MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
October 13, 2025

The October 13, 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.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal, Police Chief Ed Clark, Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl.

TOPIC: Execution of a professional services agreement with Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. to perform design engineering services for the 2026 Roadway Rehabilitation Improvement for the locations specified in this memo for a not to exceed amount of $44,880.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented information about the 2026 Road Rehabilitation Improvements. He explained that this agenda item was unintentionally included on tonight's agenda, and he provided Council members with a revised memo. He noted this is the same time every year when design work for the following year's streets and capital projects is discussed as budgets are being prepared.

Engineer Wiedeman displayed a table from the pavement rating condition report, explaining that streets in pink, light red, red, and gray are targeted for street rehabilitation, while streets above those ratings are typically targeted for patching, crack control, or quick resurfacing.

He presented a map showing the proposed work locations for 2026:

Ward 1:
- Caton Farm Road
- Cheney Road
- Hoffman Road
- Elsie Road
- Stern Road (from Oakland to Clement)

Ward 2:
- Kingsbrook Drive (from Boreal to north end)
- Longmeadow Drive (from Kingsbrook Drive)

Ward 3:
- Fox Meadow Drive (from Gaylord to Springside Drive)
- Silver Rock Drive (from Fox Meadow to Springside Drive)

Ward 4:
- Carlton Street
- Dundee Street (including all driveway replacements due to drainage issues)

Engineer Wiedeman explained that while the total estimated cost for these locations would be approximately $2 million, he plans to budget $1.45 million, noting that good prices in past years have allowed the City to complete extra streets beyond initial plans.

He also discussed planned water main relocations for 2026:
- Oakland Avenue (from Ludwig to Theodore) - second phase
- Imperial Drive (from Rut to Linwood) - including storm sewer improvements.
- Potentially Inner Circle (from Marlboro to Hosmer) if budget permits.

Engineer Wiedeman estimated the water main work at $2.9 million with a planned budget of $2.5 million, noting that further budget discussions would be needed. He requested Council's agreement on the locations and approval to move forward with design work, with Christopher B. Burke Engineering's cost at $69,790.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the professional services agreement with Christopher B. Burke Engineering Ltd. to perform design engineering services for the 2026 Roadway Rehabilitation Improvement for a not to exceed the amount of $69,790.00.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

TOPIC: Large Water Meter Testing Project

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented information on the Large Water Meter Testing Project. He explained that this project aims to reduce the unaccounted water loss in the City's system by inspecting large water meters (1.5 inches in diameter and larger) in commercial and business locations.

Interim Director Hansen stated that ninety-two large meters were tested last year, and this proposal would cover the testing of the remaining seventy-seven meters to complete the project. He provided a report on the previous test results:
- 54 of 92 meters were within limits.
- Eight meters failed but were repaired and retested within limits.
- Five meters failed and are recommended for replacement.
- Twenty-five meters were not testable for various reasons.

Interim Director Hansen recommended annual testing of meters due to the high percentage of unaccounted water loss in the City's system. He noted that any necessary repairs would be at the City's expense and would be performed by another contractor.

The cost for testing the remaining seventy-seven meters is $36,435.00. Interim Director Hanson emphasized that finding and fixing meter issues is a wise investment to prevent water loss and save money.

In response to questions, Interim Director Hansen clarified that the City plans to address the twenty-five meters that could not be tested previously and would work to ensure all meters are modern and accurate.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the Large Water Meter Testing Project with M.E. Simpson for a not to exceed amount of $36,435.00.

AYES: Ald. Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

TOPIC: Water Distribution System Leak Detection Survey
Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented information on the Water Distribution System Leak Detection Survey. He explained this project has similar goals to the meter testing project - reducing unaccounted water loss in the system.

Interim Director Hansen reported that Emmy Simpson, who specializes in finding underground leaks, conducted a leak detection survey of the entire system in April. That survey found twelve leaks estimated to be losing approximately 110,000 gallons of water per day. These leaks were immediately fixed.

Given the high percentage of unaccounted water loss, Interim Director Hansen recommended conducting a second leak detection survey before winter. He noted that summer drought conditions can cause ground constriction and contraction, potentially creating new leaks. The cost for a second complete City survey would be $21,165.00.

Interim Director Hansen emphasized the importance of controlling water loss before the transition to Lake Michigan water and stated that leak detection is a good investment if it prevents water loss and saves money.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the Water Distribution System Leak Detection Survey with M.E. Simpson for a not to exceed amount of $21,165.00.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

Alderman Dyke thanked Interim Director Hansen and the Public Works Department for trimming trees that were blocking signs with assistance from the Police Department. Alderman Dyke also thanked him for cleaning up Oakland Avenue.

Interim Director Hansen informed the Council that a new Christmas tree was planted by City Hall by the Veteran's & Police Memorial Garden.

TOPIC: Grant for Public Works Facility Security and Video

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke presented a proposal for security and video surveillance improvements at the Public Works facilities. He explained that most of the funding would come from a $200,000 state grant, with the City covering the additional $37,260 from the budget. While not initially planned or budgeted, Director Gehrke recommended utilizing the grant while available.

Director Gehrke explained that the primary issue driving the cost over $200,000 was the east gate at the Public Works facility. The gates were installed on the outside but need to be moved inside, requiring fence extension and regrading of a berm. Additional repairs are also needed on the south side of the gate where fence damage occurred from piled materials.

In response to a question about camera coverage, Gehrke confirmed that the surveillance system would cover the majority of the facilities, though there might still be blind spots.

When asked if the facilities management building on Elrose Court would be included, Director Gehrke said he would need to confirm with staff but did not believe it was included in the current plan.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the security improvements and video surveillance of Public Works facilities in the amount of $237,260.00, with $200,000 covered through the DCEO grant and the City's responsibility for $37,260.00.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke, Cipiti, Oberlin.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

Alderman Dyke commented that he feels there should be cameras at the Elrose Court location as well, since they are part of the Public Works Department.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

TOPIC: Projector Project – Council Chamber

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information on the proposed projector project for the Council Chambers. He noted that tonight's meeting would have benefited from having the ability to display maps and other visuals.

Administrator Wing reported that three companies had been consulted, all recommending a fixed 164-inch diagonal screen with either a Panasonic or Epson projector with 8,000-8,200 lumens. The room lighting can be adjusted to accommodate the projector.

The recommended solution came in just under $16,000.00, slightly above Administrator Wing's initial estimate of $15,000. Additional electrical work would cost up to $5,000. Stuart, a representative from the vendor ACP Creative IT, was present and offered additional information on the installation.

Stuart explained that the screen would be approximately 11.5 feet across by 7.25 feet tall, which is still small for the space considering viewing distances. He assured Council members that people in the audience would be able to see the projected content. The projector would be mounted about twelve feet away from the screen, hanging from the ceiling.

Administrator Wing noted that the existing TV would be saved for potential use elsewhere, such as outside the Chambers or in the Community Room. He also mentioned that a lift for installation was budgeted and would be purchased for this location to address water damage and other maintenance needs.

During discussion, some Council members expressed concern about the expense and necessity of the project. Alderman Cipiti was specifically concerned about budget impacts and unanticipated repairs throughout the year, though Director Gehrke clarified that water main repairs come from a different fund than this project would.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the projector project with ACP Creative IT in the amount of $15,897.00 and up to $5,000.00 for electrical work for the Council Chambers.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin
NAYES: None.
UNSURE: Ald. Cipiti.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

Mayor noted that this project would not be any cheaper if delayed.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

TOPIC: Consent Agenda Discussion - Update

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information on implementing a consent agenda format for City Council meetings. He noted this was the second time this item had been discussed in a work session.

Administrator Wing outlined the proposed structure for Council meetings with a consent agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting, pledge of allegiance, roll call.
2. Citizen or special requests and public hearings
3. Public comment for agenda items only (3-minute time limit)
4. Consent agenda
5. Reports and communications from departments and elected officials
6. Unfinished business
7. New business
8. Committee liaison reports
9. City Council comments.

10. Second public comment (on any topic, 3-minute limit)
11. Executive session (if needed)
12. Adjournment

Administrator Wing explained that the consent agenda would include routine items considered by one motion, with a statement that "all items on the consent agenda are considered routine by one motion. These items will not be separately discussed unless an alderperson so requests, in which event the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered separately."

He noted that Crest Hill's approach would be unique, as most communities require more than one Council member to pull an item from consent, while Crest Hill would allow a single Council member to do so.

In response to questions, Administrator Wing clarified that department heads and elected officials' reports would remain separate after the consent agenda. He also confirmed that the current 3-minute time limit for public comments would remain unchanged.

Administrator Wing indicated that if approved at the October 20th meeting, the new format would be implemented for the November 3rd meeting.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the implementation of a consent agenda format for City Council meetings.

AYES: Ald. Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Kubal, Albert.

This will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting.

TOPIC: Winter Fest 2025
City Administrator Blaine Wing distributed a handout with information about Winter Fest 2025, scheduled for December 6, 2025, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM.

Administrator Wing reported that estimated revenue from sponsorships was $7,500.00, with $5,500.00 already committed from sponsors. The City had also applied for a grant of $2,500.00, which would bring total revenue to $10,000.00 if approved. Currently estimated expenses are $7,500.00.

Alderman Gazal expressed concern that she was not aware the item would be on the agenda and felt she was not being given the opportunity to do her work as chairperson of the event.

Alderwoman Gazal mentioned she had already gotten a good response from high school students who needed community service hours and had volunteered to help.

Administrator Wing mentioned that he does not anticipate staff participating and creating an overtime cost.

Discussion included costume characters such as the Grinch and Olaf, a shortened parade route, and a wagon provided by the park district for elected officials to ride on and distribute candy.

Administrator Wing noted that they were ahead of schedule compared to last year when planning began around November 15th. He added that the park district was providing additional components this year, and staff were working with vendors to secure contracts.

This item was for information only.

TOPIC: IML Conference Discussion
City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information regarding the Illinois Municipal League (IML) Conference that was recently held. He spent several hours reviewing submitted invoices, credit card expenses, and city policies.

Administrator Wing noted potential issues with conference expenses including: canceling after the event cancellation period, not taking advantage of early registration savings, booking hotel rooms, and not using them, paying for parking at higher rates, and attending the conference for fewer days than paid for.

Administrator Wing recommended updating the City's credit card policy and purchasing policy, both of which were outdated (one from 2016). He proposed that no elected officials should have access to or use of any city Credit card, and that all registrations for conferences should go through the administrative assistant position.

He also recommended developing a written training and conference policy for elected officials that would include guidelines for registration, attendance, reimbursement, and stipends. The policy would address cancellations and early departures, requiring reimbursement to the City for non-emergency situations.

During discussion, Alderperson Oberlin noted that several training sessions at the IML specifically addressed these issues. She supported creating a formal policy for taxpayer money spent on conferences.

Alderwoman Gazal expressed concern that only four elected officials attended most of the sessions, while others did not fully participate despite the City paying for their attendance.

Council members discussed the challenges of enforcing attendance at sessions and the possibility of requiring a minimum level of participation. The consensus was that an honor system approach with clear expectations would be most practical.

Administrator Wing committed to working with the City Attorney to draft a policy for Council's review and adoption, with a goal of completion before March 2026.

TOPIC: Civil Service Commission Referendum Discussion
City Administrator Blaine Wing and City Attorney Mike Stiff presented information on potentially placing a referendum on the ballot to abolish the City's Civil Service Commission.
Administrator Wing explained that the Civil Service Commission process has been in place since 1965, with many challenges becoming worse in recent years as the labor market

continues to shrink. He noted that Crest Hill is currently the only non-home rule community in Illinois that still has a Civil Service Commission, and only six other home rule communities still maintain one.

Attorney Stiff explained that the only way to abolish the commission is through the same referendum process that established it. This requires a petition signed by enough electors (registered voters), which then must be filed with the circuit court.

Attorney Stiff calculated that 339 signatures would be needed based on voter turnout in the last election. He outlined the process and timeline:

1. Gather petition signatures from registered Crest Hill voters.
2. File a case in Circuit Court (filing fee approximately $335)
3. Appear before a Judge to request certification of the question for the ballot.
4. Submit certified question to the Will County Clerk by December 15, 2025, to appear on the March 17, 2026, ballot.

Attorney Stiff offered to handle the Court appearance pro bono to avoid using City funds for legal fees. He noted that Council members could individually educate citizens and collect signatures in their wards but should not use City resources to advocate for or against the referendum.

During discussion, Council members considered forming a citizens group to gather signatures, like what was done for the 2012 sales tax referendum. Attorney Stiff suggested each alderperson would need to collect approximately fifty signatures from their ward to meet the requirement.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to begin the proceeding with the referendum process.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Linda Dyke, a resident, asked about improvements to the microphone system in the Council Chambers, noting that sometimes people must hold microphones up to be heard.

City Administrator Blaine Wing responded that he is also working on audio improvements, which would cost around $60,000.00. He explained that the room has acoustic challenges due to its layout, and the current directional microphones require proper positioning to function well. He noted this would be a second phase of improvements after the projector installation.

MAYOR UPDATES:

There were no Mayor updates.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

City Administrator Blaine Wing thanked the Council and staff for their condolences and support following the passing of his father. He expressed appreciation for their understanding during this difficult time, noting the challenges of planning a funeral and burial in another state.

Mayor Soliman asked for a motion to go into executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(11).

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Deserio, to go into an executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).
On roll call, the vote was:
AYES: Ald. Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.
There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:55 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Jefferson to reconvene from the executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).
On roll call, the vote was:
AYES: Ald. Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Dyke.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Ald. Albert, Kubal.
There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened at 10:21 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 10:22 PM.

Approved this____day of________________, 2025.
As presented____________
As amended___________

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CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

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RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR