

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
January 26, 2026

The January 26, 2026, the City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:04 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 20600 City Center Blvd. Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois.

The following Council members were present: Mayor Raymond Soliman, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, City Treasurer Jamie Malloy, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing (remote via phone), Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, City Police Chief Ed Clark, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Angelo Deserio and Alderman Joe Kubal.

Mayor Soliman commented that he talked to both Alderman Deserio and Alderman Kubal and they were both excused for the meeting.

Additionally, Mayor Soliman announced that City Administrator Blaine Wing would be attending remotely via telephone due to illness. City Attorney Mike Stiff clarified that while the remote attendance policy passed by Council applies only to elected officials, not employees, City Administrator Wing was technically taking a sick day and volunteering his time for important agenda items.

City Administrator Wing identified himself as Chester Blaine Wing III, calling in due to illness, having taken a full sick day but volunteering to participate due to the importance of the agenda items.

Mayor Soliman asked if there were any Council objections to allowing City Administrator Wing to join the meeting remotely. There were no objections.

**MAYOR**

Mayor Ray Soliman introduced the Knapp Drive Traffic Study presentation, noting that copies were available for all Council members and acknowledging the presence of several Willow Falls residents in the audience. He explained the meeting procedure: City Engineer Ron Weideman would present the study findings and recommendations, followed by questions from Council members, and then public comments.

1. Knapp Dr. Traffic Study Presentation

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman began by recapping that in mid-2025, Council had authorized a contract with Christopher Burke to perform a traffic calming study along the Knapp corridor. The study, completed in December, aimed to evaluate cut-through traffic on Knapp between Illinois Route 7/Theodore Street and Larkin Avenue, with the goal of developing

alternatives to reduce cut-through traffic by drivers avoiding the Larkin/Route 7/30 triangle. The study also included analysis of QuikTrip development's impact on Knapp Road.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman detailed the study area's major intersections: Knapp at Larkin/Weber, Knapp at Illinois Route 7/Theodore, and the minor intersections at Willow Falls Circle Drive North and South. Engineer Wiedeman explained there were sixty-four cars in the morning and 131 cars in the afternoon taking the cut-through at Knapp Road.

Speed data revealed another significant concern. While the posted speed limit is 25 mph, the average speed was 32 mph, with the 85th percentile at 37 mph.

City Engineer Wiedeman then presented nine alternatives looking to the future as well, ranging from simple to complex solutions:

**Alternative 1** involved installing an all-way stop sign at Willow Circle South, building a barrier median on IL 7/Theodore, and signage at Knapp Road implementing time restrictions preventing southbound left turns from Knapp to IL 7 / Theodore during peak hours (3:30-7 PM Monday through Friday). Engineer Wiedeman noted the dangerous movement of eastbound Theodore traffic trying to access Knapp.

**Alternative 2** proposed temporary speed tables (not speed bumps) along Knapp Drive. Engineer Wiedeman explained. This option is offered to get drivers to slow down. Two of these temporary speed tables could be installed for approximately \$10,000 as a trial.

**Alternatives 3** involved road narrowing along Knapp Drive and curb extensions and parking for Willow Circle Drive, which will have a tunneling effect, thus slowing down traffic on Knapp Road. The road narrowing would be combined with adding speed tables.

**Alternative 4** is alternative 3 (road narrowing and speed tables) and adding left-turn restrictions at Illinois Route 7 (Theodore Street).

**Alternative 5** would make Knapp Road completely right-in, right-out at Theodore, which Engineer Wiedeman acknowledged would "have a pretty good impact on all your businesses along there," while decreasing traffic.

**Alternatives 6 and 6b** involved constructing a new access road to Route 30, requiring coordination with QuikTrip, and potentially impacting their development. 6b is constructing a new access road and putting a cul-de-sac at Willow Circle South and closing Knapp Road to the south.

**Alternative 7** proposed constructing two cul-de-sacs in the middle of Knapp, which would dramatically impact both cut-through traffic and local businesses.

**Alternatives 8 and 9** involved installing roundabouts. However, these options would be "very complex" and "very expensive," with Alternative 9 requiring major structural work over the existing ditch.

After presenting all options, City Engineer Wiedeman recommended an iterative approach starting with Alternative 1. Engineer Wiedeman suggested installing a barrier median on Theodore which would restrict left turns and install a stop sign at Willow Circle Drive South and make restricted times to make left turns off Knapp Road to go eastbound on Theodore Street for busy morning and afternoon times. Engineer Wiedeman suggests monitoring these results for a year before considering additional measures like speed tables.

Public comment featured two Willow Falls residents. Lupe Rullis from 1892 Willow Circle Drive expressed appreciation for the study after a period of feeling unheard.

Resident Rullis shared residents' experiences, stating that their biggest concerns are the speed of traffic, volume of the traffic and the big trucks and the buses using Knapp Road. When asked her preference of the options given in the presentation, she favored "a mixture" including speed tables.

Resident Marilyn Miller from 1895 Willow Circle Drive stated she was concerned about emergency vehicles, having seen an ambulance and fire truck making left turns onto Theodore that afternoon. She wanted to know if there is a barrier on Theodore Street, how would the emergency vehicles get through? Engineer Weideman stated that the barrier would not be a problem and the emergency vehicles would be able to get through.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to use alternate #1 with time restrictions for no left hand turn onto Theodore Street with the stop signs at Willow Falls South with a formal resolution drafted by the City Attorney to incorporate review requirements.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Jefferson, Dyke, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

#### **CLERK**

There were no agenda items.

#### **TREASURER**

There were no agenda items.

#### **CITY ADMINISTRATOR**

1. Discussion of Known Storm Drainage Issue Areas in Crest Hill

City Administrator Blaine Wing, participating remotely, introduced this item at the request of Alderman Mark Cipiti, noting he had been working on various stormwater issues with residents since starting nine months ago. He referenced his memo beginning on page 201 of the meeting packet, along with a 2019 memo on page 202 detailing previous City expenditures for dredging and cleaning. City Administrator Wing emphasized that the City had since learned the cleaned area was not City property.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented maps showing the Jasmine Creek drainage area. He displayed an overall exhibit showing how water flows through the area, eventually passing through Joliet property and reaching Rock Run.

Alderpersion Tina Oberlin asked who was paying taxes on the Canterbury properties. City Attorney Stiff had not verified but suspected taxes were not being paid by a company listed as out-of-business for years. Alderman Albert checked the Will County GIS site finding that the assessed value of the property is a dollar.

Alderman Mark Cipiti stated, "I brought this up as a discussion point and I know there's uncertainty on ownership, but it all boils down to we need to do something to make it right for residents that live along there. They don't want to hear from the City that we don't own it, we're not going to do anything about it. It's our storm water that is going through that route. It hasn't been maintained and as a result it backs up into residents' yards. It destroys their property. Pools, sheds, and decks getting destroyed by Crest Hill storm water that is not taking the route that it's intended to go and that's due to lack of maintenance. Whatever we have to do as a City, we need to do to find out who owns it. If no one owns it, can the City just assume ownership of it?"

City Attorney Mike Stiff explained the legal process for the city to acquire the property: "The process is called condemnation. It's a court proceeding that sometimes is quick, sometimes is not." Attorney Stiff outlined the steps including filing a condemnation action, publication of notice, and court determination of just compensation.

Mayor Soliman expressed concern about setting precedent but remained pragmatic about costs, estimating initial cleanup at \$50,000-60,000 with annual maintenance around \$20,000.

City Engineer Wiedeman added that existing easements are blocked by fences, sheds, and pools, requiring new access easements for maintenance equipment.

Two affected residents provided compelling testimony. Resident Sue Wojtak presented a document from the recorder's office that she claimed showed part of the drainage easement was granted to the City of Crest Hill in 1995. This sparked a technical discussion about the difference between easements and ownership, with the City Engineer and City Attorney

explaining that drainage easements do not convey ownership, only usage rights.

Ms. Wojtak detailed severe flooding impacts, with her basement flooding in April of 2026 and her yard flooding five or six more times in July or August and stated that she has about forty thousand dollars' worth of property that will need to be torn out this spring. Ms. Wojtak stated that when the City worked on the drainage and put rocks in the area, that the flow of the water was changed and created huge problems.

Resident Lisa Majewski of 2027 Water Tower Place, whose property includes one of the easements, testified to maintenance efforts. Ms. Majewski stated that the water in the creek hasn't been this high in thirty years. She traced problems to work done 10-15 years ago when the area was retrenched and boulders were added, making machine access difficult.

City Administrator Blaine Wing summarized staff's recommendation to proceed with condemnation, develop an engineering plan, and establish ongoing maintenance. He estimated \$50,000-60,000 for initial cleanup and \$10,000 annually for maintenance of this area, noting other locations would have additional costs.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to direct the City Administrator to begin the condemnation process, develop proper engineering solutions, and establish a maintenance program.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

## 2. Council Chambers – Audio Upgrade Recommendation

City Administrator Blaine Wing was working with and was hoping to get a third quote because “the quotes were coming in over the \$25,000 mark to have our audio equipment repaired and upgraded in the Council chambers. The lowest one, which I’ve been told has a slight adjustment, is still just under \$30,000. There is a second one that is a little over \$81,000.” City Administrator Wing noted that Stuart Soifer was present to provide a basic understanding or explanation and then answer questions. The company that Mr. Soifer works for is being recommended by City Administrator Wing, based on both the price and the solution.

Stuart Soifer stated that, “[City Administrator] Blaine [Wing] and I have worked closely on this, based on my experience with years being here, my knowledge in the industry, etc. I took a couple different approaches to this one and I didn’t get to see what the other company proposed until the packet came out. The way it really looks is that we took two different approaches. I took an approach as a citizen as to how do we address this economically, feasibly, and that means doing some different things to the system that you have here existing. Basically, expand on it. If I was coming into this

approach in a different manner, meaning that I came to the City to propose to do this, I would have probably taken a different approach but because I'm a resident here, I took the approach of how do we come in here more with a scalpel rather than a chainsaw." He diagnosed the core problem as poor system design rather than faulty equipment. Mr. Soifer stated, "A lot of the equipment is right, but it's not used in the right capacity."

Mr. Soifer stated, "What I proposed is we will remove the wireless microphones that are being used by the staff and replace them with microphones just like you [the Council] have. That will require some wiring, wiring being pulled back to the system. Also, what is happening in the system is that all these microphones are all mixed together so there's no individual control, nothing even automatically individually controlling, which is the way it should be... Each output should be on its own and have its own independent output. The way that it's set up now is that whoever is running the TV if he wants to lower a microphone because it's too loud, he lowers it everywhere and that shouldn't happen. That's where I'm thinking some of the problems are."

Mr. Soifer provided direct feedback on microphone usage, having monitored the system through the ALS (assisted listening system) he previously installed. He explained how proper microphone use would enable automatic level adjustments: "If you're speaking into the microphones properly, the system will automatically raise your microphone louder."

The solution involved expanding the DSP (digital signal processor), which Mr. Soifer identified as "'underpowered,' so what my proposal is that outside of adding the additional microphones, we must add more inputs and the only way to add more inputs is to add a bigger DSP. So, what I'm going to do is expand that DSP. So, it is adding microphones, expanding the DSP then doing some reprogramming. That's the bulk of it." The proposal would repurpose existing wireless microphones for other uses: two for the guest tables (one on each table), one handheld microphone for events, and a gooseneck wireless microphone for the podium.

Alderson Oberlin asked who will have the ability to lower the microphones individually. Mr. Soifer replied, "Nobody, it will be automatic." Alderson Oberlin asked further, "So, nobody can turn them up or down?" Mr. Soifer added, "We'll have a volume control. [We'll have] to incorporate it into the existing control system. She [the City Clerk] has some limited control from her pad there, we have to make sure that we maintain that because we can't reprogram that. The only thing we can do is start from scratch. And that is about \$30,000. It's like working the new system into the control. What will happen is the only thing she will be able to control is turning the microphones on and off. That's it. There will be a user adoption problem... If you're speaking into the microphone properly, the system will automatically raise your microphone louder than someone else's, not to overtalk them but to get everyone up on the same level... If you wanted to whisper, your microphone won't open. You'll have to talk to

a certain level before the microphone will turn on. That will cut down on the feedback problem that we're having."

Alderson Oberlin asked if the feedback would only get worse once the eight new microphones get added. Mr. Soifer responded, "No, it will get better because those microphones are more directional." Alderson Oberlin asked, "So, the ones that you're going to use that are wireless, at the table, the rest of these are going to be hard wired?" Mr. Soifer, "All of them will be hard wired, right."

When asked who will be trained on the new system, Administrator Wing explained it would include "the Council and the elected officials, the Planning Commission, and our adjudication person as well as our Civil Service Commission."

Alderson Oberlin asked who at City Hall is going to be responsible for the many items listed on page 211 of the packet, starting with "network" and at the bottom where it states, "exclusions." Mr. Soifer explained, "A lot of that is boiler plate. I'll run through most of that with [City Administrator] Blaine [Wing]." Alderson Oberlin stated, "I just want to make sure that we have someone here who's the point person... We need to know someone is taking care of all of this." Mr. Soifer said, "Most of those [exclusions] involve construction. Conduits and raceways are already existing." Mr. Soifer further explained that there are a couple of pipes underneath that the current microphones are running through and the new microphones will be using the same ones. If a new one is needed, that is what it is referring to. Mr. Soifer didn't anticipate using/need a concrete saw, firewall, ceilings, roofs, floor penetrations for this proposal.

When asked about the cost of the work of Mr. Soifer's company, City Administrator Wing answered, "It's still under \$30,000."

City Administrator Blaine Wing stated that the third vendor he contacted never responded back to him, "so at a certain point I felt this needs to go before Council. There's a 'rip out and replace,' which is about \$81,000 and there's a 're-use what we have and make improvements.' This solves our audio issue; this is not the full fix for the back room. I'm still working on getting quotes for that. There are lots of pieces of equipment in the back closet in the A/V room that are already at end of life and there's maintaining those...and some of those companies have gone out of business." City Administrator Wing promised to have more items to address for "the overall system for the Council chambers broadcasting" in the future budget.

City Administrator Wing states, "I'm trying to educate myself on what we have, what should be, and what we can do with what we have so that we can still maximize the investment that we have, but some things do need to be, quite honestly, replaced. If you have pieces of equipment that the manufacturer has gone out of business, it's lasted its eight, we're up to ten to twelve years. If it breaks, we're dead in the water. So, those are the quotes that I'm getting from other vendors."

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the ACP Creative IT audio upgrade proposal not to exceed \$30,000.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

Alderwoman Gazal raised a practical concern about remote control storage after difficulties accessing them when Administrator Wing was sick. Administrator Wing agreed to establish a designated location, with the ADA equipment, accessible to multiple staff members.

3. Recommendations of New Committees

City Administrator Blaine Wing proposed two new committees based on his six-month check-ins with Council members who expressed interest in specific areas. He presented the current Committee structure on page 236 and his recommendations for assignments.

The first proposed Committee was Finance. Its purpose would be "to help us provide some short- and long-term financial oversight, working towards our budgeting and our financial planning." The two committee members would serve as liaisons, providing recommendations to Council and the City Treasurer.

The second was a Negotiation Prep Committee, timely given upcoming contract expirations with Local 150. Administrator Wing clarified these members would not sit at the negotiation table but would help with preparation.

Administrator Wing outlined the City's three current union contracts: Local 150, and two FOP contracts for police officers and sergeants.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the proposed specific assignments: Aldermen Dyke and Deserio for Finance Committee, and Aldermen Cipiti and Jefferson for Negotiation Prep (pending Jefferson's conflict resolution).

AYES: Ald. Albert, Cipiti, Gazal, Jefferson, Dyke

UNDECIDED: Ald. Oberlin

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

The item would proceed to Monday's Agenda.



4. Discuss City Newsletter Options

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented five options for the City newsletter on page 237, motivated by the upcoming Civil Service ballot item with elections March 17th and early voting starting in early February. Administrator Wing is seeking Council input following questions about the winter newsletter at the last meeting.

Alderman Albert praised the newsletter's professional appearance but emphasized ensuring proper delivery after receiving two copies while some residents received none.

Administrator Wing suggested alternatives including doing newsletters twice yearly (spring/summer and fall/winter) rather than quarterly to combine content and reduce costs. Administrator Wing also noted demographic considerations and emphasized the reinforcement strategy of using both print and digital channels.

Administrator Wing confirmed he would collaborate with graphic designers and communications consultants who were preparing recommended article lists for each season.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

1. 1812 N Larkin Ave, Extra Space Storage - Plat of Subdivision, Special Use, City Code and Zoning Ordinance Variation

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter presented a request from Extra Space Storage at 1812 North Larkin Avenue that had received unanimous approval from the Plan Commission. The request included three components: plat of subdivision, amending an existing special use permit, and a variation from masonry requirements.

The plan would consolidate the lots and construct one additional larger building on the new property. The exterior would match existing buildings, requiring a waiver from masonry requirements.

Josh Williams from Kimley-Horn, the project's Civil Engineer, addressed the variance request: "We are requesting the variance for the brick veneer request, and we'll be matching the existing building facades with the metal framing to better match and kind of bring a coherency to the overall storage facility."

City Attorney Mike Stiff clarified the ordinance in the packet would need minor non-substantive tweaks but would include all approvals (special use, variation, and preliminary/final plat) in one vote.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve 1812 N Larkin Ave, Extra Space Storage - Plat of Subdivision, Special Use, City Code and Zoning Ordinance Variation.

AYES: Ald. Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Dyke

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

The item would proceed to Monday's Agenda.

## **ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

1. A Resolution for a Professional Services Agreement for a PFAS Treatment Equipment and Pilot Testing Study by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand and Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$10,000.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman provided an update on PFAS control solutions, reminding Council that in October they had chosen Alternative 1 (water blending) from five presented options. Public Works was working to prepare wells for blending implementation later in the year, with additional PFAS testing planned to verify effectiveness.

The scope included field review and feasibility assessment at wells 7 and 10 for installing carbon-activated systems, coordinating with EPA on requirements, and establishing parameters for vendors completing the pilot study.

Alderman Oberlin noted the proposal still referenced "Julius" as Interim Public Works Director from December, requesting it be updated to reflect the new permanent Director. City Engineer Wiedeman agreed to make the correction.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve A Resolution for a Professional Services Agreement for a PFAS Treatment Equipment and Pilot Testing Study by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand and Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$10,000.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

The item would proceed to Monday's Agenda.

2. Award the Contract to P.T. Ferro Construction Company in the amount of \$2,023,482.72 for the Division Roadway Reconstruction Improvement.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented the Division Street reconstruction project was designed two years prior but had not made the previous year's budget. The scope included reconstructing the east leg of Division to a

three-lane cross section from Weber to Boreal, transitioning to two lanes from Boreal to the subdivision's end, and resurfacing to the corporate limits near the old Honor Farm.

Seven bids were received, with P.T. Ferro submitting the low bid of \$2,023,482.72, significantly below the engineer's estimate of \$2,755,000. Engineer Wiedeman confirmed all documents were in order.

Mayor Raymond highlighted the savings of approximately \$650,000 below the engineer's estimate.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve Award the Contract to P.T. Ferro Construction Company in the amount of \$2,023,482.72 for the Division Roadway Reconstruction Improvement.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Jefferson, Dyke, Oberlin, Cipiti, and Albert.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

The item would proceed to Monday's Agenda.

3. A Resolution Approving a Revision to the Construction Agreement for the Caton Farm Rd. Water Main Extension by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and M.J. Underground, Inc. to Increase the Contract Amount to \$775,874.88.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained the need for a change order on the water-main installation project behind Menards leading to the new receiving station at Oakland and Caton Farm. While easements had been obtained from two of three property owners, the third parcel owned by Christofaro (in trust) presented challenges.

The contractor was approaching this section of work, though delayed by freezing weather and snow. Rather than stopping work and incurring \$15,000-25,000 in delay costs, Engineer Wiedeman proposed moving the water main north into an existing easement, requiring boring instead of open cut due to proximity to ComEd lines. The change order totaled \$51,038.88.

Alderman Oberlin asked if the easement would cost money if obtained. City Attorney Mike Stiff confirmed they were requesting donation but acknowledged the trust could have demanded payment.

Mayor Ray Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve A Resolution Approving a Revision to the Construction Agreement for the Caton Farm Rd. Water Main Extension by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and M.J. Underground, Inc. to Increase the Contract Amount to \$775,874.88.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal

The item would proceed to Monday's Agenda.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

There were no agenda items.

**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

There were no agenda items.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No Members of the public came forward to address the Council.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

1. 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(6): The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body.

Alderswoman Gazal made a motion to enter executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(6). Seconded by Alderman Jefferson. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert. Nays: None. Absent: Deserio, Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive session: 10:08 PM.

Alderman Oberlin made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS120/2 (c)(6). Seconded by Alderman Jefferson. Roll call: Ayes: Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Jefferson. Nays: None. Absent: Deserio, Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 10:32 p.m.

There being no further business before the Council, and no action needed from the executive sessions, the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

As presented \_\_\_\_\_

As amended \_\_\_\_\_

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CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

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RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR