



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Monday, May 05, 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; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director; Talisa Adams, Procurement; Shalonda Brown, HR Director; Diane Lewis, Deputy HR Director; Nicole Dozier, PDC Director; Rochelle Dennis, Interim Economic Development Director; Dorthy Roper-Jackson, Municipal Court Director; Tarik Maxwell, Rec/Leisure Director; Alton Matthews, Public Works Director; Nigel Whatley, Public Works Deputy Director; David Halcome, Deputy Fire Chief; Michelle Hood, Deputy City Clerk; Brandon Criss, Police Chief, and Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney.

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to amend the consent agenda to remove Item #1-Council Discussion and Approval to enter into a contract with NOVA Engineering & Environmental under New Business.

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

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to amend the agenda to remove item #7-Council Discussion to Approve Case VAR-2025-06 Variance Request, replace it with Text Amendment 2025-02, and add council discussion to replace recycle bins and planters.

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA: There was no discussion on these items.

1. **Council Discussion and Approval to purchase six (6) Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) units - Fire & EMS/Procurement Departments**

Background/History:

Fire & EMS requests purchasing six (6) new SCBA air packs/units. One unit consists of SCBA, a spare cylinder, a mask, and a protective bag for the mask. Per the NFPA 1981 (National Fire Protection Association) and NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), all SCBA cylinders must be hydrostatically tested every 5 years throughout the service life of 15 years. We currently have a total of 59 SCBA cylinders. These SCBAs, manufactured in 2011, have reached the end of their life. This purchase replaces the outdated SCBAs and keeps the inventory fully stocked. Requesting to purchase the SCBAs from the Sourcewell cooperative contract #011824 with Municipal Emergency Services for \$64,552.92 from 100-61-3520-53-1136.

2. **Council Discussion and Approval on the Lighting Service Agreement for 883 Mimosa Dr & Bowden Dr – Public Works Department**

Background/History:

The City of Forest Park is seeking approval from the Council to enter into two Lighting Service Agreements with Georgia Power. These agreements will mitigate the low lighting issues at the two locations listed below. For both Service agreements, the City will incur a monthly cost of \$64.48 or \$773.76 per year.

#LP105275 Bowden Dr: 2 additional light fixtures-\$449.76 per year.

#LP100146 883 Mimosa Dr: 1 additional light fixture-\$324 per year.

Street Lighting 100-51-4260-53-1233

NEW BUSINESS:

3. **City Council Discussion and Approval on an Ordinance to increase the compensation of the Mayor and Councilmember pursuant to O.C.G.A. 36-35-4- Executive Office**

Background/History:

The compensation of the Mayor shall be increased from \$23,040.16 to \$34,560.24 annually. The compensation of each City Councilmember shall be increased from \$14,400.36 to \$21,600.54 annually. The salary effect has been lawfully advertised in the Clayton News Daily on April 16, 2025, April 23, 2025, and April 30, 2025. The salary effect shall not take effect until January 1, 2026.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James inquired, "Since this is an election year and follows a recent special election, can you confirm whether the qualifying fee will be recalculated based on the current salary for the position? If so, will the fee increase from approximately \$430 to \$630?" Attorney Matricardi clarified that the qualifying fee will not increase at this time. She noted that the qualifying fee can be recalculated based on the updated salary in 2026, if an election is required. Since the salary increase does not take effect until 2026, any adjustment to the qualifying fee would apply beginning that year

4. **Council Discussion and Approval to enter into a contract with Technique Concrete Construction, LLC for Grapevine Buildout Project - Executive Office/Procurement Departments**

Background/History:

Grapevine Buildout Project: Request for Bid No. 2024-RFB-009. It consists of interior renovations at the Old Rite Aid Building for the new development of the city's business incubator facility. Three (3) bids were received. Request award approval to the lowest, responsive, and responsible bidder: Technique Concrete Construction, LLC, 944 Astor Ave., Forest Park, GA 30297

Total Amount: \$2,888,183.00

Mrs. Adams, Procurement Manager, noted that Procurement issued a formal bid request, and staff received three submissions. Mrs. Adams stated that each bid was evaluated, and the lowest responsive and responsible bidder was selected to complete the interior renovations at the former Rite-Aid building.

City Manager, Mr. Clark Jr., explained that the purpose of bringing the item forward for approval now is to prevent the bid from expiring while the funding model is still being finalized. He clarified that acceptance of the item does not imply that the City intends to allocate over \$2 million from the General Fund to finance the project in full. Mr. Clark Jr. noted that instead, the City plans to work with local authorities, including the Forest Park chapter, to help fund a significant portion of the project. This collaborative approach is intended to reduce the financial impact on the City while allowing the project to move forward promptly.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James inquired if the funds were a part of SPLOST or Capital Improvement funding. Mr. Clark Jr. noted that the City acquired the property last year to develop it into an incubator space, rather than allowing it to remain a blighted structure on Parkway. To date, no City funds have been used for any part of the project, including architectural drawings, engineering, or the exterior work completed thus far. Mr. Clark Jr. also noted that the City applied for and received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which has funded most of the project. Mr. Clark Jr. referenced the finance director, Mr. Wiggins, confirming that approximately \$500,000 to \$600,000 remains available under the grant for continued work on the project.

Councilmember James asked, in light of the discussion, how long it typically takes for work to begin once a contract is awarded or a bid is approved. The councilmember noted that, in this case, the bid was awarded to Technique Concrete and inquired whether the pricing remains guaranteed, given that more than four months have passed since the bid was initially submitted. Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed that this is a guaranteed, fixed-price contract, similar to the agreement in place for the City Center project. He stated that there will be no cost overruns unless change orders are initiated by the City, acting as the project owner. In response to the timeline concern, Mr. Clark Jr. explained that the delay was due to the project's unique nature. Meetings were held with Technique Concrete and the City's engineering team to ensure all aspects of the project were thoroughly reviewed. This included confirming that Technique Concrete understood the scope of work and verifying that all construction drawings were finalized. He also noted that all approvals from the investor have already been secured.

Councilmember James sought clarification, asking whether the 90-day extension refers to the time allowed for the vendor to begin work or simply an extension of the bid price validity.

Mrs. Adams included that the vendor agreed to extend their bid pricing for an additional 90 days, ensuring the current rates remain valid. Mrs. Adams clarified that a Notice to Proceed (NTP) is issued after the contract is awarded and fully executed between the City and the vendor. Once the NTP is issued, a meeting is typically held with the vendor to establish the start of work formally. She noted that while the solicitation includes a specified project duration, this timeline officially begins on the date of the Notice to Proceed, not at the time of contract award.

Mr. Clark Jr. emphasized that multiple bids were received for the project, acknowledging that the bid amounts were included in the packet provided to the governing body. He noted that Technique Concrete submitted a bid of \$2.8 million, Diversified Construction submitted a bid of \$3.7 million, and JR Bowman submitted a bid of \$4.6 million. Mr. Clark Jr. explained that given the significant disparity in the bid amounts, staff conducted follow-up meetings with Technique Concrete to review the project scope and ensure their bid accurately reflected the work required. This step was taken to confirm that the bid numbers were correct and aligned with the specifications outlined in the original solicitation.

Councilmember Gunn requested that the item be tabled, stating that she would like additional insight into the project. She acknowledged the explanation provided, noting that the \$2.8 million project cost is expected to be partially funded through contributions from various boards. However, she desired a more detailed understanding before moving forward. Mr. Clark Jr. emphasized the importance of engaging the board, noting that these entities were created specifically to serve as tools for economic development and urban redevelopment within the City. He explained that the materials provided to the board represent the finalization of several presentations related to the "Grapevine" project, including proposed designs, aesthetics, and overall project vision. Mr. Clark Jr. also noted that the project is within a 90-day timeline. He invited board members to share any specific information or additional insights they require to table the item, ensuring that any concerns or questions are addressed before moving forward.

Councilmember Gunn responded, acknowledging that she has not yet received all the materials, while the information has been shared. She noted that she only has a brief, two-page document in front of her and emphasized the need for more time to assess the project details. Councilmember Gunn reiterated that a \$2.8 million commitment is a significant financial undertaking, stating, "That's a lot of cookies," to underscore her point. She requested additional time for herself and her colleagues to carefully evaluate the proposal before moving forward.

Mr. Clark Jr. suggested scheduling a meeting to provide a more comprehensive project overview, including a guided site tour. He noted that this would allow board members to see firsthand the work

completed thus far and better understand the project's progress. He added that the team has been working on this project for approximately a year and a half, emphasizing the significant effort and planning going into its development.

Councilmember Gunn raised concerns about the clarity of the project documentation, noting that some construction work, such as exterior painting, has already been completed. She acknowledged that the community is aware of the visible improvements but emphasized the need for a more comprehensive breakdown of the \$2.8 million project cost. Councilmember Gunn also requested that the financial tabulations in the project packet be expanded, noting that the current print size is challenging to read. She humorously added that she would prefer not to invest in a magnifying glass to review the project details. She recommended that the item be tabled until additional information can be provided, expressing a desire for more clarity before moving forward, particularly in anticipation of potential questions from the community.

Mr. Clark Jr. responded, acknowledging Councilmember Gunn's concerns and clarifying that no formal contract has been presented yet. He explained that the contract would be prepared following the resolution's approval. Mr. Clark Jr. offered to schedule a meeting with staff to provide Councilmember Gunn with a more comprehensive overview of the "Grapevine" project, including a review of all work completed over the past year. He expressed his commitment to ensuring that all council members understand the project's scope and progress before moving forward.

Mrs. Adams confirmed that she would share the full scope of work included in the original bid request. She noted that the project is a comprehensive interior construction effort to transform the former Right Aide Building into the Grapevine Incubator Project for the City. Mrs. Adams further explained that the plans outlining the intended redesign and repurposing of the building were included in the bid documents provided to potential contractors. She committed to providing these materials to Councilmember Gunn to ensure she completely understands the project as initially presented to the bidders.

Councilmember Gutierrez inquired about the potential impact on the project if the item were to be postponed or tabled. He sought clarification on how such a delay might affect the project timeline, funding, or overall progress. Mr. Clark Jr. responded, stating there would be minimal impact if the item were postponed, as staff have already accounted for an extended Notice to Proceed period. He emphasized that the primary focus is to ensure that all requested information is provided to Councilmember Gunn, allowing for a fully informed decision before moving forward.

Councilmember Akins-Wells added to Councilmember Gunn's earlier remarks, noting that while the project has been discussed for some time, she has concerns regarding awarding multiple contracts to a single individual. She specifically raised the issue of Billy Freeman, pointing out that as the chairperson of the Development Authority, his repeated selection as a contractor for City projects could present a potential conflict of interest. Councilmember Akins-Wells questioned whether sufficient opportunities have been provided for other vendors to compete for these contracts, noting that, while three bids were received for the current project, it is unclear whether a broader pool of contractors was considered. She emphasized the importance of transparency and due diligence, particularly given a significant financial commitment, and called for a closer review of the City's contractor selection process.

Mr. Clark Jr. requested clarification from Mrs. Adams, asking how many potential bidders were invited to submit proposals for the project and how many responses were received, aside from the three lowest bidders currently under consideration. Mrs. Adams responded, explaining that the project was publicly advertised on the City's OpenGov site and the Georgia Procurement Registry, ensuring that the opportunity reached hundreds of general contractors. She noted that a mandatory pre-bid meeting and

site visit were held, with approximately 8 to 12 vendors in attendance, although she could not recall the exact number. During this meeting, vendors could visit the project site, ask questions, and receive clarifications before the bid submission deadline. Mrs. Adams further clarified that only three (3) vendors ultimately submitted bids, as participation in the mandatory pre-bid meeting was a requirement for eligibility. She emphasized that this was a fully competitive, transparent process, with evaluations focused on selecting the lowest-cost, responsive, and responsible bidders. This evaluation process includes reference checks and verification of good standing with the Georgia Secretary of State, ensuring that selected vendors meet all required qualifications.

Councilmember Akins-Wells asked for clarification regarding a potential conflict of interest, noting that Mr. Freeman is the chairman of One Nine Boards and has also been awarded multiple contracts for City projects. She referenced the City Manager's earlier statement about seeking financial support from the boards and questioned whether this relationship could present a conflict of interest. Councilmember Akins-Wells emphasized the importance of transparency, stating that both the Council and the residents should clearly understand potential conflicts to ensure public trust.

Attorney Matricardi responded, clarifying that it is not a conflict of interest for Mr. Freeman to bid on the project as a contractor, provided that he does not participate in any votes involving allocating funds for the project through the Development Authority. She explained that a conflict would arise if Mr. Freeman, as the chairman of the Development Authority, were to vote in favor of allocating funds to a project in which he has a financial interest. In such cases, Mr. Freeman must recuse himself from related votes to avoid a conflict. Attorney Matricardi also noted that, based on the bid tabulation, Mr. Freeman's proposal was significantly lower than the competing bids, making it the clear choice as the lowest responsive bidder. However, she recommended that the Development Authority's attorney formally advise Mr. Freeman to recuse himself from any future votes involving the "Grapevine" project to ensure transparency and compliance with conflict-of-interest guidelines.

Councilmember Akins-Wells asked a follow-up question regarding the City's approach to selecting contractors. She recalled a discussion involving Councilman Gutierrez and a vendor about a sound project, where the lowest bidder was not necessarily chosen. Councilmember Akins-Wells inquired whether selecting the lowest bidder is always the primary factor in the decision-making process or if other considerations sometimes lead the City to select a higher bid. Mrs. Adams responded that the City's evaluation process considers three key factors when selecting a bidder: cost, responsiveness, and responsibility. While the lowest price is a primary consideration, it is not the sole criterion for contract awarding. She noted that in the previous case involving the sound project mentioned by Councilmember Akins-Wells, the lowest bidder was not selected because they did not meet the required standards for responsiveness and responsibility. Mrs. Adams concluded that these factors are equally important in the evaluation process, as they ensure that the selected vendor can effectively complete the work and meet the City's quality standards.

Attorney Matricardi provided further clarification on the evaluation criteria, noting that responsiveness refers to whether a bidder has complied with all the requirements of the procurement process, including submitting complete and accurate documentation. On the other hand, responsibility considers the bidder's experience, qualifications, and capacity to complete the project successfully. She explained that the criteria can vary depending on the contracted work type. For example, in the case of engineering services, the focus is typically on qualifications rather than cost, as the technical expertise required for these projects is often more critical than pricing. However, the evaluation will consider cost alongside responsibility and responsiveness for construction projects, where multiple entities may be capable of performing the work.

5. **Council Discussion to Approve Case # CUP-2025-02, Conditional Use Permit to authorize the construction of a sixty-unit mixed-use development within the Downtown Mainstreet District (DM), Ward 2-**Planning and Community Development Department

Background/History:

Prestwick Land Holdings is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to authorize the construction of forty-eight additional residential units, bringing the total unit count to sixty, within a proposed mixed-use development located on a 1.62+/- acre lot within the Downtown Mainstreet District (DM), Ward 2. The project area lies within the Traditional Downtown Core (TDC), which supports higher-density, mixed-use development in alignment with the City's land use and economic development goals.

On Thursday, April 17, 2025, the City of Forest Park Planning Commission, which serves as an advisory board to the Mayor and Council, voted to approve the Conditional Use Permit request. With a careful overview, some potential impacts of the proposed development include increased traffic and density. However, many of these effects could be mitigated with proper design, such as pedestrian-oriented features, modern safety standards, and integration with public infrastructure. The project could improve access to amenities, reduce commuting needs, and support downtown revitalization efforts.

Ms. Dozier, PCD Director, provided an overview of the zoning requirements relevant to the proposed development. She explained that the City's zoning ordinance permits the Council to consider projects that exceed standard density limits if the project benefits the community. To pursue this option, developers must apply for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), which allows for a higher density than typically permitted under the current zoning code. In this case, Prestwick Land Holdings LLC has submitted a CUP application to increase the number of residential units for a proposed mixed-use development. The project encompasses three parcels, identified as Lot 07 and two additional lots, which form the site for the requested density increase. Director Dozier noted that the Council's decision on this application will be critical in determining whether the proposed project can proceed with the requested density, emphasizing the importance of carefully evaluating the potential impact on the community.

Mr. Harris, representing Prestwick Development Company, introduced himself and provided an overview of the company. He noted that since 2008, Prestwick Development has completed over 60 communities throughout the Southeast, focusing on the metro Atlanta area. Mr. Harris highlighted several notable projects as examples of the company's work, including 55 Milton Avenue along the Beltline in Atlanta, 1055 Ponce, and Landing in Smyrna. He emphasized that these projects reflect the quality and design standards the company aims to bring to the proposed development in Forest Park. These projects feature mixed-use buildings with residential units above ground-floor retail, aligning closely with the City's vision for the area. He then outlined the proposed project's scope, including four parcels near Main Street, Oak Hill, and North Avenue. The development will be a mixed-use, workforce housing community, supported by tax credits from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Mr. Harris explained that these tax credits are critical to the project's financial viability, as they reduce the amount of private financing required, thereby allowing for more affordable rental rates targeted at essential workers, such as teachers, police officers, and firefighters. The estimated development cost is approximately \$23 million, or about \$383,000 per unit. Roughly \$17 million is expected to come from Truist Community Capital, the community development arm of Truist Bank. The project is designed to provide affordable housing for households earning between \$40,000 and \$62,000 annually, aligning with the income range for many local civil servants. Regarding unit count, Mr. Harris explained that the proposal includes 60 residential units, a reduction from the typical 85 units the company would typically pursue for a project of this scale. He noted that this reduction was a deliberate effort to align with the City's planning goals while maintaining financial viability under the tax credit structure.

Mr. Harris also addressed parking and traffic concerns, noting that the project will include 64 on-site parking spaces, ensuring at least one space per residential unit, with an additional 44 peripheral spaces available for community use. He committed to conducting a traffic study before submitting final plans to the City, ensuring the development would not negatively impact surrounding areas. Finally, Mr. Harris emphasized the importance of aligning the project's design with the City's existing Downtown Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan, noting that this alignment is critical for securing state tax credits. He expressed the company's commitment to collaborating closely with City staff to ensure the development meets local aesthetic and planning standards. Mr. Harris concluded his presentation by inviting questions from the Council and staff, noting that the company is eager to move forward with the project in partnership with the City.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James thanked Mr. Harris for his presentation and expressed appreciation for Prestwick Development Company's interest in investing in Forest Park. She emphasized the City's commitment to supporting quality development and welcomed the opportunity to collaborate on projects that enhance the community.

Councilmember Gunn expressed her initial concerns about potential traffic congestion associated with the proposed development. She noted that after visiting other nearby cities, she observed successful examples of small, mixed-use developments that effectively balance residential space with community amenities. However, she reiterated her concerns about parking and congestion, pointing out that Mr. Harris mentioned something in his current presentation that had not been discussed in the previous meeting. Specifically, he referenced the development team having "control of parking" for the project. Councilmember Gunn requested clarification on what this control entails, humorously asking whether this would result in visitors being charged for parking, saying, "If I come over there, are you going to charge me \$1.25?" Mr. Harris responded, assuring Councilmember Gunn that there are no plans to charge for parking at the proposed development. He clarified that the parking lot would remain open to the public, allowing visitors to park freely whether patronizing businesses within the development or simply visiting nearby attractions, such as the park across the street. Mr. Harris explained that the project aligns with the City's Downtown Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), which promotes the "live, work, play" concept. He emphasized that the goal is to create a walkable, mixed-use community that encourages foot traffic and supports local businesses, without restricting access to parking for residents and visitors.

Councilmember Gunn expressed her appreciation for the thoroughness of the information provided by the developer, noting that the detailed breakdown helped clarify her understanding of the project. She also acknowledged the guidance of the City Manager, who encouraged her to visit other cities to gain a broader perspective on similar developments. Councilmember Gunn shared that, after visiting nearby communities and considering the input from residents, she recognizes that some community members are eager for this type of progress, while others remain hesitant. She admitted that she is still weighing the pros and cons but is willing to support the project if it aligns with the City's long-term vision for growth and revitalization. However, she firmly reiterated her position against parking fees, emphasizing, "You got me, but I don't want to see any parking fees—none."

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed his enthusiasm for the proposed development, noting that including commercial space on the ground floor and workforce housing is particularly encouraging. He highlighted the importance of affordable housing, pointing out that the recent increase in the minimum wage in Forest Park means that even minimum wage earners in the city should be able to afford one of the proposed apartments. Councilmember Gutierrez emphasized the significance of providing modern

housing options for the community, particularly for young professionals and recent graduates who often leave Forest Park searching for newer developments and contemporary amenities. He remarked that this project represents an exciting opportunity to retain local talent and attract new residents, aligning with the City's broader goals for growth and revitalization. He then requested clarification from the developer, asking whether the project is fully approved or remains contingent on additional factors, such as securing financing or meeting specific regulatory requirements.

Mr. Harris responded to Councilmember Gutierrez's inquiry, explaining that the development project is not yet fully approved and remains contingent on a critical step in the process. He stated that Prestwick Development Company, in partnership with the City, will submit their application for Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) tax credits on May 16. Following the submission, the DCA will evaluate and score all applications from across the state, with final decisions expected in August or September. If the project scores high enough, the development team will proceed with the following due diligence phase, including finalizing design plans and securing additional approvals. Mr. Harris noted that, if successful, the goal is to break ground by May of next year, allowing construction to commence shortly thereafter. He also emphasized that Prestwick Development Company has a strong track record of successfully securing tax credits for projects in communities that have supportive infrastructure and forward-looking plans, like the Downtown Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) already in place in Forest Park. Mr. Harris expressed optimism about the project's chances, adding that he hopes to celebrate a significant milestone with the City later this year if the application succeeds.

Mr. Clark Jr. acknowledged that traffic concerns have been raised multiple times during the discussion. To provide comfort to the governing body, he suggested that any approval for the Prestwick Development project be made contingent upon completing a comprehensive traffic study. He explained that this requirement would ensure that all necessary traffic considerations are addressed upfront, allowing the City to assess whether additional improvements are needed based on the proposed density of the development. This approach would provide greater confidence that the project's impact on Main Street and surrounding areas is fully understood and appropriately managed.

Councilmember Akins-Wells acknowledged that she initially had reservations about the proposed development but shared that after conducting her research and speaking with one of the developer's partners, she gained a clearer understanding of the project's potential benefits. She supported the initiative, noting that it aligns with the community's needs and long-term goals. Councilmember Akins-Wells also thanked the developer for their informative presentation at the Planning Commission meeting, emphasizing the importance of keeping the Council well-informed throughout the process.

6. **Council Discussion to Approve Case VAR-2025-06 Variance Request-** Planning and Community Development Department- **REMOVED FROM AGENDA**

Background/History:

Prestwick Land Holdings is requesting a series of variances to support the development of a proposed mixed-use project located on a 1.62 +/- acre parcel within the Traditional Downtown Core (TDC) of the Downtown Mainstreet District (DM). As zoning regulations require, any variance request associated with a Conditional Use Permit must be reviewed and approved by the Mayor and City Council.

Should the Mayor and Council approve the variance request with the conditions recommended by the Planning Commission and staff, the applicant will be able to move forward with a thoughtfully scaled development that supports increased residential density in the Downtown Core—further advancing the city's goals of growth, walkability, and revitalization in this key district.

7. **Council Discussion and Approval of the 2025 Haitian Flag Day Celebration MOU Agreement- Recreation and Leisure Department**

Background/History:

The Georgia Haitian American Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (GAHCCI) wishes to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Forest Park to host the 2025 Haitian Flag Day Celebration at the Starr Park Amphitheater on Saturday, May 18, 2025. The attached MOU has been drafted outlining the roles and responsibilities of both parties.

Rec and Leisure Director Mr. Maxwell noted that the City will use the amphitheater area in the MOU, assign one additional police officer for security, and assist with event promotion. In return, the event organizers will provide two additional police officers, a certificate of insurance, and a \$1,000 scholarship to one graduating senior, which can be applied to any school they attend in the fall.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gutierrez inquired if a Forest Park senior would receive the scholarship. Mr. Maxwell responded that it would be a Forest Park senior.

Mr. Clark Jr. noted that the organizers are proposing a \$1,000 scholarship for one graduating senior, as outlined in the agreement.

8. **Council Discussion to Approve Text Amendment 2025-02, for Title 8, Planning and Development, Chapter 8, Zoning, Article C, Development and Youth Standards for the City of Forest Park ordinances to amend such section, adding section 8-8-97- Mini Warehouse and Storage Facilities- PCD Department**

Background/History:

Staff received a request to review the existing ordinance related to many warehouses and storage facilities. It was determined that the current ordinance lacked sufficient guidance for appropriately developing these uses. In response, staff has proposed a text amendment, title eight, Planning and Development, chapter eight, zoning, Article C, development and use standards for the city of Forest Park, code of ordinances by adding section eight, dash eight, dash 97 many more house and storage facilities, this amendment introduces definitions and development standards tailored to ensure that such facilities are compatible with the mass scale and character of surrounding structures. These provisions are intended to provide clear guidance and promote orderly, high-quality development within the city. Should the mayor and council vote to approve this text amendment, it will help ensure the development of high-quality mini-warehouses and storage facilities that align with the city's goals for orderly and compatible growth.

Ms. Dozier provided an overview of the proposed ordinance. She explained that the ordinance is being introduced to establish additional regulations for mini-storage and self-storage facilities within the City of Forest Park. The proposed ordinance includes formal definitions for mini-storage and self-storage facilities and introduces new design standards to address these structures' size, mass, and scale. Specifically, it recommends setback steps to reduce the visual impact of these buildings and improve their overall aesthetic within the community. Director Dozier noted that the Forest Park Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of this ordinance at its April 17, 2025, meeting. She concluded her remarks by stating that this completes her presentation on the item.

9. **Council Discussion on Recycle Bins and Planters-** Councilmember James, Ward 1

Councilmember James raised the issue of the misuse of recycling bins within the community. She noted that while the City provides yellow-top recycling bins, many residents are unaware that these bins are not currently being used for proper recycling, with their contents ultimately being directed to regular waste disposal. Councilmember James explained that she had previously sent an email to council members proposing to replace the yellow-top bins with green-top waste bins to eliminate confusion and reduce contamination. However, she acknowledged that more comprehensive communication with residents is necessary to address this issue effectively.

To initiate this transition, Councilmember James proposed two potential approaches:

1. **Bin Replacement:** During scheduled waste collection days, the City could replace the yellow-top recycling bins with standard green-top waste bins to signal the change to residents.
2. **Bin Removal and Education:** Alternatively, the City could collect the yellow-top bins entirely and communicate to residents about the proper use of waste containers in the future.

Despite ongoing discussions about improving resident awareness, she emphasized that little progress has been made in educating the community about the recycling program's current limitations. Councilmember James stressed the importance of taking action to resolve this ongoing issue.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gunn sought clarification on the logistics of the proposed bin replacement, noting that different service providers may be involved in collecting regular waste and recycling. She asked whether, if the yellow-top recycling bins are replaced with green-top waste bins, both containers would be collected on the same day, ensuring consistency in the waste collection schedule. Councilmember James clarified that the day currently designated for recycling is, in fact, not being used for actual recycling, as the contents of the yellow-top bins are being redirected to the landfill. She emphasized that this misunderstanding needs to be addressed to ensure residents have accurate information about the waste and to prevent further contamination.

Councilmember Gunn inquired if one of the recycling days would be eliminated. Councilmember James clarified her proposal, emphasizing that she is not suggesting eliminating the recycling pickup day itself but removing the yellow-top recycling bins to reduce confusion. She explained that the scheduled pickup day would remain in place, but residents would be encouraged to use a single, standardized waste bin for both collection days. Alternatively, the City could replace the yellow-top bins with regular green-top bins to indicate that the contents are being sent to the landfill, not recycled. Councilmember James stressed that this approach would help eliminate misunderstandings about the City's current waste management practices while maintaining the existing collection schedule.

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed support for Councilmember James's efforts to address the recycling bin issue, acknowledging her passion for promoting better waste management practices. He noted that this topic has been a longstanding concern and appreciated the effort to bring it to the forefront for discussion. Councilmember Gutierrez asked whether residents would incur additional charges if the City transitions to a single-bin system, allowing for two regular trash days. He also sought confirmation that those who still wish to recycle would retain the option of using a single yellow-top bin for recyclable materials, with one designated trash day and one recycling day.

Councilmember James stated that the City is currently not conducting any recycling operations, meaning that items placed in the yellow-top recycling bins are ultimately being sent to the landfill. She emphasized that many residents are unaware of this, creating a significant gap in public understanding. To address this, Councilmember James proposed removing the yellow-top bins entirely, given that the planned public outreach and communication about the change in recycling practices have not yet been implemented. She stressed that this approach would provide a clearer message to residents that the City is not actively recycling at this time.

Councilmember Gunn asked if the residents were being charged for recycling. Councilmember James responded no and deferred the response to Mr. Clark Jr. Mr. Clark responded, acknowledging that he was not fully prepared to address the specifics of the recycling charges, as this topic was an unexpected addition to the agenda. However, he confirmed that residents currently have the option to choose either two standard trash carts or one trash cart and one yellow-top recycling cart. He also noted that if the contents of a recycling cart are contaminated with non-recyclable items, the entire load is treated as regular waste and sent to the landfill. Mr. Clark requested additional time to consult with Waste Management to clarify the billing structure and determine whether any adjustments are necessary to ensure that residents are charged appropriately for the services provided.

Councilmember James provided additional context, noting that Waste Management previously informed the City that its recycling collection was too contaminated to be processed as actual recyclables. She reminded the Council that, as a result, the contents of the yellow-top recycling bins have been directed to the landfill for some time, effectively eliminating the recycling program's intended environmental benefits. Councilmember James emphasized the importance of clear communication with residents to ensure they understand that their recycling efforts are not currently being processed as intended.

Mr. Clark Jr. sought clarification from Mayor Butler and the governing body, asking whether the current discussion is intended to explore the complete removal of the yellow-top recycling bins and potentially offer residents the option of receiving two regular trash receptacles. He emphasized the importance of clearly communicating potential changes to the community, ensuring that residents understand their options and the reasoning behind the proposed adjustments.

Councilmember James clarified that the proposal involves replacing the yellow-top recycling bins with standard green-top waste bins or encouraging residents to use their existing green-top bins for both scheduled trash collection days, typically Monday and Thursday.

Councilmember James raised the issue of planters that have been placed around the City. She noted that while the project originally had positive intentions, many of the planters have since fallen into disrepair, collecting dust, mildew, and debris, which detracts from the City's overall appearance. Councilmember James proposes that the City collect and refurbish the planters or repurpose them more strategically. She suggested that the Arts Department could repaint the planters with creative designs, transforming them into visually appealing features that align with the City's beautification goals. Additionally, she recommended that the refurbished planters be strategically placed in high-visibility areas where they can be more effectively maintained, reducing the burden on City staff and enhancing the community's overall aesthetic. Mr. Clark Jr. sought clarification regarding the current locations of the planters throughout the City. He confirmed that the planters have been removed from Ward 1 and remain in Ward 5. He then asked for updates on the status of the planters in other wards, noting that Ward 4 never received planters, while Ward 2 still has some in place. Mr. Clark Jr. emphasized the importance of confirming the exact locations of the remaining planters as part of the City's broader effort to refurbish or remove them.

Mr. Clark Jr. responded, confirming that the City can proceed with removing the planters, based on the wishes of the governing body. He noted that, while the City does not currently have a formal Arts Department, this initiative presents an opportunity to engage local artists. He suggested involving community members, including participants in the City's upcoming summer camp, which will have a focus on art, creativity, and dance, thanks to recent external funding. However, Mr. Clark Jr. also expressed a concern that, even if refurbished, the planters could still be misused as trash receptacles if not adequately maintained or strategically placed. He proposed launching this effort through the Main Street Program to attract local talent and encourage community participation in the beautification project.

Councilmember James inquired if a vote was required. Mr. Clark Jr. indicated that, based on the consensus of the council, he can direct his staff to remove all planters throughout the City if the majority of the governing body agrees.

Mayor Butler inquired about the council's consensus. All council members were in consensus.

10. **Council Discussion and Approval to enter into a contract with NOVA Engineering & Environmental** - Planning & Community Development/Procurement Departments

Background/History:

The Planning & Community Development Department seeks approval for an annual contract with NOVA Engineering & Environmental for building inspections. This contract supports the department's efforts to ensure compliance with local building codes, safety regulations, and zoning laws. NOVA Engineering & Environmental has a proven track record of providing reliable, professional services and will help streamline the inspection process, ensuring timely and efficient review of construction and renovation projects within the community. Approval of this contract is essential to maintaining the high standards of safety and development within the city.

The Governing Body's approval will allow NOVA Engineering & Environmental to continue providing these critical services for the upcoming year, enabling the department to meet its operational needs and support ongoing development projects.

Fund: General Operating for \$150,000.00

Mrs. Adams explained that the City has an existing relationship with Nova Engineering and that the proposed contract update is intended to formalize the terms of the agreement using the City's standard contract format. She noted that this renewal is being presented for Council approval and acknowledged that there were prior questions regarding the time of service for this particular contract.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Mayor Butler sought clarification on the terms of the proposed Nova Engineering contract. She asked whether the agreement explicitly defines the permitted working schedule for inspectors, including whether they are authorized to conduct inspections on weekends and after hours, or if the contract restricts work to standard business hours.

Ms. Dozier responded, explaining that the revised contract with Nova Engineering does not currently specify the permitted working hours for inspectors. She acknowledged Mayor Butler's interest in including weekend and after-hours availability and clarified that doing so would require an amendment to the existing contract. Ms. Dozier noted that, because this renewal was intended as a standard update to

continue existing services, expanding inspection hours had not been initially considered during the drafting process.

Mayor Butler explained that her question regarding permitted working hours was prompted by feedback from investors who have expressed concerns that the current hours of operation for building inspections may not always align with their schedules. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that the City's inspection services are flexible enough to accommodate the needs of investors, rather than requiring them to adjust their timelines to fit within a more restrictive work schedule.

Mr. Clark Jr. requested clarification from Director Dozier, asking whether Nova Engineering currently provides weekend inspection services for other municipalities. He also noted that Nova handles permitting services for Clayton County and inquired whether staff are available on weekends under those agreements. Director Dozier responded, confirming that Nova Engineering does provide inspection services for other municipalities, but she was uncertain whether this includes Saturday inspections. She is committed to finding out whether weekend or after-hours inspections are available and noted that, if offered, these services would likely be billed at a different rate than the standard weekday inspection fees currently included in the City's contract.

Mr. Clark Jr. provided additional context for Mayor Butler, noting that when the City transitioned to Nova Engineering for inspection services, one of the benefits was the introduction of an online portal that allows applicants to schedule inspections at their convenience. He acknowledged that, under the previous system, inspectors often operated within broad time windows, creating challenges for property owners and contractors trying to coordinate their availability. He emphasized that the new system is intended to provide greater flexibility and transparency, reducing the likelihood of missed appointments or scheduling conflicts.

Director Dozier clarified that, under the current system, inspections are still conducted within a time window rather than at specific, pre-scheduled times. However, she noted that once the new online scheduling system is fully implemented, applicants can select specific inspection times through the portal, addressing the scheduling challenges mentioned earlier. She emphasized that this upgrade is intended to improve the overall efficiency and convenience of the inspection process for residents and contractors.

Mr. Clark Jr. addressed the governing body, noting that if the Council desires to amend the contract with Nova Engineering to include weekend inspection hours, his staff has no objection. However, he recommended that any additional costs associated with weekend or after-hours inspections be the responsibility of the individual applicants requesting the service, rather than being absorbed by the City's general fund or taxpayer-supported projects.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Butler adjourned the meeting at 7:00 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.