



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

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

Monday, July 20, 2026, at 6:00 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
Carl Geffken, 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** – Mayor Ellison called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- II. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were present.
- III. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**
Motion to approve the agenda was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember James. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- IV. **REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA DURING THE REGULAR SESSION MEETING**
 1. **Request for approval to establish Blanket Purchase Orders exceeding \$50,000 for the FY 2026/2027 budget cycle with various contracted vendors. Fire/EMS**
Background/History: Request for approval to establish Blanket Purchase Orders exceeding \$50,000 for the FY 2026/2027 budget cycle with various contracted vendors:
Bennett Fire Products, Lake County, FL: Contract Number 22-730B Expires: 7/31/2027
Suppression Fire Gear – \$87,500 – 300-61-3510-52-3718
 - MES Services, Sourcewell: Contract Number: 011824 Expires: 3/30/2028
Firefighting Equipment – \$120,000 – 100-61-3520-53-1136
 - Bound Tree Medical, City of Fairfax: Contract Number: CTR047207 Expires: 12/31/2027 1st Aid and Medical Supplies – \$75,000 – 100-60-3610-53-1703
 - Reads Uniforms, Sarasota County: Contract SR 2512 Expires: 1/31/2027 Uniforms – \$70,000 – 100-61-3510-53-1702

Deputy Fire Chief May advised the request is a standard annual renewal for firefighting equipment, medical supplies, and uniforms.

2. **CAD & RMS Annual Software Renewal** - Information Technology

Background/History: This is the annual renewal for the Police Department CAD and RMS systems. This is the proprietary software used for dispatching officers, writing police reports, and issuing citations. This includes the annual cost for licensing and the support agreement and is a budgeted item in the IT budget for June 2026 through June 2027.

Deputy IT Director Virgil advised the request is a standard annual renewal for the Public Safety CAD and Records Management System.

V. **NEW BUSINESS**

3. **Council Consideration of a Resolution Adopting the Plaza Rehabilitation Framework Playbook.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Director Planning and Community Development

Background/History: The Planning & Community Development Department requests Mayor and Council consideration of a resolution to adopt the Plaza Rehabilitation Framework Playbook as the City's official policy framework to guide the revitalization of commercial shopping centers and commercial corridors. The Playbook establishes a comprehensive, citywide framework that provides design guidance, redevelopment strategies, implementation tools, and coordinated public-private investment approaches to encourage long-term reinvestment while enhancing the appearance, safety, accessibility, and economic vitality of Forest Park's commercial corridors. The Framework builds upon the City's adopted Downtown Forest Park Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study and extends redevelopment strategies to Forest Park's broader network of commercial shopping centers and commercial corridors.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated the request was made by Councilman Gutierrez and presented the Plaza Rehabilitation Framework, noting the city has not had a document establishing a consistent vision and expectations for commercial reinvestment; noted the Playbook builds upon the City's adopted Downtown Forest Park Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), Study developed in partnership with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC); and noted the Playbook presents a flexible framework that allows property owners, developers, City departments, and redevelopment partners to pursue improvements appropriate to each site's unique conditions while supporting consistent community vision.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah reviewed the purpose of the Playbook, stating it is not intended to create additional regulations, rather it establishes a consistent framework that guides city departments, property owners, developers, and future commercial reinvestment efforts.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah presented the map, referencing the three Key Commercial Corridors of focus: Jonesboro Road Corridor, which is the general commercial district highlighted in red; Downtown Main Street Corridor, the Historic Mixed Use Corridor, highlighted in fuchsia, and the Forest Parkway/City Center Corridor, the Regional Employment & Commercial Corridor, highlighted in pink; noting these locations were chosen for having the highest visibility, concentration of aging plazas, strong redevelopment potential, gateway locations and economic impact.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah presented the Unified Plaza Design Vision, highlighting Design Concepts that illustrate what redevelopment could actually look like, showing pictures of the existing Clayton Plaza, and showed pictures of the same plaza implementing the design standards to include landscaping islands, pedestrian crossings, lighting and building façade improvements that could be utilized; and presented other concepts that are more practical to improving the commercial corridors, noting there are different options that could be useful in the future, noting the concepts demonstrate how relatively modest improvements can significantly improve the appearance and functionality of existing shopping centers.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated that one of the strengths of this Playbook is that it does not stop at a vision, it establishes a practical implementation strategy and presented illustrations of building facades.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah reviewed the Implementation Strategy that has the framework outreach implementation, demonstrative projects, and long-term reinvestment, noting this is an inter-departmental initiative where each of the departments of the city would have a role in illustrating the options on how this can be executed together as a team; and noted the goal is to make certain that this document does not become another planning study that goes on a shelf, but rather the Playbook would serve as a working framework that departments can use to coordinate redevelopment efforts, engage property owners, and guide future investment.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah reviewed why this investment matters, stated the Playbook provides consistent policy framework that guides future redevelopment decisions regardless of changes in staff or administration, providing clear expectations for developers and property owners, while giving city staff a consistent framework for evaluating future commercial reinvestment.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah noted the Playbook as presented, represents months of planning, research, corridor evaluation, coordination between departments, and establishes the first comprehensive commercial corridor revitalization framework, and provides a long-term vision for strengthening commercial districts through coordinated public and private reinvestment for Forest Park; and requested approval of the Playbook as presented.

Councilmember Gunn commended the presentation and asked what the city's financial role in property enhancement would be, noting one of the concerns is for those properties that are grandfathered in that been here for years, and from that perspective, what part would the city play financially to do the enhancements; questioned if it would it be the lighting and or curb appeal; and asked if the city be working alongside with the business owners to obtain some type of grants, some of the businesses just don't have the funds, likewise, the owner of that plaza may not have funds to tap into.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated the project was presented to the URA Board as they are the agency that addresses blight, who will work to bring owners to the table, where provisions will be in place and serve as a guide to include incentives; stated the role of the city is to guide the development, and plan to have an ownership roundtable to bring the property owners at the table with us, noting it is not just us telling them what we want them to do, but guiding the development with them, giving them the opportunity to reinvest into their

property, to clean up their property, and the city will work with them to ensure that they have what they need as far as information; noted a great amount of this information pulled together within this report is in our city ordinance, and has been put together in an actual framework as a guide to be utilized with provision set in place that even if there were some incentives provided, the property owners can't later just sell their property to make a profit; noting the guide you know the reinvestment into our commercial corridors especially with Jonesboro Road being the entryway to the city, and potential developers and investors want to see some quality, and also trying to entice other type of businesses to come to the city, and noted the businesses will be provided with information for bringing their structures up to par, using the guide, along with additional incentives and work around how we can work with them to actually meet the needs of this playbook with the next steps being coordination with PIO on public awareness, marketing materials, bringing property owners to the table to give them a chance to be inclusive on this, and anticipating project implementation to start in the first quarter of 2027.

Councilmember James commended the project, stating she loves the part of everyone working together as a team, collectively because that's been kind of the disconnect point in a lot of different scenarios when it comes to business owners getting different information from different people; noted one of my major concerns would be how to implement this; offering an example of a new business owner purchasing a building, and the parking lot is in disarray, and they are cited to get the parking lot corrected, and it's going to over \$100,000 for the repair; not saying she would be against that, because that's the only way we're going to actually bring our city up by holding owners accountable for their parking lot, and noting that she is not knocking that at all; and gave another example where she has learned of a business owner that's actually looking to leave our city because, and just thinking about the people that they serve and allow for the patron to leave their car on the lot as they make payments, noting maybe in another jurisdiction, that car would have been sold off because you can't leave a car indefinitely on a parking lot, emphasizing this is these are the relationships they have with local patrons, and is not sure what the fix will be with these proposed changes, and wants to be mindful of the people that these people serve, and they may be doing a service to our community, but then they're cited a lot for not coming to par; and stated the city should seek grants or funding or something that we can help these owners bring their property to par, and then also we have to hold our residents accountable by retrieving their vehicles promptly when service has been completed.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated there are standards already set forth in the ordinance that should be abided by no matter who the property owner is or who the business owner is; noted the city has parking lot standards in our ordinance that states all lots shall be paved in striped with clear egress and ingress of where the lines are present, and is in the ordinance for any business owner; and stated that in regards to the junk cars, per the city's ordinance, businesses are only allowed to leave those junk cars out on the premise for 14 days, and must be either in the rear of the property or within the fence; and stated if they're already not abiding by that ordinance, it's the city's job to enforce it, but also work with them to make sure they are in compliance.

Councilmember Gutierrez stated the Playbook is amazing, recalling when this was started, going on a tour, and identifying spaces; noting it is beautiful and exciting, especially in Ward 3, where there are plazas on Jonesboro Rd where there needs to be improvements

and higher standards; referenced the rendering of what the Clayton Plaza could look like is promising; and noted questions that he receives from residents who want to patronize nice businesses and retail, and have a Kroger and Starbucks here in Forest Park, instead of going to other municipalities to shop; noted his excitement, and not placing blame or worrying about the past, and focusing on bringing up the standards in Forest Park and is really excited for the city, bringing everyone to the table, noting there are business owners who are just collecting checks from Forest Park, and they're collecting checks from these businesses to rent, and is glad that we're addressing it, and we're going to start it with this framework; thanked staff for their efforts and putting the Playbook together, and working together in collaboration with the URA where funding can be used to address the blight that we have in our city because it's clear everywhere, and helps that the city extended their map; and requested the city put the Playbook on the website so the residents can see the entire presentation.

Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked Councilmember Gutierrez for having the vision and bringing his idea to staff to implement, and thanked him for seeing what standards our community needs, and continuously reciting raising the standards; noting she agrees that right now, the city doesn't have any, making it hard to attract good businesses and businesses to come and want to stay here; noted she would like to see it not just for the plazas, but extend the standards to all businesses in our community, as they should all be held accountable; noting complaints to the previous city manager, about the hotel next to Racetrack and carwash in Ward 4, and also wants to hold these owners accountable, and implement something for all businesses throughout the city, not just Plazas; and thanked staff for their work.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated that within our department, Code Compliance conducts business license sweeps, and before they're able to issue any business license is placing conditional approvals on their business license to ensure that they're updating their properties, just to make sure they're taking care of the property as well, just to be in compliance; noted there has been conditional use permits in the past, and were voted to table it until the property owner brought that property up to code, so that a tenant could go into the property; and stated that initiative that you all had already started, and will continue at the department level to ensure that it meets that need as well.

Councilmember Mears stated it's a good idea, and agrees with Councilmember Wells with raising the standard throughout the entire city; and believes anybody that comes into the city and has a business, makes their money needs to pay to be here; noting they need to be licensed, insured, or whatever it takes, because we got a lot of things we do here that we're not getting any credit or money or anything out of it that we need to look into.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated the first meeting has been scheduled with the PIO department, which is part of the implementation strategy once approved; and also noted the assistance of the Economic Development Director, Rochelle Dennis throughout this process, and who will be instrumental with the façade grants.

Councilmember Akins-Wells stated there needs to be more right-of-way beautification by the city along Jonesboro Rd. with the shrubs, noting if the city is going to hold business owners accountable for their properties, the city likewise needs to do better.

Ms. Dennis wholeheartedly agreed with the statement about the shrubs, noting she recently learned that some of the shrubs that are planted along the right of way on Jonesboro Road were actually planted by GDOT, and there is a call in to GDOT because they were planted by them, and have never been maintained, and will follow up accordingly.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah reviewed landscape concepts, lighting and street enhancements that are included in the Playbook.

4. **Ordinance Amending Title 9, Chapter 6 (Peddlers and Solicitors) of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Planning and Community Development

Background/History: The proposed ordinance comprehensively updates Title 9, Chapter 6 of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances governing commercial solicitors, peddlers, transient merchants, charitable solicitations, and mobile food vendors. The amendments modernize outdated provisions, clarify definitions, establish standardized permitting and application requirements, limit permits to individual applicants, provide uniform permit durations, create clear administrative review, and appeal procedures, strengthen enforcement and revocation provisions, and update penalty language to align with the City's general penalty provisions. The ordinance also clarifies permitting standards for mobile food vendors and updates references to permit fees to reflect the City's current practice of establishing fees by resolution. Collectively, these revisions are intended to improve administrative efficiency, promote consistency throughout the Code, and provide clearer guidance for applicants, City staff, and the public while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated she has been working with the city attorney to update a series of ordinances with updates and clarification, noting the city's ordinances leave a lot of room for interpretation, which has caused the public or consumers to challenge staff when we're trying to implement said ordinances and put things into perspective; and noted the department is taking a proactive measure to ensure that we are comparable and also have correct standards set in place.

Mayor Ellison commented that members of churches and religious organizations have been approached by the city requesting that they present a permit for religious canvassing.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah stated the city does have a peddlers and solicitors permit in our office, where any persons that are outside selling or canvassing or certain things, they do have to get a permit, which allows them to do so for a certain time frame; and noted this ordinance just updates the provisions surrounding the ability to do so.

Mayor Ellison stated they are not selling anything, they are canvassing, going door to door, and there is Georgia state law that allows them to do that, and wants to make sure the city is not harassing individuals for what is allowable.

Attorney Matricardi stated there is an exception in this ordinance that applies specifically to religious organizations, and so that would be on page 13 of the ordinance itself, line 371; and she will revisit the exceptions, and the body can choose to Table the ordinance.

5. **Ordinance Authorizing Certain Municipal Fees to be Established and Amended by Resolution.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Planning and Community Development

Background/History: Consideration of an ordinance amending various provisions of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances to authorize the establishment and amendment of certain administrative fees, permit fees, license fees, inspection fees, and other municipal charges by resolution of the Mayor and Council rather than by ordinance. The proposed amendments standardize the City's fee-setting process across multiple sections of the Code, provide greater administrative flexibility to adjust fees as operational needs change, and align the Code with the City's longstanding practice of adopting and amending comprehensive fee schedules by resolution. The ordinance does not modify any substantive licensing, permitting, or regulatory requirements, but solely changes the method by which applicable fees are established and updated.

There was no discussion.

6. **Resolution Amending the City's Permit and Fee Schedule.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Planning and Community Development

Background/History: Consideration of a resolution amending the City of Forest Park's Permit and Fee Schedule to establish application fees for certain regulatory permits and licenses. The proposed resolution adopts new fees for peddler and solicitor permit applications, massage establishment license applications, massage establishment investigative reviews, and sound amplification permit applications. The fees are intended to help offset the City's administrative costs associated with processing applications, conducting required reviews, and administering regulatory programs while maintaining an efficient and consistent fee schedule. The resolution also authorizes City staff to implement the updated fee schedule upon adoption.

Councilmember Gunn asked what the proposed increase percentage will be.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah noted that previously, applicants were able to pay \$10 for a Pedler's Permit fee for three months, and they would pile on top of other applicants on top of the one permit, and there was never an established framework for this, and she consulted with Legal to see what the best determination would be so that fee would increase, and the time frame would be lessened; noted that the application would only be per applicant, so that people would no longer be able to add four, five, and six people to one application for \$10 for three months.

7. **Ordinance Amending Title 11, Chapter 5 (Noise) Section 11-5-4 (Sound amplification devices) of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Planning and Community Development.

Background/History: Staff proposed amendments to Title 11, Chapter 5 (Noise), Section 11-5-4 of the City Code pertaining to sound amplification devices. The proposed amendments are intended to establish clearer procedures for the permitting, administration, suspension, and revocation of permits related to the use of sound

amplification devices within the city. The ordinance further clarifies application requirements, permit durations, and enforcement mechanisms while ensuring that the City's regulations remain consistent with constitutional protections related to free speech and expression. The amendments seek to promote fair, uniform, and content-neutral standards governing the use of sound amplification devices by implementing reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions that protect the public health, safety, and welfare. Additionally, the ordinance establishes due process procedures, including notice and an opportunity to be heard prior to permit revocation, except in circumstances requiring immediate action to address threats to public safety or substantial disruptions to public peace. These revisions are part of the City's ongoing effort to modernize and strengthen its regulatory framework by providing clear guidance to residents, businesses, and City staff while supporting effective and consistent enforcement of the City's noise regulations.

Councilmember Gunn state we have a highly active community at Starr Park with coaching and other activities, noting her residence being in close proximity of the park, asking if the ordinance refers to handheld devices, and asked if there was a limit.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah noted it would be anything that would amplify sound, noting we just wanted to put some regulations on there, also noting that with the application process, as previously stated, with peddlers, there have been instances where applicants were applying for one application, listing five to seven people on this one application to do different things within events or just exterior noise, which we had no way of, for lack of better words, consolidating the list of applicants; and wanted to put some better provisions in place to better control the narrative regarding that. It would not affect, you know, the park or different things like that, but it would put standards in place as far as the application process, the type of applicants, the number of applicants on the application, and the noise levels.

Councilmember Gunn noted there in second paragraph, it says a reasonable time, and asked if somebody is utilizing the handheld device, are they going to be restricted, giving the plaza was just illustrated, asking will those become restricted areas, or how that will happen going to move forward now.

Attorney Matricardi stated the city is allowed to restrict as the time, place, and manner; and it would only be applicable as to the public area; noting that the permit is only for use of within the right of way, such as like the sidewalks, or if it if it was a park, someone wanting to use a megaphone, and in order to, it could potentially be for sporting events if there is megaphones in use for; and noted that's currently how it is now, reiterating that the permit would set forth how the duration of the permit, where it's being used, where it's permissible to use, and the hours permissible for the use; and must be specific to the location; and gave an example of being used on X date, using a megaphone to protest X at Starr Park during the hours of X and X, and these terms would be included in the permit.

Ms. Irons-Kumassah noted for context, there has been a revision all of the applications, noting they were outdated; working with the legal counsel to ensure that the ordinances are updated, we also have revised all of the applications associated with these ordinances to ensure that the correct information is asked for on the applications, and we're able to

adequately put those specific provisions in place because we have the correct information currently, and it's able to be enforced because we have set standards provided. Councilmember Akins-Wells stated there has been an ongoing issue relating to ordinances that are outdated, and need to be a priority; questioned how these ordinances are on the agenda; noted that at one point the city was going over all of the ordinances to determine which ordinances needed to be updated, and requested that review to continue and prioritize those that need to be updated sooner than later; and asked if the ordinances presented today have been an issue. Ms. Irons-Kumassah responded that there has been issues with the ordinances presented today.

Attorney Matricardi noted there is an existing ordinance, and this request amends the existing ordinance to include additional provisions and updating it with the times, essentially.

8. **Authorization to Execute Redemption Quitclaim Deed - 5116 West Street.** Presented by: Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

Background/History: The City is the successor holder of the tax deed interest in the property located at 5116 West Street, Forest Park, Georgia. The redeeming party has exercised the statutory right of redemption pursuant to O.C.G.A. Chapter 4 of Title 48 by paying the redemption amount required by law. As part of the statutory redemption process, the City must execute a Redemption Quitclaim Deed evidencing the redemption and releasing its tax deed interest in the property. Council is requested to authorize the mayor to execute the Redemption Quitclaim Deed and any ancillary documents necessary to complete the redemption.

Attorney Matricardi noted this item deals with a piece of property that the city received from Clayton County Land Bank, and the property actually there is an encroachment of a residential home, and so the former owner of the property, within a year of sending what's called a foreclosure notice, they can redeem their property by paying the past taxes and interest on the property; noted the former owner has done that, and so in order to release the city's interest, which already was somewhat clouded due to this encroachment of a residential house on the property, anyway, it's now the city's duty to execute this deed, however, because you are relinquishing a property interest, it's required to come before the City Council for consideration and approval.

Councilmember Mears asked for a legal opinion, noting the members of the governing body are not versed in real estate. Attorney Matricardi recommended approval.

- VI. **EXECUTIVE SESSION - OCGA § 50-14-1** – Motion to convene Executive Session for Personnel, Real Estate, Litigation or CyberSecurity at 6:51 p.m. was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session and sign an Affidavit with no action at 7:07 p.m. was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT – With no further business, Mayor Ellison adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk

Gwendolyn Ellison, Mayor

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