

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
September 23, 2024

The September 23, 2024, 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 Glen Conklin, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti.

Absent Council Members: Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: Interim Administrator Tony Graff, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Economic Development Director Ron Mentzer, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Police Chief Ed Clark, Interim Finance Director Erica Waggoner, Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz, Interim Employee Relations Dave Strahl, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

**TOPIC: Planning Commission Computer Proposal**

City Administrator Tony Graff commented that they are requesting to table this topic because they would like to receive two other bids from other government companies. Once they receive the bids they will have this back on a work session agenda.

**TOPIC: Resolution Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Crest Hill and the City of Joliet for the General Maintenance, of and Financial Responsibility for Certain Sections of Ingalls Avenue and Certain Sections of Gaylord Road**

City Engineer Ron Weideman commented that this agreement is encompassing three sections of roadways, they are:

- Ingalls Avenue from Gael Drive to Joliet Junction Trail
- Gaylord Road from 845 feet north of Lakeview Drive to approximately 319 feet south of west Renwick Road
- Gaylord Road from approximately 319 feet south of the centerline of west Renwick Road to the southern right of way line of west Renwick Road

Engineer Weideman worked with the City Attorney and representatives from the City of Joliet and based on what is found and the Illinois Municipal Code Section 7-1-1, when a municipality incorporates an area, they are required to take it far south of the pavement.

Therefore, based on the wording of Section 7-1-1, Ingalls which is the section discussed above is Crest Hill's responsibility since the development of Park Place on the Green and

Willow Run. Also, since the southside of Ingalls is still unincorporated, Ingalls to the south edge of the pavement is the responsibility of Crest Hill, as well.

Some highlights of the IGA are:

- Joliet will do street sweeping and general maintenance for us when they are passing through.
- When the City of Joliet goes to resurface, construction, or do any work on Ingalls they will include our side and bring us the information and they will contract the work, but the City of Crest Hill would pay for their associated costs. The same situation will be on Gaylord where we will maintain the roadway for the City of Joliet but if work needs to be done, we will include all of Gaylord and then send that information to the City of Joliet to reimburse us.

Attorney Stiff asked if the City of Joliet's attorney has looked this over and it was stated that the agreement is with their attorney for review and will be presented to their Council.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the resolution approving the Intergovernmental Agreement.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

Mayor Soliman informed the Council that he did receive an email from Alderman Albert and Alderman Kubal, and they are excused from the meeting.

**TOPIC: Civil Service Ordinance – Amendment to Compensation Section**

City Attorney Mike Stiff commented that the item for changing the compensation for Plan Commission came up at the last work session meeting and there was a discussion if the compensation for the Civil Service members should be changed as well. The question was raised that Civil Service only has six meetings a year and would you want them to have the same pay as the Plan Commission which has twelve meetings a year. Then there was an issue about appropriately addressing this topic since it was not on the agenda. Therefore, the city attorney pulled this ordinance that was being considered last week and redrafted it to just be for the Plan Commission.

It was then stated that the ordinance that passed last week for the Plan Commission states that they would receive two absences and three or above would be unpaid, and if there are five absences it could be grounds for being asked to leave the Plan Commission. He then questioned the Council if they would like to make that change to the Civil Service Commission or leave it as it is.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that since the Civil Service Commission only has six meetings, they should only be allowed one absence before not being paid.

Attorney Stiff commented that the Civil Service Commission is like the Plan Commission in where they get paid once per month. Alderwoman Gazal commented that you cannot use taxpayer money to pay someone who is not working.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he prefers the commissioners to be paid based on meeting attended and agreed that the Civil Service Commission should only have one absence since they have six meetings per year.

Mayor Soliman commented that when Civil Service Commission is creating lists, they sometimes are here two or three consecutive days conducting interviews and that is based on need and is sporadic. He then commented that at the end of the year they could have met 6, 8, 12, or 14 times a year, it just depends.

Alderman Cipiti commented that those meetings are not official meetings and not posted. Mayor Soliman commented that they are official meetings, and they are posted. Attorney Stiff commented that they get paid just like the Plan Commission for each special meeting, as well.

Alderdwoman Gazal asked the City Clerk if the commissioners sign-in when they attend a Civil Service Meeting. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that she is not aware of how they take attendance but knows the meetings are posted. Alderdwoman Gazal asked who is in charge at their meetings and takes attendance. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that the Mayor's Office or the Clerk's Office will do the postings of the agenda but that is all. Mayor Soliman commented that it was the job of Human Resources to manage the meetings and the postings. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that she will contact Civil Service, find out this information, and ask how they take attendance at the meetings.

Attorney Stiff commented that, if approved, the ordinance would be sixty dollars for the Civil Service Chairperson per meeting for special and regular meetings, and fifty dollars per meeting for regular Commissioners for special and regular meetings with one absence allowed, any absence over the one allowed will not be paid. Only other thing he noted is if the Council would like to have a certain number of absences that would subject them to possibly being removed from the Commission.

Alderdwoman Gazal asked if they need a quorum to hold a meeting and the attorney commented that they do need to have a quorum to conduct a meeting.

Mayor Soliman commented that having one absence is too low. There are long serving commissioners on that board that are older and have health issues. He also commented that he feels the allowed absences should remain at two.

Alderperson Oberlin asked if the Council could get a copy of the Civil Service Bylaws before they decide. This would give them a better understanding to decide.

Attorney Stiff commented that he would get the Civil Service Commission Bylaws and answers to other questions from Attorney John Kelly and bring it back to another work session.

**TOPIC: Plan Commission recommendation on Chaney Monge School Front-Yard Setback Variation**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that District 88 submitted designs plans for the building they are constructing on the northeast corner of the Chaney-Monge School and learned that the school district property extends out to

Center Street and would like to know if they would like to dedicate that section of their property for the public right-of-way. The district would dedicate this property at no cost to the school for public right-of-way if the city would satisfy specific conditions. One of the conditions was that upon dedication the city would need to approve a setback variance for the new building addition they are constructing.

The Plan Commission conducted a Public Hearing for the setback variance request on the September 12, 2024, meeting and it was a unanimous recommendation to approve the setback that would reduce the front yard along Center Street from thirty feet to fifteen feet.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the zoning variation to reduce the required setback on Center Street for the new building addition on the northeast corner for Chaney-Monge School and reduce the setback from thirty feet to fifteen feet.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

This will be on the October 7, 2024, Council Meeting.

**TOPIC: Chaney Monge School Plat of Dedication of Public Right-of-Way**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that this is a continuation of the previous topic which is the condition that the school district had regarding the dedication. The condition is that the city would coordinate and pay for the preparation of the Plat of Dedication.

The City Engineer has coordinated with the surveying company to have the plat prepared and the copy of that is attached in the agenda packet. This has been reviewed by the Community Development staff and the City Engineer and was found to be acceptable and are recommending the Council pass an ordinance to approve the dedication.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to pass an ordinance to approve the Plat of Dedication of a portion of Center Street to public right-of-way.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Methvin.

ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

This will be on the October 7, 2024, Council Meeting.

**TOPIC: Recommendation Organization**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that he has been with the city for over a year and has several years of experience in the Community and Economic Development area. He commented that he feels he has gained a thorough understanding of the department, ordinances, and the codes that the city has adopted. He also stated that he believes he has a good understanding of the department's priorities and expectations. He is aware of the problems that the department is experiencing and the problems on filling

the full-time positions and is recommending some revisions of the organizational structure, titles, and compensation. He believes that the recommendations that are being presented are outlined in detail in the memorandum in the packet. Which this would be more efficient and cost effective than what we are doing currently.

There are seven full-time positions and one part-time position in the Building Department. Interim Director Mentzer commented that with the full-time positions currently budgeted for in the Community Development Department, which have never been filled. He then commented that he would recommend replacing with one new full-time position and one new part-time position.

He also commented that he would recommend that the city not pursue the full-time Planner position and instead create a new mid-level position which would be the Zoning Coordinator position. This position would be a supervisor position, and that person would oversee the office staff.

Then he commented that instead of filling the full-time inspector position, he would recommend the city to create a part-time Housing and Code Enforcement Officer position.

The full-time Zoning Coordinator position would have a salary range from \$65,000.00 to \$85,000.00 and the part-time Housing and Code Enforcement Officer would have a salary range of \$30.00-\$35.00 per hour. These positions would be able to receive merit increases, as well.

Interim Director Mentzer stated that the Zoning Coordinator position would also coordinate and be responsible for the administrative responsibilities for the Plan Commission meetings. There is a lot of interaction and work to be done for these meetings. By doing this, it would lessen the time the Economic Development Director would be doing for the Plan Commission and will give more time to handle more of the higher-level things that no one else in the department are equipped to do.

He stated that the rental inspection program is a positive thing to enhance the community. He then stated by creating the Code Enforcement Officer position the city would be in much better position to fully implement the rental property registration inspection program. He also commented that with the vacancy in the position for inspections the city is not able to inspect their rental units because of the short staff and last year the city only inspected seven percent of the 2200 rental units. It was then stated that there is a \$25.00 per unit rental inspection and a \$50.00 registration fee and a reinspection fee is applied if needed to reinspect.

By implementing these changes there will be net positive budget benefits. The city would see a reduction in the personnel related budget costs from \$749,000.00 to \$675,000.00 and on top of that, if we were able to inspect seventy-five percent of the rentals, that would generate \$75,000.00 in revenue.

Alderman Cipiti asked if the contracted City Planner still be needed by implementing these new positions. Interim Director Mentzer commented that the current City Planner has scaled back her time and commitment with the City of Crest Hill but Zoe Gates and himself have taken on most of the Planner's duties.

Alderman Jefferson commented we had an agreement with a company to track down the rental units and wondered if they are not doing what they are contracted to do, since Zoe is taking on most of that work. He also stated that this work is too much for one person. He stated that he went to the Economic Development Section of the IML Conference and one thing that was said was never create just to create, create with a purpose, and right now he is failing to see what the purpose is creating these positions, and in his eyes this seems to be an overwhelming task.

Interim Director Mentzer commented that there was a vendor that was contracted with the city and failed to do the work and has since gone out of business. The contract was to provide an inspection platform and collect the revenue and submit it to the city, but it will not go out and find rental property.

Interim Director Mentzer then commented that right now that person is doing more than she should be doing in that department with the vacancies and by no means are we creating a position just to create a position. We are creating a position to help keep the current operational demands of the day-to-day in the department in the most cost effective and efficient manner as possible.

Interim Director Mentzer also commented that at some point the city might need a Planner but with the limited number of resources now a City Planner would not be needed.

Alderman Dyke commented that according to the organizational chart, the Zoning Coordinator would be overseeing the two office clerks but to implement the rental inspections would they not be working with the Building Inspectors. Interim Mentzer commented that they would be coordinating with the Building Inspectors but for overseeing the Building Inspectors and doing performance reviews should be the Building Commissioner from his point of view. Alderman Dyke also commented that the new structure does not show a Planner when we still need a Planner.

Alderman Dyke commented that he does not feel that we are at a point right now to create this position when we need to hire rental inspectors first.

Alderwoman Gazal thanked Interim Director Mentzer for all the time he has put into this but feels our biggest problem is not having Economic Development separate from Community Development. She talked to several other municipalities last week and found they separate the Economic Development and Community Development and the biggest mistake the City of Crest Hill did was to combine the Economic Development with the Community Development. She believes our Economic Development Director needs to focus on the city and look for businesses, not sit here and do zoning consistently and worry about Plan Commission.

Alderwoman Gazal asked Alderwoman Methvin to stop rolling her eyes and Alderwoman Methvin commented that she was looking for a moment to speak but never gets the opportunity. She then stated that she has seen open positions sit in the private sector and it does no one any good leaving them open and if you cannot fill them sometimes you may need to restructure.

Aldерwoman Gazal asked Aldерwoman Methvin to not interrupt her and Aldерwoman Methvin commented that everyone is here as a group, it should be equal time. Treasurer Conklin asked for order.

Aldерperson Oberlin commented that she agrees that we are putting the cart before the horse, and we need to hire the proper staff first and she cannot support this change of creating a new position at this time. She also commented that we need an Economic Development person who will go out aggressively and look for businesses to bring to the city which will bring tax dollars. She stated that she cannot support this at this time but thanked Interim Director Mentzer for his time and effort.

Mayor Soliman thanked Interim Director Mentzer for the great presentation and stated that he trusts his judgement and would like him to answer the question asked by Aldерwoman Gazal and Aldерperson Oberlin regarding splitting the Economic Development and Community Development apart.

Interim Director Mentzer commented that it is common in smaller communities to have a combined Community and Economic Development Director because you do not have enough work for a full-time Community Development Director and a full-time Economic Development Director. If the City of Crest Hill feels it is that much of a priority to have a full-time Economic Development Director and a full-time Community Development Director that is not bad, but he will not sit here and say it is a bad decision. He then stated that he just does not feel it is a cost-effective decision since you will invest money in something that will probably not produce the result you desperately want and desire.

Mayor Soliman commented that since they were missing two alderpersons, they would bring this back to another work session. Aldерperson Oberlin asked to take an informal vote with everyone who is in attendance.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

AYES: Ald. Methvin.

NAYES: Ald. Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti.

ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Aldерperson Oberlin asked the city attorney if he resolved why the IML Conference was posted by the door. She then commented that it is alarming that someone would take it upon themselves to post their whereabouts and tell all the criminals what houses to burglarize that weekend. She asked Attorney Stiff if he received an answer about the notice that was placed on the door.

Attorney Stiff commented that he has not had a chance to investigate that yet. Aldерperson Oberlin stated she would appreciate anything he could find out.

#### **MAYOR UPDATES:**

Mayor Soliman announced that Gas N Wash will be having a ribbon cutting on October 18, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. on site.

Mayor Soliman also announced that there will be a Celebration of Life honoring Brent Hassert on Saturday, October 12, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. at Prairie Bluff Golf Course.

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

There were no committee/liaison updates.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

Interim Administrator Graff commented that Stateville is down to 187 inmates that still need to be relocated.

He also informed the Council that there are no agenda items for September 30, 2024, work session date and City Attorney Mike Stiff will be out of the office.

Alderswoman Gazal commented that she thought the residents with the grass issue would be on that work session meeting. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he believed he stated that it would be on October 14, 2024, work session.

Attorney Stiff commented that he has some information regarding Gaylord but not the other alleys that have been added to this task. He stated that he investigated the Gaylord properties to see if that is public right-of-way and if that was an issue of whether the city can mandate the maintenance of those parkways being a non-home ruled community. He then commented that he consulted with the city engineer and the city has the dedication from the center of the roadway fifty feet. He then measured on GIS and has concluded that the big wide parkways with the trees on the street side of Gaylord from the sidewalk are the City of Crest Hill property. Since it is city property and we are a non-home ruled city, we cannot mandate the property owners to cut that parkway.

Attorney Stiff commented that he was given four addresses to look at and if there are more, he is unaware of that. Alderperson Oberlin stated that she would get him the other addresses to review.

Alderman Cipiti asked if the residents that were here at the meeting will be notified that the city will be cutting that parkway, and it was stated that they would be notified.

Alderman Jefferson asked if the Stateville water bill issue has been resolved. Treasurer Conklin commented that it was recommended by Josh Hassert, our Lobbyist, to accept the discount amount that was approved through the Court of Claims. Treasurer Conklin then commented that if you choose to accept the partial amount you will have a harder time getting the full amount, so he would suggest taking what we can and hope they will reconsider.

Attorney Stiff commented that if we are going to accept that amount and close out that Court of Claims matter, which will be dismissed with prejudice, we should have something that the State will not insert a statute of limitation if we would decide to refile. He then commented that by resolution the Council needs to vote on accepting the amount that Stateville believes we owe.



The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

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

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

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CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

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

DRAFT