



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Monday, November 21, 2022, at 7:00 PM
Council Chambers and YouTube Livestream

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the City of Forest Park to enhance, strengthen, and grow our city by collaborating with our community to provide the highest level of service. Striving to be recognized as a diverse community that values and respects all members. We will strive to provide fair, professional, and courteous service through transparency and open communication. As we work to achieve this mission, we will have integrity beyond reproach while employing fiscal discipline and innovation. In this work there are no praises and raises for mediocrity.

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 Allan Mears

The Honorable Dabouze Antoine
The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells

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

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: The meeting was called to order by Mayor Butler at 7:00pm and she read the Mission Statement

INVOCATION/PLEDGE: The invocation and pledge were led by Minister Cook

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

Javon Lloyd, Public Information Officer, Joshua Cox, IT Director, Chiquita Barkley, Finance Director, Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director, LaShawn Gardiner, Director Planning & Community Development, Shalonda

Brown, HR Director, Fire Chief Latosha Clemons, Bobby Jinks, Director Public Works, Police Chief, Nathaniel Clark, and Arthur Geeter, Purchasing Manager

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

There were two (2) speakers:

Ian Mendleson – Work for a company that owns rental properties in Forest Park. He commended the mayor and councilmembers for trying to improve the safety issues that some renters face here in Forest Park. Personally, he does not feel the recently passed ordinance is the right answer. There is already existing mechanism to resolve safety for the renters, which is to report the existing landlords to code enforcement. The reporting process can be improved or streamlined to be more user-friendly to resolve these issues. Any cost associated with this new ordinance falls on the landlord and will make its way to the renters by rent increases, us making the housing less affordable to the renters of Forest Park.

As per OCGA-14-13-53, the site of real property that is rented or leased to another does not constitute a location or office for the real property owner, lessor, or the agent of the owner lessor. The entire purpose of this section is to define what does or does not constitute a location or office for the very purpose of being subject to the occupational tax. Since property owners do not meet this definition, they are not required to fill out and send in an occupational tax form or pay the occupational tax itself.

The Forest Park ordinance also requires each property to be inspected by the owner and the information be sent to the city. As Forest Park knows from the Cobb County Court decision from 2005 it is unable to require a city inspector to inspect rental property without probable cause. Therefore, the legality of requiring private citizens to perform actions that the city itself is unable to perform is also legally tenuous.

However, as for OCGA- 36-74-30B in no event may a local government require a registration of a residential rental property. I am part of a landlord and property management group that collectively owns or manages over 100 properties here in Forest Park. This group opposes this ordinance and would like to work with Forest Park to produce a better solution that complies with state law then fight this ordinance in court. Collectively this group has the significant resources to fund such a fight but would rather see this ordinance proactively repealed and improvements be made to the current system.

LaWanda Folami – This comes from the concerned citizens of Forest Park, which was established by the Honorable Ms. Valencia Stovall. Some of the citizens have concerns that they brought to my attention come that are afraid to speak out in fear of no longer having a job or having to walk on eggshells. They are coming to me on their behalf because around November 4 payroll was late coming in and they received insufficient funds to their account. No one from the city has gotten with them to accommodate them with those matters.

Another concern of the citizens is that they do not want any more chicken houses, liquor stores, any downgrade grocery stores or anything such as a Burger King or gas station. It is not right that a subordinate feels that another member of staff does not have an open-door policy. When did we start placing tint on windows with blinds, when did we start having the leaders not wanting subordinates or the public to not come in to speak with them? How dare you on the taxpayer's money.

Lastly, I would like to give my condolences to the speaker of the house. Mr. David, your presence on this earth with be missed but never forgotten. Through the years I have been in Forest Park, I have learned one thing; some people look down and some people feel down, but most of the people just become low-down. At the end of that there was an old quote I heard the journey" Pimping not easy, but somebody got to do it." We the citizens are here, and I tell them I cannot believe in you until you believe in yourself, but I do not put up with foolishness.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to adopt the Council Regular Meeting agenda as printed.

Motion made by Councilmember Mears and seconded by Councilmember Antoine

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. **Council Approval of Council Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes from November 7, 2022 -**
City Clerk

It was moved to approve the Council Work Session and Regular meeting minutes on November 7, 2022

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

2. **Council Approval of a Resolution & Agreement with the Atlanta Regional Commission to Update City's Comprehensive Plan –** Planning & Community Development Department

It was moved to approve the Resolution and Agreement with ARC to update the City's Comprehensive Plan

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

3. **Council approval to Execute a Non-Residential Gas Extension Contract with Atlanta Gas Light Company for the new Public Safety Building at Gillem -** Department of Planning and Community Development

It was approved to execute a Non-Residential Gas extension Contract with AGL for the new Public Safety Building at Gillem

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

4. **Council Approval of Upgrading the Chamber AV System –** IT Department

It was moved to upgrade the AV system in the Council Chambers

Motion made by Councilmember Antoine, Seconded by Councilmember James.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY:

Councilmember James – I have lived here for 30 years, and I can remember when I ran for office, some of the community and employees' concerns were in play at that time. I want to stick with one specific thing because of the room today. We have business owners, clergy, resident owners, and visitors of the City of Forest Park, which complained about our police department.

After being elected five years ago, we decided to go in a different direction. We found Chief Clark, and we did a nationwide search to find him. I remember getting an email from a news outlet and it said, "Did you hire Chief Clark because he was Black? My response to the news outlet was, not because he was black, but he was the most qualified. Should it matter that he is black? I never heard from them again.

When we hired Chief Clark, we had many suspicions about our police department already and some of those things were confirmed. Some of the things uncovered were quotas, stop a Christian on Sunday profiling and many other things.

The public concern at that time was so great that people avoided coming to the City of Forest Park. I even had church leaders from the Hispanic community as well as the Black communities share the experience from the congregants on the harassment that they were experiencing and not wanting to come to services because of it.

I have even had Asian business owners complain about the harassment of their communities. It was not just people of color, but people of color were majority. Fast forward to today, we have had major change within our police department. The vision of the 21st century policing has been drilled in the police department. There is resistance from all when it comes to new leadership, but I recall a specific situation that occurred in September of last year, when misinformation and confidential information was being broadcast live on Facebook, which resulted to allegations and public criticism being bought against our police department, other staff members and leaders.

It seems that sabotage and resistance to change has worked itself out even to the point that people have left. Still today some are calling the police department trying to get them to jump ship. So, I am glad to come this evening and share with you as a governing body member that I am very proud of our police department and the staff. If it were not for the work that Chief Clark has put into play, I do not think we would be where we are today. I wanted to publicly make sure I said that aloud.

I attended the National League of Cities in Kansas City this past week, had a wonderful time and even went to several workshops. Some included transforming vacancies, immersive experiences, creating an equitable economy, five practical steps to grow a city, and a city's affordable housing. I also went to the NLC rail round table, and I am going to see if we can implement some of these things to better our city. I would like to give a special thanks to Ms. Victoria Williams, she was able to pick up the turkeys for me that Mr. Rashmir had to give out to Ward 1, thank you Mr. Rashmir.

I want everyone to enjoy Thanksgiving with their families and friends. Please reach out to us if there is anything we can do, or if you have any questions. We are here for you, we are your elected officials and if there is anything you want us to know about, just bring it to us and we will be happy to send it to whomever it needs to go to.

Councilmember Antoine – Thanks to everyone for coming here. I want to give a shout to Jonathan Rashmir and his team. Not everyone can call Thanksgiving on Thursday a Thanksgiving. A lot of people are going to have Thanksgiving because of the turkeys and things you gave out. As Ward 2 leader, we appreciate everything you do for the city. Also, a big shoutout to Bulldog Insurance for making a difference for the people in the city. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone.

Councilmember Gutierrez – I want to give a shoutout to the mayor and the city for hosting the Veterans Day celebration and for all the veterans that were recognized at the ceremony, and the employees that are veterans. Happy Birthday again to Mr. Rudy on turning 100 years young. Thanks to the Forest Park Choir, who will be performing again at our Christmas Parade. Thanks to Bulldog Insurance and shoutout to Mr. Rashmir. Thank you so much for making your father proud, by continuing to give back to our community. This is not just with the turkey, but we have a David Rashmir scholarship that was started initially by his father and Jonathan continued it. We have two Forest Park students that are recipients of those, and we will be celebrating them at the beginning of December. The first prize is \$1,500.00 and the second is \$1,000.00. Hopefully, more businesses will catch on and give back to the students, because they are our future.

The Senior Panthers in Actions are throwing a senior's ball on December 16 from 6pm to 11pm. They are adamant about if you are not RSVP, they are not going to let you in. So, make sure if you want to dress up nicely that you RSVP to the ball.

Thanks to the Clayton County School district, we partnered up, it was psychology and mental health week, and Ms. Taylor is the head of the department. We hosted a movie in the park and not a lot of people came out because it was very cold. We also had Thanksgiving dinner out there with the tailgate, so shoutout to Parks and Rec. and the City of Forest Park for hosting that. Enjoy Thanksgiving which is my favorite holiday and do not let Christmas stress you. It is all about love and how you make someone feel and not the materialistic stuff, because you cannot take it with you.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Thank you all for coming out. The young gentlemen with the comments, it makes a lot of sense, and I would like us to look further into it to make sure we know what we are voting on. I would like to make sure we are doing the right thing, and not of the spur of the moment type things. I would like an update on that and what our response is to him on the rental properties.

Thank you so much Jonathan for continuing to do what your dad did. He was a great guy; you are a great guy, and our community needs people like you. We have huge companies that do not do half of what you all are doing or have done over the years, and I just want the community to know that. Every time I have given away turkeys it was because of you all establishment and having the hearts that you have, and I appreciate you so much on behalf of Ward 4.

Please have a Happy Thanksgiving, these past few years have been tough for a lot of families, with covid and people losing their jobs. Like Councilmember Gutierrez said, do not let the holiday stress you, every day we should give thanks and everyday should be a holiday. Do not get depressed, I know you may have lost loved ones, or have the funds to do what you want to do but just thank God for being able to see another holiday, because a lot of people did not.

Ms. Folami, thank you for your comments. We must hold each other accountable, and you all must hold us accountable. I do get irritated when certain things are being targeted, so I will not call it Wellness with Wells, the new name is Forest Park Fitness. I think we should focus on other things when you have thieves you have elected to office, or that comes into the chambers under the influence we need to focus on doing something about those things instead of being petty about things that is for the community.

I am no one boss, but I think some of these things should be put out there and the public should know about it. It is embarrassing when you have certain people lashing out and you know why, and some of the people know why no

one is doing anything about it. Things are being brushed up under the rug, so speak up and say something, because at the end of the day we work for you all. Hold us accountable, everyone. Thank you all so much. Have a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas. To our employees thank you for showing up, I know it gets tough, I know the missing money was a lot, but you hung in there.

Councilmember Mears – I would like to thank you all for being here and hope you have a Happy Thanksgiving. Thanks to Mr. Rashmir and Bulldog Insurance for giving back. We have a lot of families in Forest Park that are having rough times. It is hard to see someone else's hardship when you are having hardship yourself. I try to help people if they look like they need help and not just around the holiday season. Thanks to the businesspeople in Forest Park for their giving and backing us and working with the council. I want everyone to have a good turkey day and after that Christmas is coming. Let us remember the reason for the season, because we need to be thankful for that day.

Mayor Butler – I would like to thank everyone for being present this evening. I do echo the sentiments of my colleagues to Bulldog Insurance and to Mr. Jonathan Rashmir, for their turkey contribution. As it pertains to the rental inspection ordinance, I do want to thank you for your understanding, of the effort that we are trying to put forward. It is not a requirement and one of the tasks of the city attorney is to protect the city at all costs.

If he has presented something that is countered to that, then it is something that the council will take into consideration and address accordingly. It is not intended to maliciously malign or hurt anyone, but it is to protect the residents. What I found is that there are some that are afraid to speak out, because they do fear retaliation one way or another. So having a process that is win, win is a goal for everybody, but we all know that it is a problem and unfortunately there are some ill principled people out there that are preying on our most vulnerable residents. That is what this ordinance is intended to address, so if you have any ideas, I am open to having dialogue with your group, but the city attorney knows how I feel about protecting this city at all costs. I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, and we will have only one meeting in December unless we must have a special called meeting.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved to adjourn the Regular Council meeting at 7:27pm

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

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