

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
October 23, 2023

The October 23, 2023 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, Alderperson Scott Dyke, Alderperson John Vershay, Alderperson Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderperson Mark Cipiti, Alderperson Nate Albert.

Also present were: Interim Management Consultant Steve Gulden, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Interim Director of Community Development Ron Mentzer, Interim Employee Relations Dave Strahl, Interim Planner Maura Rigoni, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, Police Chief Ed Clark, Assistant Public Works Director Blaine Kline, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman.

TOPIC: Considering of Acting Community and Economic Development

Interim Director of Community Development Ron Mentzer commented that he felt he could add value to the community by evaluating the organizational structure roles and responsibilities of the Community Development Department by looking at procedures, policies, and regulations that it delivers to the community and see where it can be improved.

Director Mentzer recommended that the City Council consider implementing a new standard requirement as part of any new special zoning ordinance approvals that are granted going forward. This would require the applicant who is seeking that special zoning approval to execute an unconditional agreement and consent as part of the approval process of any special zoning approvals that are granted. This would make sure the applicant is fully aware of the special conditions that might be attached to the special approval they are receiving, and they would be committed to complying with those special conditions. The applicant would have to sign the unconditional agreement and consent before the approvals are granted by the ordinance and go into full force.

Mayor Soliman asked if there were any questions or comments from the Council. There were none.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal

Mayor Soliman commented that this will be on the November 6, 2023 agenda.

Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Joe Kubal from the meeting.

TOPIC: Designate mayor and one council member

Interim Director of Community Development Ron Mentzer recommends having two elected officials, one being the mayor and another an alderperson, be Economic Development representatives to be authorized to meet with the City Administrator and the Director of Community Development to discuss in detail a specific economic development project where they can strategize about these specific development projects. He stated that the alderperson that would be designated should have a different perspective on economic development issues than the mayor. He also commented that this group would not make any decisions, it is more to enhance communications.

Alderman Cipiti asked what the process would be to select that alderperson for that team. Director Mentzer commented that it would be the Council's decision on who they would recommend.

Alderman Albert commented that he feels it is a good idea and would like to see Alderwoman Gazal or Alderperson Oberlin in this position. Alderperson Oberlin commented that she would be more than happy to be the person in this team.

Alderman Cipiti asked if the designated alderperson would be representing the Council as a group and not their own thoughts. Director Mentzer commented that the mayor and the alderperson would be the economic development representatives of the City Council and they will need to think about what the rest of the elected officials would think.

Interim Management Consultant Steve Gulden commented that this concept is to get as many people involved as possible and share ideas and visions of the Council, staff, and mayor. He also said that it is not a formal committee with reporting, it is more shared visions.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that this is someone who looks at things from a different point of view and asks the questions that do not get asked until it is to the Council, and it allows the Council to know they will hear information since one of the alderpersons would be there.

Alderman Dyke commented that he believes Alderwoman Gazal would be a good person for this group and represent the rest of the Council.

Consultant Gulden commented that they can send him an email stating who they feel is good for this group.

Treasurer Conklin commented that there would not be a quorum with two alderpersons.

Director Mentzer commented that he feels the mayor needs to be in the group since the mayor is elected by the community and the vision of the community.

Mayor Soliman commented that they can send their comments to Consultant Steve, and we will move forward from there.

TOPIC: Borio and Renwick Road

Interim Planner Maura Rigoni stated that Springfield Development Partners have filed an application for a self-storage facility at the southwest corner of Borio and Renwick. This property was just before the Council in August of 2023 and received approval under the application of A&D Storage. This property is 3.96 acres and is in a B-3 zoning district. The new application is for the reconfiguration of the building. Planner Rigoni stated because there was a change in the design it will need to come back to the Plan Commission. The proposal shows there are twelve (12) buildings and the most notable change in the proposed site plan is the replacement of the fencing material along the north, west and south property lines with storage units. The applicant received the special use ordinance. The applicant also chooses to use asphalt instead of concrete.

Planner Rigoni noted there is a setback variance requested and the building materials, and landscaping was also discussed. She also stated that what is being proposed does not include any metal.

Planner Rigoni noted that one main concern was how do you not make it look like a fortress since it will be on all four sides and not make it look like a stone wall. This is a commercial corridor and an entry way into a residential area, as well. The applicant would like to ask for reconsideration of square footage, and material. The fire department and building were talked to also.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that it was disappointing that she found this out by a resident who posted it on social media and all we went through with the residents. She asked why they were not given any information and why the past applicant backed out. She also commented that she was asked to table this so residents' will be able to come to the meeting. She stated that she is being accused of hiding information and has been under attack.

Planner Rigoni apologized stating as a consultant her job is to come here and process and provide the information and she has sat down with the applicant and let him know the meetings, hurdles, and all the obstacles we went through, and they elected to go to the November 9, 2023 Plan Commission meeting and she tried to have them attend a later meeting since there would be some unanswered questions.

Alderman Cipiti asked what happened to A&D Storage. Maura commented that she has not received any direct contact with the previous applicant. Alderman Cipiti asked Planner Rigoni when she first heard about this. She commented that she believes it was in September and not far after the previous applicant's approval. Alderman Cipiti asked the mayor if he was contacted by A&D, he stated that he was not contacted by A&D but did receive a phone call from Mike Quirk with Springfield Development Partners explaining what they wanted to do. Mayor Soliman commented that he feels this will be a better-looking building than what was initially proposed.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that it would have been nice to receive an email regarding this. Alderman Cipiti asked if these two companies are any way the same or associated with each other. Planner Rigoni commented that she does not believe so and Mr. Quirk can speak more about that.

Alderman Jefferson asked if this went through the Plan Commission. Planner Rigoni stated that it is on the agenda for November 9, 2023. Alderman Jefferson asked if this is a different concept or similar to A&D Storage. Planner Rigoni commented that they will still have the eight (8) buildings, but they will have additional buildings, so the square footage will be changing. Alderman Jefferson commented that they do not want a 'Statesville North' in that ward, and you are turning into a residential area off a commercial driveway.

Alderwoman Gazal asked what the purpose of the wall would be. Planner Rigoni said it is replacing the fence.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he is assuming the number of units will be increased quite significantly when replacing the fence with walls and wondered if Planner Rigoni had that number. Planner Rigoni commented that she did not have the numbers, they looked more at the square footage which is about three hundred square feet shy of the old square footage. Alderman Cipiti commented that the reason he questioned the number of units is because with additional units makes additional traffic which was an original concern.

Michael Quirk from Springfield Development Partners approached the podium and thanked the Council for hearing them tonight. He spoke about questions that the Council had. Mr. Quirk commented that they were contacted by A&D Storage asking them if they were interested in a special use project since they have a storage facility project in Springfield, Illinois that is nine hundred units. He stated the previous plan had 67,250 square feet and he felt the unit mix was not in alignment with the community it would serve. After looking at their data, smaller units were much more desirable in the community. There is an overlying demand for storage other than your home.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if they were willing to match the previous plan. Mr. Quirk commented that they could or go smaller. He also stated that with this plan there is less rentable square footage. There will be a small office for a part-time manager and there will be a restricted keypad, as well. Alderwoman Gazal asked who would be supervising it when opened. Mr. Quirk commented that it does not have to be supervised to be open. The purpose of having a manager there part-time would be to meet managers or perspective clients or assist someone.

Alderman Dyke asked what number of units for rent are being proposed. Mr. Quirk commented that there were 331 units proposed before and they are proposing approximately 490 units, which are smaller units. Mr. Quirk commented that the traffic count will not change.

Alderwoman Gazal asked where the existing locations are located. Mr. Quirk commented there is a location in Springfield, Illinois and this would be our second location since forming the partnership. Alderwoman Gazal asked if there was a website and Mr. Quirk said that would be National Storage.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that they want to work with them but would like it to be opened to the residents. Alderman Jefferson commented that if there is a way to look at a different design then just a wall.

Consultant Gulden commented that he feels this should not go to the Plan Commission yet and have the applicant come back with some options to address the concerns with the wall.

Mr. Quirk commented that his concern is that he does not have a committed interest rate and with the uncertainty in the financial market and he is not sure what they will be in January of 2024. He commented that he wanted to commit by December and push for the November Plan Commission meeting because of the financial market. If the wall is the biggest issue, then we will decide if we stick with the original plan or if we scale it back.

Consultant Gulden commented that it is already published for a Plan Commission meeting in November and that would be an opportunity for the residents to come forward with their concerns.

Alderman Dyke commented that he wondered if there could be a change instead of all sides being walls, something that is more blended in with the neighborhood.

Alderman Vershay asked if there will be dumpsters on site. Mr. Quirk commented that they do not want a dumpster on the site and will just have regular garbage but no dumpster.

Consultant Gulden commented that they should come back with other options to the next work session on October 30, 2023 and invite the residents as well.

TOPIC: Approval an extension for an Interim Human Resource Manager with GovHR

Finance Director Lisa Banovetz commented that it is hard to believe that Dave has been here for three (3) months already. She commented that he came to us on an emergency basis and his contract was approved in the executive session. She stated that his contract will officially expire on November 3, 2023 and she is requesting to extend his contract in two week increments with a clause that either party can give a 7 day notice to cancel. Director Banovetz stated that Dave has been doing an amazing job and she feels that some things happen for a reason in life, and he came to her specifically. She stated that he has extensive human resource experience and has been a city administrator in a couple of different communities. She commented that he has been a great asset to her team.

Alderpersn Oberlin asked how long of a period is she requesting to extend his contract. City Treasurer Glen Conklin stated two weeks indefinitely with a 7-day cancellation by either party. Alderman Cipiti asked why you would not want to extend like a month at a time. Director Banovetz stated that the contract currently reads that it expires on November 3, 2023 with automatic two-week extensions which is the way GovHR does this.

Interim Employee Relations Manager Dave Strahl commented that he would have no problem extending another three months or however long they would like. He commented that it is strange to do the two week increments and even if you would extend it three months there is still that 7 day notice to cancel clause.

It was clarified that this is an automatic two-week extension until someone says enough is enough.

Director Banovetz commented that we have a posting for a Human Resource Director and have received zero applicants. Alderwoman Gazal commented that since we have had zero applicants for the Human Resource Manager positions, we should reconsider the pay. Interim Manager Strahl commented that he thought the salary was reasonable.

Consultant Gulden commented that he did have Dave investigate having GovHR do all the marketing which was around \$4,500.00 per position. Alderwoman Gazal commented that what if we keep continuing your contract for three months and we have no applicants, is there a limit? Dave commented that he currently is not limited in terms of what the assignment might be.

Treasurer Conklin commented that we currently pay a good rate on a part-time basis to where this would be equivalent to a full-time employee. Treasurer Conklin thought of running an ad for another month and see if we receive any applicants and if not reach out to GovHR for help since they have a big network.

Alderman Albert asked Dave how many hours he is working here now. Dave commented that he is supposed to stay at 40 or less hours and with his schedule he has only worked 40 hours about three weeks of the time he has been here. Alderman Albert asked for an average and Dave commented that he would say he works an average of 30-35 hours a week.

Alderman Jefferson asked where we are advertising these positions. Dave commented that we originally advertised on the Illinois City Manager Website. Director Banovetz commented that we advertise on both the IGFOA and GFOA, and ICMA. Dave also added the position to the Illinois Employee Labor Relations Association website.

Alderman Oberlin commented that we should give it another month and if there is no success then we should utilize GovHR at that point in time.

Discussion followed regarding GovHR and GovTemps.

Dave commented that he had worked at another community as an Interim Village Manager with two-week extensions for 2.5 years.

City Attorney Mike Stiff commented that the approval from the Council was in an executive session for an emergency hire and he would recommend that we ratify the previous contract before you extend the contract. This way nobody can question that there was never a vote in an open session on the original contract. He commented that Director Banovetz did have permission to move forward and find someone, but it never was Dave that we were looking at at that time.

Mayor Soliman commented that not only Dave's contract but there was another temporary hire in the Treasurer Office. Director Banovetz stated that she was not with GovHR that she was through a temporary service called Robert Half. Mayor Soliman commented that we did not approve the hiring of her, as well. Director Banovetz commented that it was also discussed in the executive session. Mayor Soliman commented that it was not at a City Council meeting where we can have repercussions for this. Attorney Stiff commented that we need to do the same for her contract since it was not in an open session. Director Banovetz commented that she is no longer with us.

Treasurer Conklin commented that we are not extending the Robert Half contract. He stated that it was authorized and now it is done.

Mayor Soliman commented that since we are extending Dave's contract, he would like to see a resume for him. He also asked if the rest of the City Council had received a resume. Director Banovetz commented that Dave is who GovHR sent us, and they had one option.

She asked the mayor if he would like her to go back to GovHR and get some other options. Dave stated he would be happy to furnish a resume. Mayor Soliman commented that he would like to see a resume and would think the Council would as well. Alderwoman Gazal asked for what. Mayor Soliman commented that if we are extending his contract, it would be appropriate for everyone to have a copy of his resume. Alderwoman Gazal commented that GovHR did not give one in the beginning why do we need it now. Mayor Soliman commented that when Director Mentzer and Consultant Gulden came to the city, they had a resume, and everyone approved it and they were given the opportunity to ask questions at a work session. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it was an emergency, and it is different. Alderman Cipiti commented that Dave is already doing the job. Mayor Soliman asked Alderman Cipiti if he seen a resume. Alderman Cipiti responded by saying he has not seen a resume and does not feel he needs to at this point since he has been working here. Mayor Soliman commented that the past hires from GovHR have always been brought before the City Council in a work session and questions were asked by the City Council and then would come back the following week to a regular session for a vote by the City Council with the contract.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she understands where this is coming from. She had heard that a previous staff member had called one of the residents who had called the mayor questioning why we did it the way we did. Mayor Soliman commented that Alderwoman Gazal's statement is not a true statement. Mayor Soliman commented that it seems to him that there is a double standard with some of the hiring here in the city. Alderwoman Gazal asked the mayor why it is concerning him now since it has been this way for three months.

Treasurer Conklin commented that Dave volunteered to give his resume and those who want it can choose to review the resume.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

Alderman Jefferson commented during the vote, 'yes with a resume.'

TOPIC: Places for Eating Tax Update

Finance Director Lisa Banovetz commented that there were two new licenses issued for a business, who has not been paying and has received a liquor license without paying their Places for Eating Tax. She commented that back in September they discussed that holding a license is the only leverage they have to make these businesses pay their Places for Eating Tax.

Director Banovetz commented that she remembered a conversation that she had with Mickey's where Mickey's said he does not like the Places for Eating Tax but if everyone is doing it then he will comply, as well.

Director Banovetz commented that she found out indirectly that two licenses were issued to a business that had not paid their Places for Eating Tax and is wanting direction on how to prevent this from happening again.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that she does not understand how this happened this time.

Treasurer Conklin commented that he does not know if this is an oversight or what, but he wants everyone to understand that it is not a tax on the business, it is a tax on the purchase, and we collect for the State of Illinois.

Treasurer Conklin stated that we have an ordinance which states to get a license they must be up to date on their payments or anything they owe the city.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that we need to apply these ordinances universally and not be selective.

Mayor Soliman commented that every business is struggling since Covid. He stated that he decided when Crusade Burger was granted a license from the Video Gaming Board for six (6) machines for their establishment, which will help with their struggling business. He commented that he granted the license to them, and they had to pay \$1,500.00 and they will also have to pay \$1,500.00 in December. He stated that the city will receive the benefit of the 5% tax that will come from the gambling at the establishment. Mayor Soliman commented that there are nineteen businesses on the list he received on October 13, 2023 from Director Banovetz, which is not current with the Places for Eating Tax. He commented that he made this decision to give us leverage come the first of the year when we issue renewals, and he was trying to be business friendly and help the establishment get through some tough times.

Treasurer Conklin commented that the ordinance was written for a reason and should be respected by all staff and public officials. Treasurer Conklin also commented that the mayor did it to help a struggling business, but we have a net sale for this business of \$250,000.00 on average a month and the money they owe is what they collected on our behalf. Treasurer Conklin stated that the ordinance reads that the mayor has the right to suspend or revoke a license.

Mayor Soliman commented that it is interesting that the treasurer is judging the mayor for his decision when Treasurer Conklin and Director Banovetz decided to waive all penalties on the water bills from May and it never came to the City Council for approval.

Mayor Soliman commented that Crusades Burger was in arrears for June, July, and August which is not what the list stated that came from Director Banovetz. Director Banovetz commented that they have paid through June. Mayor Soliman commented that after he received an email from the treasurer he reached out to the establishment and gave them one week to make payment or he would revoke the license for gaming and contact the gaming board to turn their machines off. Director Banovetz asked why the mayor did not do this before and how she does not understand why they were not made to pay before issuing the license. Mayor Soliman commented that he thought it was the best choice for the city and to keep them operating since gaming is a great source of revenue.

Alderman Cipiti commented that the decision by the Council was to hold these businesses accountable to follow the ordinances. He also commented that he does not know how the mayor alone can pick and choose who would get a break without coming to the Council.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that we talk about being business friendly, but she remembered a business being chastised by the mayor about finances that had nothing to do with the city.

Treasurer Conklin commented that himself and Director Banovetz have never decided against any ordinance without the Council's direction. Mayor Soliman commented that who can waive it if Council does not because it is no different than a permit.

Alderwoman Gazal asked the mayor to show facts when Director Banovetz and Treasurer Conklin waived money without approval. Mayor Soliman stated that they themselves stated they did in a June 19, 2023 Council meeting and there was never a vote at the table regarding it. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it seemed like the mayor did his homework. Mayor Soliman commented that he did his homework. Alderwoman Gazal asked why the mayor could not send an email asking what the Council thinks about this.

Alderman Albert commented that he was disappointed and stated that we are one city, and we must stop acting in silos and communication will go so far and this could be avoided with simple communication. He stated that Crusades Burger has the ultimatum and if they do not pay by Friday, we are shutting them down, and there is nothing more to talk about.

Mayor Soliman asked City Attorney Mike Stiff when it comes to renewal time and a business does not renew their license or closes, can we go after them for the Place for Eating Tax money they owe the city through the Court of Law. Attorney Stiff commented that is correct.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that we can go after them once they close but that does not mean they will pay. She commented that the key here is that we have an ordinance that was not followed. She stated that the ordinances need to be followed across the board.

Attorney Stiff commented that you cannot have unfair treatment.

Consultant Gulden commented that he feels the mayor's remedy has been accepted and is good and get back to the agenda.

Director Banovetz commented that the Clerk's Office always checks before issuing a license to make sure they are current with their Places for Eating Tax.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Bill Thomas, a resident, and the Chairman of the Plan Commission asked if there has been an update with the changing of the flag permit fee from \$1,000.00 to \$250.00. Consultant Gulden commented that it is on our agenda, and it is not forgotten about. He also commented that he is upset over the news about the Borio Storage facility, and he commented that he feels that there needs to be an open meeting with the residents. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that there will be at the next work session. Bill commented that he feels that is not the place to do that and they need a separate residential meeting.

MAYORS UPDATES:

No comment tonight.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

No committee updates tonight.

ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS:

Consultant Gulden announced that the water main break at Hill Crest Shopping Center has been fixed and the only business who lost water for about an hour was Subway, but it is fixed now.

Alderman Albert commented that the Open House was well coordinated and was nice and thanked everyone involved with the Open House.

Mayor Raymond Soliman asked to deviate from the regular agenda for an executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Albert, to go into an executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal

There being seven (7) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session at 8:51 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Jefferson to reconvene from the executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal

There being seven (7) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 9:58p.m.

There being no further business before the Council, and no action needed from the executive session, the work session from October 23, 2023 is adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2023

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR