

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
July 24, 2023

The July 24, 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, Alderperson Joe Kubal.

Also present were: City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Building Administration Clerk Zoe Gates.

Absent were: Assistant Public Works Director Blaine Kline, Interim Planner Maura Rigoni, Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz.

**TOPIC: Water and Sewer Utility Financial Plan Update**

Chris Ulm from Strand Engineering commented that a rate study was done a year ago for the infrastructure work that is being done. This proposal is to see how their projections for 2022 went with what was spent, make sure we are on track with the rates, and review to see if we need to make any adjustments or corrections as we move forward.

Mayor Soliman asked if there were any questions. There were none. Mayor Soliman stated that this will be on the next meeting agenda.

**TOPIC: Rental Registration Website**

Building Administration Clerk Zoe Gates commented that they are seeking approval to implement a website for registration and information tracking of rental properties. She commented that they had been looking into this before we made the move into the new building. She also commented that the Building Department would like a better way to identify a non-registered rental to get them registered and be able to track all the rentals, which this program will be able to do for us. This program will allow notification for new purchases and will be checked daily and notify the city. Once they are registered, they will manage the registration for us and then we can decide how much information we want to input that would be available to the public. This will give residents that opportunity to seek out homes or apartments and if the property had recent code violations.

Building Commissioner Don Seeman commented that we have 2145 rentals. He stated recently he was out driving around and seen a sign for a house for rent and looked the address up and found that it was not registered with the city. He commented that this program would help us be able to track these rentals and help us be able to inspect rentals once a year.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if there are other municipalities that use this program? Zoe commented that there is not. This company is based out of Boston, Massachusetts and is just starting to branch out. She commented that this program is amazing and very easy to navigate. The program even has a place where you add police calls and they also tag empty commercial properties on the website, which is good for any potential investors and developers. Alderwoman Gazal asked if there is training. Zoe commented that remote training is included in the price. Alderwoman Gazal asked how we will advertise this to the public. Zoe commented that once this is live, we will notify are currently registered properties by mail letting them know you now will be registering through this portal. Zoe also commented that we will still be managing any code enforcement or rentals that come through the office. Zoe stated that we can decide what information we would like to put on the website.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that as per the rating system, this may not be something we may want to put on the site. Attorney Mike Stiff stated that it is all on how it is codified and there is potential to be problematic, but he will look at it to see if there is anything that will be a problem to the city. Zoe commented that we can choose to not put any code enforcement in the program and then six months down the road add it if we would like at no extra cost. Alderperson Oberlin asked Zoe if she was comfortable navigating through the program. Zoe commented that she had no problem navigating through the program and she is very pleased with it. The Building Commissioner commented that we can add inspections to the software, as well.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that Building Commissioner Don Seeman and Building Administration Clerk Zoe Gates are such hard working dedicated people and she stated Commissioner Seeman has done so much in the little time he has been here in the city. She also commented that they are constantly go, go, go and she is very thankful for them. The Building Commissioner commented that they have a good team in the Building Department.

Alderman Dyke commented that he has called Commissioner Seeman on a Friday night regarding something, and he went out there to check it out and talk to them.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to implement the Tolemi BuildingBlocks program.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman stated that this will be on the regular agenda for August 7, 2023.

### **TOPIC: ProChamps Discussion**

Mayor Soliman commented that we were notified that ProChamps has filed for bankruptcy. He commented that we have used ProChamps since 2019 on our foreclosure properties. This has been turned over to our City Attorney Mike Stiff. Attorney Stiff commented that they came onboard in 2019 and in February Ordinance #1802 was recorded and this created a registration of defaulted mortgage properties and then a Resolution with ProChamps was created. Attorney Stiff commented from his understanding that the agreement has no

financial contractual obligation with the city and the city received a portion of the revenue generated through ProChamps. Attorney Stiff verified that bankruptcy is in the process. Attorney Stiff commented to his understanding we have received some money from ProChamps since 2019. Mayor Soliman commented it was somewhere around \$80,000.00 in the last five (5) years. It was decided to bring to council that we received two inquiries from other companies regarding whether we will be using another vendor or not. We are at a point where the staff needs to know if we are going with another vendor.

Stan Urban who was with ProChamps was in the audience and approached the podium. Stan commented that he joined ProChamps in 2017 and in 2020 himself along with seventeen (17) other employees were notified that they were no longer needed with ProChamps. He commented that ProChamps was started in 2008 by two gentleman who built a great product who joined a hedge fund company in 2019 who approached them and wanted to buy the company for \$12,000,000.00 and signed the deal. They did not realize they gave away sixty percent of the company to a hedge fund. This hedge fund company started terminating employees. In 2019 when they terminated the General Counsel, he started his own company called HERA.

Stan commented that HERA does the exact same thing that ProChamps did. He commented that since June 16, 2023 HERA has signed up sixteen (16) communities. He is offering the program to the city, and they do not recommend the public look at it since it only grabs the flippers of properties and the real estate brokers.

Mayor Soliman commented that in the past several weeks he received information from competitors.

Stan commented that there are eight people employed with HERA that were employed with ProChamps who know the needs of the communities.

Alderpersn Oberlin commented that she just got the packet tonight and has not had a chance to look at it.

Mayor Soliman commented that this will be back on the agenda for July 31, 2023.

#### **TOPIC: City Apparel for Appointed Officials**

Mayor Soliman commented that he was asked by a city appointed official about receiving a city shirt. He commented that most appointed officials are nominally reimbursed for their services. It was stated that the Plan Commission has seven (7) members, the Civil Service Commission has three (3) members, the Liquor Commission has two (2) members, the Police Pension Commission has two (2) members, and the Joint Review Board for the TIF District Representative has one (1) member who is not reimbursed. This is fifteen (15) individuals who are appointed by the mayor with the consent of the City Council.

Alderpersn Oberlin commented that Plan Commission members and others go to events that represent the City of Crest Hill and feels they should have a shirt, also. Other Council members agreed that they should have a shirt as well.

Mayor Soliman commented that the first shirt was paid for by the city and then all other shirts would be purchased by the employee, which is approximately \$43.00. He asked are we offering the same to the commissioners.

Alderman Vershay asked how often we are purchasing shirts for employees. Building Administration Clerk Zoe commented that it was agreed that the first shirt is free then the cost for any additional shirts would be the responsibility of the employee.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**MAYORS UPDATES:**

Mayor Soliman commented that there will be a work session next Monday, July 31, 2023. This will be for the text amendment of the Planning Commission meetings, discussion on A&D Storage on Renwick and Borio, and a discussion on HERA.

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

Alderman Kubal commented that the Park District applied for a grant for additional improvements in the Memorial Park by Arbor Lane. This will hopefully be passed and will help with improvements such as additional parking, extending the walking path, outdoor fitness equipment, adding a picnic pavilion and a new playground area.

Alderman Albert commented it is one of the biggest parks in the park district and can be an impressive park.

Alderman Kubal announced there is an open house at the park Monday, July 31, 2023 at 5:30p.m. for residents who live in the area.

Attorney Stiff commented that he has a housekeeping matter. He commented after the last meeting a typo was found on the July 3, 2023 meeting minutes that the Council had approved. It was a simple error listing Alderman Kubal as being present and voting AYES and voting ABSTAIN. All that needs to be done is remove him from the AYES vote since he did abstain. Attorney Stiff commented that he said to remove him from the AYES vote and go ahead and post the minutes and then we will ratify the change at the next Council meeting if the Council is okay with this.

Mayor Soliman asked if anyone had an objection. There were no objections. This will be at the next meeting to formally adopt and ratify the change.

Alderdwoman Gazal asked to have an executive session for personnel.

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

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

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

Executive Session 7:41 p.m.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

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

Reconvened 8:13 p.m.

There being no further business before the Council, and no action needed from the executive session, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023

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

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

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

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