

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
April 27, 2026

The April 27, 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 (left meeting at 11:04pm), Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin (left meeting at 11:04pm), Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Council Members Absent: Alderman Angelo Deserio. Mayor Soliman stated that Alderman Deserio contacted him earlier in the day and he is excused tonight.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Assistant City Administrator/HR Director Ashley Monroe, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Community & Economic Development Dan Ritter, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Police Chief Ed Clark.

MAYOR

1. Audio Improvements

City Administrator Blaine Wing introduced the City's audio consultant, Stuart Soifer, who provided an overview of recent improvements to the Council Chambers sound system. Eight new microphones have been installed at the dais, replacing the previous handheld "puck" style units. The microphones are automatically activated by voice and are integrated into the City's broadcast and recording systems serving Comcast, AT&T, and the City's YouTube channel. Mr. Soifer noted that the system also feeds the ADA-compliant assistive listening devices recently added to the chambers.

Mr. Soifer emphasized that speakers/individuals must direct their voices toward the microphone in front of them and avoid turning their heads away while speaking. He noted that staff members at the dais had shown improvement in microphone technique over the preceding weeks but continued to encourage all participants to be mindful of the requirement. A question was raised regarding the podium microphone, and Mr. Soifer explained that only one microphone should be used at the podium to avoid the system switching back and forth between competing signals. He indicated he would continue to make minor adjustments to the system during the live meeting and that the audio, recording, and broadcast functions are now on independent systems, so changes by the television provider can no longer affect the recording quality.

Mayor Soliman asked for a deviation in the agenda due to special guests in the audience, wanting to address the first two items in the Economic Development Department first.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1. Plan Commission Recommendation for an Amended Special Use Permit for an Automobile Sales and/or Leasing Business and an Automobile Body Repairing/Painting Business; and Variations Request from Section 11.8 Schedule of Parking Requirements of the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance with Respect to Real Property Located at 1923 N Broadway Street in Crest Hill, Illinois (application of Francisco Martinez Trejo)

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter stated the subject property at 1923 North Broadway Street has operated as a car repair facility for a number of years. The applicant, Francisco Martinez Trejo, operating as FAVA Auto Body, assumed the existing special use upon purchasing the property but subsequently expanded operations to include auto body repair and painting work, which required him to return to the Plan Commission to amend the special use permit. The application also includes variations in the parking requirements.

The applicant's representative, Flor Fuente, and Mr. Martinez Trejo appeared before the Council. Ms. Fuente explained that Mr. Martinez Trejo is committed to complying with all City requirements, has already cleaned up the property significantly since purchase, and is proceeding in good faith to formalize the special use and implement the required site improvements. Those improvements include paving the rear lot, line-striping all parking areas to conform with current standards and adding perimeter landscaping and screening for the storage area. Deadlines were put in place with Mr. Martinez Trejo for the completion of those tasks.

Alderman Dyke asked about the amount of vehicles allowed in the front for sales. Director Ritter stated the number of vehicles will remain the same and also added that the previous property owner had failed to comply with conditions of the prior special use approval, including landscaping requirements and the number of vehicles displayed for sale.

Mayor Soliman inquired how many employees are anticipated for the business. Ms. Fuente stated that there are currently two employees. When asked how many parking spots for customers, Ms. Fuente stated that there are five customer parking spots. It was also noted that there will be three parking spots for vehicle sales, down from five due to the added landscaping.

Alderman Cipiti was looking at the conditions, and the spots read three designated for auto body repair business. Director Ritter confirmed and commented that there are really three separate parking areas on the property, and all of the parking areas will be paved and re-striped, which will make compliance easier to enforce. Alderman Cipiti also wanted to make sure that Mr. Martinez Trejo was aware that parking is only on the paved area, not the grass, due to non-compliance issues with the former owners. Director Ritter stated that Mr. Martinez Trejo knew about the parking constraints. Alderman Cipiti also asked if the Fire Department had approved the site plan. Director Ritter commented that the Fire Department has reviewed and approved.

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

NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

2. Plan Commission Recommendation for a Special Use permit for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility, and Variations request from Crest Hill Code of Ordinances-Sign Code for an Existing on-premises free-standing Sign with respect to Real Property Located at 905 Theodore Street in Crest Hill, Illinois (application of Jorge Cruz)

The subject property at 905 Theodore Street is the former bowling alley, which has been vacant since 2020. The applicant, Jorge Cruz (represented by his son, George Cruz Jr., and broker Omar Serrani), proposes to redevelop the property into an indoor recreational facility featuring two 5-v-5 soccer fields, while retaining and reopening the attached restaurant and bar. The applicant currently operates Playtime Sports, an indoor soccer facility in the Crest Hill Shopping Center and intends to continue that operation while expanding to the new location.

Proposed site improvements include complete repaving and re-striping of the east parking lot, installation of parking lot end islands to protect lighting fixtures and improve traffic flow, landscaping along the north property line adjacent to residential uses to screen headlights and reduce noise, and upgrades to the building's deteriorating canopies.

Alderman Oberlin raised a concern about arborvitae plantings proposed near the Waverly Street intersection, noting the street forms a curve at that location and that the trees could obstruct sightlines as they mature. Director Ritter acknowledged the concern and committed to reviewing the placement of the last arborvitae in that buffer area to ensure adequate visibility is maintained.

Alderman Dyke asked what the hours were at the facility in Hillcrest Shopping Center. Mr. Cruz Jr. stated that they open in the morning depending on demand, but usual hours are 3:00pm to Midnight. Mayor Soliman asked what the proposed hours would be at the Theodore facility. The hours are 9:00 AM to midnight for the indoor soccer facility and 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM for the restaurant.

Alderman Gazal asked if the facility will be hosting tournaments. Mr. Cruz Jr. stated that they didn't have tournaments, that they have soccer leagues for all ages; kids, men's, women's, all mostly co-ed. Alderman Gazal stated she was just concerned about the additional traffic that a tournament would bring to the area. Director Ritter stated that there is a condition limiting special ticket events, concert events, banquets and that sort of thing. Alderman Gazal also asked if breakfast will be served in the restaurant and Mr. Cruz Jr. confirmed that breakfast will be served in the restaurant.

Alderman Dyke inquired about parking adequacy given two fields (each accommodating up to 20 players simultaneously, for a potential peak of 40) plus restaurant patrons and employees. Director Ritter confirmed that the site provides 149 parking spaces against a calculated requirement of 132, providing a meaningful surplus even at combined peak occupancy of both fields.

Mayor Soliman reiterated his prior conversation with the applicant regarding the nature of the restaurant liquor license: the facility is licensed as a restaurant where alcohol is served in conjunction with food, not as a bar. He emphasized that liquor consumption must remain within the restaurant area and not extend to the soccer field areas. Mayor Soliman indicated a willingness to consider extending restaurant hours to midnight in the future should the applicant demonstrate responsible management. The applicant accepted these conditions.

Chairman Bill Thomas from the Plan Commission spoke about what a great thing they are doing for the area, and this will be beautiful. He also talked about the alcohol around children, and they will be having a netting with a sign stating no alcohol beyond this point between the restaurant and the soccer fields. Chairman Thomas commented that there was a couple of residents who reported about the customers that left the former bowling alley drunk and either drove through their property and disrupted the neighborhood, and the plan commission also had concerns of minor children walking after curfew hours.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

MAYOR

2. Commission Re-Appointments

Mayor Soliman presented three commissioner reappointments for individuals whose terms expire on May 1, 2026, each of whom has agreed to serve an additional three-year term.

- **Civil Service Commission:** Tom Hunter, originally appointed May 5, 2025, to fulfill the unexpired term of the late Nick Weiss. Proposed reappointment through May 1, 2029.
- **Plan Commission:** Marty Flynn, originally appointed August 19, 2024, to fulfill the unexpired term of Jan Plateau. Proposed reappointment through May 1, 2029.
- **Plan Commission:** Gordon Butler, originally appointed May 19, 2025, to fulfill the unexpired term of Angelo Deserio upon his election as Ward 1 Alderman. Proposed reappointment through May 1, 2029.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on all three reappointments collectively.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Jefferson.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

3. Veterans/Police Memorial Presentation

Mayor Soliman reported on the upcoming 38th Veterans and Police Memorial Ceremony. As Chairman of the Veterans and Police Memorial Committee, he outlined the anticipated division of costs between the committee and the City. The

committee will fund flowers, the band, refreshments, postage for invitation and thank-you letters. City expenses are estimated to be approximately \$2,000, consistent with the budgeted amount, and include tents (with an effort underway to borrow all three tents from the Lockport Township Park District at no charge, with Joliet Tent as a \$1,200 fallback, as that was the fee last year), staffing for police and public works estimated at \$500, and audio/video recording by Road to Eternity at \$450.

Mayor Soliman asked, "So, if there's any questions from City Council, I'll try to answer those now." Alderwoman Gazal stated, "No, I'm just happy that you're going to try and go with Lockport, for the tents." Mayor Soliman said, "Okay." Alderman Cipiti stated, "I have a question, Mayor. If you could just explain a little bit more the, one of the anticipated expenses was staffing, estimated at \$500." Mayor Soliman responded, "Mm hmm." Alderman Cipiti asked, "How many police and how many public works employees does that include?" Mayor Soliman answered, "Well, you've been coming to the last several ones, so you see that it varies from each time. Sometimes there's three, sometimes there's six, sometimes there's less or there's more. It all depends on the day and their work schedules and everything else, so I can't give you a solid number right now. As far as the public works goes, I mean they are usually here in the morning if there is help needed for the chairs and the tables and everything else, they are here to cooperate and they are also here to help clean up at the end of the day too. This is strictly a volunteer group that's on this committee and everybody's getting a little bit older and a lot more aches and pains, so I'll be the first to tell you that this is a City event. It's been a City event since its inception, and I believe that the City should participate in some of the cost for the event." Alderman Cipiti stated, "Well, I don't disagree with anything you said, I'm just..." Mayor Soliman said, "Ed, anything you can add in regard to the policemen? I know it's mostly for comp time anyway, correct?" Police Chief Ed Clark responded, "Yeah, it's mostly taken in comp time, but it depends on availability, obviously being a weekend. We've had bigger turnout, we've had sometimes smaller, but I'm hoping for a better turnout this time." Alderman Cipiti stated, "I was just curious as to how the \$500 number was derived, based on had to be some math done there to come up with a number like that, that's why I asked about numbers of employees that would be working. If would be time and a half, correct? It would be overtime." Mayor Soliman responded, "Well, this is the first time in thirty-eight years we've ever had to produce something like this, Mark, so I guess we're going to see how it goes. We'll see if we're online or if we were offline and we can make our adjustments next year." Alderman Cipiti said, "So again, how was the \$500 number derived? I know this is the first time this has been presented, and you know, I applaud that but I'm just, you know, again the question was how the number derived? Was it just picked out of the air or was it, was it, was it..." Mayor Soliman answered, "Again, I don't know how many police officers are going to be here, usually they get two hours of comp time, the ceremony lasts anywhere from an hour to an hour, fifteen minutes. In regard to the public works, we usually have maybe one person, sometimes two, depending on if it's going to be a bigger event than we're anticipating or not. And again, there's a lot of variables in here so if you wanted an exact number, I can't do that for you. I'm giving you an estimate and there's \$2,000 when I wrote my mission statement that said I believe this would cover the cost. And if we can get the tents for free, we will save \$1,200. Anybody else have a question?" Alderwoman Gazal responded, "No, it's

all just estimating right now so next year we'll have a better look of what is needed and what was used.”

CLERK

There were no agenda items.

TREASURER

There were no agenda items.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Discussion of Compensation Adjustments for City Council, City Clerk, Mayor and City Treasurer

City Administrator Wing introduced this item as an initial discussion to obtain Council direction before staff undertakes a formal survey of comparable municipalities. The packet included the applicable state statute, the City's current compensation code, a worksheet of current compensation by position, prior work session notes, and an Illinois Municipal League fact sheet.

Several substantive issues were raised during discussion:

Peer Municipality Survey: Alderwoman Gazal requested that staff gather comprehensive compensation data from similarly sized neighboring communities, including not only base pay rates but also any supplemental benefits or perks (such as cell phone stipends) so that a full apples-to-apples comparison can be made. Administrator Wing confirmed that staff would develop a survey instrument and distribute it electronically with telephone follow-up, seeking to gather all relevant information in a single outreach effort.

Absence Language: Alderman Dyke raised the concern that the current ordinance language allowing “paid absences” is ambiguous and has caused administrative difficulty. City Attorney Mike Stiff confirmed that the language had been intentionally left in place pending a full compensation review, as correcting it earlier could have been perceived as a reduction in pay subject to legal challenge. Attorney Stiff indicated the language should be cleaned up as part of this overall compensation revision. The option of eliminating paid absences entirely—paying only for meetings attended—was discussed favorably by several Council members. Attorney Stiff noted this approach is used by some communities and would eliminate the ambiguity. The survey would also ask how peer communities handle absences.

Committee Meeting Pay: Alderman Dyke noted that the current ordinance language authorizes pay for committee meeting attendance, but that no Council member has historically been compensated for committee meetings. This inconsistency was flagged for clarification in the revised ordinance.

Current Salary Structure: Discussion clarified that the Mayor, City Clerk, and City Treasurer receive an annual flat salary, plus \$55 per work session or committee meeting attended, and \$200 per special city council meeting attended. Council members are compensated on a per-meeting basis only, with provisions

for paid absences. Attorney Stiff noted apparent drafting inconsistencies in the existing ordinance and recommended a full cleanup.

Timing and Legal Constraints: Attorney Stiff explained that under state law, elected officials may not vote themselves a raise while in office; any compensation increase takes effect for newly elected or re-elected officials following the next election. The practical implication is that changes must be voted on at least 180 days prior to the April 2027 election, placing the effective deadline in approximately October 2026. Alderman Cipiti wanted staff committed to providing Council adequate lead time well before that deadline.

Phase-in vs. Uniform Effective Date: Alderman Dyke raised the possibility of delaying the effective date of any increase to the 2029 election cycle, so that all Council members would transition to the new compensation simultaneously rather than in a staggered phase-in. Attorney Stiff confirmed this was legally permissible and noted it would simplify administration for the Finance Department. No final direction was given to this question, as it was treated as a matter for further deliberation once peer data is available.

Staff were directed to proceed with developing and distributing the survey.

2. Forensic Audit Update and Discussion

City Administrator Blaine Wing stated, “Thank you, Mayor. I also have one other item that is in regard to the forensic audit update and discussion. Attorney Mike Stiff drafted the memo and update as we have received information from our insurance carrier, SWARM. There are some examples that are also listed tonight after some discussion staff is seeking direction from Council so, Attorney Stiff?” Attorney Mike Stiff reported, “As stated in the memo, after you gave direction at the last meeting on April 20th, I believe, to move forward with the Ketchum Advisory Solutions, LLC, the question came up as to whether the \$10,000–\$12,000 estimate would be actually paid by the city out of its funds or whether it would be covered by SWARM under the current assignment with Mike Bersani’s office, so that got brought back to SWARM. SWARM decided that they are getting close to closing out Mike Bersani’s current assignment which was to evaluate the dissemination of personal information from the March 2 meeting, so their engagement is about to end, and SWARM is about to stop paying for that representation of the City. They also determined that the forensic audit would not be covered under any of the City’s policies other than one potential insurance policy and that’s a crime policy that the City has with Hanover Insurance. We reached out to Mike Alesia at the broker through SWARM to find out about this crime policy because I, quite frankly, am unfamiliar with what a crime policy does and in my memo is what we received back from Mike Alesia. So, the crime policy is more like a property-type policy where once you know that you’ve got a loss due to some sort of crime, you tender that to the carrier sort of like a property damage claim so once you have hail damage you send your claim on to the carrier, the carrier assesses it and discerns whether the property coverage is covered and then you get a check for the hail damage. Well, this is, in my view, similar to that where once you’ve made a determination through some sort of investigation that there’s been a loss due to either theft or crime, you would then go to Hanover Insurance and tender that to the carrier, the carrier would assess it and you would have up to \$1,000,000

in coverage. The policy carries with it a \$10,000 deductible and if you look at the examples that we received from Mr. Alesia there's example one, two and three in the memo. In each case, the City is out of pocket for the actual cost of the investigation and whether it has a recovery depends on whether the investigation turns up a claim or not. So, we thought maybe we would be able to tender that to this crime policy but the way it looks, the City should proceed with the forensic audit and then potentially you would have a claim later depending on what the results were. So, that brings us back full circle to the fact that SWARM's not going to cover it, a claim under the Hanover policy is at this point probably premature because we don't know whether there's been a claim or a loss due to crime or theft. So, we did engage or ask Mike Bersani to get an engagement letter from Ketchum. The engagement letter is in the packet. If the City is desiring to move forward then for the next meeting you can approve the Ketchum Advisory Services, LLC engagement letter and engage Ketchum directly and the City would be responsible for payment. If you look at the engagement letter because Sarah Ketchum has worked with Mike Bersani, she wrote the engagement letter as if Mike Bersani would still be sort of the liaison between the City and Ketchum. That's the one other, I think, piece of direction the Council needs to give staff since I will not be participating in the Ketchum audit or acting as liaison based on Council's suggestions that I am a little bit too close to the situation and might be perceived as biased, same with Blaine. The City Council needs to determine whether it wants to hire another law firm, another person to be the liaison between Ketchum and the City when Ketchum comes back with its report. The City could actually have one of its own, you can determine that one of you folks should be the liaison, you could continue to use Mike Bersani's office on a separate agreement, you would have to retain them separately, but somebody needs to be working with Ketchum once you hire them to be giving them the documents and working with them to complete the investigation. I've probably talked enough and should turn it over to you to give some guidance, but I think what we're looking for tonight is whether you want to hire, you still want to hire Ketchum directly, in which case you can also use Bersani's office to act as liaison, you could just liaison with one of your own or you could hire somebody else."

Alderwoman Gazal asked, "Could we have somebody from your law firm?" City Attorney Stiff asked, "Somebody else what?" Alderwoman Gazal asked, "From Spesia?" Attorney Stiff answered, "We could do that if the Council's okay with it, but I mean..." Alderwoman Gazal stated, "I'm okay with it." Attorney Stiff stated, "I would have to create what we call the "Chinese wall" in the legal business where whoever it is I would not be, I would not talk to them about it, and they would be liaisoning with not only Ketchum but then coming to report to the City Council. Now, I could either not attend those meetings, or I could just not go into the executive session and somebody else from my office could, but certainly that's a possibility too, if the Council's okay with it. I just want to avoid all appearances of potential conflict or impropriety. And, if I missed anything, Blaine, jump in." City Administrator Blaine Wing stated, "Nope, I think that covers it. It's really for Council's discussion and we're happy to answer questions regarding the engagement letter, the information that was provided by SWARM as well as Mike Stiff's here to answer questions from his legal set."

Alderman Jefferson stated, "My personal opinion is for complete transparency that we go totally outside but, you know, that's my personal opinion. I'm not just looking for if we have a claim or not, I'm looking to see if there's a law-breaking aspect to any of the information that may be pushed forward to a law enforcement agency for you know, to look into, but I'll go with whatever Council wants to go do." Attorney Stiff said, "And again, I think you could, I mean as long as the Council is okay with it, you can assign someone on the Council to do the liaison with Ketchum. I mean, you're going to hire Ketchum. Ketchum is obviously as we discussed on the 20th, although they worked with Mike Bersani before, they have never represented the City before, so they are obviously a completely unbiased and neutral entity. I think the direction from the Council was to go ahead and hire them, you would just be hiring them directly, you would not be going through Bersani's office unless you wanted to keep Bersani on and retain them separately to act as liaison. I believe that once they've completed their report, they can report to you in executive session where they can report directly to the Council. I think it's wise to maybe have someone to actually act as a point person, but it doesn't have to be a lawyer, it doesn't even have to be somebody from my office, it just has to be, I mean, if Sarah Ketchum is engaged as of next week, they're going to want to call somebody at the City to talk about here's what we need, here's the documents that we need and someone's going to have to do that interaction and I don't know who that's going to be and that's kind of why we're looking..." Alderwoman Gazal stated, "I personally don't like that idea of having Council be involved in any of this. That's my opinion, like he said, the rest have their opinion of all I think somebody from your office and it's a done deal, I mean why are we making it so complicated?" Attorney Stiff said, "I'm just trying to make it..." Alderwoman Gazal said, "No, I understand." Attorney Stiff finished, "...Lay the options out for you and if I were in your shoes I probably wouldn't want to be the one acting as liaison for the entire City Council myself either. But to keep cost down that would be an option, I guess, is what my point is." Alderman Dyke stated, "I would be fine, like Claudia said, someone else from your office, like, you know, that..." Attorney Stiff said, "And I would probably choose somebody that's not ever attended a City Council meeting that has really not ever had anything to do with Crest Hill at least hands on, I mean, probably everybody in my office has maybe round tabled something where I had a legal issue, but I can find somebody that has never attended a Council meeting and has not appeared before you in any capacity." Alderman Dyke responded, "Sounds fine with me." Attorney Stiff stated, "Okay, that's Scott. Sounds like Darrell said he'd go along with it and Claudia so that's three of you." Alderman Albert stated, "I'm just reading your memo, and it says, 'neither me nor Spesia & Taylor should be involved in the forensic audit' so I'm just going to go with that and think it should be somebody totally independent." Alderman Cipiti stated, "I agree with that. Not someone from within the office, like Nate just read. Someone independent just to get a hundred percent unbiased work." Attorney Stiff stated, "And that's fair. Like I said, when I wrote that, I was thinking along the lines of the people that do represent Crest Hill, at least actively, but I mean I could find somebody to try to set up a, like I said, the wall, but again, for total transparency, you know, my feelings aren't hurt by you going the other way. And so, if that's where we're going, I mean, you can keep Bersani. We can ask Bersani what he would charge on an engagement letter since he's already been involved in this to some extent so there is a little bit of or less of a learning curve, if you will, than hiring somebody brand new that doesn't know anything about it, but certainly, you

don't have to go with Bersani's office. We could probably figure out some other referrals as well. That may delay it a little bit." Alderwoman Gazal stated, "I'm fine with Bersani, whatever. It doesn't matter." Alderman Dyke stated, "I'd be fine with Bersani also." Alderman Cipiti asked, "Would this likely involve personal interviews from Council?" Attorney Stiff answered, "I'm trying to remember what Ketchum's phase one said. I think phase one was more gathering documents and maybe talking to some people, but not necessarily, you know, full interviews, but I'm not remembering." City Administrator Blaine Wing stated, "That's my recollection as well as Sarah Ketchum in her previous correspondence was for the phase one is the review of documents and that sort of stuff. Potentially in phase two and three there could be some conversations. I think initially it's going to be reviewing the documents probably working with finance and some of the other departments too, the clerk's office and others to pull the documents." Attorney Stiff stated, "And my understanding is that Jason Blumenthal, who works with Mike Bersani and has been before you in person, has already obviously he's reviewed the full packet that was disseminated on March 2nd, but he's also, I think, gone into the vault and reviewed boxes and boxes of additional documents so again, I think he would be the ideal person if you decide to go with Bersani's office to just jump in straight with Ketchum and start getting documents to Ketchum, so it does make sense, I think, in the long run to just let Jason Blumenthal be the liaison." Alderman Albert asked, "Just to be clear, we with the original SWARM investigation, we weren't paying Bersani, but now you're saying to start paying them to be the liaison between Ketchum and Council?" Attorney Stiff stated, "Right. I think, so one of the executive session items today is a report on that assignment, and I believe that they are getting close to closing that out." Administrator Wing added, "That's also my understanding. The only thing I would correct from Mike's earlier statement is it was actually our storage room, not the vault." Attorney Stiff said, "Sorry. I have to get my vernacular down. I thought the vault was the vault." Alderman Cipiti asked, "You said that Bersani is close to closing that out. Are we going to receive a report on that?" Attorney Stiff stated, "Tonight in executive session." Administrator Wing also stated, "Tonight in executive session."

Attorney Stiff stated, "So if the Council is okay with us, were okay with Bersani's office being retained, we would approach Bersani's office for a new engagement letter of Bersani's office with the scope of their work and their rates, et cetera. The engagement letter with Ketchum could remain the same because right now it's phrased as though the City is hiring Ketchum, with Bersani as the liaison and the attorney so we would be back to you next week with the engagement letter for Ketchum and the engagement letter for Bersani." Alderman Dyke said, "That sounds good." Alderwoman Gazal said, "Okay." Attorney Stiff asked, "Is everybody okay with that?" Alderman Jefferson stated, "Yes, that works for me." Attorney Stiff stated, "Okay, so the resolution's drafted. You've got the Ketchum agreement in your packet today. We will have an engagement letter with Bersani for next week." Administrator Wing stated, "I didn't have any other items this evening."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

3. Resolution to Approve a New Independent Contractor Agreement Consulting Service Agreement by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, IL, and Ronald Mentzer

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter presented this item as a restructuring of the City's ongoing arrangement with Ronald Mentzer, who has served the City as a part-time Planning Consultant since September 2023. Mr. Mentzer had previously been working three days per week in the office for a total of 24 hours per week, including a period as interim Community Development Director.

Under the proposed new agreement, Mr. Mentzer would transition to a project-based role, working a minimum of one day per week in the office with additional hours as needed remotely, capped at 24 hours per week. His work would be directed by Director Ritter and focused on managing large-scale, active projects such as Seasons of Crest Hill, Quick Trip, the fire training facility, Lucky Brothers Quick Run, and the Mather Farm development. The total annual expenditure would not exceed the budgeted amount of \$50,000, and Director Ritter noted that a portion of Mr. Mentzer's time on reimbursable projects can be billed back, with recovered funds returning to the general fund.

Attorney Stiff noted that, because the terms of the original contract are being substantively changed—not merely extending Exhibit A—this constitutes a new contract rather than an extension.

Alderman Jefferson raised the question of how many times the contract had been extended, acknowledged Mr. Mentzer's institutional knowledge, existing developer relationships, and the value he brings to the department. Director Ritter explained that having Mr. Mentzer manage active large-scale projects frees him to pursue new economic development opportunities, including developer and business outreach, attendance at commercial real estate conferences, and processing improvement initiatives. He expressed confidence that this arrangement is more effective than hiring an outside economic development consultant for those functions. City Administrator Wing confirmed staff's intention that this is the final agreement with Mr. Mentzer, with the expectation that the current active projects will be wound down through his involvement.

Alderman Albert and Alderman Dyke both expressed positive comments about Consultant Mentzer's work, dedication and valuable relationships with developers.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the resolution to approve a new independent contractor agreement consulting service agreement by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, IL, and Ronald Mentzer

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

1. Resolution approving a professional service agreement for design services for the Lincoln Ave. and Crestwood Dr. watermain replacement and roadway rehabilitation improvement by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd for a cost of \$89,7975.00

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented this item, noting a typographical error in the memo and confirming the correct contract amount is \$89,975. The project encompasses two components: roadway resurfacing on Lincoln Avenue from Imperial to Eldorado; and water main replacement combined with roadway rehabilitation on Crestwood Drive from north of Root Street to Lynwood Drive. The Crestwood Drive water main is among the ten locations identified in the city's ongoing effort to reduce water loss below the ten percent threshold. Bid documents are targeted for completion by year-end for bidding in 2027.

Alderman Albert inquired about storm sewer improvements on the 1800 block of Lincoln Avenue, noting the absence of storm sewer infrastructure in that area. Engineer Wiedeman clarified that the current active project separately addresses storm sewer on Lincoln (connecting Imperial to Cedarwood), and that this design services agreement will examine storm sewer needs as part of the roadway profile analysis, adding structures at intersections as warranted. He committed to evaluating whether additional storm sewer work is needed on that block.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the recommendation.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

2. Staff is Requesting, the Council Approval to Move Forward and Finalize a Contract with V3 Companies, Ltd. to Perform Professional Construction Engineering Services for the Capital and Water Improvements in the 2027 budget. Once the Agreement is Completed, Staff will Bring the Agreement to the Council for Final Contract Approval for a Cost of \$646,245.04

City Engineer Wiedeman reported that in response to projected construction engineering (CE) costs of approximately \$1.2 million for the 2027 capital improvement program—compared to just over \$1 million spent in the prior year—he issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to bundle all 12 budgeted capital and water improvement projects under a single CE services contract, anticipating cost savings and improved coordination.

Five firms were solicited: three responded. Proposals were scored by City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Public Works Director Gary Richardson, and City Administrator Blaine Wing based on qualifications including project understanding, similar project experience, past performance, project team composition, IDOT pre-qualification status, and submittal completeness. Results were as follows:

- **V3 Companies, Ltd.** (highest score): 4,130 hours at \$646,245.04
- **Seabell:** 5,245 hours at \$820,580.00
- **Primera:** 3,970 hours at \$528,705.00

Engineer Wiedeman explained that Primera was eliminated from consideration primarily because: (a) the firm has no prior working relationship with the City, undermining the efficiency rationale of the bundled contract; (b) a significant portion of their proposed hours were allocated to intern-level staff; and (c) their project manager allocation was at a junior level, making the experience profile between Primera and the top two respondents incomparable. The proposed lead inspector from V3 has served as Resident Engineer on City projects for the past two years and was specifically commended for his effectiveness with residents and technical competence.

Engineer Wiedeman described the proposed billing structure: rather than a lump sum contract, hours and costs will be allocated per project with running budgets tracked against the total, preventing the reallocation of unused hours without his approval. A small reserve at the conclusion of the program is intended to cover CE services for projects deferred into the following year, including railroad-related work.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve and finalize a contract with V3 Companies, Ltd. to perform professional construction engineering services for the capital and water improvements in the 2027 budget at the cost of \$646,245.04.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. Approval Request of a Special Event Police Services Agreement with Palladin Productions LLC

Police Chief Ed Clark presented a request for approval of a Special Event Police Services Agreement with Paladin Productions LLC, a film production company producing the television series *American Blue*, set in 1940s Joliet. The production company is filming a scene at a local restaurant on Clement Street and Stern Avenue, and it requires police assistance with traffic control and partial street closures. Filming is scheduled from approximately 7:00 PM to midnight, with four officers and four vehicles assigned. The production company has completed its side of the agreement and has provided a certificate of insurance. Officer compensation is calculated at time-and-a-half plus a 20 percent administrative fee for vehicle use. The Fire Department will also be on site. Police Chief Clark advised that he intends to send a general SmartMessage notice to area residents advising of detour activity, without disclosing the filming nature of the event in a way that would attract crowds. The production company maintains its own security team experienced in managing public curiosity.

Mayor Soliman is conducted an informal vote for approval.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

2. Purchase of new drone for the police department

Police Chief Ed Clark presented a request to purchase a new unmanned aircraft system (UAS/drone) from UVT, with Officer Andrew Trnka providing additional technical detail. The department's current consumer-grade drone has significant limitations in moderate wind and adverse weather conditions. The proposed replacement is a law enforcement-grade aircraft designated as the DJI M4TD, procured through UVT.

Three vendors were evaluated. UVT was selected as the highest-rated option based on the following factors: (1) it is purpose-built for law enforcement; (2) it is FAA/FCC-approved and not subject to grounding concerns; (3) it includes thermal imaging (absent from the current drone), a spotlight, and a public address speaker system; (4) it is weather-rated and capable of flight in heavy rain; and (5) the price of \$14,183.54 was the lowest of the three quotes. The package includes three flight batteries, each providing approximately 45–60 minutes of flight time, with a 30-minute recharge cycle providing near-continuous operational capability. UVT maintains factory-certified technicians in the United States and offers loaner units during repair periods.

Officer Trnka noted that the department has four FAA-licensed drone pilots. Regarding airspace restrictions near Lewis Airport, he described a tiered approval system based on location, altitude and confirmed an established working relationship with the airport's air traffic control tower, allowing rapid coordination for emergency deployments north of Division Street.

Officer Trnka also highlighted potential cross-departmental utility, including infrastructure inspections for Public Works in hard-to-reach areas near the river, and thermal imaging assistance in narrowing the location of water main breaks to reduce excavation time and cost.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the quote for the purchase of the DJI M4TD from UVT for a price of \$14,183.54.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

FINANCE 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)(1): The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for

the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

2. 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(11): Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probate or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting.

Aldermoman Gazal made a motion to go into executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5ILCS 120/2(c)(11). Seconded by Alderman Albert. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Naves: None. Absent: Deserio. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive session: 9:09 p.m.

Aldermoman Gazal made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5ILCS 120/2(c)(11). Seconded by Alderman Albert. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Naves: None. Absent: Deserio, Oberlin. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 11:21 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 11:21 p.m.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2026.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR