



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Monday, March 21, 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

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 A. Cooper, City Manager
S. Diane White, City Clerk
Mike Williams, City Attorney

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: 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 - Via Zoom		✓
Allan Mears	Council Member, Ward 5		✓

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Chiquita Barkley, Finance Director, Darquita Williams, Deputy Finance Director; Shalonda Brown, Human Resources Director, 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, James Shelby, Planning & Community Development Director, Michael Brunson, Deputy Chief of Police and Javon Lloyd, PIO Director

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Dr. Marc-Antonie Cooper, City Manager**COMMUNITY INFORMATION/REMINDERS:**

- On Wednesday, March 16, 2022, Clayton County Chairman Jeff Turner gave the State of the County address. He referred to multiple residential and business development happening and coming to Clayton County, and I am proud to say that projects in the City of Forest Park were highlighted, among others as catalyst for moving Clayton County Forward. The address was live streamed and for more information or to watch the address you can visit www.claytoncountyga.gov
- Although COVID-19 numbers in Clayton County and the City of Forest Park have been declining we are not out of this pandemic yet. You can now order four more free at-home rapid COVID-19 antigen test from the following website [COVIDtests.gov - Free at-home COVID-19 tests](https://www.covidtests.gov). I hope everyone will take advantage of these free test and share this information. Please still be vigilant in washing your hands, use hand sanitizers.
- Remember you can still receive a free COVID Test from Lab LINQ Diagnostics 803 Forest Parkway, Forest Park, Ga 30297. You can visit lablingmobileatl.com to schedule an appointment or call 833-Lab-LinQ. They offer same day PCR test results.
- The New Senior Living Community currently under construction within Ward 2 is not a city project. This is a private development, and the does not have any information on how you can rent or be waitlisted for this property. We contacted the developer regarding information, and they stated that currently there is "no wait list" and sometime in the future they will have a trailer on site to assist potential residents interested in the property.
- The Clayton County Water Authority will be holding its annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, April 23, 2022, from 10:00am – 2:00pm for Clayton County Residents. A driver's license of utility bill is required as proof of residency. For more information residents can call 770-960-5200 or visit www.CCWA.us

CITY OPERATIONS:

- Please stay tuned for our second monthly e-mail newsletter 'The Leaf Report,' which is set to go out via email April 1. To sign up to receive this newsletter which helps keep you "in the know" with the happenings going on with and in the City of Forest Park please visit www.forestparkga.gov and sign up.
- The city has multiple bids and request for proposal for city projects currently posted. For more information, please visit www.forestparkga.gov under the business tab, click on Bids and RFPs to review submission and qualification information.
- The City of Forest Park is hiring within our Public Works, Police and Fire Divisions. Please visit www.forestparkga.gov under departments tab and click on Human Resources and look at our open position. We offer competitive salaries and excellent benefits.
- The new city banners have been going up throughout the city and Starr Park. The banners highlight the new city logo, as well as brighter color to instill a sense of pride in our city.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

- City of Forest Park Congratulate Mr. Nigel Wattley on his promotion to the Deputy Director of Public Works. Mr. Wattley has been with the city since 2017 and was formerly the Building Maintenance Supervisor.

CONGRATULATIONS – SHOUT OUT

- Ms. Tonya Thomas and Ms. Lydia Parrilla of the Public Works Division these two ladies are responsible for not only keeping Mr. Bobby Jinks and myself on task with public works issues, but they have been instrumental in addressing residential and commercial sanitation issues, coordinating our new Banners, as well as coordinating our new City Flag. I just wanted to make sure we give them a huge shout out and say I appreciate them for all their efforts in making our city shine.



- At our last meeting I failed to mention Happy Women's History Month. The City of Forest Park celebrates all the women in history. As stated, last month by Councilwoman James, we have living history in this city and sitting right here on this dais. And we will continue to make history within our city. So, please join me in celebrating Woman's History Month, and I apologize for my failure to state in the previous city council meeting. I hope that you charge it to my head and not to my heart.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Council Approval of a Resolution to Accept the State Fiscal and Recovery Funds for Public Safety Officials and First Responders Pay Supplement – Executive Office**

Background/History:

Governor Brian Kemp announced a \$1,000 pay supplement for all eligible sworn law enforcement officials and first responders in Georgia on September 27, 2021. To be eligible, local governments were to submit a list of each certified public safety and first responder personnel with his/her certification number and a copy of each employee payroll from August 1 through August 31, 2021, along with the completed application. The application period was October 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021.

The City Manager's Office is requesting that council approve the acceptance of the grant funds for this purpose.

Comments/Discussions from the Governing Body:

There was no questions or comments from the Governing Body.

2. Council Approval to Reallocate TAD Dollars for Gillem Infrastructure – Finance Department**Background/History:**

The Urban Redevelopment Agency is seeking approval from council to allocate \$650,000 Tax Allocation District (TAD) dollars to the Raterree Road Extension project. An approval was made by the Urban Redevelopment Agency on April 30, 2020, to bring this request to council.

Comments/Discussions from the Governing Body:

Councilmember James – I would like to know what the balance would be after the disbursement of the \$650,000?

Darquita Williams, Deputy Finance Director – There is approximately 1.2 million in fund now, so we would have excess after this transfer.

3. Council Approval of an Ordinance 22-02 to Provide for a Residential Rental Property Inspection Program – Department of Planning & Community Development**Background/History:**

There exist in the city of Forest Park, substandard, and/or unsanitary residential rental buildings and dwelling units. The physical conditions and characteristics of these substandard residential rental buildings violate state and local building, housing and sanitation codes and ordinances that render them unfit or unsafe for human occupancy and habitation. These residential rental buildings and units are detrimental to or jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of their occupants and compromise the integrity and residential quality of our neighborhoods.

The City's desire is to maintain decent, safe, and sanitary rental housing units through a partnership of owners, tenants, the city, and the community. The Residential Rental Inspection Program will relieve tenants of the burden of having to force reticent property owners to make needed repairs. Systematic inspections will be implemented to ensure that the City's housing stock is maintained and that residents live in healthy conditions.

Comments/Discussions from the Governing Body:

Councilmember James – This is awesome and is needed in the City. It refers to a Forest Park International Property Maintenance Code, is that a document or something that I can put my hands on?

James Shelby, Director of Planning & Community Development – Yes, it is a document that council approved.

Mayor Butler – About the fees associated with this, my initial thought is that it was excessively low, but I understand that the laws says that we must justify the fee amount and part of the justification is with what the salaries that go into providing this type of service. So, which salaries are considered, is that the inspectors, city employees, etc., and is there some way that if they must go out a second or third time are those fees included? If the council has not noticed it is \$75.00 and \$15.00 for each additional property.

James Shelby – Did you get the right document? One is that we took the \$75.00 out because of our conversation that we had at the retreat. The city attorney and I will bring back the fees for this and other things that we want to increase.

Dr. Cooper – I would just like to let you know that we will have all the departments look at their fees to bring back to council for review.

4. **Council Discussion Regarding Blighted Property Tax and Land Value Tax** – Legislative Offices/Chief Executive Offices

Background/History:

Discussion regarding a Blighted Property Tax and/or Land Value Tax.

Comments/Discussion from the Governing Body:

Mayor Butler – Councilmember James, do you have a proposed amount.

Councilmember James – Actually, I just wanted to have a discussion with council. During my last couple of weeks, we were able to gain some incredible knowledge while we were in DC, and one of the things mentioned was a blighted property tax and we need to address the decades of old issues of abandonment, deferred maintenance, and neglect vacant housing. Vacant houses drag down the entire neighborhood and can have harmful effects on our neighborhoods, including increased risk of crime, theft, drug use, vandalism, pest infestations, and the like. I know we have a lot going on with our rental property thing that we are doing, that is going to help with that, but it is actually for those properties that are vacant, and I am just wondering if we can have a conversation whether or not we can assess a fee or a tax on blighted properties that has continuous code violations, is there some way where we can help bring the community up a little bit, that is where I want it to go with that.

Mayor Butler – I love the idea, it this, Mr. Shelby, with the Land Bank, because there are fees associated when properties go to the Land Bank, correct? If there are any code enforcement issues that were associated with the property, is that attached to it when it goes to the Land bank? And so, this would be something in addition to that?

James Shelby – When property goes into the land bank, then the land bank clears the title and is sold to properties are sold individuals who want to purchase the property. Yes, if there is a lien of that property it goes to the land bank and that lien goes along with it. Yes.

Councilmember James – So, the vacant houses, do we have a vacant house database or a place where we can go to know all houses that are vacant?

James Shelby – I can check with the code officers to see if we have such a list, but the houses that are in the land bank, and by the way, I have discovered that a lot of the houses are in unincorporated Clayton County, they are not in the city of Forest Park and as far as vacant properties are concerned, it is interesting, we were just talking that this morning with staff. So, let me check and see if we have a list of vacant properties; I do not recall a lot of them.

Councilmember James – Thanks. The other item that I have on here and I have actually talked with City Attorney about this before and that is with the increase of economic development in our city at some point the value of our properties are going to increase, so, I am very much interested in protecting long-time

homeowners, our seniors that has been in their homes 20 plus years. I do not want to be behind the curve, I want to get in front of it and put something in place where we protect their homes, so they will not be taxed out. There was a discussion about land value tax, not sure what that is all about, but I just wanted to put that idea out

City Manager – I have worked with cities that have instituted access taxes such as this, if it pleases the council, I will ask that you give us 30 days to research how we could do that. Mr. Shelby, City Attorney, and I to have discussions on a plan of how it would go, be implemented, and protect those that have been in their homes for a long time and bring back to council for your consideration.

Councilmember Antoine – I am curious because in terms of how it will look if these houses are abandoned or have no owners. Will there be an entire process of trying to figure out how to tax a person and get them to come and pay a fee?

City Manager – There is a legal process for that, yes, for abandonment of homes and for us to take then or go the land bank or whatever, there is a legal process that the city would initiate, but if someone owns a property that is just sitting vacant. In the previous city I worked in, when a home sits vacant there is an assessment not necessarily a tax, but an assessment was applied to the property to the person of record that was the homeowner. The assessment could be waived, in some cases, if they were fixing the home up, there were process that the owner would go through to prove that and the assessment would be waived. Otherwise, it was tacked on and when the person had to apply for a business license in the city the assessment was paid along with the business license, for them to be able to rent that house.

Councilmember Antoine – So, it is possible. I am for beautifying the city, just want to know how hare it is to even get that.

City Manager – Yes, we would have to look at all the legal things around it and understand what we could do.

Mayor Butler – This is extremely timely, in the lead article in the Atlanta Business Chronicle, last week, said in the last two years the home values in Forest Park increased about 67%. And so, it is a double-edged sword, we want the property taxes to increase, but then we understand the significance that it can have on our residents. Thank you for bringing this up, Councilwoman James.

5. **Council Discussion Regarding Penalties for Multiple Violations of the City's Ethics Policy** –
Legislative Office/Chief Executive Office

Background/History:

Depending on the egregiousness of the violation and in consideration of the harm a violation may cause legislators, public employees, and other public servants may face severe consequences for violating the public trust (ethics violations). The range of penalties can include termination and/or criminal prosecution for a public employee, and for legislator's penalties can include censure, removal from office, permanent disqualification from holding any elected position, restitution, decades in prison, and fines up into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The City Manager is seeking guidance and/or direction from City Council regarding revisions to the ethics policy, specifically penalties and/or sanctions for findings sustaining violations on multiple occasions.

Comments/Discussion from the Governing Body:

Councilmember James – The way charter is written, it reads you can have multiple ethics violations and the penalty is the same; whether you have one, two or three, I am proposing that there be a fine for multiple infractions. City Attorney, as far as the council is concerned, do we have such rights as impose, a docking of pay or whatever, can you give me some direction on this?

City Attorney – A reduction in pay or some version of that, whether you call it a fine or reduction in pay, which is something you can do, via an ordinance. You do not have to put in your charter and do have to go through legislation to do that. A fine or reduction in pay, in my opinion, is something that you can do locally if there is a proven violation, you do not have to go to the general assembly, just do it by an amendment to the Ethics ordinance and or your ordinance relative to compensation that you know there is a violation, that council can impose a fine. So, that would just be something for you all to consider, depending on sort of how many violations of what kind of structure you want to put in place for that.

Mayor Butler – Do you have an idea of a structure and a pay scale?

Councilmember James – I would just say if it were more than one, we would start there, if you are actually; what is the word for it?

City Attorney – If there is a determination that a violation has occurred, and the council confirms that; the ethics committee makes a recommendation and then it comes to council for consideration and an actual vote. Council confirms that a violation occurred, then under the current ordinance, it is just reprimand requests for resignation or removal, and you could add “in addition to the fine as well.” We would need some guidance in terms of how you want to structure the fine portion.

Councilmember James – Would the fine be determined at that time? Or does it need to be set in place, or could it be something like up to or whatever?

City Attorney – Yes, that would be my recommendation, sort of an up to depending upon the severity so that everyone knows what the playing field and it is not arbitrary thing every time.

Councilmember James – So, I would recommend like up to \$300 or something?

Councilmember Gutierrez – Are there any established things like this? I would hate to just invent something.

City Attorney – We can do a survey; I am not familiar with any Georgia cities that have a fine structure, but we can do a survey to see what is out there.

City Manager – Council, just remember you do have a structure docking pay when there are missed meetings and different things of that nature and that structure can be used in this same situation. You can use a similar structure whether it is 10%, 20% of the pay based on whatever the council would want to do. Just saying there is a structure you have in place that you can use as well.

Councilmember Mears – The biggest thing, if you are going to put teeth into this, you need to put something in it that is automatic you, you do not need to throw it on the council with mixed emotions and some for and some against; too hard, not too bad. You must have a guideline to go by that takes the hands off the council to make the decision, we have run into that once. There needs to be something in place that is automatic, when you do this, you get this and so on, because if you leave it to us, it is hard to govern yourself at times.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I would like to piggyback off what Councilmember Mears just stated. Because there is a lot of discrepancies when it comes to holding certain people accountable just like the last incident, someone taking money from a contractor and a Facebook video and both people get censored; so, I agree it should be in someone else's hand and not the council, because it can go any kind of way, but it does need to be some type of structure. I am not against that, not for it, does not matter, but it needs to be done the right way and take the politics out of it.

Mayor Butler – I like the 10% and then maybe if it is continual then it can increase from there since that is already how we are docking the pay. City Attorney is this an executive session discussion?

Councilmember Akins-Wells – I am sorry, I have a question.

City Attorney – No because you are talking about policy.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – City Attorney, a question for you. Who would determine the difference in the severity of a violation? Because that does not need to be the council either.

City Attorney – Under the current ethics ordinance and of course, it does not have a fine structure in in yet. But under the current ethics, the ethics board would make a recommendation. So, in theory, if you wanted to leave that portion out of the political arena, then you could build into the fine structure that it would be whatever the ethics board recommends up to certain limits.

Councilmember Akins-Wells – Okay, I understand that, but the guy recommended that CM Antoine be removed, but that did not happen, so who would be overall responsible. They will still come back to council.

City Attorney – Yes, that is the case, under your charter, only the council can remove, reprimand or etc., but we would have to look at how to structure it so that it is either automatic or the recommendation if approved by council includes whatever the fine is. We need to do some work on how to make that happen.

Mayor Butler – Any other questions or concerns. So, you are going to come back with something based on a structure? I still recommend it starting at the 10%, do not know how the other members of the governing body feels.

6. **Council Approval Planning Commission Appointment**– Department of Planning & Community Development

Mayor Butler – Item will be discussed in Executive Session.

7. **Council Approval on the Downtown Development Authority Member Appointments and Approval of Resolution 22-11** – Economic Development Department

Background/History:

The Downtown Development Authority has two (2) members whose terms expired on March 15, 2022. Additionally, the Mayor's term as a member of the governing body serving on the Downtown Development Authority is up for reappointment. The Economic Development Department request that Council consider appointing new members or reappoint the current members. DDA members serve for four (4) years.

Mayor Butler – Item will be discussed in Executive Session.

8. Council Discussion on Urban Redevelopment Authority Member Appointments and Resolution 22-12 – Economic Development Department

The City Council has previously discussed the removal of urban redevelopment powers from the Downtown Development Authority and the establishment of a separate Board of Commissioners to operate the Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) on behalf of the City.

OCGA 36-61-18(b) provides that if the URA is authorized to transact business and exercise powers, the Mayor, by and with the advice and consent of the City Council shall appoint a board of commissioners of the urban redevelopment agency, which shall consist of such number of commissioners, with such terms of office, as shall be determined by the City Council.

It is proposed that the City Council establish a seven (7) member Board of Commissioners to manage the affairs of the URA with each member serving for a term of four (4) years. Any person can serve on the Board of Commissioners if he or she is a resident of the City.

Once the Board of Commissioners is constituted, OCGA 36-61-18(e) provides that the Mayor shall designate a chairman and vice-chairman from among the Commissioners

Mayor Butler – Item will be discussed in Executive Session.

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 recess into Executive Session at 6:29pm for Personnel, Litigation and Real Estate.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Mears.

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

It was moved to reconvene from Executive Session back to the Work Session at 6:58pm.

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved to adjourn the May 21, 2022, Council Work Session at 6:59pm

Motion made by Councilmember James, Seconded by Councilmember Antoine.

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