



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Tuesday, July 05, 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) 366.1555

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

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: The meeting was called to order by Mayor Butler at 7:16pm and she read the Mission Statement.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE: Pastor Justin Cook gave the invocation and lead the pledge of allegiance.

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		✓

Joshua Cox, IT Director, Javon Lloyd, Public Information Officer, Shalonda Brown, HR Director, LaShawn Gardiner, Management Analyst, Letasha Clemmons, Fire Chief, David Halcome, Deputy Fire Chief, Bruce Abrahams, Economic Development Director, Bobby Jinks, Public Works Director, Nigel Whatley, Public Works Deputy Director

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

There was one speaker:

LaWanda Folami – Kudos to my volleyball team. I am back, because I am so proud of my young ladies, they are all Scholars, they are A and B students. We have collaborated with leaders, in our county and city that were able to take them to the Splash Water Park. They honored these young ladies like they should have been, which will be a memory they will never forget.

We had a great time at the leisure and recreation center with basketball and volleyball. Mr. Tarik is here and can tell you how passionate I am about the children and their sports. I am the type of coach that put stipulations on my team. They are required to have an A/B average and know every city council member's name.

I would also like to talk about the report agency. I was looking over the HVAC maintenance contract with ABM, and we always keep them in contact with the city, because of our commercial air conditioning units, which I think it is a phenomenal idea. I spoke with the public works supervisor, and he assured me this was an awesome thing to do.

Also, with the murals it will be great to bring some enlightenment to our city to show the work of our community. Lastly, I spoke with the young man about the statewide community video, which contained the word U.S. mayor, but he did clarify that it would include council as well.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

It was moved to amend the Council Agenda with adding Item No. 6 - Settlement Agreement for Susan Ridley

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

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 June 21, 2022** - City Clerk

It was moved to table the minutes until the next meeting for Council corrections.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

2. **Council Approval of Line-Item Veto – Police Services** – Chief Executive Offices

It was moved to overturn the mayor's veto on Police Services Line-Item Budget

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

Comments/Discussion of Governing Body:

Mayor Butler read the Veto

Councilmember James – Chief Clark, can you tell us what positions are needed for the drug and gang unit?

Chief Clark – As discussed at the retreat, I feel we do need this drug and gang unit. I think there is a bit of a misunderstanding. I am asking for one supervisor and three officers. The specialist position, I did not ask for, I was called by finance and told I was getting that position. I asked for three investigators and one supervisor, to implement our gang and drug unit here in the city.

Drug and gangs go hand and hand and often breed violent crimes. I would like to use every resource available to ensure we have a safe community to live in, so that people can come and visit our city. This will be another avenue to ensure that safety is here in the City of Forest Park.

Councilmember James – With the vacant positions that you have, can you use those for the one supervisor and three investigator positions?

Chief Clark – I plan to advertise for these special positions. If there is someone within the department that meets the criteria, we will look internal first. However, we do not want to take personnel off the streets. I agree with the mayor, and we recognize we have these vacancies, but we have them because our salaries were so low, we could not compete and was losing officers.

As of today, based on the salary increase our application process has doubled. I would like to thank the governing body for this. Right now, we have 22 officer positions and that is not counting your supervisor's position. We have 12 candidates getting a background check, to fill some of those positions and we are still getting applications in.

We have never had this before since I have been here. We have changed our mindset and enhanced our recruiting techniques, and it is paying off. Thanks to the governing body and thanks to the system of this community.

I would also like to say approximately 2 years ago we had a long-range vision. The vision was one of our fastest growing segments in our city is Ft. Gillem. We talked about the substation and additional offices at that time. That vision is now about to become a reality. So, I am pleading with the governing body to not take resources at this critical time in our city.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I think I was kind of torn the last time but listening to you reading your veto it makes sense. It makes sense to not approve more positions when we have positions that are not being filled. What you say do make sense, and the police department has been short for a long time. I have spoken about this on several occasions and almost got in trouble for wanting to meet with officers to find out what the issue was and why there was a lack of officers on the streets.

I cannot believe I am saying this, but I am going to have to stick with the mayor on this. It just makes sense, and I am all about what makes sense. The only part I do not agree with that was stated in your veto is, as far as deciding where the funds go.

Mayor Butler - it must come back before council.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – This make sense we have been short for a long time and the safety of the community is our main priority. Also, I cannot see drugs being that big of an issue, I feel gangs may be. If

we do actual community policing, then we can even contain some of that. Both sides make sense, but I am having to go with the one that makes the most sense. That is not to approve more positions when we have some that are not being filled.

Councilmember Mears – I must agree with Councilmember Akins-Wells. I do not feel that increasing our force by 5, when we have 28-29 or 30 positions open is the answer. I do, however, agree that we need to act quickly on the gang and drug task force. We do have a problem here and we have got to stop it as quickly as we can. With that many positions open and the chief said he has applications for them. If people come in, we can put them into these positions and not keep adding on to them. Also, if you have people that are trying to become policemen you can put them into some of those places. We have people that have been here for a long time, that needs the opportunity to advance. You do not want to shut them out of the equation, because you may lose people that way. If you bring someone off the streets and put them in a position and not offer it to your rank in file, you can cause a problem. There is a lot to think about and I think adding the numbers is not the answer, and I stand by the mayor and her veto.

Mayor Butler – To me the unit itself is one thing and I agree for this unit, and some of the councils have said it also. Once the vacancies are filled, I do not think anyone here will have a problem adding more positions if that is the police chief's desire. Right now, I stand by what I wrote in my veto, unless there are 4 votes to overturn it.

Councilmember James – I respect the desire of the mayor and the council on their decision. I am going to vote to overturn, but I do not know if I will have 4 votes. Chief Clark, of the vacancies that you have can you change the title or advertisement, and come back before council with those 3 investigators and 1 supervisor positions? With the vacant positions can you snatch 4 positions you already have and use them for those needed?

Chief Clark - Yes, we can do that.

Mayor Butler – Chief has the authority to do this on his own he does not have to come back before council.

Councilmember James – I thought it was a different salary, a different grade level a different position, does that no have to come back before council?

City Attorney – He can redesignate existing funds for these positions. If he requests the organization chart and additional positions with different ranges, then that would have to come back before council. The mayor is making a point that he has the authority already to have an assignment for a narcotics and gang task force.

Councilmember Gutierrez – At first, I agreed with the mayor about the vacancies, but after hearing from chief, I think when you add something you are pulling from somewhere else, and you have to surround yourself with capable smart people. If chief say this is something he needs, I am going to give him the tools he needs to execute. That way later, I can hold him accountable when there are drugs in our community. I can say it is not being addressed so what is going on? He can say I asked for this, and you did not give it to me.

I disagree with you mayor, even though you said it can come back, I feel like if it can come back, and we hold our breathe waiting on these vacancies to be filled it may never happen. I do not know when being a police officer is going to be an attractive job like it use to be, because of everything that has happened. Thank you for the men and women we have here serving. So, I guess that is where I stand.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Councilmember Gutierrez and I talked about this previously and we both were on the fence about it. Our officers are out there trying to get all kind of criminals, drug dealers, robbers or whoever. That is what they are there for, so I feel if we have more officers on the streets, we can do what we need to do as a police department.

I am just going to be honest and transparent. I am not a politician; I am an advocate for the community I would just like to say that. I get out in the community and ask questions when things come to me that do not make sense. There was this supposedly big drug bust and somebody was running and dropped this coke bag. Come to find out that is not even what really happened.

So, I did my own investigation and feel that this was done and put out there like that it would seem like we really needed to get this drug task force, we really need to get these officers and positions. Then we can move forward if, that is what is needed. I would like to ask chief to see the drug cases that have come through the police department and the busts. Show me something that will make me want to vote to override the mayor's veto, because we need this right here right now. I would like to see how many drug cases we have open in the City of Forest Park. Again, it can come back around but it makes sense to me to fill the vacant positions we already have open.

Councilmember Mears – I want to give you a scenario. Our neighboring city Stockbridge started their own police department last Friday. They were under Henry County but came up with a lot of money and over a period of time they developed a police department. The point I am getting to is money. They paid their starting officers what our sergeants make up here. They did not have a problem getting a police force down there over a short period of time.

We need all the policemen and firemen up here we can get, but when you can go to McDonalds and make just as much money flipping burgers than you do getting shot at, we have a problem. We need to look at the real picture to get the numbers down that we want, we have got to come up with some money to pay these people.

I know everyone wants to make all they can, and we give all these raises, but we are not toting the mail and that is why we cannot get policemen. We need to look at the long range and if we can get these people over a period of time we are going to have to eventually decide where we are going to get the funds to pay them to do their job.

Mayor Butler called for the vote.

Voting Yea: Councilmember James, Councilmember Gutierrez

Voting Nay: Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Akins-Wells, Councilmember Mears

Motioned to overturn mayor's veto failed

NEW BUSINESS:

3. Council Approval of Creating a Mural Arts Committee – Chief Executive Offices

It was moved to approve an ad hoc Mural Arts Committee, to serve no more than 90 days, with 6 members appointed by the mayor and council. The committee shall present it's recommendations at a meeting before the mayor and council.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

Comments/Discussion of Governing Body:

Councilmember Antione - Do the murals have to be on a wall, can it be on the pavement like the road.

City Attorney - The advantage of having a committee is they may have their own ideas. You may get some exciting proposals, that no one has thought of yet.

Mayor - I believe we initially approved for 2 areas already and we would have to revisit the additional charge for any additional areas.

Councilmember Gutierrez - When did we approve the areas?

Mayor - Several meetings ago

Councilmember Gutierrez - We talked about them, but we never said those are the areas we were going to fund for art.

Mayor - I believe we did but we can revisit that.

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

4. Council Approval of the HVAC Maintenance Contract with ABM – Public Works

It was moved to approve the HVAC Maintenance Contract with ABM

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

5. Council Approval To Participate In Statewide Community Showcase Video Program – Public Information Office

It was moved to approve the Statewide Community Showcase Video Program

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

6. Council Approval of Settlement Agreement with Susan Ridley

It was moved to approve the settlement agreement with Susan Ridley

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

Comments/Discussion of Governing Body:

Councilmember James- I just want the public to know that this is something that the insurance company recommends. Most of the money will be paid from the insurance company.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY:

Councilmember James – Happy Independence Day, to everyone. We had a tragedy in the United States, this past week. I would like to encourage everyone to hug your loved ones closely, continue to pray and continue to be good to people. This is a process we must go through, and we should be able to work together, and I feel we did very well tonight mayor and council. When we are not on the same side, we still should be able to work together to decide that the majority feels like will be best for the city. I accept that, I respect that, and I respect the process.

I would like to encourage everyone to go to the website under Ward 1. There is a June ward meeting and the caravan we did for Class of 2022. I am not sure if it is on the city's website, but it is on YouTube, so take a look at that. To follow-up with that we had a reflection in the park with the body builder, that is on there as well. Thank you all.

Councilmember Antoine – Thanks to everybody for showing up here today. Clayton County has a small business grant for \$10,000 and anyone interested in that can email me about it. God bless you all.

Councilmember Gutierrez – Like Councilmember James said even though we do not always agree it was great to see the progress go by. I do challenge you to go to google, pick up your phone and google drug bust Forest Park. They are being made, but not by our police department. They are being made by the DEA and they are made by Clayton County. About a month ago, 113 pounds of marijuana was found in Forest Park, a ton of meth was found here two years ago. They say Mexican Cartels are moving into Forest Park, so I know that our police officers have a lot to do, and we are not against that, like the mayor said.

I think we need to have specific people there and I do not want to make it harder on the chief. Food Truck Friday is this Friday, and we will have our hot dog eating contest. Hopefully, our fire department can redeem themselves, because last time an 11 year ate 8 tacos over one our firefighters, that ate 7; so, pull up it will start at 7.

We are also having a resource fair and we are collaborating with the NAACP. Our senior committee is hosting this with them. We will have some firefighters and the police department out there educating the elderly, on elderly abuse and resources that we have here in our community. That will be at the Jencare Office from 11-2. If you have any questions, please follow the city's web page and my Instagram Councilman Gutierrez.

Lastly, my clean up is back this Saturday at 10 am. I am excited Adopt a Road initiative, we have our second person from the Eye Catchers Motorcycle Club. So, now we have two organizations that adopted a road, and it is very excited to take initiative and keeping our community clean. Some tragedies have gone on since our last meeting. Women have lost their right to choose, and I am extremely against that. I think everybody has to make the decision for their own body. Prayers to the families also, from the tragedy this week. Hopefully, some legislature can be established so these things want continue to happen and people can come together and celebrate.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Thanks for coming out and having patience with us. I am proud of this meeting tonight. Although we agree to disagree it was a great meeting and it shows us moving a step in the right direction. I would just like to say there is nothing against any department, but I am for what makes sense.

The drug force if it is needed, and Clayton County and who ever else is doing it, I appreciate it because it is saving us some money, until we get our department staffed like it needs to be. So, again I am not against it for one I would like to see the numbers from our police department and not google. I would also like to see all departments staffed fully. You see what is going on at Delta, which is my main job. The pilots are going on strike, and it is going to trickle down to our police department, because we do not have enough officers to cover the streets. They are being worked and doing side jobs and we really need these officers. So, once that is done, we can come back and supply chief with what he says he needs to be successful.

July the 22nd, is Fun Friday, so if you have not purchased your tables please do so. Casper and the 911 Band, will be the entertainment for that night. I would like to thank the fire and police department for coming out to the community event. They really had a great time, and the community likes to see the involvement from our different departments. Thank you, Chief Clark, for sending those officers and Chief Clemmons for doing an amazing job, as far as keeping the fire department involved in what goes on in our community. Have a great night and I hope you all had a great 4th.

Councilmember Mears – I hope you all had a great 4th of July, and we appreciate you all coming here giving us support and knowledge of what you need so we can take care of your business. Thank you.

Mayor Butler – I received this letter and I thought it would be a great way to end tonight's meeting. It reads as follow:

The Honorable Angelyne Butler

I am writing this letter today to tell you of the fantastic service provided by one of your police officers. Officer Thicklen, badge #1511, responded to a non-emergency call over a minor real estate dispute. The details are meaningless, but please let me just point out that Officer Thicklen, handled the situation with professionalism, courtesy, candor, calmness, intelligence, and authority. Did I leave anything out? Perhaps even a little bit of grace.

I can assure you that this type of officer we will never see on the evening news unless it is because he has rescued a kitten from a tree and is featured as a human-interest story. I jest, but truly his brand of reserved, silent intuitive authority, is what is needed in public and police service interactions.

So, I would like to end with giving Officer Thicklen a round of applause. Thank you all for coming out and I will ask for a motion to adjourn.

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 Council Regular Agenda at 7:59pm

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Gutierrez.

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