

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
February 9, 2026

The February 9, 2026, the City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:00 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 Angelo Deserio, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Council Members Absent were: Alderman Darrell Jefferson.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Public Works Director Gary Richardson.

MAYOR

There were no agenda items.

CLERK

1. Community Room Policy

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall turned the discussion over to City Attorney Mike Stiff and City Administrator Blaine Wing to present the draft community room use policy.

City Attorney Mike Stiff explained he had crafted the draft policy based on comments from the previous work session, incorporating provisions that Alderman Mark Cipiti had liked from the Dellwood policy along with additional provisions from both the White Oak and Dellwood policies. City Attorney Stiff noted that the community capacity issue had been resolved with 35 occupants maximum with tables and 145 occupants maximum without tables.

City Attorney Stiff then addressed the outstanding insurance requirement, explaining that after the last work session, the City's insurance broker Mike Alesia had contacted City Administrator Blaine Wing stating that the City is expected to require insurance from anyone using City property. City Attorney Stiff had included an insurance requirement with blank liability limits, suggesting \$1 million per occurrence based on the insurance broker's recommendation. City Attorney Stiff noted that the Autumn Ridge Homeowners Association, which had already made reservations for the community room, carries a commercial general liability (CGL) policy with \$2 million in coverage, demonstrating that obtaining such insurance is feasible for civic groups. City Attorney Stiff emphasized that requiring insurance would make the user's insurance primary, with the City's coverage serving as backup, and would protect both the City and the group using the facility.

Alderwoman Claudia Gazal raised concerns about the capacity limits, particularly for homeowner's associations that never know exactly how many people will attend their meetings. She questioned who would monitor compliance and stated that in the past, her homeowner's association had both people sitting and standing and wanted to make sure that it was acceptable. City Administrator Blaine Wing clarified that the capacity numbers came directly from the fire district and were based on egress requirements. The discussion evolved into whether tables could be removed to accommodate more people, with various Council members debating the logistics. City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall suggested just having two tables in the front of the community room with the rest of the room just being chairs. This suggestion seemed to gain consensus as a practical solution.

Mayor Soliman called for an informal vote to approve a Community Room Policy with agreement of insurance requirements of \$1 million per occurrence and \$2 million in the aggregate, with the final capacity to be confirmed with the fire district based on a configuration of two head tables with the remainder being chairs only.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

TREASURER

There were no agenda items.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Determining which Council Member Requests will be Discussed

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented an updated worksheet containing fourteen items that various Council members had requested for discussion. He explained his purpose: "I'll just kind of summarize my summary on the cover and then my recommendation and then my request tonight Mayor will be to go through these fourteen items with the hope of, again, not discussing the items really in-depth but to find out almost like an informal poll on each one of the items if there is interest for staff to do additional research and for it to be on an agenda."

City Administrator Wing proposed a system where a "yes" vote would mean Council wanted staff to spend time, money, and resources on the item; a "maybe" would indicate future consideration; and a "no" would remove the item from consideration. He also suggested implementing a "two Council member rule" going forward, where any future topic would need a Council member to bring it up and another to second it during a meeting.

Item 1: Discuss having all items discussed or presented to have the relevant elected official's name clearly indicated to the item or topic for discussion

Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, who requested this item, stated, "I believe it's transparency again. Why are you not putting your name on it?...Just be open."

Alderperson Tina Oberlin agreed, "Well, I intend to agree that if you want to speak about something, you should not have a problem saying you want to speak about it. I do not see the reason to hide that."

Mayor Soliman called for an informal vote to decide if this topic goes forward for discussion.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Deserio, Dyke, Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

Item 2: Discuss purchasing certain physical properties

Alderwoman Gazal noted she had discussed this in economic development meetings as something the City needs to consider.

Alderperson Oberlin strongly agreed: "Well, of course, I think we should discuss that. We are landlocked. We have got to do what we can do."

Mayor Soliman said to get through these fourteen topics, that he would ask if any members of Council are against each topic.

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Item 3: Discuss annexing certain properties

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Item 4: Discuss the change in pay for city council members

Multiple council members had requested this topic. One noted it had been at least 11 years since the last discussion.

Alderman Oberlin emphasized: "There hasn't been an increase in over 20 years...All the things associated with doing your job here as a City official goes up."

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Item 5: Discuss changing the pay of the treasurer position

Alderwoman Gazal immediately questioned why only the treasurer's position was listed and not the clerk, stating that the Council should discuss all elected positions.

The Council agreed to change the item to discuss pay for all elected officials, which all present are in favor of further discussion.

Items 6 & 7: Discuss changing the treasurer/clerk positions from elected to appointed

Alderman Nate Albert explained: "I did bring this up just as a discussion topic. There's a lot of municipalities across the state of Illinois that have gone to, you know, CPAs and professionals that have gone into these types of positions. And we [tend to] always think about the people instead of the position here in Crest Hill. I think it's important to remember we're talking about the position."

Alderwoman Gazal strongly opposed, citing transparency concerns and noting the importance of elected positions, particularly given past financial issues the City had faced.

Ald. Dyke, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti voted against discussing these two items at this time, effectively removing items six and seven from consideration.

Item 8: Discuss changing the mayor's position

City Administrator Blaine Wing noted that state law does not allow this change, so the item was removed.

Item 9: Discuss building and maintaining boulevard landscaping in the median of Weber Road

Alderman Nate Albert stated, "Right now, all the Crest Hill stretches of the boulevard is concrete. You go up to Romeoville, and they're all landscaped and they look nice. I know there's a tremendous cost associated with it, but I think it really creates good curb appeal, and I just think we should look into it and talk about it some more."

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Item 10: Discuss the code violation enforcement policy

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter welcomed Council members to discuss any code violation enforcement policy questions with him.

The item was not moved forward due to lack of a clear request or purpose.

Item 11: Discuss citywide storm drainage issues and possible solutions

Alderperson Oberlin noted: "The issue we're having on Jasmine is not the only one in the City. So, if we're going to discuss that one, we should discuss the other ones."

Alderman Dyke added extensive experience with drainage issues in his ward over the years.

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Item 12: Discuss having 2 council members on each committee

Alderman Mark Cipiti explained his reasoning: "Just looking at the list of committees that we currently have, all but two have two people as a committee... I just feel that for consistency, they all should have two members. It also provides backup or an alternate if one of the chairs, for example, gets ill or is in any other way incapacitated."

Mayor Ray Soliman strongly opposed it, noting the Veterans Committee had functioned with its current structure since 1988. Alderperson Oberlin, as LADISE liaison, called it "silly" and "a waste of time."

The item failed with four "no" votes.

Item 13: Discuss including a cell phone stipend

This item was tied to the compensation discussion and received unanimous support to be included in item 4.

Item 14: Discuss utilizing the executive conference room instead of council chambers for closed sessions

Alderman Mark Cipiti explained multiple concerns, "I've been requesting us to utilize that room for the intent that it was built, and we don't." He noted it's inappropriate to ask the public to leave chambers for executive sessions and expressed concerns about confidential discussions being overheard in the lobby when using amplified microphones.

Alderwoman Claudia Gazal acknowledged the concern about sound but felt it was easier to use the current setup. Mayor Soliman preferred the current arrangement for the City Clerk's convenience.

All present are in favor of further discussion.

Additional items were raised, including a discussion about bio-solids spreading, with City Administrator Blaine Wing providing background on the state contract issues and suggesting long-term solutions involving state legislation to restrict spreading near populated areas.

City Administrator Wing then provided an update on the Assistant City Administrator/HR Director hiring search, noting he had interviewed six candidates that day and will possibly have two more. He confirmed interviews would take place on February 17th following the regular City Council meeting, despite concerns from some members about the length of the combined meetings. Alderwoman Gazal expressed she could only stay until 8:30 PM, and Alderman Deserio would be out of town but could potentially call in at 9:00 PM. After extensive discussion about alternative dates and the restrictions on meetings during federal holidays, the Council agreed to proceed with interviews on the 17th.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter presented several updates.

Route 66 Signs: Director Ritter received the contract and would send it to Council for final review before bringing it to the March meeting for approval. The deadline was tight to have signs installed by the end of April.

Plan Commission Meeting: Both QuikTrip requests and the Seasons at Crest Hill apartment complex would be reviewed at Thursday's Plan Commission meeting.

Feathered Fork Update: "The location on Renwick that was previous Chaos and Crusade, they're planning on rebranding to...an Italian sit-down restaurant," Director Ritter explained. They were working on menu development and landlord clearances for the rebrand.

Rejuvenate Grand Opening: The business had successfully relocated to 2310 Plainfield Road at the old Stanton Architecture location and held their ribbon cutting on Saturday.

When asked if the furniture store by O'Reilly Auto Parts was closed, Director Ritter clarified that the owner had moved to a different location on Plainfield Road, and they were working with the property owner to clean up and re-lease or sell the vacant building.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

1. A Resolution approving a Construction Engineering Agreement for East and West Receiving Stations Improvement by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. for an amount of \$1,129,850.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained that the east and west receiving station project would go out for bid later in the month with bids opening in April. The project had made the EPA intended funding list. He presented a construction engineering contract with Strand for shop drawing reviews, pay request approvals, field meetings, and full-time construction inspection at a total cost of \$1,129,850, to be spread over several fiscal years.

Alderperson Tina Oberlin questioned provisions regarding substitute products and contractor reimbursement from page 18, #6. Chris from Strand explained: "So if a contractor proposes an alternative, you know, hey, we think this product will work better. That [product] has to be reviewed to make sure it fits in with the overall system. And we don't have that in the budget. You guys shouldn't have to pay for that, so the contractor would have to pay for that." It was noted that it is standard contractor language in contracts.

When Alderperson Oberlin asked about extension of services provisions on page 20, Chris clarified that any extensions would be negotiated at the time they are needed, citing COVID-related delays as an example.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote approving a Construction Engineering Agreement for East and West Receiving Stations Improvement by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. for an amount of \$1,129,850.00.

AYES: Ald. Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Deserio, Dyke.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

2. A Resolution approving a Construction Testing Agreement for East and West Receiving Stations Improvement by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Rubino Engineering, Inc. for an amount of \$26,335.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented a construction testing agreement with Rubino Engineering for concrete and soil testing, using the same firm doing testing for the ground storage tank. The total cost was \$26,335.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote approving a Construction Testing Agreement for East and West Receiving Stations Improvement by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Rubino Engineering, Inc. for an amount of \$26,335.00.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke, Deserio, Gazal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

3. Resolution Approving Professional Engineering Service agreement for a City-Wide Multi-Use Path Study-Phase 1 by and between the city of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd for an amount of \$48,500.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained this phase 1 study would work in conjunction with the City's comprehensive plan update to provide guidance for mobility and quality of life improvements. Phase 1 would identify potential locations for paths and regional connections, while phase 2 would involve public and Council input and detailed design. Phase 1 will take eight to ten months to complete.

"The phase 1 work here that's being proposed will be information that will benefit the comprehensive plan update, while the phase 2 will utilize some of the feedback recommendations and strategies to come up with more of a final design." City Engineer Wiedeman explained.

Alderman Oberlin expressed that Route 30 is, "just horrible and every night there's more and more people walking and it's dark and there's absolutely no pedestrian right-of-way anywhere...It's just tragedy after tragedy waiting to happen."

City Engineer Wiedeman clarified that Council and public input would come in phase 2, with phase 1 focusing on identifying possible locations. The cost for phase 1 was \$48,500 from the current budget. Phase 2 cost would be in the budget for 2027.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote approving Professional Engineering Service agreement for a City-Wide Multi-Use Path Study-Phase 1 by and between the city of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd for an amount of \$48,500.00.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Deserio, Dyke, Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

4. Resolution Approving an Agreement for Design and Related Services for the Eastern and Western Receiving Sites at Grand Prairie Water Commission (GPWC) Delivery Points by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. to Increase the Contract Amount to \$720,500.00

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman went over the bullet points on this resolution:

- Redesigning the ground storage tank from 2 million to 2.5 million gallons to account for the loss of the Stateville tank
- Adding a staff office to the east plant for water system operations
- Additional work due to building code updates from 2021 to 2024
- IEPA loan package preparation for the ground reservoir
- Additional design communications with the City's security consultant

"The incremental cost is obviously much cheaper to do that now than to try to build another larger tank later on," Engineer Wiedeman explained regarding the tank size increase. Alderperson Oberlin asked about the financial impact on the City regarding the Stateville tank. City Engineer Wiedeman clarified this was a requirement for their Lake Michigan water allocation - they must maintain two days of storage capacity. With the DOC tank potentially going away, they needed the larger tank to meet requirements.

The total supplement cost was \$75,000, bringing the contract to \$720,500.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote approving an Agreement for Design and Related Services for the Eastern and Western Receiving Sites at Grand Prairie Water Commission (GPWC) Delivery Points by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. to Increase the Contract Amount to \$720,500.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

5. 2027 Budget Capital Projects Discussion-Direction to be provided by Council.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented his capital project recommendations for the 2027 budget, explaining this discussion was happening earlier than usual at the City Administrator's request. He proposed moving traffic signal repairs and crack control to the general fund to free up Motor Fuel Tax funds for the Caton Farm bridge repairs and a Weber/Division intersection design study.

For capital road projects, Engineer Wiedeman presented the list approved in October with an estimated budget of \$1.6-1.8 million, slightly higher than previous years but manageable if bids come in favorably.

City Engineer Wiedeman's prioritized project list included:

1. Division Street reconstruction - \$2.25 million
2. Caton Farm bridge - \$850,000 total (\$150,000 from MFT)
3. Jasmine Ditch regrading - survey work already completed
4. Theodore retaining walls - final section across from El Guero

5. McGilvery Drive at Weber Road widening
6. Ladise at Churnovic widening for truck route
7. Weber Road at City Center Boulevard improvements
8. City Center municipal plaza phase 1 - design work only
9. Gaylord/Cedarwood resurfacing seed money

For water and sewer projects, City Engineer Wiedeman outlined:

- Water main projects on Imperial, Oakland, and Inner Circle
- Phase 2 water main lining on Theodore
- Dual B-box replacements on Rainier
- Meter changeouts for multi-unit buildings
- East and west receiving stations and storage tank (IEPA funded)
- PFAS pilot study - \$175,000 estimate
- Generator replacement at Well 8
- \$1 million in sewer lining and repairs
- Public works equipment and vehicles - \$600,000

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman noted that \$21.5 million would come from IEPA loans, with approximately \$6.8 million impacting the water and sewer fund.

City Engineer Wiedeman concluded by mentioning consideration of a future assistant or inspector position, explaining he was pursuing an RFP for construction engineering services to potentially reduce costs by having a dedicated consultant inspector rather than different inspectors for each project.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1. Approval of Change Order No. 10 from Vissering Construction Inc. with the direction to send it to the IEPA for approval. Change Order will increase the amount of the contract to \$49,695,708.00

Public Works Director Gary Richardson introduced Dominic Gattone from Strand Associates, Inc. to present change order 10 for the West sewage treatment plant project. Mr. Gattone explained there were five items including one deduct.

Mr. Gattone also provided a schedule update: "Substantial completion is June of this year. Final [project] completion is November of this year. In combination with some electrical subcontractor delays as well as this recent bout of cold weather, I'm kind of doubting that they're going to hit that June date."

Mr. Gattone also noted improvements to biosolids handling referencing Alderman Albert's comments about odors and biosolids earlier in the meeting: "Your digesters are being improved at this plant as well as you're getting a centrifuge. So, all of the west biosolid sludge will be land applied in solid form instead of liquid form." City Engineer Ron Wiedeman added context about the long-term solution as the prison property is redeveloped and farmland disappears where biosolids are currently spread.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for Approval of Change Order No. 10 from Vissering Construction Inc. with the direction to send it to the IEPA for approval. Change Order will increase the amount of the contract to \$49,695,708.00.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke, Deserio, Gazal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

2. Approval of the Purchase of a new RAS pump for the East Wastewater Treatment Plant from Metropolitan Industries Inc. in the Amount of \$56,179.00

Public Works Director Gary Richardson presented a request to purchase a new pump to replace one installed in 2012. Director Richardson recommended purchasing a new pump rather than rebuilding, noting the pump could take 14-16 weeks for delivery. The cost of the pump from Metropolitan Industries was \$56,179.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for Approval of the Purchase of a new RAS pump for the East Wastewater Treatment Plant from Metropolitan Industries Inc. in the Amount of \$56,179.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

3. Approval of the purchase of a new motor for the Oxidation Ditch for the East Wastewater Treatment Plant from Komline Sanderson in the amount of \$25,000.00

Public Works Director Gary Richardson presented an emergency purchase request for a ditch motor that is completely out of service. The cost of the motor from Komline Sanderson was \$25,000.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for Approval of the emergency purchase of a new motor for the Oxidation Ditch for the East Wastewater Treatment Plant from Komline Sanderson in the amount of \$25,000.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson

4. Discussion of Public Works Re-Organization

Public Works Director Gary Richardson began his presentation on reorganizing the Public Works Department, explaining he has been with the City since December 16, 2025. "I've done some assessments of the department, and I come before you tonight to talk about the reorganization and the restructuring of the Public Works Department."

Director Richardson emphasized: "The purpose of this organizational restructuring of the Public Works Department in very general terms is to improve the delivery of the service to the residents of the City of Crest Hill."

Public Works Director Richardson showed the current organizational structure, highlighting the lack of buffer between himself and the department's crew leaders who manage streets, water/wastewater (across three locations), fleet, and buildings/grounds. He noted receiving eight applications for the buildings and grounds crew leader position since Friday.

"There is no, as I call it, no buffer between myself and the department," Director Richardson explained, identifying this as a major problem.

Before continuing with details about proposed changes involving labor negotiations, Public Works Director Richardson asked Dominic Gattone from Strand Associates, Inc. to provide context about wastewater facility staffing needs. Mr. Gattone explained that Crest Hill would soon have two Class 1 wastewater facilities and compared staffing levels with similar facilities.

"Just as an example, the west plant's going from something like 10 total motors to 50 motors. There's a lot of plant responsibilities, lab technical work, cutting the grass, biological assessments, biosolids management. The list kind of goes on and on," Mr. Gattone explained. He emphasized the need for adequate staffing to protect the City's investment, ensure coverage for emergencies, and meet increasingly strict regulations.

At this point, Mayor Soliman indicated Council would need to enter executive session to discuss the remainder of the reorganization proposal due to collective bargaining implications.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(2): Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representative, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.

Alderperson Oberlin made a motion to go into executive session for 5ILCS120/2 (c)(2). Seconded by Alderwoman Gazal. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Nayes: None. Absent: Alderman Jefferson. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive session: 9:09 PM.

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

Reconvened: 10:08 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 10:08 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2026.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR

DRAFT