



**CITY OF FOREST PARK MAYOR & COUNCIL  
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Monday, September 20, 2021, at 6:00 PM  
Council Chambers and YouTube Livestream

**Website:** [www.forestparkga.gov](http://www.forestparkga.gov)  
**YouTube:** <https://bit.ly/3c28p0A>  
**Phone Number:** (404) 366.1555

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

**DRAFT WORK SESSION MINUTES**

The Honorable Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA

The Honorable Kimberly James                      The Honorable Dabouze Antoine  
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez                      The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells  
The Honorable Allan Mears

Dr. Marc-Antonie Cooper, City Manager  
S. Diane White, City Clerk  
Mike Williams, City Attorney

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:** The meeting was called to order by Mayor Butler at 6:00pm.

**ROLL CALL - CITY CLERK:** A quorum was established.

Attendee's Name	Title	Absent	Present
Angelyne Butler, MPA	Mayor, At-Large		✓
Kimberly James	Council Member, Ward 1		✓
Dabouze Antoine	Council Member, Ward 2, Mayor Pro-Tem		✓
Hector Gutierrez	Council Member, Ward 3		✓
Latresa Akins-Wells	Council Member, Ward 4		✓
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5		✓

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Darquita Williams, Interim Finance Director; Shalonda Brown, HR Director, Bruce Robinson, Deputy Director Public Works, James Shelby, PB&Z Director, Tarik Maxell, Director of Recreation & Leisure, Joshua Cox, IT Director, Michael Gentry Police Department and David Halcome, Fire Chief

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT:** Dr. Marc-Antonie Cooper, City Manager**COMMUNITY INFORMATION/REMINDERS:**

- Clayton County Rental Assistance Program has been extended to October 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is for Clayton County residents needing help with rental assistance can apply for funding now. For more information contact 404-858-6147 or email – [erap@claytoncountyga.gov](mailto:erap@claytoncountyga.gov) .
- Clayton County HUD Office has funds available for homeowners needing roof repairs, plumbing, etc. City residents needing such assistance should contact them at 678-632-1670. They are encouraging residents to do this ASAP. There are flyers outside of the Chambers at the table.
- Early Voting is October 12-29 from 8:00am to 5:00pm. There are two Saturday days, October 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and those hours are (9:00am – 5:00pm). The location for early voting is City of Forest Park's Mary Ann Connelly Senior Center located at 5087 Park Ave, Forest Park, GA 30297.
- General Election Voting will be held on November 2<sup>nd</sup> from 7am – 7 pm at the City of Forest Park Elaine Corley Recreation Center in the Gymnasium, 803 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, GA 30297.
- Absentee ballot applications can be requested by contacting our City Clerk/Elections Superintendent Diane White's office at 678-704-4784 or via email [elections@forestparkga.gov](mailto:elections@forestparkga.gov) or by visiting The Elaine Corley Recreation Center, 803 Forest Park, Forest Park, GA 30297 Monday thru Friday 8:00am – 4:30pm.
- Councilman Gutierrez will be hosting a Senior Bingo Night at the Senior Center, September 24<sup>th</sup> from 5:00pm – 8:00pm.
- Councilman Gutierrez Hispanic Heritage Festival on October 2<sup>nd</sup> at Starr Park (1:00pm – 8:00pm).
- Mayor Angelyne Butler invites all residents, business owners, and friends to the City of Forest Park's Second State of the City Address. The program to be held October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 7:00pm at the Living Faith Tabernacle, 5880 Old Dixie Highway, Forest Park, GA 30297.

**CITY OPERATIONS:**

- Clarification purposes – At the Sept 7<sup>th</sup> Council meeting I made the statement that “on August 24 I participated in a zoom meeting with all the parent liaisons within Clayton County Schools.” I just wanted to clarify that I met with all the all-parent liaison within the Forest Park cluster of schools, not the entire county.
- City of Forest Park and the Forest Park Ministers Association held its first 9-11 Remembrance Day Ceremony on September 11<sup>th</sup> at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Thank you to all the men and women that serve and protect us daily. Thank you to our own Forest Park Fire Chief Clemons for working with the minister's association to commemorate this solemn occasion.

**CONGRATULATIONS –**

- The Clayton County Chamber of Commerce held its Valor Public Safety Awards on September 9, 2021.
- Forest Park Fire Department Battalion Chief David Flagg was nominated for the Leadership Award for excelling in community-oriented engagement and activities.

- Our own Superstar Sgt. Brittney Sparks received the Merit Award for personal time given both on and off the job to our community.
- Forest Park Police Departments Officer Jeffrey Liebert received the Silver Star Medal of Valor Award, which is the second highest award for bravery and heroism.
- Forest Park Police Department Sgt. T. Gladden received a Life Saving Award, which is given to a public safety official in recognition of acts taken in a life-threatening situation.
- Forest Park Police Officer Darris A. Ramos received the “Top Driver” at the Fulton County Public Safety Training Center Emergency Vehicle Operations Course.

### **SHOUT OUT**

- Mr. Huu Do of our Code Enforcement Division on becoming an International Code Council – Certified Maintenance and Housing Inspector.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Discussion on Employee Vacation Sell Back (This is for Discussion Only)** – Chief Executive Offices

#### **Background/History:**

Due to years of increased demand on staff, staffing shortages and with the current COVID-19 pandemic it has become very difficult for some to use vacation time. Previous City Manager’s allowed for several employees to accrue above the maximum amount for their years of service. Periodically these long-term employees have been allowed to sell back overages of vacation and/or sick hours to the city. The City Manager is seeking the governing body’s guidance regarding a policy to allow employees who meets the criteria to sell back “one-time only” overages in vacation hours at their normal rate of pay. This would reduce the city’s long-term liability and provide for a re-set on vacation time that allows only the maximum rollover per current policy.

There was discussion by Governing Body:

**Councilmember James** – I would be in favor of the buy back.

2. **Discussion on Rental Assistance Program for Forest Park Residents** – Chief Executive Office

#### **Background/History:**

On September 7, council approved to set aside a portion of the city’s American Rescue Fund allocation to potentially fund additional rental assistance specifically for City of Forest Park residents. The city’s previous program was administered through Clayton County Community Services. The city had also received a proposal from the City Edge Project to review. The City Manager is seeking direction, after discussion from the governing body on funding these programs.

There was discussion by the Governing Body.

**Mayor Butler** – If this does go through would we use the city edge project to administer.

**City Manager** - the City Edge did submit a proposal to us and with reviewing the proposal they do have the capabilities of handling such administration that would be needed. This is one of the options. I know Clayton County Community Services did handle when COVID first hit. The City Edge Project is right here in the City of Forest Park, and they would be specifically for Forest Park residents.

**Councilmember Gutierrez**- the fee they are charging us how does it compare with Clayton County.

**City Manager** - what was told to me is that Clayton County took 20% for administrative cost. So, whatever the dollar amount that was funded it was 20%.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - it is roughly the same. Is there a record of City Edge? I read the packet. I guess my only concern is that it seems like a religious organization. I am a man of faith, but I do not like to incorporate religion with funds. Are there any biases with that? Is this strictly off need.

**City Manager** - from what I read in City Edge and with me talking with them this is strictly on need. They do have other services. Well, this is the only one we got in and two just reading the other services they have even though our piece would be for rental assistance. If you have someone that is homeless or in need of job training those resources are available with City Edge. But these services would not be funded from the money that we provide. We would only do the rental assistance but if someone came and needed those additional services, they will be available.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - would we have any say in anything else or would they oversee everything?

**City Manager** - we can design the program for the rental assistance piece, that is what we would have say over.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - ok, would it be for houses or apartments? How long? What are the specifics?

**City Manager** - this is what council would approve. Again, this is for discussion. Basically, with the direction I'm given by the Council we would go back and write the program. So, if you wanted a certain time frame, a one-time or multiple times. If you want to do houses, apartments or whatever that would be this is just a discussion to get the direction to bring back the program we would like to see them fund and if they would be able to fund. It is the same kind of program Clayton County Community Services doing for us. It is just another organization that will be able to administer directly into the city.

**Mayor Butler** - yes, that would be ok with people living in apartments and or people renting homes, but we need to determine a cap and how much you will allot per applicant. How much are we allocating for this?

**City Manager** - that would be up to the Council. The Council has approved \$400k. It could be all to one, partial to both. It could be whatever way the Council choose.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - could we also use some other services? I saw that they offer other things or do we have to use it just for rental assistance.

**Mayor Butler**- like utilities?

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - I saw that they offered tutoring.

**City Manager** - we would only be funding for the rental assistance.

**Councilmember Akins-Wells** - is there any reason why we are not going with the county?

**City Manager** - there is no reason why we are not going with the County. That is why we put it on here that the county did it before. I know City Edge is a project that is directly in the City of Forest Park.

**Councilmember James** - I would say that I love this idea. I don't know if it is true or not, but I know there was possibly some issues with delay with county funding. If we can invest in an organization that is right here in the City of Forest Park; it would be a good thing.

**Mayor Butler** - so, the city is funding this. So, are you talking about the Clayton County Community Services sending out payments?

**Councilmember James** - no, I have been to a meeting with Clayton County Housing Authority, and I do not know if it had anything to do with the community center. There were some issues with a delay with people receiving the funds when they put in their applications. So, if we go with someone that is focus here on Forest Park then our residence would be more apt to getting what they need.

**City Manager** - this would be for Forest Park. The residents going to City Edge would be Forest Park residents in need and City Edge would be talking directly to them. If you go to Clayton County, you could be standing behind someone that lives in Jonesboro and everyone else from Clayton County.

### 3. Discussion and Approval of Surplus city Equipment – Information Technology

**Councilmember Antoine** – I would like to know if the surplus phones can be sent to Haiti to the (2) two schools.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - what do we usually do with these items?

**City Manager** - it was told to me that once we surplus these items, I asked about them going back to the manufacturer because I do know that Apple gives you rebates, but I guess that may be for personal not for government entities. So, I think they raffle these phones off for staff, but I think that what years ago. I am not quite sure.

**Mayor Butler** - how many phones is it again?

**City Manager** - I think we have (46) phones.

### 4. Approval of Ordinance Amending Ethics Code to Create Ethics Officer – Legislative

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - I was under the impression that we were going to work on our board, and this would be a temporary fix to address those matters. So, we will not have an Ethics Board of citizens if we approve this?

**City Manager** - we would amend to have an ethics officer (one person) or a firm.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - I do not I do not like the concept of taking it from the people. I agree if we need to hire someone to address the issues until we get our board in place, but I would like the people to have the say because they are the ones that should give us the recommendations.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - first we just voted on this not too long ago. It was unanimously voted on that this was a bunch of political mess. So, my questions to you Mike is according to the ordinance now when it says the board members shall serve, until someone else is appointed is that disregarded? Why would we take that from the residents because that would be non-bias because there is a person from each ward. We are breaking our own ordinance.

**City Attorney** – to answer the first piece. There is a provision in the current ordinance that allows for Mayor and Council to remove board members or all of them by a majority of vote. So, that would address that, if need be. The second part of your question, it is the difficulty that staff has had getting the board to meet in the first place.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - who has been trying to reach them? I know I have spoken to couple of them, and no one reached out to them. A phone call was made about a training and that they would be back in touch with them. Were certain ones reached out to were all of them reached out to and who did it and is there any proof is there a record of it? To just disregard the board members even if it comes to put another board in place or appointing new members, to do away with it, it shows that it is all political. Either way, whatever the majority decides but I just want to put it on record it is a bunch of political mess and trying to make policies that are benefiting people personally on stuff. We are here to do city business. So, people are so locked up on what Councilmember Wells is doing and what another elected official is doing. We are putting this in our policy we are making it a bunch of mess for our policy. It goes back to what Councilmember Gutierrez said and this is what I read we cannot remove them, but for anything but cause. That is a policy that would be hard to overturn. So, we would have to deal with that whoever that one person or that firm is. I do not see that as being unbiased. Whatever they decide, their political moves. But just know that is all political. This is not in the best interest of the city but for the best interest for certain individuals. Again, I will say the same thing I said before. If I walk in here and do not speak to whoever I do not speak to is that room for someone to file an ethics violation because of what you all put together then that is what that is; it is a bunch of political mess. You cannot control who I speak to. You cannot control how I look and even if that is put in here it is going to have this one person that you all are trying to put over everything running back and forth because violations are going to be everywhere. "Oh, Councilmember Wells did not speak when she came in the building"; "Oh she looked at this" and "Councilmember Gutierrez did not honk the horn at me when he". That is a bunch of mess. We have other things to focus on like why has not the groundbreaking for the fire station has not taken place. Why businesses do not come into this city; but this is what you want to focus on. So, however it goes but majority rules, but this is a bunch of mess we have other things to focus on; I do. I think this is ridiculous as to what they have you spending time on as our city attorney. It needs to be an ethics board. Well, you stated yourself there should not be a board because this is how this political mess get going anyway. This should have been relayed instead of them coaching you to come up with this political mess.

**Mayor Butler** - Mike, would you like to respond.

**City Attorney** - just to guess the frame the ordinance itself. It does two things; it replaces the ethics board with an ethics officer that has no ties to the county, no ties to the city to get an objective review of any complaint. All that person does is provide a recommendation to Mayor and Council for further disposition of that charge. It is very much like the current ordinance does. All the ethics board can do now is give a recommendation to the Mayor and Council. That does not change. I hear loud and clear Councilmember Gutierrez's point about having the people weigh in on that. The other side of the argument is that you are the representative of the people. So, it would come back to the Mayor and Council ultimately as the elected body. The other part of the ordinance I think you referenced regarding conduct the council has discussed multiple times the idea incorporating a code of conduct into the ethics ordinance. The previous draft that

you had was very long and had too many pieces. This ordinance does not incorporate that; it just incorporates a much shorter version that requires elected officials to maintain high standards of conduct. As I mentioned to you on the phone call today, yes sometimes it could be a judgement about whether this was appropriate behavior or if this was rude conduct. The advantage to having an independent investigator review something like this who has no ties to the city. It would not be an ideal situation it would not be a political decision made it would be an objective decision that whatever conduct was complained of whether if it rises to the level or not. Is this the perfect ordinance, I would never say that? But, considering where we are and the fact that we have had several months go by where we cannot get the board to meet. This was seen as a good alternative and a recommended alternative to allow the city to move forward on this ethics issue.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - that is understandable that months have went by. Has the person responsible for trying to get the board together doing what they are supposed to do? If they are, where is that on record?

**Mayor Butler** - Ms. White wants to chime in.

**City Clerk, S. Diane White** - yes, Mayor and Council when the first complaint came in and I contacted all of them. I even call some of you all to get the phone numbers for the board members that were elected, and I had to find the board members. But I did talk to everyone, and I sent the information out to them. We scheduled the training. The training was scheduled on May 28<sup>th</sup>, a letter was sent out each one of them. I called them and I emailed them the invite. Everyone got the same information about the training on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A couple of days before I called to verify if everyone was coming. On that day, I called several of them. There were only (2) two people to show up. Councilmember Gutierrez and Ms. Morris, I think that is Councilmember Mears appointee showed up for the training. I called the other (3) three a couple of times during the day to find out what was going on and I could never get in contact with any of them and they never returned my call. When we had the hearing on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Stephanie called them initially on the 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:44 a.m. told them we were having a meeting to listen to the hearings and to discuss business. She called them, she sent them an email. She called them back on the 16<sup>th</sup> to remind them about the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup>. After that I knew that this was coming back to the council, so we have not tried to contact anybody since that time. But we have had to reached out to them each time either by phone or email to tell them about the meeting that was scheduled. The last person, Ms. Barbie the number that we have for her is not a good number.

**Councilmember Mears** - the problem that we have here is we have a bunch of citizens that want to do well but nobody wants to pony up to the plate when it comes to punishing one of their friends. Everybody up here has got people and people do not want to get in the mess we are in politically right now. With this option we have now we have somebody that does not know anybody and could care less... when we pick them. You are not going to get a party of 4 or 5 that do not know something and do not care about somebody losing their job. This serious business when people up here us can go out here and run wild and nobody corralled them up and tell them they are wrong and make them pay for what they have done. No one wants to live in the city go against the council. With this in mind, you can get someone that is unbiased and tell us what to do and bring the evidence to the city and let the city decide who's right and who's wrong and not the people in the city that is scared to stand up and talk.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - just to piggyback off what Councilmember Mears said as far as people being scared. First, I work for the citizens of the Forest Park, I do not work for you, I do not work for the City Manager, or any other elected official. I work for the citizens of Forest Park. Therefore, the citizens of Forest Park can determine if I am running wild out or not, not you and not this person you all put in place to be your yo-yo. So, I just want to make it fair for everybody. You can get a complaint tomorrow and just

because you do not side with these group people you are running wild. Somebody sending me a picture and somebody filing an ethics charge because I sent it to the mayor that is not me running wild. Me having a personal issue with a landlord is not me running wild. So, these frivolous complaints that you all trying to push they are charges. They are not charges until somebody say they charges. The somebody you all are trying to put in place is a somebody that you all are trying to control because it is a bunch of political mess. To say that you don't want to put friends and people or people are scared. No, the people in the police department are the ones that scared to speak up about the things that are going on there, those are the people that are scared. Let us talk about the real issues in the City of Forest Park and not what Councilmember Wells getting sent to her phone and someone taking it as stalking them because I do not have the time.

**Councilmember James** - yes, I wanted to speak to something Councilmember Gutierrez had mention and some of the other things that have been said. That was my draw back in the beginning to as far as taking it away from the citizens of Forest Park. But after speaking to other citizens in Forest Park what they mentioned to me is that items are too serious to not move forward with getting someone qualified to look at the information. If we had an officer, we would know that a complaint is filed. It won't sit dormant for a while because we cannot get people together. This is not just a problem that just came up, this has been a problem that is going on for a while getting the board together to serve, this is not someone that we are choosing this is an RFP process where we are seeking a lawyer or a firm that has ethics history. It is not someone that we will pick out a random person because we want to pick out a random person to handle things. No, it is a process that we talked about moving forward to doing because we cannot allow complaints to go unanswered and there has been complaints from citizens as well. You file a complaint, and nothing happens. Well nothings happens because we cannot get the board together. I have talked to my appointee and why they did not show up, I do not know. The point is, we are either going to move forward, or we will continue to go through the same thing repeatedly. We are not trying to pick out one person to you know this is Kimberly James's one person that she is picking out, no. this will be a process. We will put in the hands of our very capable City Manager to put the information out there to seek out firms to seek out attorneys to seek out whomever would be willing to serve our city and our citizens so that they know that if there is an issue that they have against me or anyone then they will have an opportunity to be heard. We won't have to go through the process of trying to go through training which no one shows up for, then when we have the meeting, no one is trained so they do not know what is really going on; this is a process that we can put in place to allow us to move forward as a city not hand picking anyone; just moving forward as a city. Madam Mayor I do not know if you can have Dr. Cooper speak on the process to even try to find someone that handles this.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - I was going to ask the same thing, but I was going to ask Mike. So, the City Manager is going to be the person that handles that and not the procurement officer? Because it is going to be bias to death, so that it why I am trying to see how that process is going to work.

**Mayor Butler** - first, we are going to have Dr. Cooper respond.

**City Manager** - I just want to say it has been (4) months or so since I have first been told about this whole ethics board. We have been trying our best to get the ethics board and everyone together. The procurement process-procurement reports to the city manager just like everyone else in the city except the City Attorney. That mean the procurement process would go through the procurement office. The city attorney and I would sit down and help write out the specs as to what we are looking for as a city. Then we would have attorneys that propose if again this is a big if we do not know. We can put it out there and get no one, we can put it out there and get 1, we can put it out there and get 10 but regardless of what we do once we put out the specs to say this is what we are looking for the attorneys would then respond, and they would be



reviewed and scored like any other procurement process. Whoever the finalist is they would be brought in to do presentations to the council for the council approval. So, that would be the process councilwoman.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - how long will the process take?

**City Manager** - the process can take from one month to two months depending on how quickly we get the feedback from the attorneys.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - I understand the citizens requests. They need to get these (2) issues addressed; we have (2) complaints currently. I do not mind voting with that. I don't know how many cities have this. I always thought the ethics board the people made those decisions, not an attorney. I know at the end of the day it comes back to us anyway. Is this a common thing within cities?

**City Attorney** - the more common thing is to have an ethics board. Several cities I know that in Dekalb county this specific proposal is what sort of inspired it they do have an ethics officer. Several cities have an ethics officer some have both. To answer your question the majority especially those that are a city of ethics under GMA program have boards.

**Councilmember Gutierrez** - so I guess my point is I do not want to take it away from the people. I do want to address what the problem is to those citizens. So, is there a way to find some common ground where we are going to work on the ethics board? For me, that is an excuse from the councilmembers that you cannot find anyone that is capable. Because I had 2 or 3 people that I could have choose but I felt Mr. Nobles, is fearless he is a Navy veteran and I know that we have some Navy vets out there that are not scared of people. We need to find the right people and put them here. It is a democracy process. I do not like going against freedoms. If it is the right to have a child or not, your right to wear a mask or not or the right to get vaccinated or not; those are your freedoms. To me this is a board of people. If you can find people for your D.A. board and other boards', I think we can find some capable people to serve on the ethics board. It is up to you all again, but I would be opposed to permanently putting an officer there to replace the people; that is who I want to oversee the ethics stuff. I am not opposed to assigning someone to address these (2) issues.

**Councilmember Akin-Wells** - I am not either. But as far as the old it cannot be removed unless there it is for cause and all of that; I do not agree with that. I do not agree with having someone having control over if speak or not because that is my right. We have rights as elected officials, and neither one of you can control my freedom that it is up to me. So, I just think it is petty and immature and says a lot about certain people because if it was the other way around and I am going to bring this up. Things that were actual ethical charges should have been filed they were overlooked. For someone that was abusing their veto power un recusing, recusing themselves. We focus on stuff like this but not the stuff like that. So, I just that is ridiculous. But whatever the majority decides. But again, we should not be bounded to one person because I again I do not know how much faith you have in the people that elected you but the people of Forest Park I have faith in I feel like some people are out to do the right thing and everybody is not afraid. It is about the people, the people and not about us.

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

It was motioned to recess into Executive Session at 6:40pm

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears. The motion carried.

It was motioned to reconvene back to Council Work Session at 7:01pm

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears. The motion carried.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

It was motioned to adjourn the Council Work Session at 7:02pm

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Akins-Wells.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears. The motion carried.