meeting)

3. **Presentation: HomeANCHOR - Clayton: Housing Resource Initiative (Leadership Clayton Class of 2026 – Group III). - Planning and Community Development**
Background/History: Leadership Clayton Class of 2026 – Group III is presenting HomeANCHOR – Clayton: A New Connection to Housing Opportunities and Resources, a community-based initiative designed to improve awareness, accessibility, and navigation of housing-related resources available to residents throughout Clayton County.

The project was developed in response to housing instability challenges impacting local communities, including housing affordability concerns, eviction trends, homelessness, and barriers residents often encounter when attempting to locate and access available support services. Through research and community engagement, the group identified a need for a centralized resource platform that helps residents navigate available housing-related programs and connect with organizations equipped to provide assistance.

This presentation will provide an overview of the project, identified community needs and resource gaps, and opportunities for partnership and community engagement. The group also looks forward to exploring how the City of Forest Park can collaborate in increasing awareness of available housing resources, strengthening connections between residents and support services, and serving as a potential community partner in advancing the initiative.

Interim Director Irons-Kumassah noted the request from the Leadership Clayton Class is to receive the presentations and consider partnership and collaboration.

Councilmember James asked if a vote of the Council is required.

Attorney Matricardi noted a vote would only be required if action is going to be taken regarding a partnership.

Councilmember Akins-Wells commented this would be important to the commended and suggested the City of Forest Park matches the partnership of the City of College Park.

Councilmember Gunn agreed; noting there needs to be more entities at the table for conversations for a successful collaboration.

Councilmember Mears noted both presentations are good projects, however, the city needs to look at the associated cost.

Councilmember Akins-Wells asked the city to prioritize funding, noting these projects meet the needs of citizens, and needs to figure it out.

No Action Taken.

4. **Presentation: Fresh Hope: Lather & Load Initiative (Leadership Clayton Class of 2026 – Group II) - Planning and Community Development**
Background/History: Group II of the Leadership Clayton Class of 2026 will provide a presentation on Fresh Hope: Lather & Load, a community outreach initiative designed to restore dignity and improve quality of life for individuals experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations through access to mobile shower facilities, laundry services, hygiene resources, and supportive services. The initiative seeks to address immediate unmet needs while connecting participants to available community resources and long-term support systems. As part of the project, the group is planning pilot "Fresh Hope Days" in Clayton County to demonstrate the concept, build community partnerships, and encourage support from local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders. The presentation will provide an overview of the initiative, its anticipated community impact, and opportunities for collaboration within the City of Forest Park.
No Action Taken.

5. **Presentation: Mayor's Reading Club** - Legislative
Background/History: Staff will provide an overview of the Mayor's Reading Club: Little ROOTS, a literacy initiative established under Mayor Ellison's youth engagement efforts and aligned with the national Mayor's Reading Club program. The presentation will highlight planned reading and family engagement activities for the upcoming school year, including reading events, a bookmark contest, virtual reading opportunities, and a summer reading program.
Mayor Ellison noted this item would be presented at a later date.

XIII. **OLD BUSINESS**

6. **Council Discussion on Cemetery Maintenance: Consideration of Service Reallocation Options** – Presented by: Alton Matthews, Public Works Director
Background/History: Director Matthews noted the cemeteries are privately owned.

Councilmember Mears noted the city needs to see the costs to determine the best option.

Attorney Matricardi stated that a previous city council approve the contract, and that this Council can make a motion to direct Public Works to find the most competitive price.

Councilmember Akins-Wells reiterated that the cemeteries were privately owned, noted the Public Works Department does not have the manpower now to sustain the city's properties and private properties, and suggested family members and/or other organizations provide maintenance, noting the funds could be used to provide services for City of Forest Park residents.

Councilmember James noted it was her understanding that the cemetery along Main Street and Phillips Drive was city-owned and would favor a lower cost to maintain the cemeteries.

Attorney Matricardi noted she believes people may have assumed it was a City of Forest Park cemetery because of its location along Main Street, and stated the cemeteries are not city owned.

Councilmember Gunn noted the city will be able to make a decision once the bids are in.

Motion to task staff with bringing back to the July 2026 Council meeting with a comparison of cost for in-house or contracted services for maintaining cemeteries was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed 3-1 (James/Gunn/Mears In Favor) and (Akins-Wells Opposed).

XIV. **PUBLIC HEARING –** Clerk Holiday read the Public Hearing Rules and Procedures

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

7. **Council Consideration to approve a proposed Urban Redevelopment Plan pursuant to the Urban Redevelopment Law, O.C.G.A. § 36-62.1.** – Presented by: Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director

Background/History: URA Boundary Expansion: Staff is requesting that the City Council review and approve the proposed expansion of the Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) boundaries. Approval of the expanded URA boundaries will provide the City and Urban Redevelopment Agency with a framework to address blighted and underutilized properties, pursue catalytic redevelopment opportunities, support corridor revitalization along Forest Parkway and Jonesboro Road, and advance future economic development and redevelopment initiatives within the City of Forest Park.

To promote revitalization and sustainable economic growth, the City of Forest Park's Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) engaged TSW to prepare a strategic plan for the City's Urban Redevelopment Area. The planning process began with an evaluation of the existing URA boundaries and included recommendations for expansion informed by development pattern analysis and URA staff input. Within the expanded study area, four potential sites were identified as candidates for future redevelopment. Following a comprehensive review, the URA and TSW collaboratively selected one site for detailed concept planning to

establish a clear and actionable vision for catalytic development.
During the planning process, the consultant team (TSW) met with City staff in January for an initial consultation to outline the project scope and schedule, which spans from January through the end of 2025.

Sources of data and information used in preparing this plan included: Forest Park and Clayton County GIS data; Clayton County Board of Assessors records; Field observations; Input from URA members and City staff.

The existing Urban Redevelopment Area (URA) in Forest Park is centered along Forest Parkway, extending from Old Dixie Road (US 41) to Ash Street. It encompasses the downtown area between Forest Parkway and Main Street/ Hill Street to the north, as well as the City Hall blocks and Starr Park to the south. In total, the existing URA covers approximately 122 acres.

To address blighted properties and support revitalization more effectively along the Jonesboro Road corridor—a major commercial spine within the City—the URA initiated an evaluation of potential boundary expansions. This process began with a windshield survey and mapping analysis to assess current development patterns and land uses along both the Forest Parkway and Jonesboro Road corridors. Blighted properties were identified by City staff and the consultant team and mapped within the context of these two primary corridors.

The expanded area encompasses properties fronting Forest Parkway and Main Street—from the City's western limits to Jonesboro Road—and includes commercial parcels along Jonesboro Road extending north to the City limits. In total, the expanded URA area covers approximately 512 acres.

Public Hearing Opened:
Speakers in Favor: Ms. Rose Marie Green and Dr. Lawanda Folami
Speakers Opposed: Mr. Carl Evans

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

8. **Second Reading of the FY26-27 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan.**
Presented by: John Wiggins, Finance Director
Background/History: FY2026-2027 Proposed Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan. FY2026-2027 Proposed Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan. The Proposed Funded dollar amount of the FY26-27 Budget is $46,439,729.00. The budget meticulously allocates resources across various city priorities and programs. These allocations are made with the intent to enhance public safety, improve infrastructure, promote economic development, and provide essential services. From maintaining our parks and recreational facilities to supporting educational programs and ensuring the upkeep of our streets and utilities, the budget is designed to meet the diverse needs of our community.

Public Hearing Opened:
Speakers in Favor: None
Speakers Opposed: Dr. Lawanda Folami

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

Councilmember James referenced her statement made during the Budget Retreat regarding building financial reserves for the city, and recommends the current structure remain in place, noting the City Manager candidates agree Code Compliance should be a stand-alone department.

Councilmember Gunn stated referenced the proposed new positions, stating she is not in agreement with a new department referencing page 209 in the agenda packet.

Director Wiggins noted Interim City Manager Clemons has proposed classifying the Clerk's Office as a Division, similar to Animal Control.

Councilmember Akins-Wells stated her support for a part-time Mayor's Assistant position; and questioned why the Code Compliance Department has (5) employees, with two (2) supervisors, and should have a director, and move from under the police department.

Councilmember James asked for the next steps if the city does not vote to approve the budget tonight, or do you need numbers.

Attorney Matricardi confirmed the numbers are required and noted a temporary budget could be put into place, or a Special Called meeting to adopt the budget.

Clerk Holiday referenced state law regarding the adoption of the budget.

Motion to Table was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XV. **NEW BUSINESS**

9. **Council Consideration to adopt an Ordinance to approve the FY2026-2027 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan the Proposed Funded dollar amount of the FY26-27 Budget is $46,439,729.00.** – Presented by: John Wiggins, Finance Director
This item was not heard because Item# 8 was Tabled.

10. **Council Consideration to approve the FY25/26 Budget Amendment #5** – Presented by: John Wiggins, Finance Director
Background/History: Agenda Item – Budget Amendments (Finance Department)
The Finance Department respectfully submits the following budget amendment for Council consideration. These adjustments are part of the Department's proactive financial management practices and quarterly budget review process, which ensure accurate reporting, compliance with adopted budgetary standards, and alignment of departmental appropriations with actual operational activity.
The proposed amendment reflects responsible financial stewardship and supports the City's continued commitment to maintaining fiscal stability through regular monitoring, forecasting, and timely budget adjustments.
This budget amendment reflects a **$1,427,294.93 increase in General Fund**

appropriations. This Budget Amendment updates departmental appropriations by reallocating funds from different departments instead of using revenue projections to reflect actual operating conditions and fiscal performance. The Budget Amendment will reflect a slight change to the total amount of **$44,263,641 to $44,238,651**.
Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

11. **Council Discussion and Approval to enter into a contract with DAF Concrete, Inc. for Asphalt Patching Services: Public Works Department** – Presented by: Alton Matthews, Public Works Director
Background/History: The Public Works Department has identified approximately twenty (20) roads throughout the City requiring asphalt patching and roadway surface repairs to improve roadway conditions, enhance public safety, and extend the useful life of the City's transportation infrastructure for residents, businesses, and visitors throughout the community. The proposed asphalt patching services will address deteriorated pavement conditions, including potholes, surface failures, uneven pavement areas, and damaged roadway sections that have resulted from normal wear and tear, weather conditions, and increased traffic usage.

The Procurement Division issued Solicitation No. 2026-RFB-023 for Asphalt Patching Services. The scope of work includes providing all labor, equipment, materials, traffic control, hauling, disposal, and all incidental items necessary to complete patching and roadway repairs at various locations throughout the City of Forest Part. A total of five (5) bids were received and evaluated for responsiveness, responsibility, qualifications, pricing, and compliance with the solicitation requirements. Based on the evaluation results, Procurement, in collaboration with the Public Works Department, recommends an award to the lowest, responsive, and responsible bidder: **DAF Concrete Inc., 9160 Turner Road, Jonesboro, GA 30236** Total Amount: $121,090.00 – LMIG Fund

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gunn. The motion passed 3-1 (James/Gunn/Mears Approved) (Akins-Wells Opposed).

12. **Council Consideration to approve an Ordinance Establishing Municipal Court Technology Fee** – Presented by: Dorothy Jackson, Municipal Court Clerk
Background/History: Consideration of an ordinance amending Title 2, Chapter 5, Article A of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances to establish Section 2-5-18.1, authorizing the Municipal Court to assess and collect a technology fee of up to $10.00 as a surcharge on criminal and quasi-criminal fines, as authorized by Act 592 (HB 1553) of the 2026 Georgia General Assembly. Revenue generated from the technology fee shall be used exclusively for authorized technological needs of the Municipal Court and Police Department, including court technology infrastructure, evidence management systems, body-worn camera technology, license plate reader systems, drones, and other public safety technology improvements. The ordinance becomes effective upon adoption, with fee collection commencing no earlier than July 1, 2026.

Attorney Matricardi clarified that the Resolution from December 2025 was to ask the Legislative Delegation to present the item to the General Assembly, noting it was approved and now the request is for the Ordinance for the City to approve for collect the fees.

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

13. **Council Consideration to adopt a Resolution designating the Urban Redevelopment Area and determining that the area constitutes a "Pocket of Blight".** – Presented by: Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director
Background/History: Resolution designating the Urban Redevelopment Area and determining that the area constitutes a "Pocket of Blight".
Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

14. **Council Consideration to adopt a Resolution approving the Urban Redevelopment Plan.** Presented by: Rochelle Dennis, Economic Development Director
Background/History: Resolution approving the Urban Redevelopment Plan.
Motion to approve was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XVI. **CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY**

Ward 1 – Councilmember James congratulated the two Public Works employees, Vincent Hicks and Robert Thomas, on their recent retirement; reminded everyone about the Ward meeting taking place on Thursday, June 18th at 696 Main Street at 5pm, noting the meeting will be available via YouTube; responded to comments about the data center, noting it will benefit the community; stated facts matter regarding the Brandon Criss investigation, and that while documents were not previously available during the investigation, they are open to the public now, stating time off is not egregious, and made reference to the Comprehensive Investigative Report for citizens to review; noted the City is awaiting a Judicial Ruling on the matter; acknowledged the City Council is deeply divided on this issue; and reminded everyone about the Gifts at the Park event taking place over four days, with gift selections on July 17th.

Ward 2 – Councilmember Gunn thanked everyone for attending; wished blessings upon everyone; and asked that everyone be safe.

Ward 4 – Councilmember Akins-Wells welcomed the new business to the City of Forest Park; thanked the Leadership Clayton County members for their presentations; noted the cemeteries are not owned by the city and should seek other resources within the community, or family members to maintain the private cemeteries, and use those funds to help with the homeless issues in the city; noted the Council is very divided regarding Chief Criss matter, and believes it to be personal, and that he did not have to be terminated; noted the City Attorney offers an opinion only to the governing body and does not make the decisions; noted there is a precedence that was set by the former Mayor's veto reinstating Fire Chief Horton; noted it was stated during the Appeal Hearing that there was a recording of the interview of Chief Criss, which no one has produced; noted the first Chat, Chew and Connect was a huge success, as was the Baseball Coaches and Players Clinic; noted Fun Friday has been delayed and will begin in July and run through October.

Ward 5 – Councilmember Mears stated he was pleased that the Council was here tonight to handle the people's business productively; and noted the Wash and Flow is a worthy cause, however, the city needs to look at the infrastructure and associated costs.

Mayor Ellison thanked Mr. Solomon of AtWork for choosing the City of Forest Park to open and operate his business; thanked the members of Leadership Clayton County for their presentations and forward-thinking ideas; and reminded the voters to go to the polls to vote tomorrow, June 16th for the primary runoff election.

XVII. **EXECUTIVE SESSION - OCGA § 50-14-1**

Motion to convene Executive Session for Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate and Cyber Security was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session at 11:22 p.m., sign an Affidavit and Reconvene the meeting with No Action was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

XVIII. **ADJOURN –** With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 11:22 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**