



CITY OF FOREST PARK MAYOR & COUNCIL

City Council Work Session

Monday, June 07, 2021, at 6:00 PM

Council Chambers, Virtual Meeting Via Zoom and YouTube Livestream

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 Work Session Meeting 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 by Mayor Butler at 6:00pm.

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

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:

- Moment of Silence for Clayton County Vice-Chairman Commissioner Sonna Singleton Gregory.
- Missing Child – Jessica Caulker missing since May 8, 2021. She is 5ft tall, slim/round body structure, weight 120. She likes to wear hoody hat, cover head. If seen please call Forest Park Police – 404-608-2366.
- 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 DDA is still gathering all necessary documentation and it is expected within the next two weeks City Council will be provided a full briefing, as well as a town hall for the residents. Please stay tuned for a date, time, and location for this town hall.
- Forest Park Ministers Association is hosting the Ministers for Healthy Communities Project 2021 Regional Town Hall Meeting. The meeting will be held Saturday, June 26, 2021, 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm at Starr Park (in accordance with CDC Social Distancing Guidelines + Virtual via Facebook live) for more information or to register visit www.Eventbrite.com/minister-for-healthy-communities.
- Forest Park Ministers Association and the City of Forest Park is sponsoring “Will Clean Up the Northside of our City” – June 12, 2021, volunteers are welcome. Facemasks are mandatory, hand sanitizers and gloves will be provided. For more information you can contact Edie Yongue 770-289-4640 or Dr. Leon Beeler 678-207-8904.
- City of Forest Park Presents FREEDOM DAY – A Juneteenth Celebration held on June 19th, starting at 4pm at the Starr Park Amphitheater, 803 Forest Parkway – Live entertainment, bounce houses, mechanical bulls, pony ride, food trucks, etc. Bring out the Family for a great day.
- Councilman Dabouze Antoine is presenting DIVE IN MOVIES – Poolside on June 13, 2021, 4pm – 8pm – movie featured will be “Tom & Jerry”. For more information you can contact Marquesa Moore 404-201-1126.
- Councilwoman Akins-Wells presents “Fun Friday” – June 18, 2021, from 8:00pm – 11:00pm at the Starr Park Amphitheater – featuring live band “Something for the Soul”.
- 2021-22 Budget Public Hearings – 1st meeting is set for June 16 @ 5:00 pm and the 2nd meeting is set for June 21 @ 7:00 pm both meetings will be held in City Hall Council Chambers.

CITY OPERATIONS:

- On May 26, 2021, the City of Forest Park Launched its new online payment portal visit www.forestparkga.gov and click on the “Online Payments” button to be taken to the link.
- The City of Forest Park Public Works department has resumed its Community Service Program as of May 18, 2021. The new hours will be from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm – Monday through Friday. Check in at 7:00 am at the right side of the Main Building Entrance located at 5230 Jones Rd, Forest Park, GA 30297.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

Forest Park Police Department

- Thank You Officer Anfernee Morgan was working on duty at the “I’ve Been Broken to be set free” evening on May 23, 2021. We received correspondence from Ms. Chandra Heath, Executive Director of the Amazing Soldiers, Inc. who sponsored the event praising Officer Morgan. She stated that he was standing in the back of the room made his way to speak to the host and her other business associates. He stated that “he was

moved by the testimony of the women who had spoken.” He spoke for 3 minutes to the women in the room, and it was stated that his words moved them, so they wanted to let the executives and others know that they appreciated that moment. It was stated that “with all that is going on, we all needed that moment and it showed some of the women that not all police officers are bad.” The Executive Director stated that she believes “when employees show good gestures that their superiors should know.”

Finance Office

- Thank Deputy Finance Director Darquita Williams, Finance Manager Lori Still, Ms. Leigh Corley and Ms. Nekeeta Davis for being instrumental in the launch of the City of Forest Park’s new online payment portal.

Executive Offices

- The City Manager’s Employee Advisory Committee 1st meeting was held on Thursday, May 27th and I would like to personally thank members of the committee for speaking openly and candid with regarding issues concerning employees of our great city. Committee members are Ms. Yvonne Braswell, HR; Ms. Fatima Fernandez, Finance; Mr. Braun Allen, Forest Park PD; Ms. Shereka Rouser, PNZ; Mr. Marcus Porter, Public Works; Mr. Willie Freeman, Recreation and Leisure, Mr. Joseph Kidd, Fire; Ms. Lashawn Gardiner, Executive Office; Mr. Edwin Torres, Code Enforcement; and Ms. Brittney Sparks, Forest Park PD. This was a randomly selected group that has experience in the city ranging from 8 months to 24 years. We will be meeting monthly to discuss problems and solutions, if needed will be coming before the City Council for approval.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Deputy Fire Chief Clemons

Deputy Chief Clemons reported as of June 6, 2021, there has been over 24,410 cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) and 481 confirmed deaths. There were 61 new positive Covid-19 tests reported in Clayton County between May 31 and June 6th. Clayton County continues to account for 2.7% of the total cases in Georgia, and Forest Park representing 9.5% of cumulative Cases. 78,625 Clayton County residents (28%) have received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine and 63,981 (23%) have been fully vaccinated.

COVID Testing Location:

Rock Springs Baptist Church 5900 Reynolds Rd. Morrow, GA 30260
Appoints are required, contact 1 844 625 6522 then press option 3
Monday -Friday from 8:00am-4:pm

Covid Vaccination Locations:

Mundy’s Mill High School 9652 Fayetteville Rd Jonesboro, GA 30238. Call 678 479-2223

Additional Locations: Walgreens, CVS, Kroger, Publix, Ingles, Walmart

Vaccines can be received at (no fee) Insurance Information, Driver License or SS# may be requested but does not prevent residents from receiving the vaccine. Vaccination remains one of our best tools for stopping the spread of COVID-19, along with basic prevention measures:

Wear a Mask

- Wear a mask to protect you and others
- Cover your nose and mouth

Social Distance

- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance when possible

- Choose safe social activities
- Handwashing
- Wash your hands frequently
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

After discussion with the City Manager and the fact that the numbers have not shown much of a variance, Covid updates will be held on the 1st Commission Monday of the Month, unless deemed necessary.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Council Discussion Only on Rental Inspection Program** - James Shelby, Director of Planning, Building & Zoning

Background and Summary:

Discussion Only on Rental Inspection Program

James Shelby, Director of Planning, Building, and Zoning: Most of the presentation is inaudible on the recording. What could be interpreted in Mr. Shelby spoke to changing the ordinance, specifically the inspection portion.

Comments & Questions:

Councilmember Kimberly James: I believe this is an excellent idea, especially since we get some many complaints from residents about the problems in their apartment complexes. My questions are about private family homes. Does this ordinance speak to that at all? If I own a home and I am renting it out is this covered in this? How will you know that the house is being rented?

Shelby: Answer is mostly inaudible

Councilmember Gutierrez: I agree with Councilwoman James. I am glad this is being put in place. The cost of the annual. Can you briefly break down the fees that the owner is going to have to incur annually?

Shelby: Answer is mostly inaudible

Councilmember Gutierrez: With this seems like a lot more work. Are we going to have to hire more staff? Is that something you are thinking about? I want to make sure that when we implement this, we are ready.

2. **Council Discussion Only on New Public Safety Building at Gillem Logistics** - James Shelby, Director of Planning, Building & Zoning

Background and Summary:

Discussion Only on the site plan and elevation for the new Public Safety building in Gillem Logistics - James Shelby, Director of Planning, Building & Zoning.

James Shelby – Presented site plans and the elevation for the Public Safety building at Ft. Gillem. It will sit on 4.32 acres. It will consist of a fire station with three bays with bi fold doors. It will also consists of police precinct. The fire station will be 13,208 sq. feet. There will be a conference room that will be shared. There will be accommodations for the three shift changes. It is more than a step up than what our first

responders have today. We are looking ultimately to address the needs that they have at the station. Groundbreaking is scheduled for July 26, 2021. A notice to the proceed for the contractor will be issued and the groundbreaking for the contractor is scheduled for November 16, 2021. Please keep in my mind that all dates are fluid and may have to be adjusted according to circumstance.

Comments & Questions:

Councilmember Gutierrez: Can you zoom in to the layout? I would like to know what is in there.

James Shelby – There will be a day room, dining room, kitchen with cabinets and storage space for the three shifts, fitness room, two officer bunks and shared office, eight bunks that will be put into pods (4 bunks pod a, 4 bunks pod b), watch sport room, and there will have a triage area/room. There are three bays in the fire station The police station will have a large conference room, lobby for citizens, office for patrolmen, office for the patrol supervisor, storage, deco room, and turnout gear room.

Councilmember Gutierrez: The top of the diagram says future training grounds. Are we going to use that a training area in the future?

James Shelby – This was supposed to be a replacement for the fire station, and we have gone over and beyond to ensure they have what they need.

3. **Council Discussion on the Results of the Employee Survey - Councilmember Kimberly James**

Councilmember James - Based on the Operational and Performance Audit there were some recommendations that were suggested to each department, and I am sure each Director has been task to implement as many of those recommendations as possible thanks to Dr. Cooper.

I am committed to focusing on the areas that we can change as the governing body. 33% of employees responded to survey and the scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The lowest score was 2.5, the highest score was 4.3. The highest score shows that employees more than agree that they are meeting the expectation of customers and understanding how their work relates to the success of the city and are proud to work for the city. I am very optimistic about these results. The lowest score from the survey relates to staffing levels, lack of clear communications and management. These areas are being addressed by our new City Manager, Dr. Cooper. We are proud of the level of experience and knowledge of our City Manager, and I am confident that the needed changes will occur.

There were eight open ended questions but for the purpose of this presentation, I want to focus on the question which asked employees to identify opportunities for improvement and the major impediments to making the improvements. Of the weaknesses/opportunities for improvement that were identified, some overlap and others are already being addressed. Are there any points on this list the council would like to address? The area I would like to address is Low Morale. I have forwarded a copy of an article, "11 ways to boost Employee Morale" to Dr. Cooper for his consideration. Of the impediments to making improvements that were identified, again some overlap and others are being addressed. Are there any points on this list the council would like to address? My next statement will address several points on this list and that is to say, "If we desire to be a progressive city, we need to make improvements in many areas and we must be willing to embrace change. I would challenge Dr. Cooper to continue work with and challenge our directors to continue with progress in these specific areas for the good of the city. We need to be sure that "leadership oppression" or any other type of oppression is not part of the City's Culture.

The final point on this list I would like to address is "elected officials inserting themselves in operations." As elected officials, we do not and should not have the power to hire and fire lower-level staff. The City Manager is the chief administrative officer of the city, and he directs and supervises all departments and oversees the day-to-day operations of the city. Employees are to follow the directions of their leaders who should follow the directions of the City Manager. There are only a handful of positions that the Council is directly responsible for filling. In fact, personnel are a very small fraction of the duties that we are responsible for, and most issues are handled by the City Manager who follows the charter and personnel policies with conviction. Employees should be comfortable doing their jobs without us interfering. Now then, I recognize there are certain situations when matters are brought to our attention and we can investigate to find out about the matter and, if warranted, we can discuss further as a council. I also want to say that of the issues that I have had to research, I have found that our staff has used our personnel attorneys to help with gathering the facts to come up with a result so rest assured that if an employee has a written complaint, it is not taken lightly and is handled with all matter of process to protect you as an employee and the City as an employer. One particular concern I want to share is that I have heard it said on many occasions that we as elected officials have the staff afraid. In response to this statement, I would say to you, do not be afraid but put your grievance or concern in writing and let the process work for the staff and the city. I also want to say that there should not be any bullying, or disrespectful or demeaning behavior toward any staff members because of a perceived 3 vote majority of the Council.

Our City Manager is in charge and should be respected in that manner. I know that recently, Dr. Cooper sent us a message reiterating his role and the level of disrespect that he believes is escalating towards the CM office as well as city staff. While I do not know the details or specifics, I would hope that if specifics are shared with us in future, then we as a council will address it and honor the Charter and the people that have been placed in charge. We need to hold each other accountable.

So that there is no misunderstanding, this is what I will say to the staff if anyone of us, except for Dr. Cooper, interferes with an employee's job duties and directs the employee to do something. You do not have to do it unless it has been cleared with your department head and the City Manager and this is especially true if you have already been given a directive by your superiors that contradicts the instructions that you are given by an elected official. If this is a problem, then I encourage you as staff to submit an official complaint to try and resolve the problem and then, if necessary, file an ethics charge.

I believe that council interference with personnel has got to stop. We were elected to govern the city, to set policy, and address concerns of our constituents, among other things. The governing body does not run the day-to-day operations of the city. It is our responsibility to appoint and/or confirm qualified people, such as the City Manager and department heads to handle the day-to-day operations for the city and we need to allow them to do their jobs without interference from us. And we should refer employees who come to us with concerns to follow the proper chain of command that is in place to address their concerns. As provided by Charter, we do not give orders.

Comments/Questions from Council:

Mayor Butler: Everything on here I agree with. I believe that they were spot on with their findings.

Councilmember Gutierrez: What do you mean when you say leadership oppression? I do not understand what you mean.

Councilmember James: Anyone can feel free to chime in but if I am a leader and I have someone under me that has an idea and I do not allow that idea to come out or overlook that idea or take that idea as my own and belittle the employee, you just belittle the staff to a certain extent.

Mayor Butler: I just looked up the definition of oppression to ensure we were on the right track, and it is just prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control from leadership. That could be from elected officials, directors, or other employees doing it to themselves.

Councilmember Mears: I think you have two parts here. People are not trusting the leadership or the directors. They have suggestions and I think they are scared to make any suggestions because of being done the old way so long. I think we need to get a little more trust up between the directors and the employees and put out some of the *inaudible*. People scared that they are going to be unemployed because they speak their piece. This is America. We all do have opinions. It does not mean you have to listen to it. It just means that a person has a right to voice their opinion. Hopefully, they are making stuff better for everyone else. I know we see a lot of intimidation. People are confident in doing their job

Councilmember Gutierrez: I agree with that. I appreciate you for bringing this out to the public. I am glad we can show this to the public. The mayor always says it is a new day. The accountability aspect is here. Dr. Cooper is here. We now have a City Manager in place that I trust, and I feel like the leadership oppression, if you are an employee. People will eventually show their true colors. Accountability is for everybody, even for us.

Councilmember Mears: I believe Dr. Cooper is the man for the job. The things that are coming up are council members getting involved in day-to-day operations and are superseding the city manager. That is everywhere you go. The council at our level does not need to get involved in the day-to-day problems until it goes through the proper authority and then if Dr. Cooper has a problem, then he comes to us and then it becomes our problem and then the gloves are on. But I think a lot of the problems we have with our city employees deal with them not going through the chain of command without them fearing being prosecuted and try to work it at that level and work it with Dr. Cooper administration. But we do not have that. I have been here five years and there has always been an undertow of I do not know skepticism that people are scared to reach out and really get comfortable in their job. I hope we can eliminate that section and get everyone on board. We must stop going around his position.

Councilmember Gutierrez: I would like to hear from Dr. Cooper on what he doing to fix these things or address the recommendations.

Councilmember Antoine: I am one of the longest here. Of course, nobody wants to come to work and feel like their wasting their time and not being heard. I heard Oprah say that everyone wants to be heard. But I also would like to say a lot of the things we are listening to is not going to be solved overnight. This man has been here two months. We cannot ask him to wave a wand and fix everything. We also trust Dr. Cooper. He is statesmen and he listens, and he likes to learn while solving his problems. Dr. Cooper you have my support and I do not expect you to solve this problem by midnight.

Dr. Cooper: One of the things that I am adamant about is employee morale. Of course, with the directors, manager, chiefs, and deputy chiefs you are never going to please everyone 100% of the time. We always talk about fairness and equity. My job is to make sure the playing field is fair. My job is to make sure the playing field is even and fair. I want to hear from the staff. I want to hear form the people who are doing the day-to-day things. I love our directors and think they are brilliant. However, some of us are very removed from the operational standpoint. I am not encouraging any staff member to go out of the chain of command.

Follow your chain of command that is how problems get resolved. The employee advisory committee is a place for the employees to voice their issues and opinions. I do get every exit interview now and I read every single one to see what I could have done to make it better for them. Some of the things are consensus items that we, as a city must fix. It will take time. I have faith that we will get there.

4. **Council Discussion to Scrap Fire Equipment** - Deputy Fire Chief Clemons

Background and Summary:

The Fire Department is seeking council approval to scrap (1) Fire Scene Investigation Unit, (1) mobile water horse, (1) Squad and (1) Public Safety House. These items have been out of service and are no longer serviceable to the community or the City of Forest Park. These items are deemed non-valued as the repair cost has exceeded the value through the Fire Department's Fleet Replacement Plan. Public Works has approved with the details of these items to be scrapped.

Vehicle/Equipment Year/Make/Model

1. (Squad) S6-1FDXK84A7JVA21938 - YEAR MODEL 1988 FORD, 3399 miles unknown if accurate.
2. (Water buffalo) 400 GWB – 07101790
3. (Fire Safety Trailer) FST – 1PY1526
4. (Fire Scene Investigation UNIT) FSIU – 1FDXE45F7YHA20744 - YEAR MODEL 1999 FORD

Comments/Questions from Council:

5. **Council Discussion on Donating Decommission Fire Equipment to Sister Cities** - Deputy Fire Chief Clemons

Background and Summary:

The Fire Department is seeking approval to donate (1) Fire Scene Investigation Unit, and (1) mobile water horse to our sister cities for use. These items have been out of service and are no longer serviceable to the community or the City of Forest Park. The Water Buffalo can be used as an extinguishing agent to any Fire Incident and the Investigation Unit can be used as a medical transport or equipment storage for any significant incident. These items are deemed non-valued as the repair cost has exceeded the value through the Fire Department's Fleet Replacement Plan. The Water Buffalo was a donated item and has no title or value to the Fire Department. Public Works has approved with the details of these items.

Vehicle/Equipment Year/Make/Model

1. (Water buffalo) 400 GWB – 07101790
2. (Fire Scene Investigation UNIT) FSIU – 1FDXE45F7YHA20744 - YEAR MODEL 1999 FORD

Comments/Questions from Council:

Councilmember Mears: I think we are doing the right thing by giving this stuff up to people who need it. Once we donate or give it away, I do not feel like it is the City's responsibility to ship, haul, etc. to who it is supposed to go to. That is my recommendation.

Councilmember Antoine: If this gets passed would we order the hose that connects to the water buffalo? It is inoperable without the hose.

Dr. Cooper: I think that was discussed.

Councilmember James: If we agree to donate it, are we saying we are on the hook for the costs to send it?

Dr. Cooper: Because we have been talking about the shipping of this, we have been looking at alternative option with getting it there. You have a lot of organizations that donate and do things in our Sister City and in other places. If there are any financial costs, that will come back to the Council, but we have not heard back from the ones that donate their services for that and those are the people we are looking to get in touch with right now.

Councilmember Antione: I would say we jump on top of this. I would say it wise that we really check out who is delivering this. Because there are some organizations that say they are delivering it, but the items never get to the Sister City. The government takes it and does not give it to the people. It is wise that we get on top of who we get to send it.

Dr. Cooper: Shipping costs has us looking at almost \$30,000 for these items. It is expensive because they must go by boat, and it cannot go by plane. Councilman Antoine and I have been looking and organizations because we are aware that sometimes the resources are diverted to other places. However, it gets there, it must come back before Council for approval.

Councilmember Mears: How many people are involved in this Sister City plan? Is it just Forest Park? Are we just the biggest?

Mayor Butler: No.

Councilmember Antoine: It is the whole nation. There are thousands of cities that are partnered up with countries everywhere.

Mears: I just want to make sure because this is really a burden on our taxpayer's money.

6. **Council Discussion on 2021 Municipal Elections Provider** - City Manager, Dr. Cooper

Background and Summary:

Due to the recent passage of new Georgia Election Laws, the City of Forest Park expressed an interest in outsourcing its local elections. The city has been in contact with Clayton County Board of Elections, who will not be deciding until July 1, 2021, and Intact Consulting Services to engage in the rendering election consultation and program management services for the local elections; as well as contact Dominion Voting for the equipment required to have an election. Due to the complexity in the new law the City of Forest Park is looking to engage with these services sooner than later to ensure proper processes are in place. It is recommended to the council that the City of Forest Park move forward with engaging Intact Consulting Services and Dominion Voting for the November 2, 2021, Municipal General Elections Cycle.

Comments/Questions from Council:

Councilmember James: The cost associated, we talked about it before, Dr. Cooper for this one is about \$23,000. What was the cost for the last election?

Dr. Cooper: The cost for this election is about \$26,000. For the 19/20 election the cost was about \$46,918.

Councilmember James: I just want to say that I feel like that is a great savings for the city.

Councilmember Gutierrez: I have a question about the questions you answered for Ms. Kemp on the establishment of the company. So, is it a company? Is it not established?

Dr. Cooper: It is a company. Mrs. Ridley is the Spalding County elections person. She is leaving there and has started her own company. She is very familiar with everything that we need to have done and her consulting has been established. I spoke with the City Attorney. We can legally enter into agreement with her to consult on our elections. Our City Clerk will be the person in charge of the election. She is the consultant that will work with the Clerk to ensure that everything is in place and in compliance.

Councilmember Gutierrez: Our City Clerk is still doing the election?

Dr. Cooper: Our City Clerk always oversees it. But the actual work will be done by the consulting group.

Councilmember Gutierrez: Did we do the procurement process? How did we find this individual?

Dr. Cooper: This is a special service. Under our charter we can move forward with this person. If you want to do procurement that would take about 3-4 months which would put you behind in the election cycle.

Councilmember James: One of the reasons why we had to move in this light is because of the resignation of our City Clerk, Ms. Steed

Councilmember Gutierrez: I have always wanted to outsource. I did not want this to fall on our City Clerk. My question is how we got to Ms. Ridley, but you said you used to run the Spalding County elections.

Mayor Butler: Yes

7. **Council Discussion on Adopting a Credit Card Use Policy** - Darquita Williams, Interim Finance Director

There is not a credit card policy in place to govern the use of the city's credit card, therefore the Interim Finance Director is presenting the attached credit card policy to Council for discussion and possible consideration of approval.

Comments/Questions from Council:

None

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

ADJOURNMENT:

It was motioned by Councilmember Mears and seconded by Councilmember James to adjourn the June 7, 2021, Work Session at 7:04pm.