

Trudy Smith
Board Member, Forest Park Urban Redevelopment Agency
4778 Hendrix Drive
Forest Park, GA 30297

January 27, 2020

Mayor Angelyne Butler, MPA
745 Forest Parkway
Forest Park, GA 30297

Re: Response to the Letter from Mayor Butler dated January 22, 2020 Regarding charges under O.C.G.A § 31-61-18(1):

Opening Statement: As a Citizen of Forest Park duly appointed and sworn in I have served on the Urban Redevelopment Agency for two full years, third year started 2020. I have served with pride and conscientiousness well within the boundaries of my oath of office. I received a letter from your office via hand delivery by the Forest Park Police Department. The letter states the letter was to be delivered by both Certified Mail Return Receipt and Hand Delivery. The Certified letter was not received as of the time this response was composed. Please see my response below to the charges individually.

1. As to charge number one in the letter from the Mayor dated January 22, 2020. There has been no “inefficiency, neglect of duty, or misconduct” as alleged on my part. If there is evidence to the contrary I demand to see such evidence as I am being falsely accused of actions and should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. I have cooperated to the full extent of my oath of office and in good faith with the Elected Officials however, my loyalty is first and foremost to the City, Citizens, Business Owners, and Employees. I was sworn to protect the City of Forest Park and the Stakeholders thereof without “fear, favor, or affection”. While considering the financial assistance concerning City facilities (Fire Station, and Headquarters facility), I along with my Co-Board Members voted to give the Fire Department the property on which to construct the desired facility. We were also willing to favorably consider possible financing options for this facility. We were not approached in that respect by the elected body. We voted to table this issue because we were not provided with enough information to make a decision of that magnitude. The next meeting we were asked to bundle Starr Park improvements along with a new Police Headquarters facility with the already discussed Fire Department facility and to issue bonds for financing that encompassed all or none of these projects. There was never any discussion nor plans presented as to details on what the improvements to Starr Park would be

and the New Police facility had not been discussed at all, even the Fire Chief was blindsided by the Mayor and Council's request. The only discussion was Chief Buckholts and Chief Clark making their case for the need of the facilities. I and my colleagues would have been negligent and in violation of our oaths of office if we had blindly went along with issuing bonds to finance these initiatives without due diligence in exploring exactly what we would be putting the taxpayers on the hook for especially considering the fact that we still have bonds issued/unpaid in regards to Fort Gillem. We also expressed that the City needs to complete existing projects such as the Main Street project which has been only half completed and ongoing for years. This was not "failing to cooperate" it is called being fiscally responsible. When eating an apple you do not swallow it whole, you eat it one bite at a time, the City elected officials were overreaching in attempting to start this many projects leaving others unfinished. The requests being made of us was not reasonable and the City failed to provide the Board with enough information to make it possible for us to comply with the requests as they presented them to us. These charges are a power play to negate the URA Board in order to bestow the properties as well as authorities that are now held by the current Board over to the Downtown Development Agency which was created by the current Mayor and Council in 2018. We were each approached individually by the City Attorney, Mike Williams with pre-typed resignation letters (I possess a recording of the meeting that I was a party to). In this meeting he attempted to bully and intimidate me by saying the Mayor and Council wanted the resignations so they could move in a different direction. Since we declined to sign the letters these fraudulent charges were levied to remove us from office. Mr. Williams stated it would be done the easy way or the hard way. Mr. Williams gave information that certain members did sign resignation letters which was false as four members had not signed the letters. He manipulated the Board Chairman, Frank Brandon into signing a letter. However, Mr Brandon has since rescinded that resignation as he was presented with false information by Mr. Williams. The legality of this is currently being reviewed by the State of Georgia General Counsel's Office as we speak. The Stakeholders of the City should be asking the questions why the urgency to disband one fully functioning Board in favor of another, what do the elected officials stand to gain from such an action? I am an American with a Disability (Federal Law protects citizens under the ADA Act 1990 from discrimination and attack) as well as a Model Citizen and take issue with my character being called into question with these false charges. I respectfully request that due to lack of evidence supporting these false charges they be dismissed and we get back to doing the City business that the Mayor and Council were elected to do and the Urban Redevelopment Board was appointed to do. We should be working together to insure the wellbeing of the City of Forest Park to make it sustainable for generations to come.

2. The second charge "Misconduct in office" is also an issue. I, as a private Citizen have a right to disagree with my elected officials when I feel the best interest of

the City they were elected to serve is not being met, in fact it is my civic duty. My civil rights are being violated by attempting to silence my 1st Amendment rights to free speech. I attend public meetings as is my right. I offer information to which I have direct knowledge as necessary, I do not divulge any confidential information gained as a Board Member. My being a member of the Urban Redevelopment Agency has nothing to do with my opinions as a private citizen. None of the Board Members surrendered their rights as private Citizens in order to serve on a volunteer Board, that would be absurd. If I am asked about being a member I do not deny being on the URA as well as the DA Boards, as I pride myself on honesty, transparency and integrity. Once again, I take issue at the false accusations contained in the letter from the Mayor dated January 22, 2020. As previously stated, I request these charges be dismissed in order to move the city forward in serving the Citizens, Business Owners, and Employees of the City of Forest Park.

In Closing, my character is being assaulted and this is unacceptable no Citizen should be subjected to this behavior. I give my time, talent, and treasure as a volunteer and being verbally abused is the reward the Mayor and Council chooses to bestow, shame on you. If the Mayor and Council has any integrity at all an apology will be issued and this matter dismissed so we can each do the jobs that we swore an oath to do.

Cc: State of Georgia General Counsel's Office (Hand Delivered)
Georgia Secretary of State's Office (Hand Delivered)
Mike Williams, City Attorney (Hand Delivered)
Councilmembers Kimberly James, Ward 1, Dabouze Antoine, Ward 2,
Hector Gutierrez, Ward 3, Latressa Akins-Wells, Ward 4, Allan Mears, Ward 5
(Hand Delivered)
Kimberly Scofield, Georgia House of Representatives (Hand Delivered)
Valencia Stovall, Georgia House of Representatives (Hand Delivered)
Sandra Scott, Georgia House of Representatives (Hand Delivered)
Rhonda Burnough, Georgia House of Representatives (Hand Delivered)
Valencia Seay, Georgia State Senator (Hand Delivered)
Dale Russell, WSB Channel 2 News (Emailed)
Morse Diggs, Fox 5 Atlanta (Emailed)
Karyn Greer, CBS Channel 46 (Emailed)
Mandi Albright, AJC Government Reporter (Emailed)
Robin Kemp, Clayton News Daily (Emailed)
URA Board Members, Don Wright, Felicia Davis, Pamela Lake, Frank Brandon