



# CITY COUNCIL BUDGET RETREAT

Friday, May 16, 2025, at 8:30 AM

Website: [www.forestparkga.gov](http://www.forestparkga.gov)

YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3c28p0A>

Phone Number: (404) 366.4720

**Kimpton Overland Hotel**

2 Porche Dr.

Atlanta, GA 30354

The Honorable Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA

The Honorable Kimberly James

The Honorable Hector Gutierrez

The Honorable Allan Mears

The Honorable Delores A. Gunn

The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells

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 10:50am.

**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; Sa'Vaughn Irons, Planner; 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; Latosha Clemons, Fire Chief; David Halcome, Deputy Fire Chief; Michelle Hood, Deputy City Clerk; Brandon Criss, Police Chief, and Danielle Matricardi, City Attorney.

### NEW BUSINESS:

1. 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Continental Breakfast
2. 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. – Opening / Strategic Visioning / Budget Objectives

City Manager Mr. Clark Jr. noted that the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year 25-26 is \$23 million, reflecting a 2.7% increase over the previous year, primarily driven by rising property tax values. Mr. Clark Jr. also noted that it includes 45 personnel changes without staff cuts and maintains a balanced approach without relying on fund reserves, incorporating approximately \$387,000 in contingency funding.

3. 9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – Break

4. 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – Code Compliance

Director Walker reported several key operational improvements during their recent presentation. He noted that the department has enhanced its workforce by ensuring all officers are certified in ICC property maintenance, reinforcing their code enforcement expertise. Director Walker said they have implemented body cameras to improve transparency and training, allowing supervisors to review officer interactions and use the footage for ongoing training. Additionally, mobile printers have been installed in vehicles, enabling officers to print citations on-site, significantly reducing the time spent returning to the office.

Director Walker also highlighted the efforts to support neighborhood revitalization by demolishing over 10 blighted properties, promoting safer and more appealing communities. To enhance accountability, they have introduced new software that documents every officer interaction and stop, creating a comprehensive digital record. These advancements reflect the department's ongoing commitment to modernizing its approach to code enforcement through technology and proactive community engagement.

5. 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Human Resources

Director Brown noted that the HR Department's strategic plan for fiscal year 2025-2026 focuses on four key areas: risk management, employee wellness, professional development, and strategic priorities. Director Brown reported that the HR Department has taken steps to enhance risk management and policy compliance by adding a Risk Management Analyst position and implementing monthly policy education sessions. Additionally, the department plans to launch a new risk management platform to ensure consistent policy adherence across all departments. Director Brown mentioned that in employee wellness and engagement, the department has expanded its wellness program to include personal trainer-led workouts and is planning team-building activities to support employees' physical, mental, and emotional health.

Director Brown stated that the department collaborates with Clayton State University for training and professional development to address skill gaps, offer career growth opportunities, and develop training topics based on departmental feedback. Additionally, the department's strategic priorities include optimizing internal processes, promoting safety and compliance, investing in workforce development, and enhancing the overall employee experience through innovation and accountability.

6. 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Planning & Community Development

Director Dozier presented several key initiatives from the Planning and Community Development (PCD) Department, focusing on digital transformation, development support, board training, land bank participation, and business engagement. Director Dozier included that the department is developing a PCD online portal for digital services, allowing for online applications, payments, and permit tracking, including business licensing, code compliance, and building services. This initiative aims to improve customer service and streamline communication with the public.

Director Dozier noted that the department is creating a PCD Development Academy for developers to support local development, offering zoning workshops for city officials and board members, and providing guidance on design and development processes. In addition, the department is investing in training for board members, including the planning commission, urban review board, and the newly formed arts board, while increasing dues and subscriptions to enhance staff training.

The department participates in a land bank program as part of its community revitalization efforts. It pays a \$40,000 annual fee to acquire and develop properties with unpaid taxes, creating potential opportunities for workforce housing and community growth. Finally, the department enhances business support by hosting quarterly business association network events, focusing on themes like city services and small business financing, and developing a more structured business association membership program.

7. 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon – Economic Development

Interim Director Dennis presented the Economic Development Department's strategic initiatives, highlighting a comprehensive approach to supporting local businesses, attracting new investment, and strengthening the city's workforce. She shared that the department hosts quarterly Business Association Network events focused on topics such as city services and small business financing, while also working to establish a more structured business association membership. As part of the Main Street Program, the department is working to revitalize the downtown area by hosting events that draw people back to the corridor, expanding the city's economic development efforts beyond traditional approaches. In the area of Business Retention and Expansion (BRE), Interim Director Dennis noted that staff regularly visit local businesses to identify potential challenges or risks of closure and provide support and resources as needed.

Interim Director Dennis also highlighted the launch of the Elevate Workforce Development Initiative, in partnership with the Atlanta Center for Self-Sufficiency. Since April, the program has hosted 14 successful orientations, with bi-weekly meetings planned to track progress and outcomes. To strengthen outreach and visibility, the department is developing new business welcome packets, creating digital marketing materials, forming partnerships with state economic development offices, and organizing job fairs in collaboration with HR and local employers.

8. 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m. – Working Lunch (Municipal Court & Information Technology)

Municipal Court

Director Roper-Jackson presented the Municipal Court's key initiatives, emphasizing a commitment to modernizing court operations, enhancing financial efficiency, and promoting rehabilitative approaches within the municipal justice system. She outlined the plan to transform probation services by bringing them in-house, which includes hiring two probation officers and one administrative supervisor at an estimated annual cost of \$166,000. Director Roper-Jackson noted that this cost would be fully funded through supervision fees, to retain probation-related revenue within the city rather than outsource these services.

Director Roper-Jackson reported that there are currently 4,310 active Failure to Appear (FTA) warrants, representing a potential revenue of approximately \$479,883. The court is implementing new procedures to manage and clear these outstanding warrants effectively. Director Roper-Jackson also highlighted technology improvements, including the proposed implementation of an electronic citation system to reduce processing errors. To support these enhancements, the court proposes a technology fee that would help fund necessary digital infrastructure, ultimately creating more efficient court operations.

The governing body has requested to investigate bringing probation services in-house and the implementation of a tech fee.

Information Technology

Director Cox presented the IT Department's update, focusing on efforts to modernize the city's technological infrastructure, enhance cybersecurity, and implement innovative solutions to improve operational efficiency. He began by proposing the creation of a new Technology Innovation position, which would be responsible for identifying and implementing emerging technologies aimed at streamlining operations across all city departments.

Director Cox then discussed the department's equipment refresh strategy. He noted that servers generally have a 3–5-year life expectancy, police computers are refreshed every 2–4 years, and desktop computers are on a 4-year refresh cycle. He stated that the department plans to replace aging equipment to systematically ensure continued reliability and performance. Director Cox highlighted several enhancements, including implementing advanced sign-in security protocols and an active detection alerting system that monitors unusual login patterns and locations, helping to prevent potential breaches.

Director Cox also discussed current staffing levels, stating that the IT Department consists of four full-time employees, each supporting approximately 75 staff members citywide. For more complex technical needs, external contractors are brought in. Director Cox recommended a staffing ratio of one IT support technician per 30 employees to provide adequate service levels. Regarding budget considerations, Director Cox emphasized the need for increased funding to support technology upgrades, particularly in software licensing and technical support. He also mentioned the department's ongoing efforts to identify cost-effective technology solutions.

- 9. 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – Break
- 10. 1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Recreation & Leisure

Director Maxwell presented the Recreation and Leisure Department's strategic initiatives, highlighting the department's continued focus on community engagement, youth development, and expanding access to recreational opportunities for all residents. He began by outlining enhancements to youth programming, including introducing financial literacy workshops for summer camp participants in partnership with the Clayton County Education Department. Additional offerings include leadership development programs, life skills through meal prep activities, and expanded arts programming featuring theater and music components.

For legacy residents, Director Maxwell noted the department's efforts to provide meaningful services such as monthly technology classes in collaboration with the IT Department, free fitness classes led by professional instructors, and a planned expansion of services specifically tailored to senior residents. Regarding athletic and community programming, he reported continued success with sports tournaments, new initiatives like Spring Break community events, and pocket park activations. After-school enrichment programs are also being expanded to serve school-aged children throughout the city better. Director Maxwell announced a transition from part-time to full-time recreation supervisors, along with the addition of new positions aimed at strengthening program delivery and building stronger community partnerships.

Director Maxwell concluded with facility improvements, sharing plans for a new recreation center with enhanced amenities, developing a fully accessible pool with wheelchair access, and relocating the city center to accommodate senior services better.

---

11. 2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Public Works

Director Matthews presented the Public Works Department's strategic priorities, focusing on infrastructure improvements, staffing challenges, and increasing operational efficiency through equipment upgrades and staff development. He began by highlighting the need to replace aging equipment, much of which is 10 to 15 years old. The department is actively working on infrastructure enhancements and collaborating with other departments to improve road servicing and maintenance. Director Matthews also noted that procurement of contractors is underway to support a range of capital and maintenance projects across the city.

Director Matthews expressed that staffing remains a key challenge, especially in finding qualified heavy equipment operators and those with the ability to operate and transport machinery. He added that while several candidates are being considered for building maintenance technician positions, recruitment remains a top priority. Director Matthews emphasized the department's focus on training and certifications. Staff are participating in internal training sessions, such as Microsoft Word workshops, and pursuing key industry certifications, including the International Signal Association (ISA) and LAP certification, which are essential for securing federal project funding. He also outlined several ongoing initiatives, including a citywide pothole-filling effort and efforts to improve team efficiency and safety. Enhancing the department's equipment and operational capabilities remains central to these initiatives.

Director Matthews explained that adjustments are being made to support necessary equipment upgrades and increased investment in staff development.

## 12. 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. - Fire Department

Chief Clemons presented the Fire Department's update, highlighting key initiatives to enhance service delivery, infrastructure, and overall community safety across the department's 90.3 square mile coverage area. She reaffirmed the department's mission to ensure public safety and provide high-quality emergency response services. Chief Clemons reported that the HVAC system at Station One has been upgraded, and the headquarters on Anvil Block Road is being remodeled. She also noted that all stations have installed digital dashboards to enhance real-time communication.

Chief Clemons noted that the department plans to replace Fire Station Two and develop a dedicated training ground to support firefighter preparedness and skill advancement. Two new rescue trucks are on order and expected to arrive by March 2026. Chief Clemons also shared plans to establish a helicopter landing zone to improve emergency transport for trauma patients and to construct a vehicle storage facility on Springdale Road. Other initiatives include refurbishing a 1983 power truck and hiring certified paramedics to help reduce overtime costs. The department also prioritizes employee appreciation, professional development, and the expansion of fire safety training and public education programs.

Chief Clemons concluded by emphasizing the department's ongoing commitment to modernizing operations, supporting its personnel, and enhancing public safety through innovation and infrastructure investment.

## 13. 3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. – Police Department

Chief Criss presented the Police Department's strategic overview, emphasizing the department's dedication to maintaining high-quality service, leveraging advanced technology, and strengthening community engagement. He introduced the department's budget theme: sustaining a high level of service while integrating cutting-edge technology. Among the major initiatives, Chief Criss highlighted hiring a medical

clinician to respond to mental health crisis calls, upgrading body-worn cameras and the associated parent system, and enhancing investigative tools to improve transparency and accountability. He also emphasized a renewed focus on expanding community events and outreach efforts.

Chief Criss reported that the 911 Dispatch Center is now fully staffed and is in the process of implementing emergency medical dispatch certification. Additionally, the department is creating a wellness space for dispatchers to support their overall well-being. In the Animal Control Division, he outlined plans to upgrade equipment, improve communication and coordination with partnering agencies, and enhance technological capabilities and public education programs.

Chief Criss noted the department's success in maintaining staffing levels above 95% and using new psychological screening technology to support recruitment and evaluation. He also shared that the department is exploring the use of advanced investigative technologies, including deception detection tools, to strengthen casework and outcomes.

Chief Criss explained that the department is working to reduce costs by pursuing alternative funding sources while increasing investments in professional and contractual services. The budget also prioritizes technology upgrades and improvements in community services. He reiterated the department's commitment to operational excellence, innovation, and building trust through transparency and meaningful engagement with the community.

14. 3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Finance

Director Wiggins presented the Finance Department's strategic update, emphasizing the city's commitment to financial responsibility, process improvement, and enhanced transparency in financial operations. He began by outlining the department's key objectives: responsibly administering the city's financial affairs, delivering customer-focused support services, and refining financial processes and reporting. Director Wiggins reported that the department has 10 positions, with two vacancies still to be filled. He also noted a planned title change, renaming the "Financial Service Ticket Tax" position to "Tax Specialist" to accurately reflect the role's duties.

Director Wiggins highlighted the continuation of the monthly close process, submission of the annual audit report by December 1, 2025, procurement procedure improvements, financial policy and procedure updates, and ongoing staff development. He also stressed the importance of improving the structure and effectiveness of monthly budget meetings with department directors. Director Wiggins detailed consistent expenditures for the annual audit (approximately \$77,000), management of city attorney fees, processing of payroll and AGP fees, handling of tax sales and interpleader actions, and oversight of utilities and insurance costs.

Director Wiggins announced implementing a new financial reporting platform to improve transparency and efficiency in budget tracking. Councilmembers are now receiving monthly budget reports, and new strategies are being developed to make budget meetings more productive and actionable. Director Wiggins concluded by reaffirming the Finance Department's dedication to maintaining fiscal discipline, improving operational processes, and supporting the city's long-term financial health.

The governing body has requested monthly reports and itemized financial accounts for each council member. These reports should provide a detailed breakdown of expenditures and allocations to ensure transparency and support ongoing budget oversight.

15. 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Executive Offices & Legislative Offices



Executive Office

City Manager Mr. Clark Jr. presented the Executive Office's budget and strategic update, emphasizing a continued commitment to technological improvements, responsible fiscal management, and forward-thinking planning initiatives. He noted that no additional staffing positions are being requested for the upcoming fiscal year. Developing a new city website includes adaptive design, translation support for over 50 languages, an accessible and user-friendly interface, dedicated department pages, a section for capital project updates, and an integrated alert notification system. Mr. Clark Jr. emphasized that these improvements are designed to enhance communication and transparency with residents.

Mr. Clark Jr. reported that the city's business plan initiative will continue at \$50,000. He noted a \$13,000 increase in consultant services, primarily tied to the website redesign project. To offset costs, reductions have been made in the emergency and strategic planning budgets, resulting in an overall decrease of \$54,000 in the Executive Office's budget.

Mr. Clark Jr. also provided key updates on capital improvement projects. For the Star Park renovation, the city is rebidding the project after receiving a \$20 million estimate. Planned enhancements include new gazebos, upgrades to the walking trail and pool area, and relocation of the Africa-themed section. The City Center project is undergoing value engineering to reduce its cost from \$124 million to above \$100 million. Additional projects include sidewalk improvements, park monument sign updates, and potential grant-funded developments such as a theater park and senior playground equipment.

Mr. Clark Jr. concluded by proposing a strategic planning retreat in June. The retreat would aim to align the city's long-term priorities with financial planning and focus on establishing a finance-centered strategy to support the city's future growth and sustainability.

Legislative Office

City Manager Mr. Clark Jr. presented the Legislative Department's budget update, emphasizing fiscal consistency, streamlined budget tracking, and upcoming strategic planning efforts. He began by noting that the legislative budget remains consistent with prior years. One of the key changes is the consolidation of various event budgets under a single "City Events" line item, simplifying tracking and improving transparency. The \$45,000 allocation for Mayor and Councilmember-hosted events and the \$15,000 public relations budget have been maintained. Specific event line items like retreats have been removed to streamline budgeting and reporting further.

Mr. Clark Jr. outlined the primary components of the legislative budget, including insurance and retirement contributions and election-related expenses. He noted that preparations are underway for the upcoming November election, with election services coordinated through Clayton County. The budget approach reflects a centralized strategy for managing event-related expenses, and capital funds remain reserved for major projects only, with no significant changes from the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Clark Jr. proposed holding a strategic retreat in June to align the Council's long-term goals with the city's financial priorities. He also noted the possibility of a professional training engagement for Councilmembers and expressed interest in making the retreat finance-focused to support the city's future planning efforts.

**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 budget retreat at 4:26pm.

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