



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Monday, April 21, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Council Chambers and YouTube Livestream

Website: www.forestparkga.gov
YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3c28p0A>
Phone Number: (404) 366.4720

FOREST PARK CITY HALL
745 Forest Parkway
Forest Park, GA 30297

The Honorable Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA

The Honorable Kimberly James
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez

The Honorable Delores A. Gunn
The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells
The Honorable Allan Mears

Ricky L. Clark Jr, City Manager
Randi Rainey, City Clerk
Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: Mayor Butler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK: A quorum was established.

Attendee's Name	Title	Absent	Present
Angelyne Butler, MPA	Mayor, At-Large		X
Kimberly James	Council Member, Ward 1		X
Delores A. Gunn	Council Member, Ward 2		X
Hector Gutierrez	Council Member, Ward 3		X
Latresa Akins-Wells	Council Member, Ward 4		X
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5		X

Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Joshua Cox, IT Director; Rodney Virgil, Level 2 Support Engineer; Javon Lloyd, PIO; John Wiggins, Finance Director; Talisa Adams, Procurement; Diane Lewis, Deputy HR Director; Nicole Dozier, PDC Director; Rochelle Dennis, Interim Economic Development Director; Alton Matthews, Public Works Director; Nigel Whatley, Public Works Deputy Director; David Halcome, Deputy Fire Chief; Brandon Criss, Police Chief, and Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney.

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to adopt the consent agenda.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Mears.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

There was no motion to adopt the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Council Discussion and Approval to enter into a contract for On-Call Real Estate Appraisals and Right of Way Acquisition Consultant Services- Public Works/Procurement**

Background/History:

The Department of Public Works requests City Council approval of a contractual agreement with Colliers Engineering and Design, Inc.

In March of 2022, Procurement conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services to assist the City in acquiring property and easements for various projects, including those funded by the Federal and State governments. For federally and state-funded projects, compliance with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Real Estate Division is required. Colliers Engineering and Design, Inc., provides essential services to ensure the City complies with these regulations. This contract is necessary to continue the City's sidewalk projects and maintain uninterrupted services.

SPLOST Funding: Cost is to be determined on a project-by-project basis.

2. **Council Discussion and Approval to Renew the Agreement with Flock Safety - Police Department/Procurement Department**

Background/History:

The Forest Park Police Department conducted a thorough examination in 2022 to identify the most effective license plate readers, and Flock Safety emerged as the top choice. In January 2024, the Mayor and Council approved the acquisition of LPR cameras to ensure comprehensive coverage across the city. These license plate readers prove to be invaluable tools for law enforcement, particularly in the realm of investigations.

The Forest Park Police Department is seeking to continue services with Flock Safety for another year at the annual cost of \$62,500 funded by Red Speed, the automation School Zone cameras.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. **Council Discussion to Approve the Acquisition of Permanent Easement Rights Located at (Lot 78, 13th District) 5201 Albert Drive, Forest Park, Georgia 30297 - Executive Office**

Background/History:

There is a public necessity and use for the City to acquire permanent easement rights on the property located at 5201 Albert Drive, Forest Park, Georgia 30297 (Clayton County Tax Parcel Identification No.

13078B F007). There has been a finding that the circumstances are such that it is necessary to proceed with condemnation proceedings regarding permanent drainage easement rights by using a method of condemnation, as authorized by O.C.G.A. §§ 22-1-1 *et seq.*

Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney- informed the Mayor and Council that the matter is considered a 'friendly condemnation.' Collier Engineering has been working to acquire the necessary easements; however, the property owner passed away without a will. As a result, the most efficient way to obtain the easement rights is through a condemnation proceeding. Attorney Matricardi explained that the process is not adversarial but strictly procedural, allowing the city to secure the rights through the court system since there is currently no authorized individual to execute the easement agreement.

4. **Council Discussion and Approval regarding Major Medical renewal benefits package for FY' 25-26-Executive Office**

The City's Employee Benefits Program renews annually on **July 1st**. Currently, **Cigna** provides our **Medical, Dental, and Vision Insurance** plans.

In preparation for the upcoming renewal, our Benefits Broker, **MSI Benefits Group**, collaborated closely with Cigna to secure a competitive proposal. Cigna's initial underwriting analysis projected a **16.43% increase** in premiums. However, the carrier released an initial renewal offer at **+12%**, followed by a **verbal non-marketing offer of +7%**, contingent upon the City not marketing the plan to other carriers.

John Leggett, representative of MS Benefits Group- presented an overview of the city's health insurance claims data and the proposed premium increases from Cigna. He explained that the analysis covered a 12-month period from March 2023 to January 2025. During the most recent 12 months, the city paid approximately \$5.3 million in premiums, while Cigna paid out just over \$5 million in claims, resulting in a 94% loss ratio. Leggett pointed out that six of the last seven months had claim costs exceeding premium contributions, prompting Cigna to propose a 16% rate increase initially.

Mr. Leggett noted that Cigna offered a reduced increase of 12% if the city chose to market the plan and a 7% discounted non-marketing renewal offer after negotiation. Mr. Leggett outlined the financial impact of each option, emphasizing that maintaining current employee deductions under the 12% increase would cost the city an additional \$679,000 annually. The 7% increase would reduce that impact to approximately \$396,000.

Mr. Leggett also presented a "cost-neutral" option that holds employee deductions flat for Option 1 but adjusts contributions for Options 2 and 3. For example, employees with single coverage under Option 2 would see deductions rise from \$10 to \$14.96 per paycheck, and those with family coverage would see an increase from \$20 to \$55.76. Option 3 would see smaller increases. Employees currently in Options 2 or 3 could move to Option 1 or 2, potentially reducing their deductions, but with the trade-off of a narrower provider network under Option 1.

Mr. Leggett noted that the cost-neutral option would bring the city's overall increase down to about 4%, or \$237,000 annually, while keeping plan benefits unchanged.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James- inquired about the background and history section. Mr. Clark Jr. explained that the background section uses approximate percentages because the numbers can change slightly during

negotiations. To avoid confusion, they kept the summary general but included the exact figures, down to the penny, in the detailed chart provided in the packet for clarity.

Mr. Leggett of MS Benefits Group continued to present an overview of how the City of Forest Park's employee benefits compare to other local governments across Georgia, highlighting the city's strong position. He noted that MS Benefits Group works with nearly 70 local governments, and Forest Park stands out as having one of the most generous benefit packages offered to employees.

Mr. Leggett shared a slide comparing current and projected premiums under a proposed 7% medical increase. The comparison included 56 government employers—26 counties and 30 cities—along with the State Health Benefit Program (SHBP). Mr. Leggett emphasized that Forest Park employees currently pay \$0 for single coverage, compared to the average of \$43/month across other governments; Employee + family coverage costs Forest Park employees \$56/month, while the average is approximately \$633/month; The City covers 100% of the employee-only premium and around 96–97% of dependent coverage tiers; The plan design remains strong, with a \$500 deductible, a \$500 HRA, and 100% coinsurance, contributing to the city's reputation as a desirable employer.

Mr. Leggett also discussed a proposed 21% increase in dental premiums due to high claims. Mr. Leggett noted that Cigna still provided the most competitive rate after shopping the market. He also stated that currently, dental costs are bundled into medical coverage at no additional cost to employees. Two options for handling dental coverage moving forward: Option 1: The city pays 100% for employees and covers 50% of dependent costs. Employees would pay \$5.10/week for one dependent or \$8.12 for a whole family. The city's net spend would decrease by roughly \$14,000 annually. Option 2: The city covers 0% of dependent costs, reducing its annual dental spend by approximately \$69,000.

Mr. Leggett stated that Vision coverage is voluntary, but the city currently covers 100% of the employee premium. By contributing 50% toward dependent coverage, the city could reduce its vision premium increase from 8% to about 3.5%.

Mr. Leggett also noted that the city currently provides basic life insurance through Lincoln Financial. Though Lincoln offered a small rate reduction for adding voluntary life, the city opted not to proceed due to existing military life coverage. However, a more competitive quote from Standard would lower the city's premium from \$35,000 to around \$24,000 and includes a \$50,000 line-of-duty benefit for police and fire personnel.

Mr. Leggett proposed three renewal options were presented for consideration: Option 2: 7% increase on medical premiums, no changes to employee deductions, and keeping life insurance with Lincoln (total increase: 7.7%); Option 3: Cost-neutral medical (some employee deduction changes), 50% contribution on dental dependents, and switch life insurance to Standard (total increase: 4.7%); and Option 4: Cost-neutral medical, no dental dependent contribution, and switch life insurance to Standard (total increase: 3.7%). Mr. Leggett noted tight timelines for upcoming open enrollment preparations, including platform setup, benefit guides, employee meetings, and town halls.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James- noted having some of the best benefits and inquired if option 2 included the dental and vision increases or was limited to the 7% increase on the medical plan. Mr. Leggett clarified that Option Two includes a 7% increase to the medical plan, a 21% increase to dental premiums, and an 8% increase to vision. However, under this option, there would be no changes to employee payroll

deductions, meaning employees would not see any cost increases, as the city would absorb the full impact of all premium increases.

Councilmember James- asked for clarification regarding the 21% increase in dental premiums. Specifically, she wondered whether that 21% increase is included in the total increase shown under Option Two, alongside the 7.7% for medical. Mr. Leggett confirmed that the 21% dental increase applies to the city, not to employees, and that under Option Two, the city absorbs the full cost of increases to medical, dental, and vision. Councilmember James sought further clarification on Option Three, confirming that it includes a 4.7% overall increase. However, under this option, employees would begin contributing toward dental coverage, based on the shared figures, such as \$5.10 per week for one dependent and \$8.12 per week for family coverage, as the city would cover only 50% of dependent dental costs. Mr. Leggett clarified that Option Two holds steady employee deductions for medical, dental, and vision coverage while renewing Lincoln Financial's life insurance policy. This option results in a total increase of 7.7%, or approximately \$439,000, which the city would fully absorb.

Mr. Leggett- further explained that Option Three would move to a cost-neutral approach for medical coverage, meaning employees would experience increased payroll deductions based on their selected plan. There would be no changes to dental costs for employees, although vision premiums would increase. Additionally, the city would switch life insurance coverage from Lincoln to Standard. This option brings the overall increase down to 4.7%.

Councilmember James- inquired about the previous rates of increase. Mr. Leggett noted that a similar situation occurred last year. The initial underwriting projection called for an increase of approximately 16%, but after negotiations, the city ultimately settled on a 7% increase, similar to the outcome proposed this year.

Councilmember Gunn- sought clarification on the financial impact of selecting Option Two and Option Three. She noted that moving from a 7.7% increase (Option Two) to a 4.7% increase (Option Three) results in an estimated savings of just over \$180,000. She asked how the city would account for or compensate for that difference in the budget. She further inquired whether the projected cost under Option Two—approximately \$433,000 to \$439,000, is already reflected in the current budget, or if it would represent a new increase that must be accounted for moving forward.

City Manager Clark .- explained that the administration's recommendation is to move forward with either Option Three or Option Four. He explained that one of the main goals is to address equity concerns related to the city's contribution toward family coverage versus individual employee coverage. Mr. Clark confirmed that employees have access to three different health plan options: Plan One, which is free; Plan Two, which offers enhanced coverage; and Plan Three, which is the most comprehensive or "Cadillac" plan. The city pays the same amount regardless of which plan an employee selects, including Plan Three. The recommendation to pursue Option Three reflects an effort to stabilize and rebalance that cost structure while offering generous benefits.

City Manager Clark noted that Option Three is preferred because it presents less of a financial burden on the city's budget while remaining fair to employees. He acknowledged that employees who move from Plan Three to Plan Two may experience some changes. He emphasized that the city would work closely with those employees to ensure continued access to their doctors and specialty care. Mr. Clark Jr. referred to a slide presented by Mr. Leggett, which compared Forest Park's benefits to other cities and counties across Georgia. Even under Option Three, Forest Park remains among the most competitive in cost and plan design, offering one of the best benefit packages in the market and still ranking below the State Health Benefit Plan averages.

He noted that adopting Option Three would still impact the city's budget, as fixed costs such as healthcare and property/casualty insurance are expected to rise. He also explained that the decision not to go to market for new proposals was strategic. Going to market could have resulted in a 12% increase if no better bids were received, and the city prioritized stability in choosing to remain with the current provider.

Mr. Leggett- noted that if the city were to change carriers, the new provider would have limited claims experience, typically only seven to eight months, when preparing the following year's renewal. He referenced a slide showing recent claims performance and emphasized that while there is hope for improvement, current trends remain a concern. He pointed out that, similar to the prior year, Cigna initially proposed a 16% increase, but ultimately agreed to a 7% increase after negotiations. If claim trends continue as they have, the city will likely need to revisit its options again next year, which may include going to market and potentially switching carriers.

However, Mr. Leggett emphasized that securing a renewal below trend, as with the 7% offer, is considered a strong outcome. He added that employees have generally expressed satisfaction with Cigna, and very few issues have been reported with the provider.

5. **Council Discussion and Approval to Purchase Body Worn Cameras and In-Car Cameras – Police Department/Procurement Department**

Background and History:

The Forest Park Police Department currently utilizes Versaterm for its body-worn and in-car camera systems. However, the department has encountered ongoing operational challenges with the Versaterm body-worn camera platform. Additionally, the system lacks several critical features that are considered standard in today's law enforcement technology landscape.

Due to these concerns, the department requests to transition to Axon body-worn and in-car camera systems. Axon is widely recognized for its reliability, advanced features, and seamless integration capabilities. The Axon platform offers automatic camera activation, real-time access to video footage, and secure cloud-based storage, providing a more effective, dependable, and legally compliant solution to meet the department's operational needs.

The Forest Park Police Department requests approval to piggyback from the Sourcewell cooperative contract #101223-AXN with Axon. The 60-month total cost is \$969,071.05—body Cameras: \$388,931.05 and in-car camera system: \$580,140.00, which will be expensed in annual installments. The initial payment starting in June 2025 totals \$9,690.69, to be funded from the Department of the Treasury account: 214-31-3210-53-1105. The 2025/2026 annual total cost is \$87,216.40.

Chief Criss- explained that the department is currently using a system that functions like a cell phone placed in a holster, worn on an officer's vest, or mounted inside a patrol vehicle. While this system does provide video recording capabilities, it no longer meets industry standards. The city is currently spending approximately \$80,000 annually for this service. Chief Criss outlined the system's key limitations, including the lack of automatic activation and tagging features. Officers must manually activate their body cameras during high-stress situations, which can create safety concerns and risk non-compliance.

Chief Criss- highlighted Axon as a significantly more advanced alternative. The Axon system includes automatic activation triggered by specific actions, such as when an officer exits a vehicle, unholsters a Taser, or draws a firearm, ensuring critical moments are captured without requiring manual input. The system also provides automatic tagging, which reduces the chance of footage being incorrectly labeled or retained for the wrong duration. He concluded by stating that many law enforcement agencies are transitioning to Axon due to its advanced capabilities, and he firmly believes it would be a great fit for the Forest Park Police Department.

City Manager Clark inquired with Director Wiggins whether the funding for this item, specifically the full annual payment, is being covered entirely through the Department of the Treasury. He sought confirmation that this funding applies to the initial payment as well. Director Wiggins responded that the initial cost will be covered using confiscated funds. The city will begin incorporating the ongoing expenses into the regular budget for future planning and sustainability.

Mr. Clark Jr. asked whether there is a cost associated with turning in the current equipment. He also inquired whether the city receives any credit, incurs fees, or retains equipment ownership. Chief Criss noted that the cell phones used in the current camera system were provided at no cost to the city. These are Verizon-issued devices; if the city decides to repurpose them for other uses, it can do so. He also noted that the current body-worn camera system is already funded, and transitioning to Axon is not expected to result in a significant cost increase compared to the city's current provider.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Mayor Butler- asked for clarification regarding the body-worn cameras' battery life and charging process. She noted that this had previously been an issue and inquired whether it has since been resolved. Chief Criss responded that the battery life issue was resolved when the department upgraded to the newer cell phones. Additionally, he noted that if the city transitions to the Axon system, battery-related concerns will no longer be a problem, as the latest equipment is designed to address those issues more effectively.

6. Council Discussion and Approval of a Fee Waiver for the Use of Starr Park Amphitheater – Recreation and Leisure Services

Background/History:

The 3rd annual "Jam for Peace" festival is looking to return to the City of Forest Park on Saturday,, May 10th. This event will feature performances by local artists and church and school choirs and provide the community with an educational, job, and health fair.

Mr. Jay Francis Springs, representing WIGL Radio- expressed gratitude to the City of Forest Park for allowing his radio station and organization to host an annual event at Starr Park focused on youth and community engagement. Mr. Springs noted that the event has been very successful over the past several years and requested the same consideration and use of the park for this year's event, scheduled for May 10th. He confirmed that the organization has already secured insurance coverage and thanked Mr. Clark and city leadership for their continued support. He opened his remarks by warmly acknowledging the presence of the Mayor, Councilmembers, and constituents, stating, "Today is the best day of my life, and it got better when I saw all of these honorable and esteemed elected officials and the constituency here in Barnes Park."

7. Council Discussion and Approval of a Fee Waiver for the Use of 696 Main Street – Recreation and Leisure Services

Background/History:

The Clayton County Department of Children's Services would like to use 696 Main Street on May 22 for their Employee Appreciation Day. The event will take place on Thursday between 10 a.m. and 4pm.

Director Maxwell- addressed the Mayor and Council on behalf of DEFACS, requesting use of the 696 Main Street facility on May 22nd for an employee appreciation event. The event would feature team-building activities and lunch for staff. He noted that an additional speaker had been invited to provide further remarks on the request, but acknowledged that it appeared the individual was not present at the meeting.

City Manager Clark clarified that, as with all facility use requests, the organization would still be required to provide proof of insurance listing the City of Forest Park as additionally insured. This requirement applies to all groups and events utilizing city-owned property.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: (When an Executive Session is required, one will be called for the following issues: Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate).

It was moved to recess into Executive Session at 6:34 p.m. for Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate matters.

The motion was made by Councilmember Akins-Wells and seconded by Councilmember James.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears.

It was moved to reconvene the work session at 7:02 p.m.

The motion was made by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Mears.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gunn, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Butler adjourned the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring meeting accommodation should notify the City Clerk's Office at 404-366-4720 at least 24 hours before the meeting.