



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Monday, February 07, 2022, at 6:00 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) 366.1555

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

APPROVED MINUTES

The Honorable Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA

The Honorable Kimberly James
The Honorable Hector Gutierrez

The Honorable Dabouze Antoine
The Honorable Latresa Akins-Wells

The Honorable Allan Mears

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

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: The meeting was called to order 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		✓
Hector Gutierrez	Council Member, Ward 3 - Mayor Pro-Tem		✓
Latresa Akins-Wells	Council Member, Ward 4		✓
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5		✓

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Darquita Williams, Interim Finance Director; Shalonda Brown, Human Resources Director, Lashawn Gardiner, Management Analyst, Latosha Clemons, Fire Chief, Bruce Abraham, Director Economic Development, Tarik Maxell, Director of Recreation & Leisure, Bobby Jinks, Director of Public Works, Joshua Cox, IT Director, Arthur Geeter, Purchasing Director, James Shelby, Planning & Community Development Director, Nathaniel Clark, Chief of Police and Javon Lloyd, PIO Director.

Mayor Butler spoke on the recent retreat and that the alignment throughout of entire organization and revisited our mission statement reaffirm the mission, vision, and value statements. In part, we want to make sure that every employee understands the importance of those three statements and we are going to make sure that when we have our meeting, we revisit those three statements and each director is going to make sure when they meet with the staff they are going to reinforce those three statements and it is just indicative of making sure that we are all on the same page and acting accordingly as it pertains to the entire city of Forest Park. She asked Dr. Cooper, city manager, to read the mission, vision, and values statements for the city.

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

COMMUNITY INFORMATION/REMINDERS:

- Do your part to ensure that storms do not leave pollution behind. Stormwater runoff could be carrying pollutants that are harmful to the environment including: oil, gas, grease, copper, and animal waste. To learn how you can help prevent pollution in stormwater runoff visit the Clayton County Water Authority Website.
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs launched its Mortgage assistance program. The State of Georgia received \$354 million from the U.S. Treasury's Homeowners Assistance Fund established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, to provide relief to homeowners who suffered a financial hardship due to the COVID pandemic. This program is administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. For more information on how you can qualify for up to \$50K in assistance and/or to apply. <https://georgiamortgageassistance.ga.gov/>

CITY OPERATIONS:

- The City of Forest Park is working on a partnership with the Georgia Relay 711 which is a Free public service provided by the State of Georgia to making communicating by telephone easy, accessible, and reliable for everyone, including people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or have difficulty speaking. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Georgia Relay allows users to stay connected. Georgia Relay 711 along with our previously bi-lingual incentive for city staff will enable the City of Forest Park to be even more accessible and inclusive of all in our community and ensure we are providing communications and outreach directly to them.
- Mayor and Council had a successful budget retreat on January 28 and 29, 2022. This retreat started preliminary budget talks and priority outlines for the FY22-23 budget. We will be looking to schedule our public hearings on the budgetary items within the next few months, with the hopes of having an approved FY23 prior to June 30, 2022.
- On Friday, February 4, 2022, Mayor Angelyne Butler and Clayton County Chairman Jeff Turner, myself and others attended the Ribbon Cutting evening for the Kroger Corporation Fulfillment Center in Fort Gillem Logistics Center. "With direct access to three interstate highways, an international airport and railways, our city has become a strategic partner that supports large-scale commerce and growing industries," said Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA. "This type of economic development progress only helps to strengthen our message that it is a new day in Forest Park. We trust that our public-private partnership with Kroger will help pave the way for more high-wage jobs and serve as an investment toward our goal of creating an even more robust business climate."

CONGRATULATIONS/SHOUT OUT

- Shout out to all members of the Executive Leadership Team of the City of Forest Park. As previously state the Mayor and Council had a successful Budget Retreat, and each director present information that will help formulate a budget so the city can live up to its mission, vision, and values for the community. I would like to extend my personal thank you to the entire team for their diligence and dedication to our city.
- Shout out to our Mayor and all City Council Members for completing the mandatory National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) – ICS overview for Executives and Senior Officials training. Thank you to Ms. Sheri Russo of GEMA, Forest Park Fire Chief Latosha Clemons, and our Emergency Management Coordinator Ms. Ioana Armstrong for facilitating this training for all of us.

COVID-19 UPDATE: EMS Coordinator, Andrew Gelmini

As of January 30, 2022, Clayton County has 55,302 cases of Covid 19 and 776 confirmed deaths.

Between 1/24 and 1/30 there were 3,940 new confirmed cases county wide.

50% of County residents have received at least 1 dose of vaccine and 45% are fully vaccinated.

Forest Park makes up 8.4% of County cases dropping 0.7% from last report. With a total of 4,928 cases as of 1/30 up 1,638 cases from last month. We are showing a 41% decrease in new cases.

The 20 to 50 age group shows the highest percentage of positive cases with African Americans showing the highest positive case percentage followed by Unknown and Caucasian.

Cases peaked in the second week of December and are continuing to show a steady rapid decline.

65 to 85 age group has the highest vaccination rate.

The Omicron Variant is showing significantly less severe symptoms than the Delta variant with symptoms lasting from 3-5 days. Delta is still actively being spread to some people, still requiring hospitalization, and causing severe illness. The EMS and EMA Coordinators have tracked about 40 positive cases of city employees

The CDC continues to encourage and recommend vaccination and boosters for COVID-19 which are available through several means. The current recommendations for vaccines are anyone 5 years and older. The current recommendation for boosters is at least 6 months after receiving the final dose of the first series for Moderna and Pfizer or 2 months after receiving the single dose Johnson and Johnson. People can text their zip code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find local vaccine providers. Contacting your Primary Care Physician or local pharmacy to see if they are giving vaccines or visit vaccines.gov. The Clayton County Health District is giving vaccines based on availability and are rotating their locations to allow for easy access. They are requesting people wishing to receive the vaccine or booster to call and make an appointment at (678) 479-2223.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Council Discussion on Transferring Previous Year CDBG Funds to Current Year – Executive Offices**

Background/History:

The City of Forest Park was awarded 2019 CDBG funds for architecture and engineering costs for improvements to Rock Cut Road in the amount of \$64,213 for engineering and design. All engineering and design services have been completed, leaving a balance of approximately \$29,213. If approved by Clayton County HUD Offices to transfer remaining funds to the 2021 Starr Park Improvements award, it is in the city's best interest to do so, so that the funds are not recaptured by the County.

LaShawn Gardiner, Management Analyst - \$35,000 of the funds from CDBG 2019 program year has been expended, we have a remaining balance of \$29,000+, so it will be in our best interest to ask to have these funds transferred to another project, which is the Starr Park improvements.

Comments from Governing Body:

Councilmember James – Do you have any idea whether or not the county will accept something like this? Will they allow us to do, approve it?

LaShawn Gardiner – This is the formality, if you recall about a couple of years ago, we went through the same process regarding the town center funding, so we are just asking the same transfer request from the county, so that they do not recoup the funds. They anticipate few years ago, so we are just following the same process.

2. Council Discussion on Consideration and Approval for “The Leaf” Monthly Newsletter – Public Information Office

Background/History:

“The Leaf Report” will be the City of Forest Parks way of communicating important, timely information to citizens. The newsletter will be published monthly and electronically distributed to residents and businesses. The newsletter will focus on citywide operations and will not be ward specific but will encompass all operations of the city, covering all projects and issues.

Sending an electronic newsletter is a great way to give residents and businesses "added value" in the form of interesting content, information, and valuable tips, as well as keeping them informed of upcoming matters. The City Manager is seeking approval from Council to adopt “the Leaf” as the official newsletter of the city and begin distributing it via email.

There was no discussion or comments.

3. Council Discussion to Reduce the Speed Limit on East Bound and West Bound Pineridge Drive – Chief Executive Offices

Background/History:

From April 14 – 18, 2021, the City of Forest Park conducted a speed study on East Bound and West Bound Pineridge Drive to validate a request for installation of Speed Calming Devices. After review by the City Manager, Public Works, and Forest Park Police Department it was determined that the street did not meet the criteria for the devices or to a speed reduced.

The streets current speed limit is 35 mph and vehicle counts are approximately 9,372. Per city ordinance any city street with a speed limit over 30 mph or a traffic count over 4000 vehicles per day would not qualify for a speed calming device. Before a speed clamping device could be installed the speed limit would have

to be reduced to 30 mph to bring it within the guideline of the City Ordinance.

However, upon a reduction in speed an independent third party is required to conduct a speed study, it could not be done by the city and that report reviewed by the State. If it cannot justify based criteria from the State's Uniform Rules of the Road a need for the devices it can be denied, and they can restore or increase the speed limit on the road.

Pineridge Road is a proposed City Park location.

The city manager is requesting council's guidance on how it would like to proceed in this matter.

Comments from Governing Body:

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I asked this to be placed on the agenda and I spoke with Dr. Cooper and Mr. Williams, a while ago and I by Mike Williams that is just took to police department changing the speed limit and so that was supposed to be in the works. When it came time for the speed bumps to be put out, Cynthia Lane was complete and Pine Ridge was not, in actuality Pine Ridge is one of the most dangerous streets in my ward, there is a lot of accidents, people hitting mailboxes because they are speeding going around curve. I am hoping that the speed limit can be reduced and whatever needs to be done as far as investigating can be done, as well as the proposed park going in that location, I think the speed limit should be reduced and speed bumps should be installed. Also, residents that have done police reports, and some of the people have been caught speeding and destroying mailboxes; so hopefully you will take this into consideration because it is about the safety of the people and if we can do something to change it then hopefully, we will.

Councilmember James - There is something outlined on here that says that before the speed can be reduced, it is required that we conduct a speed study and also that we have to be approved by the state before that speed can stay that way. Can you elaborate on that, Dr. Cooper?

City Manager – The speed study that was originally done was conducted by the city, that is the initial proposed speed study to determine if it meets the criteria of the city ordinance to have speed calming devices installed. It did not meet, according to the city ordinance criteria. In conversations with CM Akins-Wells and police department, which does not have the authority to do it if it does not meet the ordinance criteria. The only other way is that council would vote to reduce the speed limit, but at that point it will be out of the city's hands. We would hire a third-party company to come in and conduct another speed study and that information would go directly to the state, it would not come back to city, we would not have anything to do with it. Once the state receives it, they can review it along with any other information they have as far as accidents or anything else, and if they feel that it is not justified for the speed limit to be reduced, they can deny it and tell us that the speed limit must be put back to 35 or even increased if they feel that is warranted. So, it would really be out of the city's hands at that point.

Councilmember Antoine – So would that leave the police department in a comprising position, knowing that they do not know what speed limit to enforce.

City Manager – No, the speed limit would go into effect, if council voted to reduce it, the 30 mile an hour speed limit would go into effect, however, what would happen, because CM Akins-Wells would like speed calming devices, we would have to get another speed study done by a third-party. So, the speed limit would be the speed limit until the state reviews the information and either tells us that it can stay, we can put in the speed calming devices or no you must take that speed limit out and increase it.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – So, in order to take all that out, if I said install stop signs, would it be the same? If we do not have to go through all of that, for stop signs.

City Manager – Yes, we could put stop signs, we would have to look at the intersections we would do it and would it be either a three-way or four-way, we can do stop signs. But if we were going to do the speed calming devices this is the process we would have to take.

Councilmember Akins-Wells - If we can do stop signs, I would rather do that instead of going through all of this, so let us do the stop signs; because it is about the safety of the people.

Mayor Butler – So would you like to table this, or you could just remove it?

Councilmember Akins-Wells – As long as we can do stop signs, the sooner the better, we can take it off.

City Manager – Mr. Jinks, please make a note of that and we will discuss it tomorrow with Sgt. Gladden and Chief.

4. **Main Street Streetscape Phase IIA – Relocation Agreement Between Georgia Power and City of Forest Park** – Department of Planning and Community Development

Background/History:

Main Street Streetscape Project Phase IIA from College Street to Phillips Drive requires a relocation agreement between the City of Forest Park and Georgia Power to relocate existing Georgia Power equipment and to install concrete poles to replace existing wooden poles.

Comments from Governing Body:

Councilmember Mears – Dr. Cooper, are we going to have to pay for the concrete poles or would it be a swap out type situation?

James Shelby, Planning & Community Development – No, you cannot swap out wooden for concrete. This is so GA Power can remove the existing creosote poles and all the wirings they have and then they will come back and replace them taller concrete poles, which will allow us to continue with the project. Now, this is not the decorative lights, I will bring that to council in a couple of weeks. This is so important because we are getting ready to put this project out for bid.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Where will the money/budget line will this come from?

James Shelby – Out of the 2015, 2020 SPLOST and from URA Bond issuance

Councilmember Mears – So, it will not cost the city anything, other than it coming out of the other funds?

James Shelby – No, it is already funded out the URA Bonds, SPLOST 2020 and we also have money in existing bonds, I believe its 1.4 million in existing SPLOST funds,

5. **Council Discussion on Purchasing New City Street Light Banners** – Chief Executive Office

Background/History:

The City of Forest Park has Street Light Banners along the major thoroughfares of the city. The banners are intended to instill a sense of pride in the community, by adding a decorative element to the city's streetscape. The City Manager is seeking council approval to purchase 18 new streetlight banners.

Comments from Governing Body:

City Manager – Council, these are the banners that we brought before previously, that you asked to be redesigned. We did that with the new city logo, the “welcome to” language that CM Gutierrez asked for and I think the finished product looks good. We are looking at getting them in the three different colors for each banner.

6. Council Discussion and Action Regarding a Councilmember's Missed Meetings and Pay Reduction – Chief Executive Office

Background/History:

Pursuant to council meeting of January 22, 2022, discussion regarding Councilmembers missing meetings. Per the city code of ordinances Sec. 2-1-33 - Compensation and expenses of members of the city council. Councilwoman Wells pay was reduced by 10% for each meeting missed which is documented as the workshop and regular meetings of November 15, 2021, and the workshop and regular meetings of December 6, 2021.

Councilwoman Wells is requesting that there be a vote regarding her pay being reinstated and will provide her reasons per the Code of Ordinances to council. The City Manager is seeking direction on how the council would like to proceed in this matter.

Comments from Governing Body:

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I wanted to put this, because whatever the rules or the charter says, that is what the charter says, but my issue comes with one not being transparent and me being told that there was supposed to be a vote to take place on where my reasoning was justified. My reason being that I was around somebody with COVID, so I was not coming to put people's lives in jeopardy so, I was told to put this on the agenda so, that it can be on record and two, you know just reading our vision, values and mission statement, it says without discrimination and so, I know for a fact, in my last 10 years here, CM Antoine has missed more meeting in two years that I missed in 10, but nobody has brought that up. The charter does is it is for everybody, it is not just for me, it is not just for the mayor, it is for everyone. What I asked, is if my pay was going to be reduced, that is fine, but you got to be consistent, you cannot pick and choose who you want the charter to be for. I have requested that information and I still have not received how many meetings CM Antoine has missed. Because having a second job in the summertime does not mean you call in to meetings and do not miss meetings. It was also stated that I was supposed to call in to let them know and that is not in our charter, I do not have to call and let nobody know, I can do it out of respect, but that is not something that I have to do. It is not about the money being deducted, but you would need to go back and do the same thing for other people, because you cannot pick and choose who you want this charter to relate to. Mr. Williams, if you do not mind, I asked you and I believe Dr. Cooper, meetings missed by other council members, because if I am not mistaken, everybody has missed a meeting up here, so why just specifically CM Wells, if there is no discrimination going on.

City Attorney – In reviewing this, this past year, it appears from the record that we have that all the other councilmembers, whether they had a personal illness or illness of an immediate family member or things of that sort, they were excused.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – By whom?

City Attorney – By operation of the ordinance, there is just cause, if there is a personal illness that there is no vote required; if it is a personal illness of a family member....

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I get that, not to cut you off, but I am talking about when people have other jobs and they miss a whole summer of meetings and no one says anything about that, no one says we got to vote to make sure that reason is justified, that is what I am talking about.

City Attorney – I cannot speak to those facts directly, I know for the prior year, when we were under COVID, everyone was calling in; (*CM Wells – we are still under COVID*) I hear you, but I am just saying that in terms of specifics on where people were, what was going on, we were allowing people to call in per the state of emergency and that is the only information I have to respond to that.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I get completely what you are saying, but I am just saying, I have never heard anyone come to me and say CM Wells, we need to talk about if this person's reason for missing a meeting was justified. I have never heard of that, so I am just saying, if we are going to do it, be consistent, and I still want that information and I still want it to be voted on because mine was not, you told me that there was to be a vote if my reason was justified and me being around someone with COVID is not justified reason, so that was why the pay was taken. So, I just want this to be on record and I want to know the meetings that everyone has missed, so we can go back and do the same for everyone else.

Mayor Butler – City Attorney, when some people have been out, the fact that they were able to call in, still counted as they were present, as long as we had a physical quorum present.

City Attorney – Yes, exactly, it was not an absent, it was that they were away from city hall, but calling in pursuant to the provision in open meetings act, which allows you to call in.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Allows you to call in if you are in the state of Georgia?

Mayor Butler – from exclusion was that if we had an executive session, then they would not have been permitted to partake in executive session.

City Attorney – for that portion of the meeting, but they are still counted present for the meeting.

Councilmember James – I just want to be clear for those that are listening this is not about missed meetings, because we are all grown, and we all are professionals and at some point, in life things are going to happen and we may not be able to make a meeting. This is about the disrespect of acknowledging that you are going to be gone, when no one, including the city manager, city attorney or anyone was notified that you are not going to be at a meeting, whether and if it is an emergency that happened and you cannot call but at least the next day or whenever your emergency subsides, you would call and say this is why I was not present at the meeting. There was no communication, whatsoever, why this person, well why CM Wells was not present at the meetings in November and December. No communication at all, we had no clue; it was not until we brought it up and asked why you was not present and why did not you communicate, and the response was "well I do not have to communicate, (*CM Wells - because I do not work for you*). Well, the thing is, when you are employed by someone, then you are accountable, and you cannot just not show up and not notify anyone and that is a standard that we all have.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – City Attorney, is that in the charter, that I have to call into them.

Mayor Butler – Just let her finish, you will have your moment to respond.

Councilmember James – I will say that it gives for just reason or things that are justified for being absent. So, if we know that you were sick, if we know whatever the case may be, then it is automatically justified, we do not have to take a vote for it, in fact when we talked about this during our executive session, we talked about the fact that there was no communication, that is the problem. It is not the problem that the meetings were missed, it is the problem that there is no communication. We all are held to a standard and we all should be able to communicate, with at least to our city manager to say that I am not going to be present and that did not happen, and its months and months and we still did not know what happened until we had a discussion about it and why a councilmember was not present for two of the meetings we had.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – City Attorney, again is it in our charter that a councilmember has to call in to anyone when they are going to miss a meeting? Now, out of respect, yes, I can go with that, but we are going by the charter. Is there anywhere in our charter that states a councilmember, and I am not an employee of the city of Forest Park, I am an elected official. Is there something in our charter that states I need to call in? Because, if I work for the citizens of Forest Park, as long as a couple of citizens know I am not going to be a meeting, then that is enough for me, because that is who I work for. So, can you, for the record, state if that is in our charter that a councilmember has to call in?

City Attorney – In that code section, it does not require advanced notice by any member of the council if you are going miss the meeting.

Mayor Butler – It would be the justifications enlisted in there is for a sickness not an exposure?

City Attorney – The automatic just cause applies to along the line what you are saying, Madam Mayor, is basically, if there is a sickness of councilmember of immediate family members etc., if goes on to say that, the council may vote to determine whether an absence was justified and reasonable based on information provided by the councilmembers, so the information does not have to be provided in advance, but if you choose to vote afterwards based on the information, it is within the council's authority to vote to determine whether it was justified.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – So, we just had our fire department talk about COVID, people actually dying from it and you are saying COVID is not a sickness, I guess that is what you are relating that to, but if I have been exposed to someone with COVID, and I actually had it, I am not coming here and put other people's lives in jeopardy for a meeting, I am just not doing that, so if you all feel that is not justifiable, I just wanted it on record that being exposed to COVID, having COVID is not an excuse to miss a meeting.

Councilmember James – Madame Mayor, one more comment. If you have COVID or is exposed to someone with it, then you do not come to the council center the day of the council meeting and expose the people that you are around at that time and then and not come to the council meeting. Then attend a high school basketball game, which was the next day after council meeting. You do not show up to high school basketball (CM Wells – *what basketball game?*) Jonesboro vs Forest Park, that was the day after the council meeting on Tues. evening, so, I do not have a problem with the excuse of quarantine but let us just be truthful about it.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – It is not an excuse, just like now, I am sitting here with people without masks on, last meeting CM Mears coughing with no mask on, I can social distance. So, yes, I had to hand business, I came up here, but I was not in anyone's face, because I did not have to be, and I had my mask on. So, again it is not an excuse, and I am not worried about the money, but like I said you have to be

consistent, you are not going to pick and choose who you want the charter to be for, and again this is for the record.

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

It was motioned to recess into Executive Session at 6:37pm for Personnel, Real Estate and Litigation matters.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

It was motioned to reconvene back to Work Session at 6:44pm

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

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

Councilmember James – I would like to announce that our city manager, for those who will have to leave, is one of the nominees for the National Forum of Black Administrators, to be on their board of directors. Congratulations, and if you are member you will vote for him to represent us nationally.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was motioned to adjourn the Council's Work Session at 6:46p.

Motion made by Councilmember Mears, Seconded by Councilmember James.

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