



CITY OF  
**FORESTPARK**

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

Monday, July 20, 2026, at 7:00 PM  
Forest Park City Hall | Council Chambers  
745 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, GA 30297

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The Honorable Mayor Gwendolyn W. Ellison  
The Honorable Kimberly James                      The Honorable Delores A. Gunn  
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez                  The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells  
The Honorable Allan Mears  
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 7:07 p.m.
- II. **INVOCATION/PLEDGE** – Elder Justin Cook
- III. **ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK** – All members were present.
- IV. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS**  
Motion to adopt the agenda as presented was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Mears. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  1. **Council Approval of Work Session Meeting Minutes from July 6, 2026**  
**Council Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes from July 6, 2026**  
Motion to approve the Minutes with an amendment to July 6, 2026, Regular Session Meeting was made Councilmember Akins-Wells; seconded by Councilmember Mears. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- VI. **CEREMONIAL - Recognition of New Fire Department Employees and Promotion**  
Deputy Fire Chief May introduced (4) four new hires to the Fire Department: (2) Paramedics- Desmond Newkirk and Anthony Lottman, Staff Assistant, Isabel Soriana and Deputy Fire Marshal, Andre Eberhart and referenced the promotion of DeAndre Robbins to EMS Lieutenant; and reminded everyone of the State of the Fire Department Address on Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup> and includes a Pancake Breakfast from 10am – 12pm.

## **VII. CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

Clerk Holiday reminded everyone that Early Voting is taking place at (4) locations in Clayton County for the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Special Election.

## **VIII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mayor Ellison welcomed Mr. Carl Geffken to the City of Forest Park.

Mr. Geffken thanked the Mayor & Council for their approval and opportunity to serve the City of Forest Park; noted his welcome here has by far been the best; noted the interview process was good and gave a brief bio noting 35+ years of government experience in Arkansas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and that he was born and raised in New York City; emphasized his commitment to implementing the Mayor & Council's directions and policies; highlighted the importance of listening to everyone, including residents, employees, and the community; noted the significance of employees as the city's greatest resource and asset; encouraged open communication and invites feedback from everyone; and aims to ensure that the city's priorities are met through dedicated service. Noted the actual report is available on the city's website.

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

Clerk Holiday read the Public Comments Rules

Ms. Julia Protho commented that she has been made aware that there are questions regarding the maintenance of cemeteries, and that lack of maintenance will cause the property values to decrease; noted she was under assumption that it had been put on a national historic registry, and stating there are individuals of all nationalities buried there, and veterans, and inquired about the status of the cemeteries being placed on the National Historic Registry site, and referenced the study that was done by a Georgia State student that laid the groundwork for the cemetery to become historical.

City Manager Geffken asked Ms. Protho for the names of the cemeteries in question.

Ms. Protho referenced the Conley Road cemetery, the Colored cemetery (now Macedonia), Odd Fellows cemetery, and Rock Springs cemetery;

Mr. Carl Evans welcomed City Manager Carl Geffken; noted the city has had difficulty in keeping City Managers and hopes he will change that; commented on his embarrassment and disappointment with the negative news about the city; referenced his many complaints about the mismanagement from the HR Department, members of the City Council and the previous Interim City Manager, regarding employees; noted the difference in the treatment of the situation regarding former Police Chief Brandon Criss and former Public Works Director, Alton Matthews where employees called for multiple investigations, and nothing happened; stated the news reported the knowledge of the incident was known by members of staff regarding the DUI incident of the former Public Works Director, who wrecked a city vehicle, and asked how was he allowed to retire or quit and receive pension benefits, instead of being fired, noting the different treatment of these two situations are absolutely unacceptable; agreed with some of the things that were said tonight about trying to correct some of the blight and stuff in the city, noting the city needs to also remember that when change happens, you need to remember these people that have been in business for decades, and that they have a right to be allowed

to continue to operating that business without being harassed by code enforcement, who can sometimes be selective with their enforcement; and stated it is a proven fact that higher taxes and stricter regulations equate to lower revenue because nobody wants to come here; stating that it's not profitable to come here and open a business if there are too many regulations and fees and fines and the business can't make any money.

Dr. Lawanda Folami noted she invited neighbors to attend the meeting because they are looking for a change from the mediocracy; thanked Chief Clements, for holding the city together until we could get Mr. Geffken here and also running her department; stated Human Resources is one of the jewels of the city; noted each person who works here is receiving income and has a job description; noted her disappointment of social media postings; stated she and her neighbors stand with Councilmembers Mears, James, Gunn, Gutierrez, and Wells, as the people elected them, and in turn, can vote each of them out if not pleased with what you're doing; stated she will not go on social media to attack officials; stated when she wished Director Matthews well, she did not know what happened, and still does know what happened, and did not issue a verdict, however, expects the matter to be fair to the taxpayers because without us, you have no population; asked that the pettiness stop, and to collaborate to move our city forward. noted Jonesboro Road is Highway 54, and to do the math; referenced Old Dixie Road, and to do the math. Referenced Pineridge Rd. and to do the math; and stated that on that point, there are people who look down, feel down, and some of them just slow down.

Ms. Jay Evans asked for advice on how to remedy a situation at her home where her neighbor's tree fell onto her property, and homeowner's insurance does not cover it; noted she has tried to be amicable with the homeowner to resolve the matter; noted there are several dead trees that need to be removed in the area and asked for assistance from the city on how she can resolve the issue.

Mr. Duane Thomas addressed the governing body and welcomed the new City Manager, wishing him success; noted he is not here to make friends. I'm here to ask questions that the people of Forest Park deserve answers to, and stated that not long ago, this Council made one of the biggest employment decisions of the city history by terminating Chief Chris; referenced the process where it had been stated that there were multiple public concerns; referenced the appeals hearing where there were not multiple concerns that were actually founded; stated those allegations were investigated, and from everything that was presented publicly, was never proven that Chief Criss intentionally violated policy, yet his career was still destroyed; and then asked that the subject turn to accountability, and referenced a matter where a department head was reportedly arrested for DUI while operating a city vehicle, and the individual remained employed for nearly two months before ultimately being allowed to resign; and questioned why; asked why was one employee publicly investigated, publicly criticized, terminated, while another employee faced facing more serious public concerns that could have took somebody's life? Asked why he was allowed to remain employed and then leave on his own terms, stating if the standard is accountability, then it needs to apply equally. If the standard is integrity, it needs to apply equally. If the standard is for us to do things right, it needs to apply equally, stating that because from where many citizens are standing, it appears that there are two different standards in City Hall: one standard for some people and another standard for everybody else. As long as you win the clique, you are right; stated that he wants to remind everyone that not every member of this council supported terminating Chief Chris, but those who pushed hardest for his removal now owe this community an explanation of why they did not pursue that same level of accountability with that department head; stating the public deserves to know who

made the decision to allow this department head to remain employed? Why wasn't disciplinary action done immediately? Why was resignation deemed acceptable here, and termination was deemed acceptable for Chief Chris? What factors made these two situations so different that they produce completely different outcomes? Noting, those are fair questions because equal justice doesn't mean applying different rules depending on who someone is or who they're connected to. It means everyone should be held to the same standard. The citizens of Forest Park also have heard concerns from this department head, from employees that he has scared employees and did all types of stuff; asked was that investigated? Was that taken care of? Were these employees protected? Noting these are the people that work for you, and the people deserve answers; stated public confidence in government is built on consistency, not favoritism; stated it's built on transparency and not silence; stated it is built on accountability and not selective accountability; and called on those who knew about this department head to resign your seat immediately because you have no integrity.

## X. **CONSENT AGENDA**

### 2. **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### 3. **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.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

## XI. **NEW BUSINESS**

### 4. **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.

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

5. **Consideration of Ordinance Amending Title 9, Chapter 6 (Peddlers and Solicitors) of the City of Forest Park Code of Ordinances.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Director - 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.

Motion to Table was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

6. **Ordinance Authorizing Certain Municipal Fees to be Established and Amended by Resolution.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Director - 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.

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

7. **Resolution Amending the City's Permit and Fee Schedule.** Presented by: SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Interim Director - 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.

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

8. **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, Interim Director - Planning and Community Development

**Background/History:** Staff has 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. Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

9. **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.

Motion to approve was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

## **XII. CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY**

Ward 1 – Councilmember James stated the negative news comes from us; referenced a very successful Gifts at the Park Initiative, noting it was a four-day endeavor, and gave a special acknowledgement and thanks to Ms. Donna Barkley who was present, and Ms. Carolyn Franklin who assisted with the event on all four days helping to set up the gym with all the gifts as shown, unpack the boxes the first two days and get everything set up so it'll be presentable to our families that came to shop; noted there were 50 volunteers that came out over the four days; highlighted the great partnerships with Hartsfield Jackson, Helping Hands Ending Hunger, and several others who were acknowledged during the last meeting; noted there were 600 families to sign up to receive free gifts, and it was a wonderful blessing with all items selected or donated to Rock Church of Atlanta, and gave a special thanks to Ms. Franklin from Hartsfield Jackson who came with refreshments and drinks for the families; gave a special thank you to Mr. Sam, the owner of Forest Square, who donated shopping carts that our families shop; and noted everything was completely free; expressed excitement for what was able to be done for the families; noted she plans to reach out to everyone that received the items and ask for testimonies so we can hopefully do this again for our community, again thanking everyone for their support; noted that due to the Gifts at the Park event, the Ward 1 meeting was canceled, and will be back on schedule next month, and every third Thursday of the month at 5:00 o'clock at 696 Main Street at the Hartsfield Community Center; welcomed all of our new employees in our fire department, and thanked them for choosing Forest Park; welcomed Mr. Carl Geffken, the new city manager, welcoming him to Forest Park; stated that it was her recollection that the city would continue to clean up the cemetery, and would look into that, as well as the historical aspect; stated that as far as the negative news, the negative news comes from us, and it's come it comes from us because we put out information that's half truths; stated there are some things that she is not going to speak freely on, and should not be speaking on right now; and thanked concerned citizens for their support of the Council, noting it is appreciated; stated the city has a wonderful staff that includes our Interim City Manager, noting, she's not the interim city manager anymore, she is our fire chief, and stated that also includes our HR director, reiterating that the city has a wonderful staff; noted one item that she can speak on that has already been settled is the fact that there was no public investigation of our former chief of police. It was private; stating it was not something that was done in public, however, people put it in public; asked who put it in public? That she does not know, but people put it in public and stated there was an opportunity for resignation that they chose not to resign; stated that as far as the other information, that is information that is lies that are put out, noting the City Attorney has advised us when we all found out on the same day, further stating that every single one of us found out the information on the exact same day; stated there was no one knows something beforehand, and you can say it's a lie all you want to, but she know the facts; and won't speak on the matter as advised in order protect our city, restating that what you all don't understand is when you get out there and you say stuff that you don't know of, you're not protecting our city, and instead, you are putting stuff out there that really gives the other entity that wants to sue our city information that will then can cause jeopardy to our city when the information is not true; stated that when things that come up, and someone is in the courts defending their self or defaming names, then you will find out how true things are; and thanked everyone coming out.

**Ward 2** – Councilmember Gunn thanked everybody coming out tonight, and thanked everyone who came to the podium with public comments, noting you believes each comment was heartfelt, and stating, your comments are heard; stated to the residents, that a deeper dive includes information that not everyone has, and that when she is given a directive from the city's legal counsel of what not to do, she just does not do it; and stated that if she is told not to talk about it,

she stands firm and does not talk about it; noting that is not an easy thing to do; acknowledged Mr. Thomas' comments to be something he truly believes and is fighting for, and stated there will be a time frame where the information will be released; stated the Public Works department is going through a hard transition now, and that her heart goes out to the family of the Public Works employee, noting it is a great loss of this city; stated she wants to address something of my actions from last in the last meeting where her tone was very coarse, very sharp, and she was very impatient and allowed her emotions to get the best of her; stated when it comes to leadership, it comes with pressure, but there is never an excuse as a leader to speak to anyone with less than respect, professionalism, and the support that that individual needs; stated that because she made those comments in public, she would correct this in public, stating that she has already spoken with the individual privately, and apologized, but also wanted to address her publicly and apologize, noting she couldn't sleep that night, and genuinely felt that she hurt a soul that night, regardless of what was all the information that was put out, it wasn't right how it handled it, and apologized director department head, Ms. Dennis; stated she did not handle the situation properly, and wants to move to the standard of professionalism where we take things and we do it the right way, following a protocol; stated she appreciates and respects her Ward 4 colleague for interjecting and suggesting a conversation outside of the meeting; stated she is extending herself to open conversations and come to a common ground; stated these employees have chosen to come to work for this city to serve us and to be about the business of Forest Park, commending Ms. Dennis and her department for doing a great job; noted communication is the key, and when you're able to sit across the table, you might not agree with everything, but you can come across the table and extend concerns and be able to hear each other, and sometimes walk away to agree to disagree; stated she commits to do better and will present with a different approach, again issuing a sincere for her actions, and thanked Attorney Machacardi and Councilwoman Wells for that night, really just pulling her back in; referenced the monthly Free Food Pantry taking place every second Monday of the month from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and this is at Gateway Restoration Church with Dr. Leon Beeler at 4981 Phillips Drive in Forest Park, where they serve the city, and is excited about what they are continuously doing; stated there are other pillars in the community, servant leaders, our pastors, and churches that do other extensions; referenced the Forest Park Minister 's Association upcoming event "It's Time for a Reset", taking place on Thursday, July the 23rd and Friday July 24th from 2026 starting at 7p.m. at Living Word Church of God in Christ with Dr. Kenneth Paden and Dr. Joseph Durham, expressing her excitement; and asked that everyone come and support every intercessor, and every prayer warrior as they cover the city for us with Prayer in the Park at the Fountain located in Ward 2 at 5031 Park Avenue, Forest Park, starting time is always at 12 noon between 12 noon and 3 p.m., and asked that the community come out and support them; announced that Ward 2 wants you to stay connected and introduced a texting platform to stay connected to send and receive text messages about what is happening in Ward 2 and the city, noting it is easy to use your phone to scan the barcode, and you can always have the option to opt out; and thanked everyone for coming out.

**Ward 3** – Councilmember Gutierrez thanked everyone for coming up for the public comments, noting he believes that is what makes our community stronger, and that accountability and hearing from you all; responded to Ms. Jay that he would reach out to her regarding the tree issue and get it resolved; stated he understands the frustration with the lack of transparency, and that when you don't show what's going on, and there are injustices like it's the one that we witnessed, noting he disagrees entirely, noting he agrees with Mr. Thomas, as his own opinion, stating there is injustice, and there needs to be accountability, and there has been no accountability; stated there was supposed to be a decision already, and does not know who is dragging their feet, as

the city does not know what happened to our police chief, and is an issue to him; referenced the negative media, stating he hopes that we can come to a conclusion and fix that; regarding the former Public Works Director that he did not know what happened and found out when everybody found out, and then saw the news article; stated the frustration from the public comes when there's a lack of transparency and not being consistent with how issues are handled, and to hold everybody accountable; welcomed the new City Manager, Carl Geffken, noting he saw him earlier today and he indicated he was drinking from a hose with a lot going on; welcomed the new employees to the city; stated he loves hearing from you all, and to please reach out if you need anything or have any initiatives or ideas to please let him know; noted it has been a summer full of traveling for him, stating he loves going to these different conferences because a lot of the things that we might be going through, another municipality might have addressed it already, and as a lot of the you know, calls himself an idea vulture, and takes cool stuff from other places, and then bring it here to Forest Park, because he knows that we have the potential and the community, which is our biggest asset, to take advantage of these things, like our beautification initiative to put your name on a road sign and beautify one of these spaces, whichever space you want to have; referenced all those people on Councilwoman Gunn's flyer with the beautiful churches that they have here, noting they should all have one of the beautification signs, and adopt their roads, and, take pride in these spaces so that we can make Forest Park beautiful; noted a constituent called him today reporting that her neighbor has a house in between hers that is just abandoned, an believes the city needs to address properties that are just abandoned because it just can attract unwanted insects and animals, and become covered with kudzu; noted there are a large number of senior and legacy residents in his community who sometimes need assistance, and he is going to reach out to a volunteer to assist with Ms. Jay's tree issue, and another home on Elam Road; thanked everyone or showing up, and to continue to show up because that is how you change the community and hold everyone accountable, and thanked everyone for coming out.

**Ward 4** – Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked the residents for speaking up and for being the voice that the city should be for you; agreed with Councilman Gutierrez that the community wouldn't be in an outrage if people were just transparent, if people were just consistent, if people were just real, just told the truth, respected the people, employees, and the residents, stating people don't respect lies or covering up the truth; stated everything that Mr. Evans said everything that Officer Thomas said is the absolute truth, and that the city must be consistent in all things; stated that when you consistently have people that are complaining, and nothing gets done about it, eventually, people are going to speak up about it, whether you feel some type of way or not, noting the elephant is leaving the room; stated no one should want to call everybody else out because they step on somebody's toes who is not a part of their clique, and then walk away because you don't want to hear the truth; stated the city has lost so many amazing employees, with two sitting in the audience today; noted one employee was forced to retire who had been employed by the city 20 plus years because of one person, and because nobody wanted to hold them accountable, and then get mad when somebody speak about holding them accountable; stated that as the saying goes, if you give a person enough rope; stated that no one should get mad when people are speaking out about it, stated because if something had been done, we wouldn't even be in this situation to have to speak about it; stated Chief Criss absolutely deserves to be here; stated on the matter of the former Public Works Director, not everybody knew because she did not know anything, and believes some people did because somebody had to pick up the vehicle as he was in jail for a number of days, and asked if he got paid for it; and asked that people not get mad at others for speaking up because somebody didn't do the right thing, or because somebody chose to be a part of a clique and be loyal to the people that work

here to doing the wrong thing instead of loyal to the people that elected you to serve; asked that everyone stay humble; stated that when you have integrity, you don't have to cover up, you don't have to make excuses, you don't have to lie, and you don't have to be a part of a clique to be accepted; stating all you have to do is do the right thing and stated that you can feel however you want to feel about Councilwoman Wells, that she has not lied about anything; welcomed Mr. Geffken, noting this is what you will get from her, stating that she appreciates him for being here, and hopes that he can help to bridge the gap; acknowledged the passing of Public Works employee, Tonya Thomas, noting there was a balloon release in her honor, despite being told they could not do it, and unfortunately on short notice where not everyone was able to participate; noted Tonya served this community, and the employees loved Tonya Thomas, she knew her job, she did everybody's job in the department, and one day she was here, and the next day she was gone; asked what the city has done to celebrate Tonya; offered condolences to Tonya's family, and to every employee that had the opportunity to work with her, stating she was an amazing individual, where every time she saw her she had a glow about her and was always smiling, and was such a positive person; and asked if you see a public works person please stop and pray with them, give them a hug as they are hurting, keeping in mind, they lost a part of the family, Forest Park lost a part of our family, and noted the funeral for Tonay will take place on Friday afternoon; stated the Chat, Chew and Connect has been canceled to next month, as she will be attending Ms. Thomas' funeral; welcomed the new employees; and noted several months ago and that no city vehicle should be driven that does not have decals, noting city vehicles do not belong to employees, the vehicles belong to the residents of Forest Park, and wished everyone a blessed night.

**Ward 5** – Councilmember Mears stated the biggest thing today is we seem to have a little problem here with these rumors going around about cliques and buddies in power, and wants everybody to know his point of view right now, stating he is over 21 years old, held various jobs, has been around the world two times, and has not had one person drag me along; stated what he does and says he takes on by himself, and he does by himself; stated the he can't help it if there are two or three people that get along and have the same idea, noting it may be reversed on the other side, but there's not a click on his side, and it's been going around for a long time; stated he usually remains quiet, but has a bad side; stated he is not part of any clique, and asked that if anyone has questions to please come to see him directly; stated he appreciates the new city manager, noting the city has been out of sorts because of how the city manager situation went down, noting we now have a good one, and when a situation arises, it needs to be between the city manager and your division people who are here every day, and without the part-time Councilmembers getting involved in city business, and allow the City Manager to provide the Council with city information, and if it goes over their head where they need counseling, they come tell us; stated the Councilmembers don't need to get in a day to day fighting about who's fired, who's hired, who's brought back; stating that's why we pay these people six figures for them; agreed with Councilmember Wells to not kill the messenger, and that he is easy to locate should you require any information from him, and wants everyone to allow staff to do their jobs, and that all he needs is God, and to be truthful, as stated that he is not afraid to tell the truth.

**Ward 2** – Councilmember Gunn stated Councilmember Mears just said it all; stated each one of us has a different fingerprint, we are all individuals, and she was not born with a twin; and all the leaders she been up under, they will tell you she was a hard not to deal with, and that she has her own mind, but understands what it means when it comes to her representing her constituents, and that she takes it to heart at the end of the day this is a part time job, and that she has a full

time job and loves this city; stated the Council's job is to listen to those persons that are in authority to move with the insight and directions to guide us and lead us, our city attorney, and is thankful for the new city manager and providing information so that they can dive in and see what really is taking place, what really happened when it's available for you to tap into; agrees with Councilmember Wells that the ball was dropped, and that the city should be taking initiatives to make sure that staff has the basics: who, what, when, where, and why; stated that she wants the city's PIO (Public Information Officer), Javon Lloyd to basically come and talk to the officials, noting the importance of the voice of the city's PR person to represent the city's position and to get that information out, opposed to misinformation and other narratives; stating if this is done on the front end, being approached and questioned in the grocery store, or on your job, as she was, could be corrected, noting the questioning by her employer affects her livelihood.

**Mayor Ellison** stated that she has had a very busy week; extended a welcome to all new employees to the city of Forest Park; congratulated IT Director Joshua Cox, on the birth of his baby girl; referenced an Ice Cream Social she hosted at the senior center, where she proudly unveiled the center's new sewing room, and as part of the celebration, four brand new sewing machines were presented, along with all the necessary accessories to help support and expand the center's new sewing program, noted Commissioner - Elect Demetrius Collins also stopped in and everyone had a fun time with the seniors that day, where Executive Assistant, Samaria McCoy, gave them little squares that will be part of a quilt include their little message on the squares, and gave a special Thank You to Ms. Ann Foster, for all the help and the fun we had with the ice cream social and the sewing room, and noted because there were so many people to sign up, we may have to buy more sewing machines; stated it is with a heavy heart to share the sad news of the passing last Saturday of Tonya Thomas, noting she participated in the city's Clean Sweep Event, and when she dropped off her tires around 8:00 o'clock that morning, and was so perking, and she was so perky Tonya was so vibrant, saying "Hey, Mayor", and by 7:00 o'clock that night, received a message that she had had a heart attack and died; stating she is so thankful for Tonya and for her 27 years of dedicated service, and we want to make sure we keep her family in prayer, her husband, her two children, her grandson, who whom she of course adored, and we want to also keep the public works department, noting the staff is hurting, and stated that people don't understand Tonya's effect on this community and staff, noting everyone loved her, and thanked Samaria and Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff, for joining the balloon release; stated the reason for the balloon release was requested by one of the employees, and we found out that no clergy or chaplain had been there to pray and comfort the workers in the Public Works department, with many of them only finding out about Tonya's passing when they showed up for work on Monday morning; stated that as far as the balloon release, everything happened very quickly, and that's why there wasn't a lot of advance notice, but it happened and it was absolutely beautiful; noted the Forest Park Ministers Association came and prayed and offered moral support individually and groupwise, and the city appreciates your heart and feeling for someone who was so dedicated to this city and to Public Works, thank you so much; stated that on a lighter note, the city hosted a Soccer Watch Fest at Arena at South Lake, and if you missed it, it was a treat; stated it took place on Wednesday, the England vs Argentina game, and of course Argentina won in the last few minutes of the of the game, and after that she attended the soccer on the green in Lovejoy with Mayor Fluellyn and councilmembers; joined the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce for the ribbon cutting of Dirty Birds Southern Kitchen on Upper Riverdale Road where there was a very nice atmosphere and the food was great as well attended a grand opening and ribbon cutting at the Church of Celebration, they opened their new location on Ash Street, and they have made a beautiful sanctuary completely renovated in that location, and holds approximately 1000 seats, and turned out really beautiful; stopped by Gifts in

the Park noting the entire gym was filled with a wide variety of items, and the community was coming in and out, and was stated by Councilmember James, 600 families signed up, with more families coming in who had not signed up and were allowed to shop, noting it was quite an affair, and really exciting and great for the community; and stopped by Fun Friday, and it was quite a success, the first one of the summer, and the Melvin Miller band, and the M3 band were phenomenal; and then on Saturday, attended Development Authority board member Felicia Davis with her family, the Hopson family, who had their family reunion over the weekend at Starr Park one day, and then they had a banquet in Forest Park as well, and met the family's 91-year-old patriot, and their Uncle Matthew, was presented with a proclamation from the Mayor; noting there were happy time and great food all weekend long; again, extended prayers to Tonya and her family, and asked that we all keep them lifted up and keep public works staff lifted up as well. In prayer, stating we appreciate you, and thank you so much; stated the only other comment is regarding that matter that we're not going to talk about is that, noting we hear you and we understand your concerns, and be assured that we are committed to conducting a thorough review of what happened, the events that followed the accident, so that we'll know because we don't everything that happened, and just found out when you guys found out pretty much, and stated that as soon as we can, the city will conduct a thorough review of those matters and get some transparency because we need we have questions that get answered as well; and thanked everyone for their time, noted everyone is appreciated, and stated no more comments.

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

Motion to convene Executive Session for Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate or Cybersecurity at 8:19 p.m. was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session 9:02 p.m. and sign an Affidavit with no action was made by Councilmember James; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells; The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. was made by Councilmember Gunn; seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk

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Gwendolyn Ellison, Mayor

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.