

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
April 8, 2024

The April 8, 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, Alderman John Vershay, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

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

Absent were: Police Chief Ed Clark, Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz, Interim Employee Relations Dave Strahl, Interim City Planner Maura Rigoni.

TOPIC: Cable Television Broadcasting

Mayor Soliman introduced William (Bill) McCluskey and stated he has been helping the city with their broadcasting audio/visual services at the city's last three meetings. Mayor Soliman asked Bill to approach the podium and introduce himself. Bill commented that he is a resident of Crest Hill, and he has been using the A/V equipment and he has identified some things that we could improve with the equipment.

Mayor Soliman commented that the contract does include the Memorial Day Ceremony and the Lidice Memorial Ceremony.

Attorney Mike Stiff commented that the contract is similar to the prior contracts but there were a couple of minor changes that Mr. McCluskey suggested, and he had no issues with.

Mayor Soliman asked Bill to explain the issue we had at the last meeting. Bill commented that there was an issue with the recording of the audio and video at the last meeting. He commented that there is a delay when starting the meetings and that was due to the system having a failure to record and he was not aware of the issue. He also commented that the back-up system we had had burned up prior to this issue and was never replaced, which is getting replaced now. He stated that there should not be a ten-minute delay now since he is aware of the issue.

Interim City Administrator Tony Graff commented that the new piece of equipment would be delivered Wednesday and our I.T. staff will install the equipment.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the agreement to have Bill McCluskey be our cable television technician for City Council meetings, Plan Commission meetings, and the two special events.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman commented that the official vote will be held on April 15, 2024.

TOPIC: Resolution Approving an Agreement for Hillcrest Water Main Replacement- Design Engineering Services by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. for an amount of \$87,415.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman would like to have Christopher B. Burke Engineering start working on the design of the relocation of the watermain. He commented that it would not be completed in one year, so he would like to do it in stages. Currently the city is responsible for the watermain that runs in and through the Hillcrest Shopping Center. These lines are old, and the plan is to take the watermain and build a new one that loops around the outside and then the city would not be responsible for the old watermain that runs through the parking lot.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that they replaced approximately twenty-five percent of this with the Building and Recruiting Center about a year ago but we need the design and get the costs narrowed down so we can figure out how to budget this work.

Alderman Albert asked if there are any official easements. Engineer Wiedeman commented that it is a blanket easement over the entire property, and this will clean this up, so we will not have any breaks in the middle of the parking lot and vehicles get damaged. He stated that the water main is all over the place, but they are starting to nail it down better, the lines are original from the 1960's.

Alderman Vershay asked how the watermain is in front of the bakery. Engineer Wiedeman commented that those were replaced last year when they were working on the recruiting center, it is all brand new and has been tied in.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote approving the Agreement for Hillcrest Water Replacement in the amount of \$87,415.00.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman commented that this will be on the agenda April 15, 2024.

TOPIC: Commission Re-Appointments

Mayor Soliman commented that there are five (5) commissioner's terms that will expire on May 1, 2024. They are:

- Civil Service Commission Board
 - Pat Camden - This is a three-year term, and he has agreed to serve another term. He originally was appointed in 2016, and this would make this his third term.

- Police Pension Board
 - John Smith – This is a two-year term, and he has agreed to serve another term. He originally was appointed in 2022 and this would be his second term.
- Plan Commission Board –
 - Ken Carroll – This is a three-year term, and he has agreed to serve another term. This would be his fifth term.
 - Bill Thomas – This is a three-year term and Bill Thomas is the Chairman of the Board. He was appointed in 2020 and he has agreed to serve another term, which would be his second term.
 - Cheryl Slabozeski – This is a three-year term, and she has agreed to serve another term, which would make this her second term.

Mayor Soliman asked if there are any objections to the five reappointments. There were no objections.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve all five (5) reappointments.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman commented that all five (5) reappointments will be on the agenda for April 15, 2024.

TOPIC: Update for the Draft Fiscal Year 2024-25 Annual Budget

Finance Director Lisa Banovetz commented that not much changed since the last notice and they did get the General Fund deficit down to approximately \$31,000.00. She commented that the focus on the budget is to make sure you have an Operating Fund that is sustainable since those are the recurring costs, salaries, benefits, and debt service.

She commented that capital projects will show a deficit that is built into the rate study and the rates will catch up in the future and the fund will build up. She also stated that the engineer has water/sewer projects to do next year because with the Lake Michigan Water project many contractors will be working on other projects and prices will rise. There was approximately a million dollars transferred out of the General Fund to cover streets. Director Banovetz commented that there is \$1.3 million dollars in capital projects next year and she is comfortable taking that out of the fund balance for the General Fund, since we have \$7.8 million dollars in that fund. She also commented that she wanted to thank Engineer Wiedeman since he cut many capital projects and went through his operating budget and decided to save the city money, he would do many things in-house. She also commented that through the Public Works Director vacancy, Engineer Wiedeman has stepped up and has taken on extra work.

Director Banovetz commented the Engineer Wiedeman had a conversation with the DCEO grant manager discussing how we need to start over, and the grant manager gave the city some forgiveness and because of this they will grant the two \$1 million dollar grants. Many Council members thanked Engineer Wiedeman for making this happen.

Interim City Administrator Tony Graff commented that the rental fee has been approved and the city will have a net gain of approximately \$30,000.00, which is a comfortable number and will help take care of our expenses for the rental program.

He also mentioned that the FOIA cost from the attorney should decrease, since the Police Department has hired a FOIA Specialist that will manage these in-house. Costs were broken down showing we consistently have about \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 monthly in costs, which majority of this is the Police Department and now most of this can be managed by the FOIA Specialist.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that he is comfortable with the budget being passed like it is.

He also stated that there are no new hires, and if anyone is a new hire it will have to be brought before the Council for approval unless it is a direct replacement.

The Police Department is down an officer, they have thirty-one officers but would like to be thirty-two officers, but there is a list, and we would need to look at the list, which may need updated.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that at the last meeting there was a request for a full-time administrative clerk position at the Police Department and she suggested that the part-time administrative clerk should be offered the full-time position and asked what is going on with that. Interim Administrator commented that that person had gone through the process and was not selected at that time. Alderwoman Gazal asked if there is any reason the Chief of Police is not here for this meeting since the budget is important. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he knows the budget is important and has agreed to collaborate with the Council and coming back to the Council when he needs more manpower. Alderwoman Gazal commented that she wants something in writing why the part-time administrative clerk did not get the full-time position since she has talked to her and wants to make sure we have something in writing so there is no discrimination here.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if the FOIA amount that we are saving is an estimate since we do not know how many FOIAs we will do. Interim Administrator Graff commented that it is projections based on numbers over the last year and there will be more of a demand since we are going to have body cameras. He also commented that body cameras should be active by mid-late summer which will create extra work for the FOIAs. Attorney Stiff commented that part of the reason the attorney's office was doing the FOIAs in the past was because the city did not have the correct software to do redactions, but the city is fully on-line and has the software to do the redactions. He also commented that the attorney office will be doing much less FOIAs since the city has the software and the FOIA Specialist to manage the requests.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has suggested investigating another I.T. company since the one we use is very costly and wondered if we have budgeted to hire a new I.T. company. Director Banovetz commented that currently we have the service and if we hired someone in-house even if we hired hybrid, it would save the city money and we have budgeted for the service which includes what we pay now, which is what is known. Treasurer Conklin commented that we are budgeted to cover I.T. but we should be able to gain savings if we find a less expensive service. Director Banovetz commented that we

currently pay \$17,200.00 a month and we were paying the former company \$10,000.00 monthly.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that he met with our current vendor and asked for an analysis of how many hours they currently do, and it was stated that our block of hours are 150 hours, but our trend is approximately 120 hours. He also commented that he asked them to write another agreement and take the agreement to 130 hours but also to have a carryover, and this would reduce the cost about \$25,000.00 with the current vendor.

Alderman Cipiti asked if the Treasure and Finance Department is okay with this change in I.T. hours. Treasurer Conklin commented that this has already been mentioned to the Council and in the budget with the savings. He also commented that there was a \$31,000.00 budget deficit in the operation budget and with the changes of legal services, I.T. hours, and rental fee software revenue would make the operations budget have a \$22,000.00 surplus.

Alderman Cipiti asked where we are at with doing an RFP for legal services. Treasurer Conklin commented that money is spent on legal services and every couple of years it is good to do an RFP and check the market and this should be done soon or possibly do this in-house.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if it were correct that we would not be reviewing the pay increases until the end of the month. Interim Administrator Graff commented that all the performance reviews are completed and when Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl returns from vacation, he would like to review them and give his recommendations for the non-union employees. Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has been asking since February and now that Interim Manager Strahl is on vacation we have to wait for him, which should have been a priority. Interim Administrator Graff commented that Interim Manager Strahl really wanted to make sure the employees doing extra work would be recognized. He also commented that there may be some classification of job description changes for next year.

Treasurer Conklin requested an approval to roll into the budget the cost savings and then approve the final draft budget posting on April 15, 2024. Director Banovetz commented that April 15, 2024 would be when we would approve the budget but not to forget we can amend the budget at any point in time.

Treasurer Conklin reiterated again that there is a placeholder allocated for the salary raises in the budget.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that the Council has been requesting this for so long and it has not been supplied to the Council and now you have to vote on the budget, and we do not have the salary increase information, and what if we do not agree with the raises. Treasure Conklin commented that the budget is what you approve for the amount of expenses that you would have during that year, and the salary recommendations are entirely separate from that, and the budget allocates the amount to drive those salaries through. He also commented that the approval of the salary increases is a totally separate issue and the limit in place you cannot go over.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has a trust issue since there is a minute that states the Council will not be part of the salary increases. She also commented that if she does not have the salary studies, then she will vote no, and she has been clear on this for two months.

Alderman Cipiti asked has there been a vote on salary increase for employees or has it typically been done with the budget. Director Banovetz commented that recommendations have been brought to the Council in executive session regarding a specific employee and what raise they will get. Alderman Cipiti commented in the past he has heard that all employees do not get an evaluation, but he thought every employee was to have an evaluation annually. Treasure Conklin commented that recommendations were done annually. Alderman Cipiti stated he is referring to evaluations which is what the recommendation comes from.

Treasurer Conklin asked if we could move forward with approving the budget. Director Banovetz asked if there is a penalty if we do not pass the budget in time. Attorney Stiff commented that he would need to look into this. Treasurer Conklin commented that he would like the Public Hearing on April 15, 2024.

Treasurer Conklin requested an informal vote to roll in the new savings and have a balanced budget on the General Fund and have the public hearing on April 15, 2024.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to do the Public Hearing and Approval for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget.

AYES: Ald. Kubal, Albert.

NAYES: Ald. Gazal, Jefferson.

ABSENT: None.

UNDECIDED: Ald. Cipiti, Oberlin, Vershay, Dyke.

Treasurer Conklin commented that the question is whether you want to have the cost savings rolled into the numbers to have your draft budget for presentation on April 15, 2024, which is legally required.

Treasurer Conklin commented that all he wants is an informal vote if you want the cost savings because we are going to post the draft budget on April 15, 2024. He also commented that to legally handle our obligation, he wants an informal vote to roll the new numbers into the existing draft budget as an update, which would show a surplus of \$22,000.00 in the General Fund.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that this is an estimation. Treasurer Conklin commented that everything in this budget is an estimation except for our bond payments and is predictable to the best of our abilities, a forecast on revenue and expenses.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to include the two cost saving recommendations that bring the General Fund to a surplus of \$21,884.00 and a Public Hearing on April 15, 2024.

Alderman Albert commented that he wanted to thank Treasurer Conklin, Director Banovetz, Engineer Wiedeman, and Interim Administrator Graff because he did vote

against this the last time because it seemed like we had no plan on getting the General Fund down, but he wanted to thank them again and said it makes him more confident in voting for this.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that when someone comes in as an interim, they learn as they go. He commented that he has seasoned experience, but he does not have Crest Hill culture and way of doing things, so he learns as he goes. He admitted that there have been some missteps in the beginning using his experience in the past from other communities and he has learned there is more involvement of the Council at a certain level, and we are accomplishing that now and being truly transparent.

Alderman Gazal asked Attorney Stiff if the Council can have something to vote on that would say the salaries will come before the Council on April 29, 2024. Attorney Stiff commented that you can add it to the agenda for April 15, 2024 stating that whichever staff member it may be to provide the information needed to have a formal vote. Alderperson Oberlin asked Clerk Vershay-Hall to make sure that was on the agenda. Alderman Cipiti asked what if it is still not done by that date. Treasurer Conklin commented again that these are two very separate items with a concept that you want to put pressure on the one item of completing another item. He also commented that it is painfully clear that the Council wants consideration of the salaries prior to the adoption of the final budget. Attorney Stiff commented that just because your direction to staff does not come through it would nullify a vote on a final budget and you are going to have a final budget to vote on at some point. Just because you are missing a piece of information it will not nullify a vote, you will still have to vote. Alderman Cipiti asked what the purpose would be to have that agenda item on the agenda serve. Attorney Stiff commented that that would be a discipline/personnel issue with the staff who did not comply with your directive.

Attorney Stiff asked if it is really because Interim Manager Strahl is not here, they do not have the salaries and are these salaries ready to go the day he gets back from vacation. Treasurer Conklin commented that Interim Manager Strahl is returning on April 22, 2024 and the budget is a document for your spending and should not be held hostage for a single event that is accounted for within the budget.

Treasurer Conklin again asked to move forward with an informal vote to include the two cost saving recommendations that bring the General Fund to a surplus of \$21,884.00 and a Public Hearing on April 15, 2024 for the draft budget.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman commented that the Public Hearing will be on April 15, 2024.

Director Banovetz commented that sometimes things get 'jacked around' and informed Clerk Vershay-Hall that the first thing on the agenda should be the opening of the Public Hearing.

Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

Mayor's Updates:

There were no mayor updates.

Committee/Liaison Updates:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

City Administrator Updates:

Interim Administrator Graff commented that Public Works notified him that there are around four hundred hydrants that need to be repainted, he will give the map to the Council tomorrow. Mayor Soliman commented that we have 1175 hydrants and the four hundred ones that are left are on the east end of town.

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Gazal, to go into an executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

There being eight (8) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:18 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Jefferson to reconvene from the executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 9:02 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2024
As presented _____
As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR

DRAFT