



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Monday, June 16, 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

DRAFT 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- VIA PHONE		X

Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Rodney Virgil, Level 2 Support Engineer; Javon Lloyd, PIO; John Wiggins, Finance Director; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director; Talisa Adams, Procurement; Shalonda Brown, Rochelle Dennis, Interim Economic Development Director; Dorothy Roper-Jackson, Municipal Court Director; Tarik Maxwell, Director of Rec and Leisure; Alton Matthews, Public Works 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: There were no consent agenda items.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to amend the agenda to include the Council Discussion on the City's Property Casualty and Liability Insurance and Council Discussion for Potential Participation on the GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing).

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA: There were no consent agenda items.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Council Discussion on the Proposed FY 25-26 Budget- Third Public Hearing- Executive Offices**

Background/History:

The Proposed Funded dollar amount of the FY25- 26 Budget is \$43,034,857.00. The budget meticulously allocates resources across various city priorities and programs. These allocations are made with the intent to enhance public safety, improve infrastructure, promote economic development, and provide essential services. From maintaining our parks and recreational facilities to supporting educational programs and ensuring the upkeep of our streets and utilities, the budget is designed to meet the diverse needs of our community. The City Manager will present a full overview of the proposed budget.

The third Public Hearing, which will result in the adoption of the budget, will be held at tonight's regular session meeting at 7 p.m.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James asked for clarification on the organizational charts and whether they reflected all current and proposed positions. City Manager Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed a request had been made for the personnel ledger and asked HR Director Brown to provide details. HR Director Brown explained that the IT Department is undergoing a staffing change: the current Network Administrator role will be reclassified as a Deputy Director, and a new Network Administrator will be added. She clarified that no staffing changes were proposed in other departments.

Councilmember Akins-Wells questioned the need for a Deputy Director in a department with only four employees. Director Brown responded that the employee has been serving in that role functionally. Mr. Clark Jr. added that department heads are allowed to propose structural changes during the budget process and that this reclassification had been discussed during budget meetings. Councilmember Akins-Wells stressed the importance of transparency and ensuring that changes are logical. She stated her concern wasn't personal, but about aligning structure with need.

Councilmember James then asked about the vacant Capital Projects role in the Executive Office, and Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed that it is an existing part-time role previously held by Director Shelby.

Councilmember Gunn asked about the \$150,000 increase to the street lighting budget. Mr. Clark Jr. explained that it reflects actual and anticipated costs based on requests for additional lighting, not new districts. Director Wiggins confirmed the City is already spending over \$450,000 on street lighting.

Councilmember Gunn questioned how personnel costs, like in Code Enforcement, would increase significantly if no new positions were added. Mr. Clark Jr. clarified that the increase was due to implementing the full-year wage and compensation study that started mid-year. He noted that this accounts for similar changes across departments, not new hires.

Councilmember Gunn also questioned the fairness of the increases and how they impact overall budgeting. Akins-Wells added that a breakdown of salary increases is essential before approving the budget. Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed that all requested documentation can be provided and that if the budget isn't approved now, a special called meeting must be scheduled before July 1. He suggested the June 27th retreat as an option.

Councilmember Akins-Wells also questioned the size and cost structure of the HR Department, expressing concern about high-salary positions in a small department. Mr. Clark Jr. responded that the increase in HR was due to the role of Risk Manager and the GIRMA program recently approved by the Council.

Councilmember James noted that time constraints may prevent a special meeting before July 1 and asked if the Council might prefer to approve the budget now and receive details later. Mr. Clark Jr. said that could be arranged if the governing body prefers.

2. **Council Discussion on Case # RZ-2025-01- Rezoning Request for 5116 Sargent Street-** Planning and Community Development Department

Background/History:

The subject property is a residential dwelling at 5116 Sargent Street, at the southeast corner of South Avenue and Sargent Street in Ward 3. The property spans approximately 0.208+/-/- acres and is currently zoned RS (Single-Family Residential District). According to Clayton County property records, the site contains a two-bedroom, one-bath, ranch-style single-family home. However, a visual inspection reveals that the structure now appears to be a two-story home, despite no recorded permits or documentation indicating that a second level was added. Surrounding properties to the north, south, east, and west are also zoned for single-family residential use, and the applicant is requesting to rezone the property to RT (Two-Family Residential District) to permit the use of the home as a two-family dwelling (duplex).

Senior Planner, Mrs. Irons-Kummasah, provided an overview of the rezoning case. She noted that the applicant was present at the meeting. She explained that the Planning Commission heard the case on May 15, 2025, and voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request, subject to specific stipulations. Mrs. Iron-Kummasah clarified that the final decision on the rezoning rests with the Mayor and Council. Should the governing body choose to move forward with approval, staff has outlined a set of conditions the applicant would be required to follow as part of the rezoning approval.

Applicant Tony Terrell stated that building permits were obtained for the property to be developed as a duplex, even though the current zoning in the surrounding area does not permit duplex uses. He noted that the directly adjacent property is currently utilized as a two-family (duplex) residence. According to public records, all necessary permits were issued, and all required inspections were completed with no changes from the stamped and approved construction drawings submitted to the Building Department. Mr. Terrell emphasized that throughout the inspection process, it was known and acknowledged that the structure was a two-family residence.

He added that one of the final recommendations from the inspecting officials was to install a fire-rated floor assembly, which was addressed. He confirmed that all work was completed in accordance with the approved plans, and the project is now pending the outcome of the hearing and the Council's decision.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James asked whether the property in question was newly built or updated. Mrs. Irons-Kumassah explained that renovations had caused an existing home to lose its nonconforming use status, which now requires zoning compliance.

Councilmember Gunn expressed concern that the property had been converted into a duplex, which is not allowed under its current single-family zoning. She asked how this was allowed to happen during permitting. Mr. Terrell, the applicant, clarified that the second story was already there and that only cosmetic changes were made. He said the home had previously been used as a duplex, even if not reflected in tax records. Mrs. Irons-Kumassah responded that no permits had been found for the second story. Google Maps and property records showed a two-story structure, but the City had no approval record. She noted that the applicant should have gone before the Urban Design Review Board for the exterior updates.

Councilmember Gunn cited potential negative impacts from the proposed rezoning, such as traffic, overuse of services, and neighborhood disruption. She also noted that the property looks much better now, but emphasized that the process needs to be improved. Mrs. Irons-Kumassah confirmed that the Planning Commission recommended approval with conditions, and the applicant has agreed. She also clarified that rezoning would only apply to this one property, not neighboring lots.

Councilmember Gunn requested zoning density and setback information for further review. Mrs. Irons-Kumassah explained that the current zoning allows five units per acre, while the proposed R-T zoning would allow up to eight. Gunn expressed concern that this could set a precedent.

Councilmember Akins-Wells supported the applicant, saying the city may have missed something in the permitting process. She praised the renovation and stated she fully supports the rezoning request, highlighting the importance of community improvement.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. **Council Discussion regarding Data Centers in Forest Park-** Legislative Office/Councilmember Gutierrez (Ward 3)

Background/History:

Councilmember Gutierrez has requested to initiate a discussion regarding the presence, development, and potential impact of data centers within the City of Forest Park. This discussion may include topics such as zoning considerations, infrastructure capacity, economic benefits, environmental impacts, and regulatory frameworks for managing data center operations in the city.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gutierrez raised concerns after learning that a data center was being proposed in the Fort Gillem area. He expressed frustration over the lack of communication with both the Council and the community. He requested detailed information on the project's status, location, purpose, and timeline, emphasizing the need for transparency and early community engagement. He noted that past construction in the area had already caused disturbances, and he did not want a repeat of those issues for residents in Ward 3, which borders the site.

Attorney Matricardi responded that the project is still in the early stages and is located on property previously sold by the Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA). Although no land disturbance permits have been issued, the developer has submitted materials to the Architectural Design Review Board. She explained that the project's use is permitted under existing zoning, meaning no Council vote is required to proceed. However, she noted that a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is being developed to ensure the project contributes positively to the City and includes enforceable environmental and community standards. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) would oversee that agreement, though the City would be a party to it.

Councilmember Gutierrez acknowledged the potential financial benefits, including projected franchise fee revenue between \$100,000 and \$400,000 annually, but emphasized that revenue should not outweigh the community's health and well-being. He expressed concern over the environmental effects of data centers and the possibility of increased energy costs across the state. He called for community meetings to inform residents and allow for public input.

Councilmember Gunn shared similar concerns, stating that she was unaware of the project until recently and had since reviewed data showing serious environmental and health risks associated with data centers. She criticized the lack of transparency and pointed out that Georgia is being targeted for such developments due to generous tax incentives, with residents ultimately bearing the cost. She warned about pollutants from generators, light pollution, increased water usage, and air quality issues, and questioned the long-term health effects, especially on children. Councilmember Gunn stressed that meaningful public engagement had not occurred and that this type of project, near residential neighborhoods and future housing sites, warranted much scrutiny. She stated that financial gain should not come at the cost of the community's health and urged the City to prioritize more responsible development.

Attorney Matricardi noted that while the project had not been widely publicized, the URA agreement had been publicly available and referenced potential development as a data center. She acknowledged that some members of the Council may not have realized the implications. Mr. Clark Jr. added that the project had previously been referred to as "Project Splash" and had been discussed for about two years. However, the details and developer identity were not publicly known until recently.

Councilmember Gunn argued that burying such a significant project in legal documents or behind vague names does not meet the standard of true transparency. She noted that even community leaders who are typically informed had no knowledge of the proposal and that the lack of direct outreach to the public was unacceptable. Attorney Matricardi recommended inviting the developer to meet with the Mayor, Council, and community to answer questions and clarify the project's impact.

Councilmember Gutierrez asked whether the City Council would have any input on the Community Benefits Agreement. It was confirmed that while the DDA has approval authority, the City will be a party to the agreement and therefore involved in the process. Gutierrez reiterated that while he recalls the project title, he had not connected it to a data center and only recently became aware of their potential harm. He emphasized that his concerns were not directed at any individual but stemmed from his obligation to represent his constituents.

Councilmember Akins-Wells expressed frustration with how appointed boards like the URA and DDA operate with limited Council involvement. She criticized the failure to communicate critical decisions to

the broader Council and public and specifically questioned why elected officials serving on these boards had not informed their colleagues. She argued that if Councilmembers must sign non-disclosure agreements to access information, that should be the protocol, but not knowing about a project of this scale until after the fact was unacceptable. She called for greater collaboration and accountability moving forward.

Councilmember James, a member of the URA, explained that an NDA restricted what could be shared and that, at the time, the board did not know the specific end user. The data center became apparent only after the transaction closed. She cautioned against concluding without complete information and confirmed she had requested additional details from the developer. She also recalled that the project was briefly discussed in executive session under the name Project Splash, though not all Councilmembers were present at the time.

Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed that no City staff have spoken directly with the developer, Digital Realty, and the first information received came from a news article. He added that Digital Realty is scheduled to appear before the Urban Design Review Board, which will be their first formal interaction with the City. He reiterated that no permits have been issued, and the project remains in review.

Councilmember Gunn concluded by stressing that, regardless of how the project was labeled, the environmental effects of data centers are well known. She questioned why no early warning was given to the community, arguing that greater foresight and communication could have prevented confusion and distrust. She acknowledged that not every detail may be known, but the City should have acted more responsibly given the potential risks involved.

4. **Council Discussion to allow Clayton County Board of Commissioners to use the Forest Park Senior Center for the Special Primary Election- Executive Offices**

Background/History:

The Clayton County Board of Commissioners (CCBC) previously used W.A. Fountain Elementary School as a polling location; however, the school is scheduled to be demolished in June 2025. In preparation for the upcoming Special Primary Election, which includes advance voting days and a primary voting day on June 17, 2025, CCBC has requested to use the Forest Park Senior Center, located at 5087 Park Avenue, Forest Park, Georgia 30297, as the designated polling site. This location is expected to provide a seamless and accessible voting experience for Forest Park residents.

Mr. Clark Jr. explained that the item is a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the continued use of the Senior Center as a polling location. He noted that voting has occurred at the Senior Center for some time without issue, as a designated area that does not interfere with senior programming is used. He stated that Clayton County wishes to maintain the location for future elections.

5. **Council Discussion for Clayton County Board of Elections to Conduct the November 4, 2025, General Election for the City-Executive Office**

Background/History:

In alignment with the approach adopted by the governing body last year, staff recommend that the Clayton County Board of Elections continue to oversee the City's election process. Given that the City Manager is currently the only certified election superintendent on staff, delegating this responsibility to the County

will help ensure the highest level of electoral integrity while minimizing any potential conflicts of interest related to direct involvement in the election.

Please note that the general election will be held on November 4, 2025, and is estimated to cost \$29,279.00.

As in past years, the City Clerk will continue to manage the candidate qualifying process.

Mr. Clark Jr. explained that this arrangement is the same as what was done for the recent special election. He noted that he had not heard of any issues related to Clayton County conducting the special election at the Forest Park Senior Center. He clarified that this MOU extends to the use for the upcoming November general election.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James inquired whether consideration had been given to the fact that the City will be holding its election on the same day as the County's, and whether plans were in place to accommodate both elections simultaneously at the shared location. Mr. Clark Jr. clarified that this particular item pertains to Clayton County conducting the City's general election. He stated that should the County place a question on the ballot, such as the proposed SPLOST, residents would see the City's election (which includes Wards 1, 2, and the Mayor) and the County question on a single consolidated ballot.

6. **Council Discussion to purchase an upgrade to the Audio-Visual (AV) System Refresh in the Council Chambers-** Procurement/IT Department

Background/History:

The City's Council Chamber Audio Visual (AV) system has been in service for the past 7+ years, is at the end of its life, and requires an upgrade. The AV system will seamlessly integrate with the owner-furnished CivicPlus (Municode Meetings) software platform, which provides document display, digital voting, and agenda management capabilities. The AV system will support clear audio and video streaming, seamless in-room and remote participation, electronic voting, and document display for the city council. The system will also enhance meeting efficiency and transparency and improve sound quality for all meetings hosted in the council chambers. Additionally, it will provide a better streaming experience for residents watching online. Upon completion of the new City Center, the system will be decommissioned and installed in the new council chambers. The IT department requests to piggyback from the DOAS cooperative contract # 99999-SPD-SPD0000210-0004 with:

Atlanta SoundWorks, 580 Marksmen Ct, Fayetteville, GA., 30214

Total Amount: \$98,250.09

Capital Outlay Fund: 320 20 7550 54 2502

Mr. Virgil, Level 2 Support Engineer, explained that the current AV system in Council Chambers is outdated and has reached the end of its service life. He noted that the system continues to experience sound, video quality, screen sharing, and streaming issues, which affect both in-person proceedings and remote viewership. Mr. Virgil stated that the IT Department collaborated with Finance and Procurement to identify several vendors through a state contract for an AV system refresh. Each vendor was invited onsite to assess the chambers and provide equipment recommendations. Of the four vendors, three

completed the evaluation process. Atlanta SolidWorks was ultimately selected because it presented the most comprehensive and suitable solution for the City's environment. Mr. Virgil noted that Atlanta SolidWorks submitted the lowest proposal among the vendors, with a total cost exceeding \$98,000.

Mr. Virgil further explained that the other two vendors, Solutions II and NetPlanner, submitted significantly higher proposals. Solutions II proposed \$174,000, while NetPlanner submitted two proposals, the lowest of which was \$252,000. He also noted that representatives from Atlanta SolidWorks were present and available to answer any questions.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gutierrez inquired whether the nearly \$100,000 investment in sound and camera equipment would be transferable to the new city center once constructed or if it would be permanently installed in the current location. He referenced a concern Councilmember Akins-Wells raised regarding the investment's long-term value and portability. Mr. Virgil confirmed that the AV equipment would be migrated to the new city center once constructed, ensuring the investment remains valuable and in use beyond the current location.

7. **Council Discussion to enter into a contract with Russell Landscape Group for Forest Parkway (SR-331) Median Landscape-** Procurement/Public Works Departments

Background/History:

Forest Parkway (SR-331) Median Landscape: Request for Bid No. 2025-RFB-011. Required for a complete project. This project includes, but is not limited to, providing the construction and complete installation of multiple areas of landscape components within the roadway medians on Forest Parkway (SR 331) within the City. The work consists of furnishing and installing all materials, labor, tools, equipment, and related services, including traffic control, demolition, clearing/trimming, surface grading, landscape installation, and all other activities and appurtenances to complete the project. A one-year maintenance service is included to ensure the median landscape's overall health, growth, and visual attractiveness. Four (4) bids were received. Request award approval to the lowest, responsive, and responsible bidder: Russell Landscape Group, 4300 Woodward Way, Sugar Hill, GA 30518.

Total Amount: \$446,530.20

SPLOST 2015 Funds

Mrs. Adams stated that the project was publicly advertised through a formal bid process. A mandatory pre-bid meeting was held, with approximately six to seven vendors in attendance. Ultimately, four bids were submitted on time and evaluated. The contract was awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. The scope includes a one-year maintenance service agreement, after which Public Works will assume responsibility for the area.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gutierrez asked whether the proposed \$446,530.20 expenditure was for maintenance or actual construction, and requested clarity on the project's scope. Director Matthews explained that the initiative entails a full landscaping overhaul along Forest Parkway, from one city limit to the other, including removing existing plant material and installing new, durable plant species. The design also requires removing certain crepe myrtles and includes a one-year maintenance warranty.

Councilmember Akins-Wells questioned the price, pointing out that nearly half a million dollars seemed excessive for landscaping. She asked whether Public Works could handle the task in-house and stressed the need for transparency and clear justification for spending public funds on flowers and bushes. Mr. Clark Jr. responded that while the cost is high, the bid was the lowest of three submitted, with others reaching as high as \$1.3 million. He added that the bid includes demolition, traffic control, installation, and compliance with Georgia DOT standards. Mrs. Adams noted that the project documents, which include full scope and bid details, are available online and can be emailed to the Council.

Councilmember Gunn asked who would maintain the landscaping after the one-year period. Director Matthews explained that Public Works would assume responsibility once the contractor's maintenance period ends.

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed concern over the presentation of the proposal, noting that the extensive documentation was not user-friendly. He requested a more concise and readable summary, emphasizing the need for clarity before approving such a large expenditure.

Councilmember Akins-Wells reiterated the importance of visual plans and cost breakdowns, adding that the Council must be able to justify this investment to the public. Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed that renderings and additional documents could be provided immediately for review.

8. **Council Discussion to enter into a contract with Georgia Highway Cable Barrier, LLC for Linda Way Sidewalk Rehab**-Procurement/Public Works Departments

Background/History:

Linda Way Sidewalk Rehab: Request for Bid No. 2025-RFB-015. This project includes but is not limited to providing the construction of and complete installation of concrete sidewalks, ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps, stormwater structures, stormwater drainpipe, asphalt paving, and thermoplastic striping within the City. The work consists of furnishing and installing all materials, labor, tools, equipment, and related services to complete the project, including all traffic control, demolition, erosion and sediment control, and all other activities and appurtenances. Four (4) bids were received. Request award approval to the lowest, responsive, and responsible bidder: Georgia Highway Cable Barrier, LLC, 1122 Jimson Circle SE, Conyers, GA 30013.

Total Amount: \$329,915.73

SPLOST 2008 Funds

Director Matthews stated that the sidewalk improvement project on Linda Way stretching from West Avenue to Ash Street has been pending for some time. He explained that the scope includes replacing the existing sidewalk with a four-foot-wide, ADA-compliant path and drainage enhancements along West Street. He noted that a pre-bid meeting was held on site to ensure all vendors understood the project's requirements. Of the four bids received, the lowest came in at \$329,915.73.

9. **Council Discussion to enter into a contract with Mr. Dee'e Electric Service, LLC, Shalom Visionary Strategies, and Capital City Electrical Services, LLC for On-Call Electrical Services and Repair (Annual Contract)**- Procurement/Public Works Departments

Background/History:

In 2021, the City entered into on-call contracts with three (3) electrical firms for as-needed electrical services and repairs for City-owned facilities. These contracts are at the end of their term. Public Works will continue to provide minor electrical repairs in-house and encourage facility maintenance staff to earn an electrician license.

On-Call Electrical Services and Repair (Annual Contract): Request for Bid No. 2025-RFB-013. Consists of providing electrical services and repairs in support of projects exceeding in-house capabilities. The specific scope of work will be negotiated and assigned by Task Order(s). Five (5) bids were received. Request multi-award approval to the responsive and responsible bidders:

- Dee'e Electric Service, LLC, 144 Bellamy Place, Stockbridge, GA 30281
- Shalom Visionary Strategies, 749 Vinings Estates Drive, Mableton, GA 30126
- Capital City Electrical Services, LLC, 1346 Oakbrook Drive, Ste. 170A, Norcross, GA 30093

Estimated Annual Amount: \$60,000.00

General Fund – Various Departments

Mrs. Adams explained that the bid request was issued as a rebid of a previously established annual contract that had run its course from 2021 to 2025. The new bid aims to establish an on-call electrical services agreement on an as-needed basis. She noted that staff is recommending a three-vendor award to allow for flexible, timely responses to electrical needs across city departments as they arise.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Akins-Wells stated that while she had no questions regarding the electrical contract, she wanted to revisit the discussion on the median landscaping project. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that expenditures make sense. In comparing the scope and cost of the median project to the Linda Way sidewalk project, which includes concrete sidewalks, ADA-compliant ramps, stormwater infrastructure, asphalt paving, and striping, she noted that the extensive work on Linda Way is significantly less expensive at \$329,915.73 than the \$400,000-plus cost of landscaping medians along Forest Parkway. She concluded by stating she wanted her observation reflected in the record.

10. **Council Discussion to enter into a contract with Falcon Design Consultants and United Consulting Group Ltd. for Geo-technical Environmental Services-** Procurement/Planning & Development and Public Works Departments

Background/History:

With the City's expansion and growth of its infrastructure and development of new businesses, Planning and Development and Public Works departments require continued qualified firms to provide soil and erosion inspections, plan reviews, testing, engineering, and construction management services to support these efforts.

Geo-technical Environmental Services: Request for Proposal No. 2024-RFP-005. Consists of providing soil and erosion inspections, plan reviews, testing, engineering, and construction management services. Five (5) proposals were received. After the evaluation of technical and cost proposals, the Evaluation Committee recommends multi-awards to the two (2) highest scoring proposers:

Falcon Design Consultants, 235 Corporate Center Drive, Suite 200, Stockbridge, GA 30281

United Consulting Group Ltd., 625 Holcomb Bridge Road, Norcross, GA 30071

Estimated Amount: \$100,000.00

General Fund

Mrs. Adams explained that a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued, and the evaluation committee conducted a thorough scoring process. The two highest-scoring vendors emerged with nearly identical totals, separated by only a point or half a point. Both firms were interviewed, and the scores remained tied. Given the varying types of services needed by the Planning and Public Works Departments, the evaluation committee unanimously agreed to recommend awarding contracts to both vendors to ensure flexibility in meeting the departments' future project needs.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gunn commended staff on their thorough evaluation process. She noted that she had reviewed the evaluation tabulation and was impressed by how the grading criteria were applied to select the best-qualified vendor. She expressed her appreciation for the in-depth and transparent work.

11. **Council Discussion on Cemetery Maintenance: Consideration of Service Reallocation Options–**
Public Works Department

Background/History:

The City of Forest Park currently oversees the landscape maintenance of the following cemeteries:

- Main Street at Phillips Dr – City-owned
- Conley Road Cemetery – Privately owned by the Forest Park Lodge of Odd Fellows
- Elam Church Road Cemetery – Privately owned by Elam Church Cemetery

All three sites are being serviced under contract by World Scape LLC, with approximately three months remaining in their current agreement. (Balance left: \$3950 X 3 = \$11,850)

Public Works is seeking direction on whether the City should continue maintaining the privately owned cemeteries at Conley Road and Elam Church Road. If the Council decides not to continue maintaining the private sites, we recommend reallocating World Scape's services to prioritize high-visibility corridors such as Jonesboro Road and Old Dixie Highway. and Forest Parkway that impact residents and visitors daily, while ensuring continued stewardship of City-owned assets.

Director Matthews stated that an assessment had identified three cemeteries within the city, two (2) privately owned and one city-owned. He recommended reallocating Worldscapes to maintain high-visibility corridors, which currently take Public Works longer to address. The reallocation would utilize the remaining three months of the Worldscapes contract to ensure those areas remain in better condition.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James noted that several years ago, the City had considered options for the Conley Road Cemetery, including whether it could be designated a historic cemetery or possibly condemned. She admitted she couldn't recall all the details of those discussions and requested that Mr. Clark follow up and provide additional information on the status and any feasible next steps for the site. Mr. Clark, Jr.,

acknowledged that the conversation regarding the cemetery had occurred under a previous administration. He suggested that there should be a broader discussion about what managing a cemetery entails, noting that he and Attorney Matricardi have had positive and negative experiences in that area. He emphasized that this is a matter worth considering. Regarding the current item, he clarified that he had asked Director Matthews to place it on the agenda specifically to seek direction from the governing body on how to proceed with the city's cemeteries, and he committed to providing the requested information.

Councilmember Akins-Wells expressed her longstanding position on the issue, recalling prior discussions and stating that she has never believed the City should be in the business of managing cemeteries. She emphasized that municipal employees should not be responsible for cemetery upkeep and noted that, in her view, this is not a typical function of local government. While acknowledging that she generally does not favor outsourcing all services, she stated that if the City is contracting with a landscaping company, the focus should be on areas that directly impact residents, not cemeteries. She urged her colleagues to support removing cemetery maintenance from staff responsibilities, reiterating that it didn't make sense in the past and still doesn't.

Mr. Clark Jr. asked Attorney Matricardi for clarification, noting that the City should not be responsible for maintaining privately owned property, particularly cemetery maintenance. She sought confirmation on whether continuing such services would be improper from a legal or procedural standpoint. Attorney Matricardi clarified that using public funds to maintain privately owned cemeteries would technically constitute a gratuity unless the City receives a substantial benefit in return. Generally, public funds should not be used to maintain private property.

Mr. Clark Jr. noted that the City has been unable to locate records indicating when or why the cemetery maintenance began. He said it may have initially responded to property owners neglecting upkeep, but he emphasized that the City cannot continue this practice. He brought the matter before the governing body to receive formal direction.

Councilmember Akins-Wells expressed concern regarding a past incident where a City employee was terminated for cutting a senior resident's yard, which she viewed as a good deed. She highlighted the inconsistency in allowing City staff to maintain privately owned cemeteries while penalizing an employee for assisting a resident. She stated that if the City uses staff to maintain private property, that employee deserves to be rehired.

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed concern about the potential consequences of discontinuing City maintenance of the cemeteries, particularly the one on Conley Road, which historically served as a "colored cemetery." Councilmember Gutierrez emphasized that while the City may need to discontinue maintaining private properties, these sites are still integral to the community and carry significant historical value. He encouraged the Council to explore a sustainable solution or develop a transition plan, such as identifying a responsible party to assume upkeep, rather than allowing the cemeteries to fall into disrepair. He stressed the importance of preserving and honoring the legacy of those laid to rest in these spaces.

Councilmember Akins-Wells expressed that although the City may need to step away from maintaining private cemeteries, the properties hold significant value to the community and should not be left to deteriorate. She emphasized the need for the Council to work toward a viable solution, whether by identifying a responsible party or creating a plan to transition care, rather than allowing these historic spaces to fall into neglect. She echoed the importance of honoring the legacy of those buried there and ensuring the sites remain respected as part of the city's cultural and historical fabric.

Mr. Clark Jr. confirmed with Director Matthews that City employees are no longer responsible for cutting the cemetery lots; a private company is now handling this work. She acknowledged that while City staff had previously performed the maintenance, that is no longer true.

Councilmember James sought clarification, asking whether the current direction is to discontinue extending the contract for cemetery maintenance. She emphasized the need for clear guidance from the Council on whether the private contractor would continue cutting the grass at these locations or if that responsibility would end.

Mr. Clark Jr. responded that continuing cemetery maintenance would require legal guidance. He noted that Attorney Matricardi would need to explain the lawful process and conditions under which the City could proceed, should the Council choose to take that direction. Attorney Matricardi explained that if the city wished to continue maintaining privately owned cemeteries, it would be necessary to record the substantial benefit to the City. She noted that such a benefit could include factors like aesthetics, especially if the property's condition negatively impacts the appearance of the surrounding area or serves as a deterrent to visitors or residents entering the City.

Councilmember James noted that the Forest Park Lodge and the Odd Fellows organization no longer exist, and the multiple lots that comprise the historically designated "colored cemetery" referenced in the community mural also no longer have active ownership or management. She explained that a few living descendants had petitioned the City for help in the past, as the site had become severely overgrown. At the time, the City explored the possibility of condemnation, not to assume responsibility as a funeral service operator, but to preserve and maintain the cemetery due to its historical significance. She recommended gathering more background information to help determine a responsible path forward.

Mr. Clark Jr. inquired if individuals were being buried there. He noted that someone must manage lot sales at the cemetery, as graves are still being opened for burials. He emphasized that a funeral home would not conduct a burial unless arrangements were made to prepare the site, suggesting that someone is facilitating these services and likely profiting from them. This indicates that ownership or oversight of the property still exists.

Councilmember James stated that, to the best of her recollection, there may no longer be any burial space at the site. However, she noted she would need to revisit previous records to confirm. She acknowledged that it has been a long time since the matter was last reviewed.

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed concern about abandoning the maintenance of the cemetery, acknowledging its historical significance, particularly as a place where people were buried during a time of segregation. He stated he would be open to establishing a volunteer committee or finding an alternative solution. Still, he supports continuing maintenance until a concrete plan is in place.

Councilmember Akins-Wells stated that while she understands the cemetery's emotional and historical concerns, she does not support continued maintenance if it is not something the City is legally authorized to do. She acknowledged Attorney Matricardi's effort to justify, but emphasized that managing cemeteries falls outside the City's scope. She recalled discussions about placing the site on the historic registry, which did not move forward due to unmet criteria. She suggested involving the community to assess interest in forming a volunteer group, noting it could be an opportunity to foster unity through shared responsibility.

12. **Council Discussion on the City's Renewal for Property Casualty and Liability Insurance-** Executive Office

Background/History:

Matt Simmons of Gallagher will present the City's property, casualty, and loss renewal to the governing body for the FY 25-26 budget cycle.

Mr. Matt Simmons, Senior Director at Gallagher, presented the City of Forest Park's FY 2024–2025 insurance renewal. He explained that the City transitioned to a protected self-insured program last year due to limited market interest in its prior guaranteed cost model and historical loss trends. This new structure allowed the City to control costs better and manage risk exposure.

Mr. Simmons reported notable improvements in the City's loss performance, credit to the favorable renewal results, and ongoing risk management efforts. Although Gallagher had initially projected a 14.5% increase in fixed costs, the final outcome was a net premium increase of only 3.3%. He emphasized that this was a strong result, especially in the current insurance market. The retained loss budget remained at \$619,953, based on the City's five- and ten-year loss history, and overall, the total cost of risk decreased by 0.2%. He highlighted a 7.2% increase in fixed costs, primarily due to claims and CPA fees, but clarified that the total net cost increase was just 2.8%. Gallagher recommended keeping the retained loss amount stable in the early stages of this program transition, though it may decrease if performance improves in future years.

Mr. Clark Jr. informed the Council that the renewal would require a vote that evening and shared that the originally proposed premium increase had been in the double digits. He challenged the broker to arrange a meeting with the underwriter, who traveled from Philadelphia for a rare face-to-face discussion. During the meeting, the City demonstrated its proactive risk management strategies, significantly influencing the underwriter's assessment and helping secure more favorable terms. Mr. Clark described the final renewal package as generous, given the original proposal.

13. **Council Discussion for Potential Participation on the GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing)- Planning and Community Development**

Mrs. Iron-Kumassah explained that GICH is a statewide initiative designed to assist cities in developing and implementing long-term strategies to improve local housing conditions. The program is a collaborative effort led by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Municipal Association, and the University of Georgia. Over three years, selected communities form a housing team and receive expert guidance, peer support, and technical assistance to address key housing challenges, such as aging housing stock, limited affordable housing options, and neighborhood revitalization. Mrs. Iron-Kumassah emphasized that the program has a proven track record of helping communities attract investment, strengthen partnerships, and improve local housing policies, ultimately enhancing quality of life for residents.

She noted that participating in the program would proactively allow Forest Park to shape its housing future. If accepted, the City would need to establish a 10-member housing team, selected by the Mayor and Council, representing key sectors such as public housing, education, regional planning, economic development, banking, real estate, nonprofit organizations, and Habitat for Humanity. Team members would receive training, attend two required retreats, and lead the process of identifying housing needs and developing a comprehensive housing plan for the City.

Mrs. Iron-Kumassah requested support from the Mayor and Council in the form of a resolution and assistance with the application process, including the selection of the housing team. She stated that a

letter of intent is due by July 11, and the full application must be submitted by July 31. Staff will prepare the letter, outlining how participation in GICH would benefit the City and its residents.

Mr. Clark Jr. noted that this is the same Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program previously shared with the mayor and council last year. At that time, the City could not apply because the portal had closed at noon on the day it opened.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Gutierrez expressed his appreciation for the initiative and emphasized his support. He stated that if the city is selected for the program, it would be a tremendous opportunity and a meaningful step forward for the community. He noted that participation in the initiative would benefit the city and its residents.

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 7:57pm with a 5-minute recess.

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.