



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Monday, February 17, 2025 at 7:00 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 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 7:06 pm.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE: Bishop Mark Fortson led the invocation and pledge.

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		•
Hector Gutierrez	Council Member, Ward 3		•
Latresa Akins-Wells	Council Member, Ward 4		•
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5		•

John Wiggins, Finance Director; Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance, HR Director; Shalonda Brown, Diane Lewis; Deputy HR Director, David Halcomb, Deputy Fire Chief; Joshua Cox; IT Director; Pauline Warrior, Chief of Staff; Rodney Virgil; Level 2 Support Engineer, Nigel Wattley; Deputy Director Public Works, Public Works Director, Alton Matthews; Tarik Maxwell, Recreation Director, Marsellas Williams, Economic Director; Nicole Dozier, Planning Community Director; 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 motioned to approve the agenda with the addition of removing item #4 Public Hearing the text amendment does not require a Public Hearing, it will be placed under New Business.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. **Council Approval of Council Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes from February 3, 2025 -**
City Clerk

It was motioned to approve the Council meeting minutes from February 3, 2024, as printed.

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

There were three (3) Public Comment Speakers.

Dr. Beeler: noted that he moved to Forest Park in 1988. He moved his ministry in 1994 to Forest Park, and he has noticed a change and is glad to see that change. He noted he met Chuck Hall, who used to be the mayor, and they were friends. He noted he gave him a book, Comprehensive Plan 2005-2025, and tasked him with praying for the City for 20 years, and he has done that. He noted he is passing it along so that they can get someone else praying for the city.

Ms. Folami: She has that same book and would like to read it because it is outdated. She thanked the City Manager and Ms. Pauline for their productive meeting regarding the recreation center. She also thanked Councilmember Akin-Wells and Councilmember Gutierrez for the feedback she received regarding the volunteer coaches. She noted the city is headed in a good direction, and she can remember when they all were not there, and it is good to see the different colors of people in the room. She thanked Public Works for keeping the streets clear during the storm. She noted they have to be patient and allow the people and the City Manager to do their job. She said she was glad to see the Tax Commissioner there talk about the House Bill and thought the city should opt out.

Ms. Gunn noted that the distribution of publication with all residents by mail is amazing, but her concern is the change of location from what was given to all candidates that are running for Ward 2. She noted a lot of the residents in that ward does not know about this. She wants the city to take accountability, do a push card mail out to Ward 2 to inform them of the change of location. She also stated that it say voters must vote at there assigned polling location on March 18, 2025, so please make sure all necessary information is on the card. Ms. Gunn noted she does not see any updated information on the website pertaining to this change of location and asked that this information be updated quickly.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Clark noted with the public comment on the location of the election that they are planning to do a mailer by Wednesday. He said that the information is on the website. He noted he knows historically that advanced

voting has always been at the Senior Center, and the difference is the county has never conducted a Municipal Election in this Municipality. He stated to keep from voter suppression because there is a countywide election for ESPOLOST on the ballot and to keep from having two locations, all of the voters will go to their normal polling place. He stated that instead of sending the mailer out to Ward 2 only they are sending it to the entire city. City Manager Clark noted there are new hires in the Code Compliance and Recreation and Leisure departments.

Director Walker introduced Nia Rodriguez as the new Administration Staff Assistant.

Director Maxwell introduced Terrance Martin as the New Athletic Coordinator.

City Manager Clark discusses the optimization of recreation and leisure activities to ensure better communication and scheduling for residents. He noted that to make it more efficient with the sharing of information and to make sure basketball and volleyball are not overlapping the time has been moved up. He stated that everyone will still receive the same number of practice weeks. Mr. Clark noted they have learned there is a better way to communicate this on the front end to the residents so they know what the season will look like. He noted he plans to bring back before the board a policy that governs a lot of these activities.

PRESENTATIONS:

2. IT Department Update – IT Department

Background/History:

The IT department would like to share a presentation to Mayor and Council. The presentation includes some key updates from the IT department including metrics, projects, staff updates, etc.

Director Cox gave an overview of his staff members and what they are working on professionally. He noted when he first came to the city there was not a great process for submitting request. So they implemented a new process. For noncritical items you email tech support, and it creates a ticket. If it is critical you can call the help desk 24/7. He noted they are replacing computers and are a 5-year refresh recycle; that way, everyone will have a computer for 5 years or less. He noted they deployed over 150 new desk phones, and it is forever changing. He gave an overview of the continued key projects and things being implemented. He noted that they are working on being more proactive than reactive. Director Cox noted he is excited because they are going to have new vehicles for their department and asked for approval of the new logo.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember James thanked him for what he and his team are doing.

Councilmember Gutierrez thanked him and noted he was excited. He stated he loves the way he leads his team. He noted that when he goes to the GMA training, everyone knows Director Cox and always has good things to say about Forest Park, and noted he did a great job at the conference.

Councilmember Akins Wells thanked him and his team because they play a vital role in keeping the city going.

Councilmember Mears thanked him and his staff for what they do.

Mayor Butler noted she is amazed at how far they have come. She said she heard he was amazing at the conference and thanked him for stepping into that role.

Mr. **Clark** asked him about an important piece that was omitted.

Director Cox noted he wanted to highlight that he may bring before the Mayor and Council a request for an additional position. He noted that most organizations operate on a 1 to 30 ratio, and they are operating on a 1 to 82 ratio. He noted that they do have a third-party contractor who assists with some of the projects and escalations.

Councilmember Akins Wells asked the other person if the other company would not be needed.

Director Cox noted they would, but as they did previously, they would renegotiate the contract, have the third party do only what was required of them, and bring some of the other houses in-house.

It was motioned to recess the regular meeting to open the first of three public hearings to opt out of House Bill 581.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

3. Public Hearing #1-Opting-Out of HB 581-Executive Offices

Background/History:

House Bill 581, passed during the 2024 legislative session and signed by Governor Kemp, introduces key changes impacting local government revenue. This bill includes procedural modifications to property tax assessments and appeals, a new statewide homestead exemption (which local governments can opt out of), and a local option sales tax aimed at providing property tax relief.

The second Public Hearing will be on February 20, 2025, at noon, and the third Public Hearing will be at 6:00 p.m. If approved by the council, the adoption will follow.

Mayor Butler asked Director Wiggins if he could provide them with an overview of the House bill.

Director Wiggins noted he could not because he does not know a lot about it in its entirety.

Attorney Matricardi noted it was adopted at last year's legislative session, which includes a floating homestead exemption in the case all municipalities within a county participate in 581. It would allow homeowners property assessment not to be increased more than what the inflation was for the prior year. She noted not many people in Forest Park will be affected because of the 150,000-homestead exemption.

Mayor Butler asked the attorney to explain how If one municipality opts out it opts them all out and what it opts them out of.

Attorney Matricardi noted that with the FLOST and the county, if everyone stays in the 581, there will be a FLOST, and any taxes collected would go back to the homeowners. She said it would not help defray any taxes lost to the City of Forest Park, but the city would have to increase the millage rate to recoup the lost funds. She noted that one municipality has opted out, and there is no FLOST available to Clayton County.

Mayor Butler noted that this is not just Forest Park but for all municipalities across the State of Georgia. She asked even though it is not official what is being proposed at the state level as it pertains to this house bill; and how it could override the city if they opt out.

Attorney Matricardi noted various bills are pending and one would require every city in the State of Georgia to have this local homestead exemption. She noted there are others trying to extend the deadline to opt-out. She said some are looking to extend the time others are trying to make it mandatory.

There were four people in opposition.

Mayor Butler noted it was very convoluted for everyone. She noted this was passed on the November ballot. Because it passed, every city of the State of Georgia was automatically opted in. She stated it went into effect January 1, and everyone was given the opportunity to opt out. She noted that being opted in means the taxes will be based on inflation for the current. She noted it will go into effect in 2026 to give it a whole year for the values to be assessed or accumulated. Opting out is whatever the property is assessed at that is how the taxes will be determined. She stated Forest Park Homestead is 150 thousand and this will not take away any homestead exemption, it only adds to. She noted not many people will be affected because they are not assessed at that 150-thousand-dollar value. Mayor Butler noted that the law states there has to be 3 public hearings to opt out.

It was open to close the public hearing, and to reopen the regular meeting.

Motion made by Councilmember Akins-Wells, Seconded by Councilmember James.
Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells,
Councilmember Mears

Council Approval to approve Text amendment to amend such section updating Banquet Halls and adding definitions for Brown Bagging, Banquet Halls, and Brewpubs. - Planning and Community Development (public hearing in regular session).

Background/History:

Staff have worked with the city attorney to update the ordinance for clarity. After a careful review of the ordinance, several changes were proposed to safeguard the community, prohibiting brown bagging, covering front windows in banquet halls, and updating operating hours. These items were suggested to clarify and to ensure safe business operations and practices within the City of Forest Park. If the Mayor and the Council proceed with approval of this Text Amendment, it will allow the proposed amendments to be enforced.

This item was moved under New Business; a public hearing was required.

CONSENT AGENDA: **There were no items.**

NEW BUSINESS:

4. Council Approval to approve Text amendment to amend such section updating Banquet Halls and adding definitions for Brown Bagging, Banquet Halls, and Brewpubs. - Planning and Community Development (public hearing in regular session).

Background/History:

Staff have worked with the city attorney to update the ordinance for clarity. After a careful review of the ordinance, several changes were proposed to safeguard the community, prohibiting brown bagging, covering front windows in banquet halls, and updating operating hours. These items were suggested to

clarify and to ensure safe business operations and practices within the City of Forest Park. If the Mayor and the Council proceed with approval of this Text Amendment, it will allow the proposed amendments to be enforced.

It was motioned to approve the Text amendment to amend such sections updating Banquet Halls and adding definitions for Brown Bagging, Banquet Halls, and Brewpubs.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

5. Council Approval regarding the distribution of a publication to all residents via mail showcasing the happenings within the City of Forest Park. - Mayor Angelyne Butler, sponsor

City Manager Clark asked to include the authorization to amend the budget as necessary.

It was motioned to approve distribution of a publication to all residents via mail showcasing the happenings within the City of Forest Park, and to amend the budget if necessary.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted that she would like to know all that it entails and if all of the Governing Body is doing this because she does not want this to be an advertisement for any elected officials since this is an election year. She also noted that since it is going out to every Ward, everyone should have a say in what goes in it.

Mayor Butler noted that it has nothing to do with elected officials per se but with everything going on in the city. She noted that she agrees that no one should utilize city funds for campaigning and that no elected officials should use city funds to campaign for any campaign. She asked if they could make sure that is not happening.

Attorney Matricardi noted that this should not be done and is prohibited under state law. She reiterated that no city funds can be used for a campaign.

Mayor Butler stated she would like to make sure.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted she would also. She stated that since it is a newsletter, she would like to make sure everyone has a say in what is sent out on their behalf.

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

6. Council Approval regarding use of 696 Main Street by the Downtown Development Authority – Councilwoman Latresa Akins-Wells

It was motioned to approve the use of 696 Main Street by the Downtown Development Authority.

Motion made by Councilmember Akins-Wells, as she would like to discuss the item, seconded by Councilmember Mears

Comments/Discussion from Governing Body:

Councilmember Akins-Wells stated she would like to be clear and asked if they were reducing the usage of 696 for the community closet.

Attorney Matricardi noted as of now it states use by the Development Authority, she noted she does not think it is worded correctly. She said she could propose her motion if she chose to.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted if they are already using it for something to find an alternate space or build a space, and he would contribute to it.

Councilmember Akins Wells noted that was her request for the City Manager. She stated that she requested to find a location that would house everything. She said she was giving the directive again to find another location.

City Manager Clark noted that there was the Archive building and several other locations; other than that, he does not know if there are other facilities.

Councilmember Gutierrez, as if they had seen the containers being used and how nice they looked, suggested that as an option.

City Manager Clark noted that it would be nice and innovative.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted they did visit the Archive building, and it is being torn down. She noted her purpose was to prove a point: If certain people are not benefiting, then there needs to be a discussion. She said it is to benefit the community and try to use a city building, but they will find another location. She stated that her directive is to look into this and see when it can be done.

Councilmember James asked for a point of order to call for the vote.

Councilmember Akins-Wells rescinded her old motion.

Mr. Clark asked for clarity if they were just looking into another location or the container as well.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted both.

Councilmember James asked if they were using the council building as the Community Closet and what time so she could inform her constituents.

Council Akins-Wells noted it has been published for a long time, and the Council Aides can give her the information.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted that churches and schools are doing the same thing, and she could possibly collaborate with them. He supports it happening in the city.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted that she was not aware of that, and she asked that you please let her know so she can contact them.

It was motioned to find an alternative location and container to use as the Community Closet.

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

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells

Voting Nay: Councilmember James, Councilmember Mears

Mayor Butler broke the tie and voted to find an alternative location.

7. Council Approval on the March 18, 2025, Special Election Voting Locations- Executive Offices

It was motioned for Approval on the March 18, 2025, Special Election Voting Locations, with a Saturday voting date of March 8th from 9-5 pm.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

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

8. Council Approval on the FY2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)- Finance Department

It was motioned to approve the FY2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Mears

Voting Abstaining: Councilmember Akins-Wells

9. Council Approval of Budget Amendment for General Fund- Finance Department

It was motioned to approve the Budget Amendment for the General Fund.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Mears

Voting Nay: Councilmember Akins-Wells

10. Council Approval on the MAINTSTAR Upgrade – IT Department

It was motioned to approve the MAINTSTAR Upgrade.

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

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

11. Council Approval on the 696 Main Street Special Usage Request – Recreation & Leisure Services Department

It was motioned to approve the 696 Main Street Special Usage Request.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY:

Councilmember James thanked everyone for coming and Dr. Beeler for 20 years of prayer and stated she know he will continue to pray. She stated the Ward meeting will be on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 696 Main Street, and the January meeting has been posted. She highlighted that the fire department Deputy Chief May stated there were 251 calls (1 shooting/stabbing, 2 overdoses, 241 fire responses, one house, and 2 apartments). She noted that for the year, there were 23,653 calls, and of those, 5,544 were fire. She states there were 1,037 inspections done by the Fire Marshall. She noted the police have extended their hours from 7 am to 6 pm. She stated there will be updates of the Teachers Celebration from the last Council meeting on the cluster of schools. She stated there will be a Hunger Walk with the Atlanta Community Food Bank Team Forest Park on March 9. Councilmember James stated that they are looking for sponsors and accepting donations. She noted on Sunday, March 3, the City of Forest Park, along with Patton's House of Performance, will present the play "The Journey" at Living Faith on Old Dixie at 7pm and a preshow by the Forest Park High School Band Kings of Sound.

Councilmember Gutierrez noted he enjoyed the comments on HB 581 and noted that when voting, they will do what is best for the community. He thanked Dr. Beeler for the book and stated he hopes he will continue to pray for the city. He welcomed the new employees and gave a shoutout to Maulding and Jenkins. He said he is big on transparency. He stated that the Food Truck Friday events will start back next month and the clean-up the next day. He thanked everyone for coming out and told them to reach out if anyone needed anything.

Councilmember Akins-Wells thanked Josh and his team for all they do to contribute to the city and Director Maxwell and his team for what they do and for being available when needed. She thanked Ms. Folami for her comments and noted that as elected officials, they do not just come up there to vote or have events and make decisions but also to hold people accountable. She said she would ask questions and investigate what needs to be investigated regarding the City of Forest Park. She stated that she had a threat made against her and that one of the council members was going to file an ethics complaint against her for doing her job. She stated that there is nothing unethical about that. She thanked the Finance Department for what they do and noted there is a reason why she abstained, and it is because she has questions. She stated that as far as campaigns and things of that nature she has never and will never mishandle the city funds.

Councilmember Mears thanked the new employees and noted he does not see his favorite man, Mr. Finch, and hopes he is not ill.

Councilmember Akins-Wells noted she would like to recognize Gwen Ellison from Hope Funeral Home. She said Ms. Gwen is one of the owners, and she thanked her for the things she does and for giving back to the community.

Councilmember James noted that she does ask a lot of questions, but only one councilmember on the dias has been found guilty of an ethics violation. She noted that when the employees are in jeopardy of ethics, she will file.

Mayor Butler noted that the charter allows them to conduct their own investigations. However, a section is often overlooked: the section on prohibited conduct. It states that no city official shall use their position in such a manner to threaten, intimidate or humiliate the public and city workforce. She noted through her own investigations that there are employees that fall under this section. She noted it bothers her to know that employees do not feel like they are truly being protected. She stated they will sit and gather the evidence with the intent to sue the city later, but she want it to stop before it gets to that point. Mayor Butler noted this is the time for the employees to say something because it has been said nothing is being done. She noted they cannot fight their battle if they are not saying anything, and if they are looking at one aspect of the charter look at it all.

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

It was moved to recess into Executive Session at 8:28 pm for Personnel, Litigation, or Real Estate matters.

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

It was moved to reconvene the work session at 9:31 p.m.

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

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Butler adjourned the meeting at 9:31 pm.

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

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