

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
March 11, 2024

The March 11, 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 Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: Interim City Administrator Tony Graff, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, Attorney Chris Spesia (left at 7:14pm), City Attorney Mike Stiff (arrived at 7:23pm).

Absent were: Alderman John Vershay, Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz, Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz, Interim City Planner Maura Rigoni.

Mayor Soliman asked for the Council's concurrence to deviate from the agenda to item number ten.

**TOPIC: Digital Sign License Agreement – Caton Farm Rd. at Weber**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that this is for a license agreement for the digital sign that will be placed at the northeast corner of Caton Farm Road and Weber Road. This agreement has been reviewed by City Attorney Chris Spesia and our insurance company. Attorney Spesia commented that they have gone back and forth with the pipeline company and produced this customary agreement that you use when building something on someone else's property. He also commented that there is no charge to place the sign at this location. Engineer Wiedeman commented that there is no pipeline going under this sign, the pipeline crosses Weber Road to the north. It was stated that the pipeline company will try to keep minimum use of this property but if they need to access the spot where the sign is it will need to be relocated but they will use reasonable efforts to minimize interference or alteration. Attorney Spesia commented that there are specific insurance requirements, but the city's insurance carrier indicated that they are okay with this.

Attorney Spesia commented that if we cease to use the sign for twelve months or breach the license agreement, they can terminate this license agreement.

Alderperson Oberlin asked if the city would be liable for any damage. Attorney Spesia commented that there is no liability, only to the sign. He gave an example that if someone were constructing the sign and was hurt while on the property and that party would sue the pipeline company as owner of the property the pipeline company would hand that case over to the city and we would indemnify them.

Alderman Jefferson asked if it would cost the city anything and he was told that there is no cost to the city and the sign company would incur the cost.

Alderman Cipiti asked if this is the same type of sign that we have installed in other places. Engineer Wiedeman commented that it is the same sign but will be bigger than what you see in other locations. He also commented that it is like the sign we have on Kubinski or on Gaylord but will be a larger two-faced digital sign.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that the sign company will need to hire someone from Nicor Gas Company to be onsite and this will be up to the digital sign company if Nicor Gas Company will need to be there at all times and their cost, not ours.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to execute the license agreement with Natural Gas Pipeline Company LLC for an easement in the northeast corner of Caton Farm Road and Weber Road.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**TOPIC: Liquor License – 1723 N. Center Street**

Mayor Raymond Soliman commented that he met with Tony on February 28, 2024 and went through the process of the liquor application and everything came back in order with the background checks. Mayor Soliman also commented that Tony does own a similar type of tavern in Worth, Illinois. Tony Kavaliunas will be purchasing the business and the property from John Cox who has had that property for the last eight to ten years. Mayor Soliman asked Anthony ‘Tony’ Kavaliunas, who was in the audience to approach the podium and introduce himself.

Tony stated that he purchased a bar in Worth, Illinois about one year ago. Tony commented on his background stating that he worked the Mercantile Exchange for twenty-five years and has been a FedEx Contractor for over fifteen years.

Aldermoman Gazal asked if the name would stay the same, and she was told yes.

Alderman Albert asked if the hours of operation will remain the same. Tony commented that he will keep the same hours of business. Alderman Albert also asked if the kitchen would remain, and the menu would stay the same. Tony commented that he will keep the kitchen open, and the menu would remain the same.

Tony commented that as a business owner he does not drink and plans to keep the staff that is there.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to give the new owner direction on creating a new class A liquor license.

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

NAYES: None.

Absent: Ald. Vershay.

Mayor Soliman informed Tony about the next steps and what he will need to do and get turned in. He also informed him that the formal vote will be on Monday, March 18, 2024.

**TOPIC: Amendment to the Class Q BYOB Permit**

Mayor Soliman commented when he met with Mr. White a question was asked about outdoor consumption on the patio area which is fenced off and would like the outdoor consumption added to his Class Q Permit.

Mr. Don White approached the podium and introduced himself. He commented that when this came up during our conversation, he had realized that this part of the business which is part of the building was not included in the permit. Don commented that they have done many things to make this beautiful and we hope that we can add that option to the permit.

Mayor Soliman commented that there are pictures in the packet of what has been done and he would recommend that the Council consider this request.

Alderman Albert commented that he has no problem with this and feels bad it was not set up for this in the beginning.

Alderman Gazal commented that she has no problem as long as it is controlled and kept clean, and no neighbors are bothered.

Alderman Dyke asked if this would be a beer garden. Mayor Soliman commented that this is not a beer garden. Don commented that there are five tables and benches. They have been sitting outside on nice days and they have fireplaces outside.

Mayor Soliman commented that this would be under Section 508.280 under restrictions and prohibitions under letter G. The mayor read the section of the draft ordinance to include the attached patio.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to amend the Class Q BYOB Permit.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**TOPIC: Consideration of Fee Waiver Policy for Overlapping Governmental Jurisdiction**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that the Community Development Department processes applications from other governmental overlapping districts and at this time we do not have a fee waiver policy. After working with the city attorney, we are asking the City Council to consider giving staff, which would be the Community Development Director or the Building Official, the standing approval to waive up to \$2,500.00 for the city permit fees for overlapping districts. Director Mentzer commented that anything over the \$2,500.00 would have to come back to the City Council for approval.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked if this would include tap on fees, and she was told no just permits.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**TOPIC: 1240 Caton Farm Road Permit Fee Waiver**

Building Commissioner Don Seeman commented that they received a letter in February from the Will County Department of Transportation for a fee waiver for the project at 1240 Caton Farm Road. The cost of the project is \$1,213,566.00 to demolish the existing salt dome and replace it with a new hundred square foot new salt dome. The permit fee would be \$15,810.00 and the County is asking for a waiver of the permit fees.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked if they had done the same for the City of Crest Hill and was told they had.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for a fee waiver in the amount of \$15,810.00.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**TOPIC: Consideration of Recruitment Process – Department Directors**

Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl commented that he could not find anything in the human resource procedures as to what procedure you utilize as Department Director, and he wants to put something together. He also mentioned that the applicants for the Community Development Director closed today and can start reviewing this, but we need some type of process to start reviewing these applicants. He commented that if this procedure is good, we will apply this to the Public Works Director position, as well. The only difference is we are collecting the applications and resumes ourselves.

Manager Strahl commented that the Interim Community Development Director and himself will meet and look over the applications and set up preliminary interviews with the applicants chosen. Manager Strahl asked what the City Council's involvement is in this process since it is the mayor's appointment. He suggested to have a couple Council members involved but reminded them if you get more than a couple of members it will need to be a public meeting.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that it would be limited to two council members and once it is down to the final applicants, she believes the Council should be involved in the interviewing. She also commented that she would like all the resumes of all the applicants.

Alderman Albert commented that even if it was two or three members, it can be posted and still go into executive session since it is interviewing.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she is on the Planning Committee and has only been invited to one meeting and she does not know if there has been more. She also commented

that she feels the Human Resource Manager and the City Administrator should look at the top five and bring that to an executive session with all the members.

Interim Manager Strahl asked if it would be acceptable to make a list of the applicants that meet the minimal qualifications and then present that list to the Council with the qualified applicant's resumes.

It was agreed that that would be acceptable.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the outline proposed to evaluate the applicants for the director positions.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**TOPIC: City Sign Ordinance Variation Process**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that he has received two separate applications for variations to the city sign ordinance. He mentioned the two applicants are the Will County Children's Advocacy Center and the new Gas Station being built on Broadway and Caton Farm Road. Interim Director Mentzer commented that he looked at the code to see what it would require in terms of process and noted the code stated the City Council would conduct the public hearings and make the final decisions on sign variation requests. He commented that it is not commonly known in the department, so he wanted to take this opportunity and let the City Council know there will be a public hearing at the next meeting on March 18, 2024 for the Will County Children's Advocacy Center. He then informed the Council that there is another sign variation public hearing on April 1, 2024 for the new gas station mentioned.

Alderman Albert asked if this has gone to the Plan Commission level, and he was told it did not.

Attorney Stiff commented that most sign codes are within the zoning ordinance and Crest Hill's sign code is not within the zoning ordinance which is why it does not go before the Plan Commission.

It was stated that the sign for the Will County Children's Advocacy Center will have a digital component and is larger than what is allowed in regulations.

Alderman Albert commented that we alter the signs of every new business that comes into the city and wonders if we need to rewrite this. Attorney Stiff commented that he believes the reason to not have it in the zoning ordinance is if you want to change the sign ordinance you can do that without having to go through a text amendment which requires publication and hearing notice.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if we could have a work session on signage. She commented that many businesses have banners when they open and never turn that banner into an actual sign, and it is starting to look terrible.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he has noticed foot signs being placed in the ground on the corner of Weber Road and Route 30 but then are removed by Monday and he is wondering if we have anyone on the weekends to enforce this code violation. Commissioner Seeman commented that if he is out there on the weekend and sees them, he will enforce this code, but we do not have anyone scheduled for the weekend to enforce this code.

**TOPIC: Entrance Sign – Phase 2 Discussion**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that we have installed the stone signs outside of the City Center and are waiting for better weather to place the larger stones.

Alderman Gazal commented that the word Chamber was not on the signs. Engineer Wiedeman commented that it was not in the original proposal, it has been proposed this way from the beginning. Engineer Wiedeman commented that he can check with the company and see what it would cost to add the Council Chambers on the stone. Alderman Gazal commented that it does not make any sense that we have these huge signs, and it does not have all the directions on the stone, but it would be up to the Council to add that.

Alderman Albert commented that he does not think it is necessary to have the Council Chamber wording on the stones since you can park in either lot.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that in the next four to six weeks the other signs will be finished that were in Phase I. He commented that there are five locations that are still outstanding and the fifth sign he is not sure if one can be placed on Broadway.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that we had primary signs which are the larger signs, and then we have secondary signs which are going into the tighter locations which are not primary locations.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that the sign on Larkin that is just North of Burger King is not in our jurisdiction but is over a watermain and it was suggested to place it more towards Big Lots and see if we can get an easement for three to four parking spaces and curb it this way and it would not be on IDOT's right of way.

Alderman Cipiti asked if there is anything available on the other side of the street. Engineer Wiedeman commented that the other side has the retaining wall, and we will not be able to place it there and if we put it in the grass area it will be in the IDOT right of way and they do not allow any permanent structures because they must be breakaway.

Alderman Dyke asked what sign it would be and was told it is a primary sign.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that he is asking the Council to see if he should continue and talk to the property owner about the sign.

Alderman Albert commented that something does not make sense because there is a sign at Route 30 and Theodore and the sign is closer to Route 30 and if that is the rules than this sign is too close to Route 30. Engineer Wiedeman commented that the digital sign company

had all the locations and informed us that this location is a location that IDOT would not approve.

Engineer Wiedeman stated that the next location is the location near Peach Street by the self-storage area and this will be out of IDOT's right of way and does not have any utilities at that location.

Alderman Cipiti commented that this is not a good attractive background for this sign. Engineer Wiedeman commented that he will go back and look to see if there are any other locations.

Alderman Albert commented that the coffee shop and the church are within the city but across the street is not.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that the next location was to potentially have a secondary sign on Gaylord. The first location is right at our city limits, but we would be fighting utility poles. The second location is farther down by the townhomes, and it will have landscaping in the background. Alderman Cipiti asked what subdivision that would be by and was told it was the Renwick Club Townhomes. The third location is closer to Renwick, which would be closer to leaving the city limits. Engineer Wiedeman commented that he prefers option #2 by the townhomes.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that he is looking for ideas and recommendations to come back with better locations.

Alderman Gazal commented that she had never seen a city with so many digital signs, she was told that the signs that are now being discussed are the stone signs they are not digital.

**TOPIC: Informational Update on Status of Walgreen's Store at 2379 Plainfield Rd.**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that he reached out to Walgreens Corporate on the rationale of the closing. He commented that they apologized for making the decision to close the store without talking to the municipality, and that this is not their usual process.

They discussed why the store is closing and it was stated that the store has been losing money for the last couple of years and do not see any reason that would change the downward trajectory of the sales of the store. They also stated that all the other stores in Joliet are increasing sales, and they are corporately suffering from the increased competition for the products they sell at these stores. He also commented that they stated there were corporate battles that are reducing their pharmacy sales because of the online competition. They also commented that there is a concern regarding retail theft from this store and the access of the store.

Interim Director Mentzer commented that the mayor asked repeatedly if they would reconsider the closing of the store and they said the corporate decision has been made and there is no interest in revisiting their decision.

The lease for this property extends until 2028, and they will be maintaining the property but will give us the information on who to contact for the property if we need to do so.

The closing is scheduled for April 10<sup>th</sup> and the property will eventually be subleased.

Interim Director Mentzer commented that he finally was able to contact the owner of the property and stated that he was not aware that this store is closing.

Mayor Soliman commented that he was disappointed that the decision was final, and they would not reconsider. He also commented that he followed up regarding the number of calls for theft with the police chief and over the last two years there were thirty-two calls for shopping lifting and theft. He also commented that the store never wanted to file a complaint and called after the fact that incident happened.

**TOPIC: City Hall Street Lights - Banners**

Mayor Soliman commented that there was a request to table this for more information later.

**TOPIC: Wilcox Stormwater Project – Design Engineering Services**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that this is a design proposal from Christopher B. Burke. This proposal is to install a new storm sewer collection system that would eliminate an existing storm sewer located in private alleys from Stern to the alley located between Wilcox and Kelly. This new storm sewer will be placed in the public right of way of Stern, Wilcox and Ludwig and will eliminate ninety percent of the storm water being drained to an existing pipe that is in a private alley or adjacent to existing homes. This proposal also includes filling portions of the existing storm sewer that are located within six feet of an existing structure or when crossing public right of way.

Engineer Wiedeman commented that he is looking for a resolution to approve this agreement for the Wilcox Storm Sewer Project by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois, and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. for an amount of \$41,490.00. This design work is budgeted for 2025.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**MAYORS UPDATES:**

Mayor Soliman commented that he received a call from Congresswoman Lauren Underwood on Saturday afternoon. He commented that he was in a holding pattern for the Corrosion Control Grant for the Lake Michigan water process, and she had good news that



the \$200,000.00 grant that we asked for has been approved and the money should come sooner than later.

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

There were no updates.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if anything was figured out regarding Cable. Interim Administrator Graff commented there is a person coming out tomorrow that does LaGrange and Lagrange Park to look at our system. He also stated that the mayor has someone from the Village of Shorewood coming out who might be interested. He commented that there is a possibility of having someone here on Monday to broadcast the Council meeting, but realistically it may be the following meeting.

Mayor Soliman commented that he reached out to the IT person who does the Village of Shorewood who also lives in Crest Hill. Mayor Soliman commented that he will be meeting with him and Ron Romero on Saturday afternoon. He also commented that Ron Romero cannot attend the next Council meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup> but will be available for the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

City Treasurer Glen Conklin asked what we were paying. Mayor Soliman commented that it was \$200.00 per Council meeting and \$100.00 per Plan Commission meetings, if needed.

Alderwoman Gazal asked when the next meeting for the budget would be. Treasurer Conklin commented that they are meeting Wednesday morning and there is a deadline for all supervisors to have their evaluations on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Alderwoman Gazal asked when the raises will be presented to the Council. Interim Administrator Graff commented that they will come before the council meeting within two weeks after March 30<sup>th</sup>. He also commented that this year we will be using the performance evaluation and next year the evaluation will be changed depending on how it is done.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that they are looking at doing something flat across the board. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it does not work like that, sorry to tell you that. Interim Administrator commented that this was done in the past and Alderwoman Gazal commented that it has not been done like that in the past.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has been asking for this for a month and the interim administrator has been here a month and nothing has been done, so she will not be voting on the budget if they are not done. She also commented that you cannot give a flat across the board because each person has had a different position and done more than others which is why we have the evaluations and why it is being made so complicated. She then stated just bring it to the Council so we can discuss it in executive session.

Treasurer Conklin commented that the salaries have a place holder in the budget. He also commented that he will be pushing to get a max salary on the individual in his department and will be lobbying that very hard and will be presenting a compelling case on how that individual deserves a very substantial raise because of the responsibilities met and for responsibilities that were met and were not that individual's responsibilities.

The budget discussion will be on the Agenda for the March 25<sup>th</sup> work session.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

There were no updates.

Mayor Soliman asked for a motion to go into executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: Ald. Kubal.

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

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

Executive Session 8:54 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, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Vershay.

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

Reconvened at 10:05 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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