

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
May 11, 2026

The May 11, 2026, 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 (left at 7:12 p.m.), Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Angelo Deserio, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman (left at 8:45 p.m.), Public Works Director Gary Richardson, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Assistant City Administrator/HR Ashley Monroe, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke (left at 8:32 p.m.).

**MAYOR**

1. Festa Italiana 2026 Update  
Mayor Soliman reported receiving a call regarding the Festa Italiana 2026 event. The festival is scheduled for Friday, August 7 through Sunday, August 9, 2026. Friday and Saturday hours will be from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday will begin with a Mass at 11:00 a.m., followed by a parade through the neighborhood, with the Festa open from noon until 9:00 p.m. The organizers requested a waiver of permit fees for all three days and a waiver of the liquor license fees of \$50.00 per day. Mayor Soliman noted these terms are consistent with arrangements from prior years. Council raised no objections, and Mayor Soliman indicated the item would be placed on the June 1st City Council meeting agenda to allow the organizers to proceed with obtaining their state license.

Mayor Soliman also previewed the upcoming May 18th City Council meeting, which will include a special presentation by Lockport Township Fire Chief John O'Connor honoring two City officers for life-safety heroic acts performed in November 2025, as well as three proclamations: one for the 250th Anniversary of the United States, one for Motorcycle Awareness Month, and one for the Building Department.

**CLERK**

There were no agenda items.

**TREASURER**

There were no agenda items.

## CITY ADMINISTRATOR

### 1. City Communications Review and Plan

City Administrator Blaine Wing introduced the City's communications consultants, Method Engine, who presented remotely via video conference. The updated website, remaining on the Civic Plus platform, is planned for launch in June or July 2026. The redesign features a modernized homepage with rotating hero images, updated quick-navigation links based on current usage data, a refreshed news section, and an improved meetings and events layout. Interior pages will have a reduced banner image height to emphasize content, and each department will have a featured area for contact information, photos, FAQs, and important links. The city has also secured the domain *cresthill.gov*, which will replace *cityofcresthill.com*, with automatic redirects to be set up. Final content review and department updates are to be completed prior to launch. A draft document of 50-plus pages has been provided to the Council. The guide establishes consistency in language, visual identity, logo usage, tone of voice, and document templates including letterhead, email signatures, and a PR template. It also includes website and social media guidelines and photography recommendations. Council feedback was requested by May 22, 2026, with the guide to take effect June 1, 2026. The document is intended to be updated annually. The consultants recommended transitioning official City communications from the existing Facebook group to a Facebook page, which is public, searchable, and more accessible. The group would continue as a community discussion space directing residents back to the official page and website. Four content pillars were outlined to guide posting: public service information, resident engagement, community identity development, and department spotlights. A formal monthly content approval process is being developed in coordination with staff, with June's calendar currently being built.

Alderwoman Gazal asked why they would be using a .gov platform for the new website. Administrator Wing stated that the City .gov website cannot be spoofed, as anti-hacking is provided by the government with a .gov platform.

Alderwoman Gazal inquired about the fees for the communications consultants. Administrator Wing commented that the staff will continue monitoring and can maintain, he cannot give a total cost, once it started the cost will be minimal since staff will be maintaining. To create the material, the cost is between \$2800 and \$3200 per month and \$35000 per year.

Alderman Cipiti asked about the approved cost amount and time frame of the project. City Administrator Wing clarified that the currently approved contract is for six months at a maximum of \$3,200.00, and that future scope and costs will be determined as the work progresses.

2. 84th Lidice Memorial Ceremony

City Administrator Wing presented an estimated budget of up to \$2,000.00 for the City's co-sponsorship of the 84th Lidice Memorial Ceremony. Key cost-saving measures included borrowing tents from the Lockport Park District at no charge and having Public Works staff handle set-up and teardown during normal working hours. Estimated costs included approximately \$1,000.00 for staffing, \$450.00 for audio/video recording, and \$50.00 in miscellaneous expenses. The school associated with the memorial has committed to providing refreshments, music, and flowers. Alderperson Oberlin commented since using this format for the first time the cost may come through at a lower cost.

Alderman Jefferson noted that when he researched the event it appeared as a private event, and requested documentation of the City's historical involvement, citing concerns about public dollars being spent without a formal agreement on record. City Administrator Wing acknowledged that no formal written agreement was currently on file and that the City's involvement appeared to have developed historically through informal practice.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that a Council member commented to her about using money, but no one is questioning this event, that we should not pick and choose events, and that she feels that she is being picked on and this event is using City staff, where she was not allowed to use any staff. Administrator Wing commented that the goal is to keep the cost low on staffing and we are trying to do this with all events. Administrator Wing will be using his own personal vehicle to pick up chairs and tables and will be attending this event.

Alderperson Oberlin, the committee liaison, provided context, explaining that the original Czech Republic-based organizing group had dissolved, and that the school and a related association only assumed stewardship of the event in the prior year. She also clarified that the property is not City-owned—it is owned by the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, based in Iowa—a fact confirmed when the City petitioned for historic landmark status and discovered the true ownership. Alderperson Oberlin will be contacting them for donation for this property. It was further noted that the City had previously been maintaining the grounds in error, and that a private contractor has now been engaged by the organizing group to manage all grounds maintenance going forward.

Alderman Cipiti stated that it was nice to start discussing events with Council, emphasizing the importance of transparency and formalizing City involvement in events of this nature, noting that he learned that the Lidice property wasn't owned by the City. Alderman Cipiti agreed with what Alderman Jefferson stated that while the event is historically significant and worthy of support, formal written agreements, insurance documentation, and a defined ongoing relationship with the property owner should be put in place going forward.

Alderman Albert commented that this was the event of the original group from the Czech Republic 84 years ago and since Crest Hill has only been a City for 66 years that we just piggy-backed on their event. Alderperson Oberlin commented the original group from the Czech Republic had folded and the annual event was passed on to the school and the association last year. Alderperson Oberlin commented that the first presentation is on YouTube and the original was on Stern.

Alderwoman Gazal expressed frustration regarding perceived inconsistency in the scrutiny applied to various City-supported events, noting that other events had been permitted to use City staff and resources without similar questioning.

Council reached a general consensus to support the event for this year without disruption, while agreeing to revisit the formal structure of the City's involvement after the ceremony. No formal straw poll was taken, as no objections were raised to proceeding.

3. Azavar/LocalGov Agreement Discussion

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented an updated professional services agreement with Azavar/LocalGov, the platform used to administer the City's Places for Eating Tax. Under the current agreement, the City pays \$6,000.00 annually. Azavar is requesting an increase to an \$8,000.00 annual minimum, with an additional \$2,000.00 to be collected via new per-filing fees assessed directly to businesses. The proposed new fees to businesses include a \$3.00 per filing fee (up to \$2,000.00), an increased credit card transaction fee of 3.2%, an annual service/licensing fee of \$40.00 per registrant, and a \$1.00 operating platform fee.

Alderwoman Gazal asked that the City should absorb the additional \$2,000.00 increase itself rather than pass costs along to local businesses.

Alderperson Oberlin asked about the fee for certificate of \$15.00 and \$25.00 per application. Administrator Wing explained that businesses have to apply annually for the Places for Eating tax and the \$15.00 fee is for the certificate to show that they have complied.

Alderman Jefferson raised questions about whether a private entity has the authority to levy fees on businesses, which Administrator Wing clarified—Azavar is not levying a tax but rather charging service fees for the convenience of online processing, consistent with other third-party service arrangements. Following discussion, City Administrator Wing indicated he would contact Azavar to have the agreement revised to reflect an \$8,000.00 City payment before it goes to the City Council meeting.

City Administrator Wing and Finance Director Glenn Gehrke clarified that Azavar functions as a third-party processor collecting the City-imposed tax on the City's behalf, similar to how Oxcart administers overweight permits. The City does not have in-house capability to collect the Places for Eating

Tax independently. The tax generates over \$800,000.00 annually for the City.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the professional service agreement with Azavar, which includes the \$2000 increase.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

4. Website Update Project

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented the components and costs associated with the City's website update project with existing vendor Civic Plus. He explained that the City's website has not been substantially refreshed since 2016, and that rather than paying \$30,000–\$40,000 for an entirely new website, the City is taking advantage of a comprehensive upgrade package built into prior contract terms. Key components include:

- Website platform renewal (new Civic Plus version): approximately \$7,500.00/year (up from \$7,409.89).
- AudioEye (digital screen reader accessibility tool) and DocAccess (ADA-compliant PDF conversion): required to meet federal ADA compliance mandates.
- AI chatbot integrated into the Civic Plus platform.
- Website and social media archiving: required under Illinois state law for FOIA compliance; the City has not previously been fully compliant in this area.
- The combined cost of the ADA, chatbot, and archiving components for the first year is \$20,137.30, bringing the total first-year cost to \$35,047.19.

City Administrator Wing noted that comparable solutions procured separately would cost \$50,000–\$60,000. The domain will also migrate from *cityofcresthill.com* to *cresthill.gov*.

Alderman Jefferson suggested exploring federal ADA compliance grant funding to offset costs, which City Administrator Wing agreed to investigate.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the renewal of the website with a first-year cost of \$35,047.19 with Civic Plus.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There were no agenda items.

## **ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**

1. A Resolution Approving the Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement by and Between the City of Crest Hill and The Grand Prairie Water Commission Establishing a Joint Improvement Program

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Crest Hill and the Grand Prairie Water Commission for a Joint Improvement Program. The scope of work includes resurfacing the southbound lane of Gaylord and Cedarwood, installation of a new three-foot aggregate shoulder in two defined sections where the Commission's project would otherwise leave gaps, widening the box culvert at Gaylord and Theodore to three lanes with tapers and storage improvements, and lengthening the taper just south of Fox Meadow Drive. City Engineer Wiedeman and City Attorney Stiff have reviewed the IGA. Key terms include: the City may withdraw from any portion of the work prior to award of construction; the City's share of construction services is set at 8% of awarded construction costs; and the City must deposit funds into escrow with the Commission no less than three months prior to the scheduled completion date. Total construction is estimated at approximately \$2,132,000.00, with construction engineering estimated at approximately \$170,560.00.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for a resolution for the IGA between the City of Crest Hill and the Grand Prairie Water Commission to establish a joint improvement program.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

There were no agenda items.

## **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

1. Clarke Environmental Mosquito Management Agreement Discussion

A representative from Clarke Environmental, Jack Thennisch, presented an overview of the company's mosquito management program and its long-standing relationship with the City of Crest Hill spanning over 35 years. Clarke Environmental is an Illinois-based, vertically integrated company and the world's largest mosquito control contractor. The program operates on two levels: larval control—treating catch basins, roadside ditches, and standing water sites, which represents approximately 80% of the work—and adult mosquito control, deployed in response to significant rainfall events or confirmed West Nile virus alerts from the Illinois Department of Public Health or Will County Health. Mr. Thennisch noted the 2026 season is tracking as one of the wettest springs on record, and that mosquito larvae have already been identified in standing water sites.

Adult control uses approximately 0.5 ounces of product per acre, delivered at the micron level via GPS-tracked trucks following set routes along

public rights-of-way. Residents can opt-in to receive advance notification of treatments via phone, text, or email through [www.clarkeportal.com](http://www.clarkeportal.com). Biological controls, including larvicide tablets for standing water and mosquito-eating minnows for wetland areas, are also employed. Catch basins are treated by bicycle to reduce the carbon footprint of the program.

Alderman Albert asked about treatment for mosquitoes in rain barrels. Mr. Thennisch commented that rain barrels should be completely covered, but if not, there is a tablet that can be used in the barrels to treat the mosquitoes or the barrel can be drained, which also applies with kiddie pools.

Public Works Director Gary Richardson noted that an updated contract with minor corrections would be brought for formal approval the following week. The proposed agreement term is 2026–2029.

Alderman Cipiti stated that while he supports biological forms of mosquito control, he expressed reservations about chemical spraying, citing potential unknown long-term environmental effects and drawing parallels to the historical use of DDT and the current PFAS contamination issue. Alderman Cipiti stated that the one thing you think is safe now is kind of short-sided. He is not for negative risks on the environment. Mr. Thennisch responded that the products used are at extremely low application rates, are targeted specifically at the mosquito life stage, and are deployed only when public health thresholds are met. He invited Alderman Cipiti to tour Clarke's facility.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for an agreement from 2026 to 2029 with Clarke Mosquito Management.

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

NAYES: Ald. Cipiti.

ABSENT: None.

2. Approval of the Purchase of a New Single Axle Dump Truck from Lindco Equipment Sales, Inc., through the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing Contract, in the amount of \$273,251.00

Public Works Director Gary Richardson requested approval to purchase a 2027 Peterbilt 548 single-axle chassis outfitted with a Viking stainless steel dump body through the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing contract. Director Richardson noted this would be the department's first steel-body dump truck, chosen to address ongoing issues with aluminum dump bodies deteriorating due to the abrasive nature of water main break work and salt/chemical exposure in winter months. He noted that due to lead time of over a year, early approval is necessary. Alderman Dyke asked if the City is keeping all the snow plows we currently have. Director Richardson stated that all existing trucks will be retained.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the purchase of a single axle dump truck from Lindco Equipment Sales in the amount of \$273,251.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.  
NAYES: None.  
ABSENT: None.

3. Approval of the purchase of a new 2026 Elgin Pelican Sweeper, through the Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract, in the amount of \$334,860.00. Public Works Director Gary Richardson requested approval to purchase a new 2026 Elgin Pelican street sweeper through the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing contract in the amount of \$334,860.00. The department's current sweeper, purchased used and now approximately 19 years old, is currently out of service awaiting parts from Canada, with delays attributed in part to ongoing tariff-related supply chain issues. City Administrator Wing noted he was able to place a hold on the last available unit in Illinois while Director Richardson was attending a conference. The existing sweeper will be retained as a backup unit.

Alderman Dyke asked how long before the current sweeper is up and running and requested that the cost of the pending repair on the current sweeper be provided to Council prior to the formal vote. Director Richardson stated that the current sweeper we have will be kept and used as backup, but they are having a hard time getting repair parts for it from Canada.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the purchase of a new Elgin Pelican sweeper in the amount of \$334,860.00.

AYES: Ald. Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke.  
NAYES: None.  
ABSENT: None.

Director Richardson also shared that earlier that morning, Public Works staff successfully completed the first startup of one of the wells at the West Plant, a significant milestone for the project. The second well is anticipated to come online by July 1, 2026, with full operational status expected by the end of July 2026.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

1. 5ILCS 120/2(c)(5): The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired.

Alderman Oberlin made a motion to go into executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(5). Seconded by Alderwoman Gazal. Roll Call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. NAYES: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive session: 9:11 p.m.

Alderman Oberlin made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(5). Seconded by Alderman Jefferson. Roll Call: Ayes: Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke. NAYES: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 9:39 p.m.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39pm.

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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR