



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

Monday, June 21, 2021, at 6:00 PM
Council Chambers

Website: www.forestparkga.gov
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, Interim City Clerk
Mike Williams, City Attorney

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

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 <i>Via telephone</i>		✓
Hector Gutierrez	Council Member, Ward 3		✓
Latresa Akins-Wells	Council Member, Ward 4		✓
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5 <i>Via telephone</i>		✓

DIRECTORS PRESENT: A. Girard Geeter, Procurement Manager; Darquita Williams, Interim Finance Director; James Shelby, Director of Planning & Zoning, Bruce Abraham, Director Economic Development, Bobby Jinks, Director Public Works, Tarik Maxwell, Director of Parks and Recreation, Nathaniel Clark, Police Chief, and Latosha Clemons, Deputy Fire Chief

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Dr. Marc-Antonie Cooper, City Manager

COMMUNITY INFORMATION/REMINDERS:

- On July 2, 2021, at 10:00 am the Recreation and Leisure Department will be having a Renaming Ceremony for the Senior Center, 5087 Park Ave, Forest Park, GA 30297.
- Second Street Park located at 377 2nd Street and Theatre Drive Park located at 4375 Old Jonesboro Rd both are underway with the installation of new grills and benches at both parks.
- Theatre Drive Park, 4375 Old Jonesboro Rd project is moving forward grills and benches are being installed.
- Waste Management processing station we are working on a possible mitigation and/or resolution to this matter. We have contacted Waste Management and will be providing an update as soon as possible.
- Wharry House aka Hollander Park Apartments – the City Council will receive a brief on this matter, and the Town Hall will be scheduled for June 30, 2021 @6:00pm in the City Council Chamber for all residents of Hollander Park.
- Forest Park Ministers Association is hosting the Ministers for Healthy Communities Project 2021 Regional Town Hall Meeting. The meeting will be held Saturday, June 26th, 2021, 4:00 pm – 9:00pm at Starr Park (in accordance with CDC Social Distancing Guidelines + Virtual via Facebook live) for more information or to register visit [Eventbrite.com/minister-for-healthy-communities](https://www.eventbrite.com/minister-for-healthy-communities).

CITY OPERATIONS:

- CodeRED Mobile Alert app (QR Code attached) Download the free CodeRED Mobile Alert app today to stay informed of community, emergency, and severe weather alerts directly on your mobile device. The app is geo-aware, meaning that you will only receive alerts that impact your specific location. or <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/C66C4ED0E73D>
- To improve communications within the city we are working on creating an internal "Intranet" portal. This portal will allow all city employees to view not only view, download and print city related communications and policy and procedures, but provide the option to allow them to view and make changes to their personnel information such as address, phone number etc. via a secured portal.
- During the June 8, 2021, Council Meeting it was stated that we had (5) five Forest Park Police Officers leave during the month of May 2021. I checked the record and we had (0) zero sworn office leave in May. It was also stated that during the meeting we only had (3) officers on duty patrolling the city. I check the records and find that we had a total of (8) eight officers on the road ready during the time council meeting was occurring.

- Employee Turnover Rate – According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics table 16 – Annual total separation rates by industry and region tracks turn-over rate. According to these statistics in 2019 State and local, excluding education turn rate was 19.6% and in 2020 it was 21.2%. By region in the South in 2019 was 45.9% and 2020 it was 58.3%. The City of Forest Park’s Turn-over rate for 2020 was 18.7% and so far in 2021 turnover rate is 19.68%. While these numbers aren’t ideal for the city, as we look for ways to reverse the trend and become a preferred employer, we are falling below the national average for turnover. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Information: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t16.htm>

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

Public Works

- Thank you, Mr. Bruce Robinson, and Mr. Vincent Hicks, for assisting our residents on understanding the sidewalk replacement process. Both gentlemen are a wealth of knowledge, and we are proud to have them with us.

Recreation and Leisure

- Kudos to our Recreation and Leisure team, especially to Director Tarik Maxwell and staff Ms. Maya Williams and Ms. Rashay Reeves. They are successfully hosting summer camp for about 60 youth ranging from (5 years to 12 years old) in the City of Forest Park.

Executive Offices

- Councilman Hector Gutierrez recently completed his Human Resources Administration Certification Program with the Georgia Municipal Association. Councilman Gutierrez and I have had some great discussions on how we can further improve employee morale and HR operations. We have discussed and came up with some great ideas which we are working to bring to fruition. Congratulations Councilman Gutierrez on this outstanding achievement.

PRESENTATION(S):

1. Update on Cemetery Initiative - Mike Williams, City Attorney

City Attorney Mike Williams represented his previous presentation given in December to the combined meaning out the Development Authority, Urban Redevelopment Authority, Downtown Development Authority, and City Council. The problem is that the cemetery sites on Conley Road adjacent to the Forest Hills Cemetery are not being properly maintained on a consistent basis and the owners cannot be found. Over the years community members have expressed their concern on possible action that should be taken by the Governing Body in order to rectify the situation. Mr. Williams showed with pictures the difference between the upkept cemetery and the abandoned cemetery.

The options for action with the cemetery were presented as followed:
Do Nothing – Just continue to do periodic clean-ups and allows groups to maintain on a sporadic basis (no cost or liability)

City Maintain and Operate – There is a provision in state code that allows local governments to take ownership of local cemeteries and operate them. (We would be able to restore the cemetery. There is some belief that there is some historic significance to the cemetery. This also would eliminate and meet the community’s concerns. This also would beautify the current site. However, the costs and forever

commitment to maintaining. is a pressing concern with this option. There also is a question on who and how it be managed especially if addition interments would be allowed at the site.

Take Control of Cemetery & Partner with Entity to Manage – If partner with another organization there is possibility for a lower long-term cost. There still would be the upfront cost but this is a good way to eliminate any management issues. There are cities in the state of Georgia that do manage and maintain cemeteries. They operate like regular private cemeteries. If the consensus was option 3, there would not be a management issue.

State Code states that Cities can exercise their imminent domain power, condemn the property, and get a court order awarding ownership to the City. It allows Cities and County to do it on them or in conjunction with each other. Meaning this is not something that the city must take on its own. We could possibly examine working with the county.

The three parcels' ownership has been discovered. There has been some conversation, but they have not really gone anywhere is a partnership with Forest Hills. This would help clean up the title issues and it could be held by the city or even transfer ownership to them. During the conversation a prerequisite to them signing on would be that ground penetration be completed before they would assume ownership or work with the city. They would like to know where all the potential burial sites reside. If this is an option, we would negotiate the costs and provide signage, etc. to keep it in the best interest of the community. The staff recommendation was before a decision was made was to explore some option on costs and collaboration, not necessarily just with Forest Hills to find a long-term solution to the problem.

This was an overview of the presentation that was made in December, however there was never a decision made, therefore we are back awaiting a decision about how to move forward.

Questions/Comments from Governing Body:

Mayor Butler: Is the City still maintaining the other cemeteries?

City Attorney: There are two cemeteries in the Main St./downtown area that the city has historically maintained. I do believe that is still ongoing, but I would have to confirm.

Councilmember James: Thank you for the presentation. I invited some of the members that are associated with the cemetery to make sure that they have the information. I have some of the members also on Zoom listening to the conversation. I want to have a conversation with them later to discuss what their recommendations would be in how we move forward with this.

Councilmember Gutierrez: Mike, there are also two other cemeteries in my Ward, and I think they share the same history as the one on Conley Rd. One of the constituents reached out to me about it because she used to maintain it. The gentlemen in Public Works pointed it out to me when I did my ride along. I would like to add that to the investigation that we are currently doing with this cemetery.

Mayor Butler: I thought with the signage that about two to three City Managers ago they were working on signs and markers. Where are we with that?

City Attorney: I do not know.

Bobby Jinks, Director of Public Works: I was never forwarded any information regarding signs.

Councilmember Akins-Wells: So, isn't there already a cemetery that the city maintains?

Bobby Jinks: There is one on Main St. across from 1000 Main Street. The city has been maintaining for as long as I can remember. I did pull up the tax records to see what it says. It just says Forest Park Cemetery. It does not say, "The Forest Park Cemetery".

Councilmember Akins-Wells: Right, so I am just wondering what was done that has the City maintaining that cemetery because if that hasn't been done then the City shouldn't be maintaining it, right?

City Attorney: There is no written agreement, document that was signed or approved by Council to maintain it.

Councilmember Akins-Wells: I am not against trying to find the owners of the cemetery and think it needs to be cleaned up, but I also believe that the ones that are also in Councilman Gutierrez's Ward should be cleaned up. If we're going to focus on it, I believe we should focus on all the ones that are in the city, which would be more money from the city. I just believe that we need to be consistent. This cemetery is important, the beautification of the city is important, but also, we shouldn't leave out others. But if that same thing wasn't done to maintain those (Main St. cemetery) then I think we should stop maintain it until it is done the correct way.

Councilmember Gutierrez: I have a suggestion. I know that ultimately the responsibility for this fall on our Public Works department. This would mean them taking more time, possibly needing more staff. Is there a way to contract the services out to maintain these cemeteries until we figure out what we are going to do with them?

Bobby Jinks: Legally they are not property of the City of Forest Park so I cannot go on them and clean them unless I have orders from mayor and Council to do so.

Councilmember Akins-Wells: That goes back to what I am saying. So, if it's not City property and nothing has been done, then we shouldn't be cleaning it. It goes back to people having events but that aren't City events but having City staff work them. I just think we need to be consistent on the things we are doing and making sure that we are going by the charter and not overworking our employees because cleaning and maintain cemeteries is not an easy task. I just read something today in the Clayton Crescent today where people are complaining about us having City sponsored events, but the streets aren't clean. So how can our streets be dirty but Public Works is cleaning property that doesn't belong to the City.

Mayor Butler: Are you going to give us some recommendations in order to truly hammer this down and make some decisions?

City Attorney: That's what the staff needs. We need some direction. The best thing is to look at working at a partner organization that is in the cemetery business who knows best. I would suggest exploring that and if there is an agreement or is a desire to partner then we would have to look to see what it would take as far as upfront costs to get there and bring that back to Council to decide.

Mayor Butler: We had some of the conversations with Forest Hills. We know their recommendations. I was hoping that with this presentation that we would have seen some of the numbers, so that we could move forward. Can we get those number, so that we know what those costs would look like so that we can make a decision?

City Attorney: I know the main thing that they wanted was the route tracking radar, so that they could get a survey of the site. So, we have that number. Those numbers are roughly what you saw. We can update those numbers. Assuming they are still okay with that. I would want you all to get confirmation from them, get a letter of intent from them, and work in earnest before you start spending money. I don't want you to spend money and they don't want to do it. My recommendation is to have the conversation and if you are willing to spend the money to move forward in that direction.

Councilmember James: I want to first speak with those parties that are possibly connected to the cemetery because it is not the property of the City. We can't spend the money on the device because it is not our property. So, we would need to have a conversation with those members in the community that it directly effects on our course of action, so that we can make a decision. Until then it is just considered an abandoned property.

Councilmember Gutierrez: How far are we from recognizing it as a historical property?

City Attorney: So, there is a consultant is doing the research for that. The last I spoke to her was about a month ago. I did not reach out to her prior to this presentation today. However, she is doing the groundwork and research on the cemetery to establish the historical nature of it. There is a separate process to go through to register it, but we would need the data first.

Councilmember Akins-Wells: If the City was taking it over, we would handle it like a regular cemetery. So, if someone wanted to be buried there. Would the City be responsible for that?

City Attorney: If you were to take it over and you weren't working with an organization. You are not required to operate it as an operating cemetery. You could just leave it as it is and no further interments. That would be a question. Because we don't have a survey we truly don't know if there are any addition spaces for burial.

OLD BUSINESS:

2. **Intact Consulting Services** - Marcia Ridley

Background & Summary:

Ms. Ridley was approved to conduct the City's 2021 Municipal Elections and will give Council a presentation on her company. This is for discussion only.

This item was moved to the July 6, 2021, meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. **Approval of Proposed Film Ordinance and Fee Schedule** - Economic Development Director, Bruce Abraham

Background & History:

It is proposed that the City adopt an ordinance and policy with respect to granting permits for the purpose of filming by television companies, movie companies, or other media in the City. This ordinance provides guidelines for the issuance, approval, and fees associated with obtaining a film permit from the City. The

City has permitted filming for a number of years as a Special Event, however the proposed ordinance will allow for a more streamlined and efficient permitting process.

In September 2020, all filming operations for the City of Forest Park were transferred from the Finance Department to the Economic Development Department. Since then, the Economic Development Department has been focused on improving film permit process to better serve television and film companies.

There was no discussion by the governing body

4. **Discussion to approve surplus vehicle/equipment for auction on Public Surplus – Public Works Director, Bobby Jinks**

Background and Summary:

We have a list of vehicles and equipment that has been sent to the appropriate departments for Director's approval to surplus. The vehicles/equipment has outlasted the life of them, and the cost of repairs will be more the value of the vehicle/equipment. See attached document of the entire list to be surplus.

There was no discussion by the governing body

5. **Support for the Restoring Neighborhoods and Strengthening Communities Act - Dr. Cooper, City Manager**

Background/History:

The Office Congresswoman Nikema Williams is seeking the support of this City Council for legislation introduced by her called (H.R. 2859) the "Restoring Neighborhoods and Strengthening Communities Act". This legislation is being presented in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and seeks to undo the damage of "urban renewal" projects that displaced communities of color after the enactment of the Federal Aid Highway Act.

There was no discussion by the governing body

6. **Council Discussion on GEMA Grants - Fire & EMA Departments**

Background/History:

In 2018, the EMA Director applied for a grant available through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security office, named the "State Homeland Security Program" or SHSP for short. The Forest Park Fire & Emergency Services department was awarded a total of \$54,700 for two separate projects. One project, "HazMat", was awarded \$30,500 and the other project, "GSAR", was awarded \$24,200. Prior to the State's approval and being awarded the grant, the department had to specify the exact item(s), quantity needed, and cost of items requested. The items requested are necessary to the safe functioning of our Hazardous Materials Team and Special Operations Response Team (SORT), as most, if not all, the equipment is expired. The grant period for using the funds was previously missed because prior to applying for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) for fiscal year 2020 in March 2021, our department was unaware of its existence. Since its discovery, the EMA office has worked with GEMA to obtain an extension on the awarded projects, with a deadline of July 31st, 2021. Along with the project extension, we have amended the GSAR budget by changing the items previously requested, to items the

department's technical rescue team requires for safe operations. As of now, GEMA still considers the City of Forest Park as a Regional HazMat Team, however until this equipment is obtained, we do not have the proper personal protective equipment or detection tools to safely respond to such an incident. Attached, you will find the original grant applications, signed award letters, cost item details, and GEMA approved project extensions and budget amendment. This grant is 100% reimbursed by the State and will assist the department in obtaining a portion of the necessary and required equipment for safe operations in these areas.

Cost \$54,689 and it was not budget.

Financial Impact: The City will provide initial cost until reimbursement from the State. These Grants are 100% reimbursed by the State. No long-term financial impact to the City.

There was no discussion by the governing body

7. **Bulletproof Vests Partnership Program - Police Department and Grants Management**

Background/History:

The Bureau of Justice Assistance solicits participation in its bulletproof vests program periodically as funding is available. This BJA program has a 2-year performance period of which police departments purchase vests as needed over this time period and is reimbursed 50% of the cost of each vest, based on the data submitted to the awarding agency. The Forest Park Police Department has been a participant of this program for several years, most recently in 2019.

Cost \$18,625.00 and it was budgeted for.

Financial Impact: If selected to participate in the program, the city would be reimbursed \$9,312.50 or 50% of the cost for 25 vests.

There was no discussion by the governing body

It was motioned by Councilmember James and seconded by Councilmember Mears to amend the Work Session Agenda to add a Discussion about Ordinance Section 8-3-6 General Requirements for All Signs, 8-3-9 Regulations and Restriction to Temp Sign, 8-3-10 Non-Conforming Signs.

Voting Yea: Mayor Butler, Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears

Councilmember James - I wanted to make sure that I highlight these items as according to our ordinance. These are already items that we have place, so we don't have to vote on it is something that just applies. I just want to make it clear that I have been getting complaints on some of the signs that are around the city. The temporary signs that are promoting events that are around the city as well as some of the signs that are in the right of way. According to our charter we do have restrictions and regulations to these signs. According to section 8-3-10, these signs can be removed immediately. So, I am asking our City Manager to have these signs that are in direct violation and non-conforming to be removed immediately.

Councilmember Akins- Wells - You must have three people to direct the City Manager. However, Mike, I want to ask you what that ordinance says. I would also like to explain why all of this is happening. What she is referring to are the Fun Friday event signs that have Councilwoman Wells and City of Forest Park's

name on them. She hates the fact that Councilwoman Wells is doing anything, so whatever I am doing she comes back with some negativity. When in actuality these events are that myself and the City of Forest Park are having benefits our community. Out of all the negative things going on, I believe that is a breath of fresh air for the people. I haven't heard any complains and it is my signs that are out there that belong to the City of Forest Park. So, can you help me understand why it is an issue for Kimberly James, an elected official where elected officials all over the state of Georgia and the country have events and put their names on it. There is nothing unethical or illegal about a city councilperson having an event. You should try to have one. You would see. Can you please explain these ordinances and why these signs need to be removed?

City Attorney - Councilwoman James referenced several pieces of the ordinance. The primary issue is regarding temporary signs, advertisement signs. The main provisions in the ordinance as related to those are in terms in size, duration they can be up, and location. Primarily that they cannot be in the right of way. As it related to temporary signs, we do have provisions that say they can't be more than a certain size.

Councilmember Akins- Wells - What's the size?

City Attorney - Well, I would have to look at the actual provision.

Councilmember Akins- Wells - The City right of way is City property, right? These signs are property, so the City can't put anything on their own right of way.

City Attorney - I had this conversation with Councilwoman James. There are so people that believe that cities can be immune from their own sign ordinances. The opposite side of that is you shouldn't have rules for everyone else and not follow those rules. I am trying to find the exact sign requirement

Councilmember Akins- Wells - Are you saying the signs need to be removed?

City Attorney - I don't know. You must take each sign individually. If there is a specific sign that violated the ordinance, the ordinance does state that the city has the option to remove it.

Councilmember Akins- Wells - Do we have to vote on it?

City Attorney: Code Enforcement can do that on its own. This is not just about City signs. This could be real estate signs, etc. It is neutral to content and owner of the sign. It speaks to size, location, and duration.

Mayor Butler: So, Public Works wouldn't be able to do it because it would essentially be a violation of our own ordinance?

Councilmember Akins- Wells: How is it a violation? I would like to know the duration that the sign can stay.

Councilmember James: 30 days.

Councilmember Akins- Wells: I would also like to know when conversations like this are being had with Councilmembers then maybe you should let me know because it is involving me. If it is an ordinance that I am breaking, let me know. The event is still happening, the people are still going to come and that is the part that you don't like. Can you please tell me what the ordinance says? And if there are any other signs that are in violation they need to come up at the same time. This is petty and childish, not the ordinances because I don't mind abiding by those. But of all of things that we could focus on in this City which is a lot.

You choose to focus on a sign because a Councilperson's name is on it that does work in the community and gives to the community. That is a problem for you. Focus on your ward. Focus on the citizens, that is what matters.

Councilmember Antoine - Can I ask a question?

Mayor Butler: Yes. Mike are you are you still looking for the ordinance?

City Attorney: The time period is 21 days. The right of way.

Councilmember Antoine: According to the signs that I've seen. It mentions the city too. It doesn't just mention one person's name. Latresa's signs say, "Latresa and the City of Forest Park". But what does the charter say?

Councilmember James: Let me make a clarification Councilman Antoine. The clarification is that it is not about whose name is on the sign. It is about the fact that we are violating our own charter. I have gotten complaints several times and I say it is a city event and to please come out to the event. I always promote City events. It's not about whose name is on it. I have gotten complaints in the past and now I am looking into it, and it violated the charter, simply put. It is a violation because these signs have been up for months, so end of story

Councilmember Akins- Wells: If it is violation, I am not violating the charter so take them up. Mike I also want to ask

City Attorney: There is not a size for temporary signs.

Councilmember Akins- Wells: There is nothing wrong with the name of an elected official being on a sign. Commissioners do it, State reps do it. A lot of elected officials do it. It is not unethical. There is nothing wrong with it. Is there anything in the charter that says that is illegal or unethical?

Councilmember Akins- Wells: It is not illegal. There is nothing in the charter or ordinances that prevents elected official's names from being on signs.

Councilmember Gutierrez: I am guilty of this as well I have my signs up. It wasn't knowingly. I do not want to break our charter. I think the problem here lies with the ordinance itself. My food truck Friday event is an ongoing event. So, I would like to know a place I can put the sign, to give more attention to the event. I think we change the ordinance

Councilmember Akins- Wells: Can you draft an ordinance that states that if we are having City events? That is okay for us to promote our events.

City Attorney: That is provision that can be added. It is my understanding that an update to the sign ordinance is already underway.

Councilmember Akins- Wells: Can we have that at the next meeting? The signs can come up because I don't want to break an ordinance, but can we examine having that at the next meeting?

City Attorney: I cannot commit him to having something done by next meeting.

Councilmember Akins- Wells: You can draft something up to temporarily override that.

Councilmember James: The provision does speak to special events. For example, when the city did the 5k race. The sign they would normally put up was at Conley Rd./Jonesboro Rd. They would advertise that it was coming up and then the sign would come down. It's not saying we don't advertise. People just complain about the signs being up all the time, all over the place and being in the right of ways. It is a valid complaint. It is in our ordinance. We don't want people putting temporary signs all over the city and leaving them up all the time. Even if the event is ongoing, there are other ways of advertising. I will speak to that it was said I was personally against people having events that is not true. I am very supportive of whatever happens in our city but there are some things that arise that I will speak to when people speak to me about it or if I do not agree with it. But it doesn't have anything to do with who having events. It's not a competition. It's about moving the city forward.

Mayor Butler: The signs will come up until something else is passed or revised?

City Attorney: Yes. If we are going to abide strictly by the signs.

Councilmember Antoine: Can you use your Ward money to promote events?

Mayor Butler: The dilemma is that the signs are placed in the right of way. Who is placing the signs? Why are they placing them in the right of way?

City Attorney: If staff is placing signs for the events they need to be instructed on where to place the signs so that it doesn't violate the ordinance. Every sign is not in violation. You must look at each specific sign, one by one.

Councilmember Akins- Wells: These signs have been going up for three years and it has never been an issue. Now all of sudden it is in an issue but please take up the signs in violation. If you agree that it is okay to promote our events. Can we please direct them to write up an amendment to the ordinance?

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

ADJOURNMENT:

It was motion to adjourn the Work Session Meeting at 7:13pm

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

Voting Yea: Mayor Butler, Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears