



CITY OF FOREST PARK
MAYOR & COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 4, 2020 6:00 P.M.

- Call to Order:** The Regular Meeting of Mayor and Council of May 4, 2020 was called to order by Mayor Angelyne Butler at 6:00 p.m.
- Invocation:** The Invocation was given by Interim City Manager, Chief Clark followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.
- Present:** Mayor Angelyne Butler
Councilmembers: Kimberly James, Dabouze Antoine, Hector Gutierrez, Latresa Wells and Allan Mears
- Also present were Interim City Manager Nathaniel Clark, Director of Finance Ken Thompson, Public Works Director Jeff Eady, Deputy Chief Antonio Fletcher, City Clerk Shalonda Brown and City Attorney Michael Williams
- Approval of Minutes:** Councilwoman James made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of April 20, 2020 with the changes that were previously recommended. It was seconded by Councilman Mears. Voting for the motion was unanimous.
- Councilman Antoine made a motion to amend the agenda to add item number 5, hire of Albert Barker, City Manager. Mayor Butler stated this item needs to be discussed in executive session first. It was seconded by Councilwomen Wells. Voting for the motion were Councilman Antoine, Councilman Gutierrez and Councilwoman Wells. Voting against the motion were: Councilwoman James and Councilman Mears. The motion passed.
- City Manager's Report:** Interim City Manager, Chief Clark, stated that they are educating the public in reference to COVID-19 by way of social media through pamphlets, conference calls, and neighborhood meetings. Chief Clark asked Councilwoman



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James to elaborate on the neighborhood meetings. Councilwoman James announced that there will be a neighborhood meeting on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 5:00 pm. She stated she would provide more details about the event during the governing body comments of the meeting.

Interim City Manager, Chief Clark thanked the citizens and guests for their support and prayers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Update:

Mayor Butler stated there are several stimuli packages that have been rolled out over the last few weeks for municipalities. Most of them were catered towards municipalities with a population of 500,000 or more for COVID related expenses and not necessarily for loss revenue. GMA has rolled out a survey sheet in which they are asking for member cities to analyze their expenses for possible reimbursements to local governments. GMA has recognized the local governments with a population of fewer than 500,000 will not receive Direct Care Act funding. Governor Kemp is considering a joint request to share in the state's allocation of the cares act funds to reimburse local governments eligible for COVID-19 related expenses. LaShawn Gardiner is working with the directors to complete this survey that is due on May 8, 2020.

Mayor Butler announced Clayton County Development Authority has a grant for local businesses. Bruce Abraham will serve as the liaison for Forest Park, and the Clayton County Development Authority. Once approved by the Forest Park Authority, they will examine and see what they can provide for the businesses in Forest Park. This will be on the Development Authority's next agenda.



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Clayton County will be adding an additional testing center at Jim Huie Recreation Center. This will allow for public safety officers in the county to have testing. This option will be made available to our first responders. Chief Brackett and Deputy Chief Fletcher will circulate the information to their departments. Mayor Butler recommended if someone does not want testing; they should sign a waiver saying testing was available and they refused. She asked Attorney Williams to draft this waiver.

Mayor Butler stated she would like to start making plans to reopen the city. GMA has rolled out a checklist to assist with planning a reopen. Mayor Butler would like the governing body to consider setting a target soft reopen date of June 1, 2020.

Councilwoman James stated that she would base her decision on reopening the city on the number of cases the city has on June 1st. Mayor Butler stated that between now and the next council meeting she would like the council to think about a plan to reopen so it can be discussed in the next meeting. The mayor read the Executive order from Governor Kemp.

Mayor Butler stated that she would like the governing body to consider providing transportation to seniors 55 and older to testing sites. Councilman Antoine stated that he is in full support of providing transportation to seniors. He reminded the mayor that shelter in place guidelines for nursing homes and long term health care facilities are still in place, however this will not affect the city providing seniors with transportation to testing sites. Mayor Hernandez commended the Mayor, and stated he felt this was a great initiative. He would like to make sure that the seniors are aware that this service is available to them.

Mayor Butler stated she would like to have an open discussion in regards to Ashton Walk. She received an email stating that a previously reported COVID-19 case that was already being monitored has ended in a



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death. There was some confusion about if Ashton Walk fell under the criteria of a long term care facility or not. Dr. Augustine emphasized in the last meeting that Ashton Walk is not a long term health care facility, and Ashton Walk does not fall under the same guidelines as a long term health care facility. In the beginning, there were a certain criteria that needed to be met before testing could be done. Each facility had to meet a threshold. When Ashton Walk received their 1st case, the National Guard was called to clean the facility. The process that Ashton Walk adhered to was recommended by the CDC, the Department of Health, and the state guidelines. Once a report of the 2nd death at Ashton Walk was received, an action plan was developed. The action plan was to swab all residents who agreed to be tested. Ashton Walk had to provide certain pieces of information to the Clayton County EMA Department. Once that information is gathered, it is placed into their system, and a visit is scheduled for swab testing. Chief Merkison is awaiting the needed information to proceed. Due to Ashton Walk being a private facility, testers have to be welcomed in. Mayor Butler stated the City of Forest Park has acted in accordance with the state, the CDC Guidelines and the Department of Public Health. Nothing wrong has been done. Councilman Antoine would like both Directors at Ashton Walk to come to the next meeting to give an update on where they are at so the city will have a better perspective, and understand what they are facing at the facility. Councilman Gutierrez added if the citizens need any assistant from the city, they can contact him.

Open Discussion:

Councilwoman James asked for an update on the governor's order in regards to the waste management emergency contract. She asked if the contract is still binding. Jeff Eady responded that we are still in a state of emergency at the national and state level. After May 13th a discussion will be needed in regards to when yard waste pick-up will resume. Councilwoman James asked the council to consider hiring a company to pick up yard waste until the state



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of emergency is over due to the current overflow. Public Works Director, Jeff Eady stated waste management is not collecting bulk items or leaf and limbs. This includes yard waste. They do plan to resume, however a date has not been provided. They will accept debris at the transfer station if residents are willing to bring it. There are at least 300+ homes with debris at the curb. He also stated waste management has the equipment to pick up the curbside trash without touching it, and it can be disposed if the city has the capacity at the transfer station. He stated public works has plans to assist waste management with trash pickup.

Councilwoman James expressed concerns about the same people being on multiple boards. She would like to see more diversity and representation of the city on the boards, and not have the same person on multiple boards.

Councilwoman James spoke about Forest Park 101. She asked the governing body to consider doing a virtual meeting to start Forest Park 101 so each department can still provide residents with information about their department during the COVID-19 crisis.

Councilwoman James also gave additional information on the neighborhood meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 5:00 pm. The dial in number is 301-715-8592. The meeting ID number 85662631616. The Passcode is 078051. SPLOST, city updates from the police and fire department, and the census will be discussed.

Mayor Butler asked Leshawn Gardiner to provide an update on the Census. The governing body allocated \$10,000 towards census efforts. Mrs. Gardiner stated Clayton County has a 50.1% self-response rate and Forest Park has a 44.5% response self-response rate. She recommended sending bulk mail notices to individuals and commercial businesses proving



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different ways to complete their census during the COVID-19 crisis. She also considered doing a TikTok presentation to put on the City's social media platforms to gain interest and get people involved. Councilwoman James asked if there is a way to track specific neighborhoods that have not responded. Mrs. Gardiner stated she is only about to see areas and not specific addresses at this time. Councilman Gutierrez recommended radio marketing to target certain regions about the importance of the census in English and Spanish. Mrs. Gardiner stated she will look into radio advertising.

**Ordinance to Amend
FY 19-20 Budget:**

A request was made to consider purchasing computers and computer docking stations for first responder police vehicles. The approximate cost to outfit 60 vehicles would be \$275,000.00

Councilwoman James stated she would like to have a discussion before voting to amend the budget. She asked if there was personnel to use all 60 vehicles, and if the money needed to be spent right now to install the computers and computer dock stations. Deputy Chief Fletcher stated the police department is actively recruiting. When the city opens back up, the police department plans to be fully staffed so all vehicles do need to be fully outfitted. He recommended purchasing the equipment now to avoid price increases. Councilwoman James stated I have an additional question. With the company that we have now.. Intedev.. they're not able to do?cause it looks like it's a computer docking station. Chief Fletcher stated Interdev primarily focuses on the internet. These companies are the actual hardware..... the computers themselves and the docking stations. Chief Clark stated that he understands her concerns about the budget; however the police department wants to utilize unexpended funds. In other words, it won't be a budget adjustment. He would like to take funds that have already been allocated to the police department to purchase the computers and computer docking



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stations. The police department is slated to return approximately \$600,000 when this budget cycle is over. The police department is asking to use some of that money to get their cars fixed. He stated whether we do it now or next budget cycle, we're still going to have to do it. Chief Clark stated he understood that we're probably going to be facing some budget shortfalls. It is in our best interest if we have the money now, to go ahead and get those cars fixed. When you start talking about Interdev, this is like 2 pieces of equipment. This is not something that they can fix. The equipment that was first purchased is not compatible to one another. What we want to do is make sure that our officers that are in those cars are safe. Once it has been brought to our attention, if we don't rectify the problem, and an officer gets hurt then the city will possibly be liable. Councilman Antoine stated we don't want that. He asked the Chief to provide examples of dangerous or deadly consequences that could arise as a result of not getting the police cars fixed. The Chief responded the computers could overheat and cause a fire.

Councilman Mears commented to the Chief that it was his understanding that when Chief Clark started there was \$1,500,000 in claimed funds that was brought over that Hobbs had. He asked Chief Clark if the police department still had those funds.

Councilman Mears stated these were confiscated funds that were kept. The council at the time tried to retrieve those funds, and a letter was received from the state saying that it was under the discretion of the chief at that time. Councilman Antoine asked if this would be considered a private personnel matter. Attorney Williams answered no. Chief Clark stated he would go back and check on the standards for Councilman Mears.

Councilman Mears responded saying if there are funds that was there when Chief Clark started, there should be money in a reserve to cover repair expenses on vehicles, and not take funds from the budget. Chief Clark reminded Councilman



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Mears that the police department is not asking for additional funds. The funds that the police department would like to spend have been already allocated to the police department. This will not cost the City any additional money. Councilman Mears stated he would still like a follow up on exactly where the confiscated funds are. Councilwoman James stated that it's called the Asset and Forfeiture Account, and those funds can only be used for what the chief decides that money can be used for, and I understand what you're saying about we've already allocated the money... I understand that...I get that...but just because the money is there doesn't mean we need to spend it, and the reason I say that is because we have this pandemic that's going on, and we know that the proposed budget that's coming aboard is asking everyone to cut certain things, and we definitely never want to go in our reserve so I would think if we could table this and maybe look at how much money is in the asset and forfeiture account...that's the confiscated money that we got from seizures and possibly use that money to update the vehicles. Attorney Williams stated those funds have to be used for law enforcement purposes, but rather table the topic because this would cause a 2 week delay, you could approve it coming out of the asset forfeiture if it's available, but if not, it can come out of the budget account so they are able to move forward. Councilwoman James stated that sounds good. Councilman Gutierrez stated he does understand her concerns; however he does not want our officers out there with outdated technology, especially during these times. Chief Clark stated he is pleading with the governing body to allow him to approve the funding to get those cars back in service. Councilwoman Wells stated you don't have to plead with me because the safety of our officers should be everyone's main concern, so I'm definitely for it. Councilman Mears stated he does not want the officers working with outdated equipment. His issue is where the money comes from. He stated he knows that approximately a million and a half was there or is there, and whatever it takes to get your people fixed,



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and get back on streets is what I want also, but we have to do the best we can with the most money where we can.

Councilman James made a motion to approve the \$275,000 to be used out of the asset and forfeiture account if it is available and if not from the budget. Councilman Antoine asked the chief if that is the way he would like the motion worded. Chief Clark stated he is asking to take the funds out of the budget. There was a seconded by Councilman Mears.

Voting for the motion was: Council woman James and Councilman Mears. Voting against the motion was: Councilman Antoine, Councilwoman Wells, and Councilman Gutierrez.
The motion failed.

Council woman Wells made a motion to approve the request as written on the agenda. It was seconded by Councilman Antoine. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

Executive Session:

Councilwoman James made a motion to recess the regular meeting and enter into Executive Session to discuss Personnel, Litigation, Real Estate, and Legal matters. It was seconded by Councilman Mears. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

The governing body entered into Executive Session at 7:34 pm.

Councilman Mears made a motion to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:56 pm and reconvene the Regular Meeting. It was seconded by Councilwoman James. Voting for the motion was unanimous.

Amended Item #5
Hiring of City
Manager:

Councilman Antoine made a motion to appoint Albert Baker as the new City Manager with the same pay and benefits as the previous City Manager effective immediately. It was seconded by Councilman Gutierrez. Voting for the motion was: Councilman



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Antoine, Councilman Gutierrez, and Councilwoman Wells. Voting against the motion was: Councilwoman James and Councilman Mears.
The motion passed.

Public Comments:

Trudy Smith – Please explain why council members are interfering with day to day operations of departments? It is not up to individual councilmembers to interfere.

Anonymous – Wasn't a code of conduct adopted by the Mayor and Council at the last meeting? Why are the elements not being followed?

Councilwoman Wells asked why anonymous comments are being presented to the board if a name is required to submit a comment.

Mayor Butler stated comments that do not follow the guidelines will not be approved for the next meeting.

Dianne Lunsford – With the new ethics law just passed what makes a councilmember take it upon herself to address a department head with disrespect?

Robyn Kemp – When will the Chief be available for an interview? It's been about a year since I first requested one with Clayton News. The invitation still stands with the Crescent.

**Comments by
Governing Body:**

Councilwoman James thanked everyone for participating in the virtual meeting. Forest Park High School will be doing banners for the Class of 2020. \$3,600 has been collected. They have a goal of \$6,600. She extended a thank you to everyone who has donated.

Councilman Antoine extended a thank you to everyone for participating in the virtual meeting. He received an update on stimulus payments. Checks from the Federal Government will be sent out on Friday.



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Councilman Gutierrez recognized the first responders for their hard work during the COVID-19 crisis. He also offered condolences to the family of the citizen who lost their life to COVID-19.

Councilwoman Wells thanked everyone for participating in the meeting.

Councilman Mears thanked everyone for participating in the meeting. He stated he has received calls in regards to the trash pickup, and he wants the citizens to know that they working on a plan to resume trash pickup.

Mayor Butler announced that Don Horton is our sole finalist as our Fire Chief. She hopes to make a formal appointment in the upcoming council meeting.

Adjournment:

Councilman Mears made motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Councilwoman James. Voting for the motion was unanimous.