

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
November 10, 2025

The November 10, 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 Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, City Treasurer Jamie Malloy, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Angelo Deserio, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert (7:27p), Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Police Chief Ed Clark, Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

MAYOR

There were no agenda items.

CLERK

There were no agenda items.

TREASURER

There were no agenda items.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1. Cross Connection Backflow Prevention Ordinance

Economic Development Director Dan Ritter introduced the Cross Connection Backflow Prevention Ordinance, explaining that this was implementing something that should have been done long ago to meet IEPA and EPA rules regarding backflow prevention. Director Ritter mentioned this project involves collaboration between the Building Department, which will focus on enforcement and permitting, and Public Works, which will handle inspections to ensure compliance with the regulations. Wyatt Mach from CCRA Professional Services, the City's contractor for this program, provided further details about the requirements, stating that backflow prevention devices are crucial for preventing contamination of the water supply during events like water main breaks and fires when negative pressure can cause water to flow backward. He noted that all municipalities are required to run cross connection programs according to Title 35, which includes annual tracking of backflow assemblies and surveying all water connections. He added that for commercial buildings, failing to have proper backflow prevention could cause serious health risks as devices like industrial pressure washers can push water back into the system, highlighting the importance of maintaining safe and compliant systems in both residential and commercial properties.

City Attorney Mike Stiff explained that they had reviewed ordinances from neighboring communities, particularly focusing on Mokena's ordinance. Mokena was considered to have a very thorough ordinance, which became the basis for Crest Hill's draft with tailored changes recommended by the Consultant, Building Department, and Public Works.

Wyatt clarified that the survey process involves sending notices with water bills asking customers to complete an online questionnaire about their water connections. This process includes basic questions and photos to confirm compliance, and any properties identified as problematic will be prioritized for in-depth review. He emphasized that while the EPA wants 100% of connections surveyed every three years, it is more realistic to focus on non-responders and those identified with potential issues in subsequent years.

There was discussion about whether residents had received surveys in the past, with several Council members indicating they had never seen such surveys. Alderwoman Gazal asked the City Administrator to look into when the last surveys were sent out, noting the importance of ensuring residents are informed and Administrator Wing agreed.

Wyatt explained that older homes often face common violations, such as the need for screw-on vacuum breakers, which are simple and cost-effective fixes. Conversely, newer homes might have issues related to irrigation systems installed without proper backflow prevention.

Alderman Jefferson requested information about the state statute requiring these devices, particularly for homes built after 2000-2005, to understand the City's legal position regarding enforcement costs that might fall on residents. The Council members agreed on the importance of putting the ordinance into place to comply with regulations and protect public health.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to adopt a Cross Connection and Backflow Prevention Ordinance.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Albert.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Fiber Master Service Agreement

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information about the Fiber Master Service Agreement. He explained that as the City began receiving requests from various fiber companies to install fiber throughout the City, he believed it would be prudent for the City to be proactive rather than just relying on the state's simple law. This would allow the City to place reasonable restrictions and make specific requests to vendors who want to operate in Crest Hill.

Administrator Wing noted that they had used a specialist firm to assist the City along with the City Attorneys. The first step was to update the ordinance and create a template master service agreement. Any final agreement would need to be negotiated with fiber vendors and brought back to Council for approval.

Administrator Wing shared that other communities have been able to negotiate with vendors to have City sites connected to fiber at either no cost for the initial years or at a reduced cost. As an example, he mentioned that the City currently spends more than \$8,000.00 per month on internet for its sites, and getting that reduced by half for five years would represent significant savings, in addition to increased bandwidth.

City Attorney Mike Stiff elaborated that this proactive approach was important because fiber companies and their lobby in Springfield had made changes to state laws that severely limit what municipalities can do regarding franchise agreements and permit fees. Having an agreement ready would give the City some benefits when companies apply for fiber installation.

Attorney Stiff explained there were two documents in the packet: a Master Licensing Agreement (MLA) that could be used as a template, and the City's current ordinance for construction in the right-of-way (12.28) with proposed updates. He noted that the MLA has been vetted and is similar to one that was signed in New Lenox. The ordinance updates included cleaning up references to positions that no longer exist, as well as adding a section on small wireless facilities.

Alderman Tina Oberlin pointed out some redundancy in the language on page 34 regarding projects "over \$250,000.00 or more." Attorney Stiff acknowledged this was an error that would be corrected. Alderman Oberlin also raised concerns about a section on page 36 that gave the Public Works Director authority to allow permittees to post a single bond for multiple sites, suggesting this was too much discretion. After discussion, it was agreed that this authority should rest with the City Administrator instead.

Alderman Jefferson asked how much of Crest Hill would be involved in the fiber optic. Administrator Wing confirmed that the fiber agreement would require companies to serve the entire City, not just select profitable areas, which would create competition against existing providers like Comcast and AT&T.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to provide directions to staff and the City Attorney to finalize the ordinance and master service agreement template for approval on the November 17, 2025, City Council meeting, with the changes discussed.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman also conducted an informal vote for the changes to the right-of-way.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

2. Assisted Listening Solutions

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information on assisted listening solutions for the Council Chambers. He explained that the City was not currently compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding audio accessibility. To remedy this, several solutions have been explored ranging from \$6,500.00 to \$10,000.00, including equipment and integration into the current audio system.

Administrator Wing noted that there were three options: a radio frequency (RF) solution (lowest cost), a Wi-Fi solution, and an infrared (IR) solution.

The vendors had indicated that the project would not be installed until January as they were booked through the end of the year.

Technical Consultant Stuart Soiffer explained the differences between the options. He noted that the RF solution operated on the 72-megahertz frequency dedicated for assisted listening but would require users to manually tune to the correct channel. The IR solution would automatically pair the receivers when someone entered the room, similar to systems used in movie theaters. Stuart recommended the IR solution as the simplest for both users and staff, while expressing concerns about potential latency issues with the Wi-Fi option.

There was discussion about coordinating this project with a future upgrade to the entire sound system. Administrator Wing confirmed that while there would be some economy of scale by having technicians do both installations at once, the ADA compliance issue needed to be addressed promptly.

Alderwoman Gazal expressed concern about audio quality for TV broadcasts, and Stuart clarified that while this was a separate issue, overall improvements to the microphone system would help both in-room sound and broadcasts.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal motion to proceed with the infrared (IR) assisted listening solution for the Council Chambers.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

3. Request for Limited Staffing Authority

City Administrator Blaine Wing explained that in mid-October, he had voluntarily placed himself on a moratorium regarding certain personnel actions for full-time employees. These actions included hiring, appointments, promotions, demotions, compensation adjustments, and disciplinary actions at or above suspensions. He emphasized that this self-imposed pause was necessary due to significant concerns about his authority in managing personnel matters. Administrator Wing was now seeking restoration of his disciplinary authority to allow him to take urgent disciplinary actions up to but not including termination of employees. He explained that this was crucial for handling situations requiring immediate action, such as interpersonal conflicts between employees that might necessitate temporary separation to ensure a safe workplace.

Administrator Wing pointed out that his current authority was limited to issuing written reprimands, which would be inadequate in more pressing situations. He emphasized that he was not seeking to terminate employees without Council approval, but rather to have the ability to take necessary intermediate disciplinary steps. He then commented that he has encountered some disciplinary actions that have come up for employees and gave a theoretical example stating that if he has two employees from two different departments that are fighting, and their offices are next to each other he does not have the ability to temporarily do any administrative action such as suspension or administrative leave and he could only give a written reprimand without this authority. He then stated that it would not be wise if it happened on a Tuesday and had to wait until Monday to discuss it with the Council. He does feel that terminations need to be brought before the Council.

In addition to requesting disciplinary authority, Administrator Wing sought confirmation that he could hire temporary or seasonal employees for up to 90 days, as stipulated in the City's personnel policy manual. This request was particularly pertinent as the snow season was approaching, and the Public Works Department was experiencing staffing shortages with at least two vacancies.

Alderwoman Gazal inquired whether elected officials were covered under this revised authority, to which Administrator Wing confirmed they were not. She also wanted to make sure that the administrator would not be terminating any employee without going to the Council and was told that is correct.

Alderman Jefferson expressed his view that the Council should not be involved in the nitty-gritty of day-to-day disciplinary processes. He advocated for the City Administrator to have the necessary authority to manage routine personnel issues effectively and seamlessly.

Alderman Deserio mentioned that not even a month ago we removed these actions from the City Administrators authority, and he believed that we hired the administrator to run this City, and he should have that authority.

Alderman Jefferson also raised concerns about diversity in the seasonal workforce and the pathways for these employees to transition into permanent roles. Administrator Wing clarified that seasonal positions offered the most significant opportunity for diversity because they were exempt from the civil service process. However, he noted that for permanent positions, all employees, including those transitioning from temporary roles, would still have to go through the standard civil service examination process.

Administrator Wing reassured that hiring for seasonal positions, especially during the winter months, was designed to ensure a workforce reflective of the community. He also invited suggestions from Council members on prioritizing diversity in these roles, including recommendations on platforms for advertising job openings. Lastly, he reminded the Council about the looming challenges with upcoming civil service tests, expressing a commitment to publicizing them more broadly to reach a diverse applicant pool.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal motion to reauthorize the City Administrator position to be able to demote and take disciplinary actions at or above suspensions and return to the City Administrator being bound by the personnel policy manual and union agreements. Also, the City Council understands that from time to time there is a need for temporary and seasonal employees and that the City Administrator has the authority to hire temporary and seasonal employees.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

City Administrator Wing commented that he had an additional item that did not make the agenda due to multiple departments working on this project. We are looking to update several copy machines. In the past we have leased these machines and after running an analysis of both leases versus purchasing, it was stated that the cost of purchasing is \$20,000.00 less than leasing over a five-year period.

Administrator Wing stated if Council is okay, he would like to place this on the agenda for November 17, 2025. This would be for the Clerk, Finance, Police, and Administration Departments.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to place the copiers on the agenda for November 17, 2025.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN/UNSURE: Ald. Cipiti.

ABSENT: None.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. Request to Purchase a 2026 Ford Utility Interceptor

Police Chief Ed Clark presented a request to purchase a 2026 Ford Utility Interceptor for the Investigations Division, replacing a 9–11-year-old Ford Taurus sedan. The cost would be \$46,382, which was under the \$65,000 budgeted for the vehicle. He explained that less equipment would be needed than for a patrol vehicle, but existing equipment would be reused where possible.

When asked about the choice of an SUV versus another sedan, the Chief explained that the utility model was preferable for winter conditions, referencing the "snowmageddon" of 2011 when many squad cars were unable to operate effectively. He noted that the proposal was for a standard gasoline engine rather than a hybrid, which would save about \$2,600 upfront.

Alderman Dyke suggested that the hybrid model would pay for itself quickly through fuel savings, even for investigators who do not idle as much as patrol officers. After discussion, the Chief agreed to discuss this with the mechanics and consider the hybrid option.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to purchase a 2026 Ford Utility Interceptor, with the final decision between gas or hybrid version to be determined after consultation with mechanics.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

2. Provide Direction to Staff on the Purchase of Urban SDK Licenses for the Comprehensive Collection of Speed, Volume Data, and Workflows for all City-Owned Streets within the Corporate Limits of Crest Hill

Police Chief Ed Clark presented information about Urban SDK, a company that collects speed and traffic data. He explained that the service pulls aggregated data from cellular devices to provide detailed information about traffic patterns, speeds, and volume throughout the City without having to conduct individual traffic studies.

Chief Clark noted this would be more effective than the City's current speed signs, which often cause drivers to change behavior when they see them. He explained that the data would help the Police Department target enforcement in high-speed areas and could be overlaid with crash data to improve safety. The service would also benefit the Engineering Department for traffic calming measures and future planning.

City Administrator Blaine Wing added that they currently spend significant amounts on individual traffic studies, whereas this service would provide continuous data throughout the year. He mentioned that five municipalities in Illinois are already using this service, which originated in Florida.

The proposal included options for one-year, two-year, or three-year agreements, with discounts for longer terms. When asked how the data was collected, Administrator Wing explained it uses aggregated, anonymized data from cell phone gyroscopes that are geo-located to specific streets.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to provide directions to staff on the purchase of Urban SDK licenses for the comprehensive collection of speed, volume data, and workflows for all City-owned streets within the corporate limits of Crest Hill.

It was recommended to go with the three-year agreement with Urban SDK for comprehensive collection of speed and volume data at \$16,290 billed annually (10% discount).

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1. Approval of Well 4 change order

City Administrator Blaine Wing, speaking for Public Works Interim Director Julius Hansen's absence, presented a change order for Well #4.

Administrator Wing explained that as the project was wrapping up, they discovered two components that had rusted out and needed replacement. The change order amount was \$6,780.00 for replacing a 6-inch diameter pipe with a flange. This should allow the well to be back in service within 2-3 weeks.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of change order for Well #4 costing \$6,780.00 to be paid to USG Water.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

2. Approval of Final Payment to Williams Brothers for the East Water Reclamation Facility Phosphorus Removal Upgrade Contract 2-2021.

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented the final payment to William Brothers for the East Water Reclamation Facility phosphorus removal upgrade. This contract dated back to 2021, and the final payment amount was slightly over \$100,000.00. Administrator Wing noted that the City's Engineers from Strand Engineering had reviewed and recommended approval of this final payment.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the final payment of \$100,988.53 to Williams Brothers for the East Plant phosphorus removal upgrade contract of 2021.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

3. Tier 1 SCADA Project

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information on repairs and updates needed for the SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system at various well houses throughout the City. The project involved work at Well houses 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Administrator Wing explained that they had received bids from three vendors ranging from \$42,000.00 to \$140,000.00. The engineering estimate for the project was \$50,000.00, which had been budgeted. The two lowest bids were within \$5,000.00 of each other. Administrator Wing recommended awarding the contract to MJ Electric, the lowest qualified bidder, with a 5% contingency for a total not to exceed \$45,000.00.

He noted two special considerations: MJ Electric's proposal included an exception to using rigid galvanized conduits in chemical rooms where it might react with chemicals, and neither of the low bidders had indicated a completion schedule, which would need to be finalized.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for approval of Tier 1 SCADA project awarded to MJ Electric for expenditure not to exceed \$45,000.00.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

4. Snow Removal Standard Operating Procedure

City Administrator Blaine Wing requested to pull this item from the agenda. He explained that there was confusion between the current operating procedure and the proposed one, both of which had "draft" labels.

Administrator Wing indicated he would work with the Public Works Director to create a clearer 1-2-page summary comparing the current procedure with the proposed changes. He noted that updates were needed to ensure compliance with federal laws and to protect employee safety and the safety of residents.

The Council agreed to pull this item for future consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public came forward to address the Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1): The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

Alderperson Oberlin made a motion to go into executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1). Seconded by Alderman Deserio. Roll Call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session: 8:47 p.m.

Alderperson Oberlin made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS120/2(c)(1). Seconded by Alderman Cipiti. Roll call: Ayes: Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke. Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 9:09 p.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 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.
As presented _____
As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR