

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
April 14, 2025

The April 14, 2025, 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 Treasurer Glen Conklin, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: Interim City Administrator Tony Graff, Police Chief Ed Clark, Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk, Sergeant of Investigations Dave Reavis, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, Community & Economic Development Director Patrick Ainsworth, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman informed the Council that he received a message from Alderman Kubal, and he will be excused from the meeting.

**TOPIC: A Resolution Approving an Engagement Letter with Chapman and Cutler, LLP in an Amount not to Exceed \$45,000.00 for Funding through the Water Pollution Control Loan Program (Administered by the Illinois EPA) of Certain Capital Projects Required for the City's Conversion to Lake Michigan Water**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman began by explaining that this process was like what was done about 3 months ago for a lining project, which required a referendum for IEPA funding. He stated that the previous referendum was only for that specific project due to timing constraints, as these referendums are only valid for 3 years.

Engineer Wiedeman explained that they were now coming back to the Council to do a bond referendum for the remaining estimated cost of all Grand Prairie Capital projects, which are up to about \$32 million. He requested approval for an engagement letter with Chapman and Cutler for \$45,000 for funding through the water pollution control loan program administered by the IEPA for their capital projects for Grand Prairie.

City Attorney Mike Stiff added that the cost was in line with or lower than a previous engagement they had done for the west treatment plant several years ago.

Alderperson Oberlin asked about the responsibilities of Chapman and Cutler. Attorney Stiff explained that they draft the first backdoor referendum ordinance and work with the city to certify that all notices were correct and done pursuant to open meetings. He noted that they are a niche firm with a limited engagement.

Alderperson Oberlin also inquired about a clause in the agreement regarding changes in applicable laws or regulations. Attorney Stiff confirmed that Chapman and Cutler would make the city aware of any such changes.

Alderman Jefferson asked for clarification on the different amounts mentioned: \$45,000 for Chapman and Cutler's work, \$32 million for capital costs, and \$355,000 budgeted for engineering and/or attorney fees. Engineer Wiedeman explained that these amounts were all independent, with the \$355,000 being the total amount budgeted for engineering or attorney fees in next year's budget, paid out of water and sewer fees.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Request for Approval of Pay Request #27 from Vissering Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for a Total Amount of \$1,076,112.10**

Mayor Soliman introduced the agenda item, stating that the request was for a total amount of \$1,076,112.10 to be sent to the IEPA for approval and disbursement. He then called on Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen for comments.

Interim Director Hansen explained that this was the monthly expense for building the West sewage treatment plant. He confirmed that they were looking for an approval for pay request #27 from Vissering Construction and Company, with direction to send it to the IEPA for approval and disbursement for a total amount of \$1,776,112.10.

When asked about the project schedule, Interim Director Hansen confirmed that they were still on track for October 2026, a little ahead of schedule.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Proposed Succession Plan for COIRC of Wastewater**

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented a proposal for addressing the upcoming retirement of the Certified Operator in Responsible Charge (COIRC) at the end of May. Interim Director Hansen explained that they had researched three companies and recommended Test Inc. out of Peru, Illinois, as the best fit for the city to replace the employee that is retiring.

The proposal included:

- A contract with Test Inc. for \$500 per day, three visits per week, totaling \$1,500 per week or approximately \$80,000 annually.
- An additional \$20,000 for extra projects, bringing the total annual cost to \$100,000.

- The possibility of overlapping between the current employee and the contractor for knowledge transfer.

Interim Director Hansen emphasized that this solution does not have to be permanent and could be reassessed in the future. He also noted that the company could assist with phosphorus removal at the east plant and construction meetings at the west plant.

Council members raised concerns about the document referring to Crest Hill as a village instead of a city, which Interim Director Hansen agreed to have corrected. There was also discussion about ongoing efforts to have current employees obtain necessary certifications.

Alderman Jefferson suggested looking into assistance from Chicago Water Management, given the city's future transition to Lake Michigan water. Interim Director Hansen acknowledged the suggestion but expressed confidence in Test Inc.'s abilities and pricing.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Organizational Structure Change in Public Works**

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented a proposal for reorganizing the Public Works department, which included:

- Creating Superintendent positions for wastewater, water, and general public works operations.
- Eliminating the Deputy Director and Administrative Assistant positions.
- Adding an Administrative Superintendent position.

Interim Director Hansen explained that this structure would provide better span of control and accountability, especially given the upcoming retirement of the current ROIC (Responsible Operator in Charge) for both water and wastewater.

The proposal aimed to have a net zero impact on the general fund, with increased costs to the water and sewer funds offset by the elimination of certain positions.

Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl supported the proposal, emphasizing the need for non-union supervisory positions and noting that this structure is common in other public works organizations. He commented that a union crew leader is not going to hold another union member responsible, so they need to be non-union supervisory positions.

Council members expressed concerns about:

- The timing of the restructuring, given previous discussions about waiting for a permanent Public Works Director.
- The potential impact on current employees whose positions might be eliminated.
- The similarity of the proposed administrative superintendent role to a previously rejected proposal.

Alderman Jefferson commented that he has a problem with the Deputy Director and the Administrative positions being eliminated since they already voted down to realign/reassign those positions and those positions could not be voted on again unless two-thirds majority of the Council vote to do that. Alderman Jefferson also commented that those positions were brought up before with the intention to give that person a raise and it was voted down.

Alderman Jefferson also asked if we will be advertising those superintendent positions or would it be in-house and was told by Interim Director Hansen that no one in house would want these positions and no union employees want to be non-union employees, but we would need to post this to see for sure.

Alderman Oberlin commented that she does not like anything about this restructuring and you are making more bosses and asked where the workers are. She then commented that the Council agreed that no changes were going to be made until they hired a permanent Public Works Director.

Interim City Administrator Tony Graff clarified that this proposal was part of their ongoing efforts to address the upcoming retirement and operational needs. He emphasized that while they were not seeking immediate approval, they wanted to present the plan for Council consideration.

No formal action was taken on this matter, with the understanding that further discussion and refinement of the proposal would be needed.

**TOPIC: Discussion to Approve and Authorize the First Amendment to the Purchase and Sale Agreement for 1610 Plainfield Road**

Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer presented an update on QuickTrip's request for a 90-day extension to their inspection period for the former City Hall property.

Consultant Mentzer explained that QuickTrip had already used their two 45-day extensions provided in the original contract and was now requesting an additional 90 days in exchange for a non-refundable \$10,000 payment to the city.

Consultant Mentzer emphasized that all other terms and conditions from the original contract remained in place, including land use restrictions and development obligations.

He noted that QuickTrip had been working collaboratively with city staff on design drawings and studies for their proposed development.

Charlie Tarwater, QuickTrip's real estate manager, provided additional details:

- QuickTrip remains committed to the project and the agreed-upon timeline for starting work.
- The development will include a QuickTrip fueling center and convenience store on the east half of the property, with no truck fueling amenities.
- The west half of the property is intended for desirable commercial development, ideally a restaurant.
- QuickTrip has been actively marketing the vacant parcel but has faced challenges due to economic conditions.
- The extension is needed to continue discussions with IDOT regarding access on Plainfield Road and to address the city's concerns about traffic on Knapp Street.

Council members asked questions about the timeline for appearing before the Planning Commission, the status of IDOT approvals, and the proposed site layout. Mr. Tarwater stated that it would be after IDOT gave their answer in terms of level of access.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to direct staff and the attorney to draft a resolution to approve and authorize the first amendment to the purchase and sale agreement for the April 21, 2025, City Council meeting.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Update DRAFT of the FY 2025/2026 Budget**

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke presented a revised budget memo, addressing concerns and questions from the Council members. He highlighted the following points:

- The operational budget is balanced with approximately a \$6,000 surplus.
- Current fiscal year revenues are \$100,000 over projected, with another month to go.
- Current fiscal year expenditure is on target, with an expected \$300,000 surplus.
- The enterprise budget is balanced with a \$2.3 million surplus, to be used for future Grand Prairie Water Commission capital projects.
- The total budget deficit is approximately \$2 million, to be taken from the fund balance.
- Fund balances will decrease from \$26 million to \$17 million over two fiscal years, still maintaining 70% of the current operational budget.
- The city's financial position remains strong, with fund balances well above the requirements for an AA bond rating.

Finance Director Gehrke addressed questions from Council members regarding specific line items, the removal of coffee budgets, and the structure of the budget presentation.

He also mentioned ongoing efforts to improve debt collection through the Illinois Comptroller's Office.

Council members expressed their desire for a budget presentation format like previous years, which Director Gehrke agreed to provide.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if the Clerk's Office budgeted anything and was told that there is potential new software for meeting transcription and document management.

Director Gehrke encouraged Council members to reach out with any additional questions or concerns about the budget.

**TOPIC: Commissioner Reappointments**

Mayor Soliman presented the following Commissioner reappointments for consideration:

- Civil Service Commission:

- Frank Blasky for a third 3-year term, expiring May 1, 2028.
- Plan Commission:
  - John Stanton for a fifth 3-year term, expiring May 1, 2028.
  - Jeff Peterson for another 3-year term, expiring May 1, 2028.
- Liquor Commissioners (terms run with the mayor's term):
  - Mike Gale (16 years of service)
  - Dave Stengele (entering fifth year)

No objections were raised by the council members regarding these reappointments.

Mayor Soliman indicated that these reappointments would be on the agenda for the April 21, 2025, City Council Meeting. He also mentioned that there were three additional appointments to be discussed at future work sessions on April 28 and May 12.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

### **MAYOR UPDATES:**

There were no Mayor updates.

### **COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

There were no committee/liaison updates.

### **CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

There were no City Administrator Updates.

### **TOPIC: EXECUTIVE SESSION 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(1)**

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Executive Session 8:49 p.m.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Reconvened 9:08p.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 9:09 PM.

Approved this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2025.

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

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

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

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