



CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Tuesday, January 03, 2023, 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

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: The Meeting was called to order by Mayor Butler, and she read the Mission Statement.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE: The invocation and pledge were led by Dr. Beeler, of Gateway Restoration

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, Chiquita Barkley, Finance Director, Jeremi Patterson, Deputy Finance Director, LaShawn Gardiner, Director Planning & Community Development, Shalonda Brown, Director of Human

Resources, Diane Lewis, Deputy HR Director, Fire Chief Latosha Clemons, David Halcome, Deputy Fire Chief, Bobby Jinks, Director Public Works, Deputy Police Chief, Sandra Johnson, and Arthur Geeter, Purchasing Manager

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

There were two (2) speakers:

Jonathan Baker, Battalion Fire Chief – As Battalion Chief, my job is to manage major disasters and things of that nature. What people do not see is the other most important thing we have to take care of and that is our employees. I love them more than I love myself and that is why I am standing here in front of you tonight. If we take care of our internal customers, our employees, then they will take care of our external customers.

For many months we have been struggling to make sure they have been paid correctly. We have had ongoing issues: some have been transitioning from Incode to ADP, some are clerical errors and some just the way the numbers have been documented. As these things are being discovered, instead of getting it fixed there has been a lot of fingers pointing. Our employees deserve us all at the table battling to get things fixed.

Some of these things have taken months to get resolved, it goes back to October payroll. Personnel not receiving their back pay for the pay raise they were due. In November 23 personnel was shorted their overtime pay at the rate it was supposed to be paid at. They were paid their overtime at a rate less than their hourly salary, not at their time and a half.

The following week we had a lot of personnel missing hours. We finally got a face-to-face meeting with Dr. Cooper, the finance payroll team, Chief Clemmons and Chief Halcome were all present. On that day, December 2, one of our employees was paid .66 cents an hour for 53 hours' worth of work, the net bring home was a zero-point zero-dollar check. That was brought to attention on December 2, that employee was out on injury and had gone without pay for a substantial amount of time. They received an, if you do not pay this by December 12, notice we are going to repossess your vehicle.

For the next two weeks we battled to get that employee paid. On December 14, I am sitting in Human Resources, begging for a solution because 23 of us still had not been paid that overtime from November, from before Thanksgiving. That is when things escalated, we got some checks cut that day, but it was two days past the deadline to get the employees car paid for. Since then, we have had an employee miss a paycheck the last two Fridays, the pay has been going to a prepaid debit card. He was accused of having his payroll changed to this, which would have to go through human resources, which it did not.

Friday, Battalion Chief Flagg was able to stand in at the city hall where we were instructed not to go, to demand the check and finally two checks got cut. That employee had to wait almost two weeks before he got his money. What can we do to get a more expeditious way of getting our employees paid, regardless of who end it is on.

Patricia Rankhorn – I have lived in Forest Park for 34 years, never had a problem. My husband just died, I am a retiree and I live alone. Last Thursday when I came home from the doctor's, there was a group of young ladies 10-12 of them, standing on the corner of where I live screaming at one another.

I had to drive-by them to get to my house, and I called the police when I got there, because I knew they were going to get to fighting. They said someone else had called and they would be there shortly. I walked across the street to my neighbor's house and stood for about a good 5-6 minutes before they came. Two police came in an SUV they had no siren on, no blue lights and just rode in easily. Both of them got out of the vehicle and all those girls just took off running.

Never once did the police say stop. They had one girl on the ground beating her, with their fist. I felt like they were gangs, another girl came up with a bat and was fixing to hit the girl, thank God the police showed up in time to stop her or she might have been dead. The police just let everybody go and I was one of the people that called.

I called and told them you all left me and my neighbor in jeopardy, no one was reprimanded they was just let go. I want law back here in Forest Park, and I have never had anything like this happen; it scared me. I need to know I have protection from our police, at this point I would call the fire department before I call the police anymore. I got no results, they never even tried to talk to us.

Two or three of the girls ran down the road and jumped a neighbor's fence and tried to kick in his back door. He had a ring doorbell, and he gave the video to the same police, but had not heard any more about it. I feel like it was a policemen place to restore order there, and make sure no one would be hurt. I have always looked up to the police and was totally shocked at what I saw Thursday evening. I just want law here like it used to be.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA WITH ANY ADDITIONS / DELETIONS:

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

Motion made by Councilmember Antoine, Seconded by Councilmember James.

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 December 5, 2022 - City Clerk**

It was moved to approve the Council Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes from December 5, 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 Administrative Appeal (Blood Plasma Center) – Planning & Zoning; Legal**

Background/History:

During the October 3, 2022, meeting, the City Council adopted a moratorium on blood plasma centers due to the concern regarding the potential negative effects such centers might have on local neighborhoods. This arose in part due to an inquiry the City received from a potential developer of such a center and the fact that the City does not currently have any regulations controlling such centers.

The language of the moratorium provides for an appeal and/or exemption from the moratorium if the applicant can show that its proposed use would be in compliance with the anticipated changes the City might adopt.

It was moved to approve the Administrative Appeal for the Blood Plasma Center

Motion made by Councilmember Antoine.

Motion failed for lack of a second.

3. Council Approval of Resolution of the Appointment of Mayor Pro-Tem for 2023 - Legislative

It was moved to appoint Councilmember Latresa Akins-Wells as the 2023 Mayor Pro-Tem

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

Voting Yea: Councilmember Gutierrez, Councilmember Akins-Wells

Voting Nay: Councilmember James, Councilmember Antoine, Councilmember Mears

Motion failed.

4. Council Approval of Resolution to Set and Publish the Qualifying Fees for Nov. 2023 - Executive Office

It was moved to approve the Resolution to Set and Publish the Qualifying Fees for Nov. 2023

Comments/Discussions from Governing Body:

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS BY GOVERNING BODY:

Councilmember James – Happy New Year 2023 to everyone, looking forward to a great year. I will begin my ward meetings on the third Thursday of every month. However, I am not sure about January due to our retreat. I do want to say to the battalion chief, I hear you and I thank you when items are brought to our attention. We will make sure we handle it, and I do understand. We love our employees; we love our staff; you all make us look good and you all are why we are here.

As far as Law and Order goes, we do believe in it to our fellow residents. We will see what we can do to better address that. I believe in our police department, and I do know that we have some fine officers. My condolences to you on your husband.

Councilmember Antoine – Welcome back everybody, Happy New Year; I believe great things for this year for everybody. I know last year there was a lot of covid, but I believe this year the season is going in the right direction. battalion chief, thank you for coming up and sharing that with us. You are in good hands, and we will get to the bottom of this, you are not alone, we have your back on that. Dr. Cooper will make sure all that is resolved. To the new employees that came on, welcome to the All-Star Team. You will see that the environment here is people wanting the best for other people.

I did not thank you last year, but I would like to thank you all for the hard work that you do to make the city better. Again, you all know how to contact me, Ward 2 you know you guys are the best ward. We have big developments coming here and I am here to let you know we are going in the right direction. You know the 600,000-dollar home they are building here, it sold. The city is headed in the right direction. If you see something, you say something. We are not the smartest and we do not know it all, so we ask you all to help us to make the city a better place for all.

Councilmember Gutierrez – Thank you for coming out today, it is rainy so please be safe. Happy New Years to everybody, during the break I had a tragedy, I lost my mother and want to thank everybody that reached out to me and everybody that called me. I would like to give a shoutout to our city and the way they took the initiative to handle the water issue. It made me proud to be part of this.

Chief we are going to handle that; thank you for bringing that to our attention. Nothing is perfect and like Councilmember Antoine said we need to speak up about things, so we can make them right. Thank you for your public comment, we are going to address that as well. Our police are very dedicated so I know that they will handle this. This is election year you must hold us accountable and for the people in our wards, if you thought about running and think you can do a better job, shoot your shot.

I was an educator and did not have a lot of experience in policy and I shot my shot, and I am up here, and I won by 7 votes. It is not rocket science, it is looking out for our people and making the best ethical decision that you deem possible and justifying it and being as transparent as you can.

Shoutout to Tenisha Dixon our council aide, she is my backbone when it comes to all these events. Tomorrow is her birthday, so thank you Lord and Momma Dixon for letting us borrow her. I am extremely thankful for her and our staff. We are glad to have the water back. Thank you, Mr. Frank, for coming here to show your face, others ignore things and do not pop up. Bingo night is coming up, make sure you stay warm and come out and celebrate with us at the senior center.

Councilmember Wells – Councilmember Gutierrez, my deepest condolences to you and your family. To Chief Baker, one of my favorite people in the police department. I was in tears up here listening to you. There are bigger things going on, I do not give a damn about being Mayor Pro-Tem, I care about situations like this. This is important and the type of things we need to be focused on.

I have been hearing about it and I did not know it was the fire department. Every department needs a person like you, to get up here and speak for our employees so they do not have to worry about retaliation, because it happens. That was a bold move for you, thank you sir. Chief Clemmons, I know you have a lot to do with what goes on in the fire department, but I just applaud you and Chief Baker.

Our employees should not have to go through this, if you come here and give this city your all, the least you should be able to do is feed your family and pay your bills. We need to hold people accountable, no disrespect to Dr. Cooper, but you are the city manager, and you need to be held accountable. When things like this and the department is not going the way, it should, it comes back to you. It is embarrassing to have employees come to work every single day and give their all and end up with nothing. How would you feel if it was your family?

Some people are up here just for money, but if you came to these meetings every Monday and did not get your check how would you feel? We need to start having a different conversation and hold people accountable. For every department head get someone like Chief Baker to speak up for these employees, because sometimes they are turned away when they try and speak up for themselves. They have to worry about having a short check and being retaliated against, for speaking about having a short check. My heart hurts for you all and as a city we need to do better, when it comes to our employees. The employees take care of us and they take care of the city. We need to put a little more attention and focus on them.

Again, I am not here for a title I have been in office for 11-12 years. I am going to be Latresa Wells, whether I am councilwoman; I am going to be me. For 12 years I have been giving back to my community. This young lady has 6 kids, and the Gerald Crawford Foundation is a non-profit organization that I teamed up with to help provide Christmas for her kids and to buy groceries. We spent thousands of dollars to make sure her family was taken care of; those are the type of things I like to focus on, and I will continue to do that whether I am here or not.

This title does not make me I am Latresa Shantae Akins- Wells, before I am anybody and these are the things that put a smile on my face, not a title. I appreciate you all for your decision. You have someone up here that does absolutely nothing, gets drunk and steal money; I hope you do not appoint him. I will be in favor of Councilmember Gutierrez again because he puts in the work and deserves to hold that title. It is never about a title; it is what is in me and not what is on me.

I thank God for being in a position to be able to help these families, you see people not getting their checks it could be us any day. Me and my family are in the business of helping. My husband is one of those employees and he still gave some money to help the family, that is what we are about. Happy new Year's, God bless you and hopefully our employees do not have to endure this anymore. Dr. Cooper, you can get on this and make sure our employees are good like they make sure our city is good.

Councilmember Mears – I hope you all had a Happy New Years. We are working diligently to correct the problem and I am sure there is a lot of fingers pointing that can be done, but this does not solve the problem. We need to find out what the problem is and get it cleared up as soon as possible. We need our fire and police department; we need our city workers and all the people that work every day to help make Forest Park.

The person with the gang problem or whatever she calls it, we need to get a handle on that. That is something that is growing underneath it is smoldering and we do not want that to any further. We want to make sure the fireman gets paid. This is something we must do, and I will work with Dr. Cooper, the finance department and the police department to get these problems resolved.

Councilmember Gutierrez – Yes, I would like to give our city condolences to Big Mike, he used to come out to a lot of our events, and I was made aware that he passed away. My condolences to his family, I feel your pain and we lost a great person.

Councilmember Wells – Big Mike was a friend of mine; we went to middle school and high school together. He was very much involved in the city, and he passed away the other day. I just received a message saying, Mr. Scandrett (pops) who is a young man from my ward, who is a lifelong resident of Forest Park just passed tonight. I would like to send my condolences to his family.

Mayor Butler – I would also like to send my condolences to his family. Battalion Chief Baker, when we spoke and we were able to get some and I do not say that easily, but some of the issues we were able to get resolved. After being told repeatedly the issues have been resolved to hear that there are still ongoing issues is definitely a problem, which for the governing body is not acceptable. So, we are going into executive session and with this executive session I am going to ask Dr. Cooper to remain out here for the first part and we will let him in later, but it is to address some personnel issues. The operative word I think is accountability. At this point I do not think at this point there is anything anyone can say that can put me at ease with the situation that is going on with our employees and their pay. Therefore, accountability is coming down the pipeline.

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

It was moved to enter into Executive Session for Personnel at 7:37pm

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

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

It was moved to reconvene back into the Regular Meeting at 9:27pm

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

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

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved to adjourn the Council Regular Meeting at 9:27pm

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

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

APPROVED