

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
August 28, 2023

The August 28, 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 Attorney Mike Stiff, Management Consultant Steve Gulden.

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

TOPIC: New City Center Facility Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting

Alderwoman Gazal commented that after she received an email from the mayor, she reached out to him to see if the Council members were going to be involved in any way with the Grand Opening. She commented that since there are ten elected officials and we spent \$20,000,000.00 on this building, she felt this needed to be discussed. She stated that she has some concerns with the event, one being it is so close to the winter fest and the Christmas break, plus we are doing touch a truck, and possible trunk or treat and feels everything has a time and place for it. She also stated that we cancelled the National Night Out because we don't have enough police staff and now, we will be needing them for safety for this event as well. She commented that she was wondering who was going to be invited and feels past officials should be invited and she also asked how we are going to pay for this event. Alderwoman Gazal commented that staff have been overworked and department heads are taking many tasks on throughout the year and then we are going to have the parade and Christmas event. She stated she feels we need to do something simple, possibly a couple hours before a meeting and invite whomever you would like and do appetizers and refreshments.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that the celebration of the building is a big thing, and the Council has been involved in fixing problems of the building but not asked our input on a grand opening and stated that she finds it very distasteful that the council did not have any input.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that a meeting was held, and Alderman Cipiti was not invited to the meeting, and he is on the committee. She stated all members should be treated equally.

Mayor Soliman commented that there was a staff meeting, where six or seven staff members attended, and the idea was discussed, and we chose a date and two hours later he announced to the City Council to save the date and further discussion was coming. Mayor

Soliman then stated that staff met the next week and Management Consultant Steve Gulden joined the group and he feels that Steve Gulden is the most qualified to handle the open house and lead this group since he had already planned and lead the same event for a municipality twice the size of Crest Hill and it was successful. Mayor Soliman stated at that point and time he turned over the lead of the grand opening to Steve Gulden.

Steve Gulden commented that he attended his first staff meeting last week and the mayor asked him to attend, and he feels it is a good idea to have an open house. He stated the mayor asked if he would like to oversee the event and he commented that it would be up to the Council to decide.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked Steve Gulden if at his previous municipality where he had planned this event if he included the Council in the planning. Steve commented that a memo was sent out to the trustees at his previous employer asking if they wanted to be a part of the event. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that she did not understand why the mayor did not bring this up at the meeting the night before the announcement was sent out and she felt it was offensive that he did not say anything about contributing their opinions. Mayor Soliman asked Aldersperson Oberlin what the title was in the announcement he sent out announcing the grand opening. Aldersperson Oberlin stated it said, 'Save the Date'.

Steve Gulden commented that a grand opening is a great idea, but a committee should be created. He commented we have one time to make a great first impression of the beautiful building and it should have pride with the residents and be classy with a budget set. Steve also commented that in Romeoville we did fancy invitations, had one night when legislators spoke and then the following day the residents came through for tours and served finger foods.

Alderswoman Gazal commented that she has no problem with Steve Gulden doing this or the mayor. She commented that she never said let's not do this, her problem was if the Council will be involved in any decisions.

Steve suggested a committee with Council members and staff and make the meetings in the evening to accommodate schedules and whoever wants to join and give their input along with the committee members Alderman Albert and Alderman Cipiti.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that she doesn't disagree with anything Steve Gulden has said and the most encouraging thing that she heard said was that anyone who wants to participate can and she agrees with everything Steve Gulden has said.

Alderman Albert commented that he wanted to clarify something that Alderswoman Gazal and himself had a conversation about last week. He stated that Engineer Wiedeman reached out to him about some timely things regarding holidays that are coming up and some ideas about the banners and a quick meeting was had by City Clerk Vershay-Hall, Commissioner Seeman, Assistant Public Works Director Kline and himself. He commented that the meeting that was had turned into talking about everything under the sun; banners, open house, winter fest, summer fest, and pretty much turned into a brainstorming meeting. Alderman Albert commented that he stated that Alderman Cipiti needed to be a part of this, and we tentatively have another meeting scheduled for this Friday, September 1, 2023. He also commented he was unsure what role, if any, the Events Committee will play in this open house, but it sounds like things have transitioned since that first meeting but either

way it goes, he agrees with everything said that it should be done classy and top notch to make that good first impression. He also stated that we need to define what roles we are having in these events and what type of budget. Alderman Albert commented that this thing was thrown in his lap just like the events committee when Alderperson Oberlin resigned. Alderperson Oberlin stated she did not throw this in Alderman Alberts lap, and she did not appoint him. Alderman Albert stated that Alderperson Oberlin didn't even tell him at that time that she was resigning from the Events Committee.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that she does not understand why anyone on the staff is running around making decisions about these things without consulting the Council. Alderman Albert commented that no decisions were made, it is staff that has these ideas. Alderperson Oberlin stated that the staff should not be calling certain alderpeople and telling them their ideas or holding meetings; they should be suggested to the Council. She also commented that finding out that some engineer is making plans for banners that the Council knows nothing about is very unsettling.

Consultant Gulden commented that we have too many staff members picking up phones and contacting whomever and let's do this should not be happening. He commented that it should go through him, and it should be channeled.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the banners should be under public works not an engineer coming up with banners. Steve stated that she is correct that anything with buildings and grounds is public works and banners is part of maintenance which would be public works.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that the Council cannot be left in the dark and the Council should be involved. She commented that she is very tired of that.

Consultant Gulden commented that the open house should be this year and a committee meeting held in the evening to kick it off and staff takes direction and moves forward. He also commented that a date will need to be made, that there are pros and cons to a Saturday night but to email him the dates that you think are important.

Mayor Soliman asked if anyone would like to serve on the committee. Alderperson Oberlin commented she would like to.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if we could pick a date tonight since the newsletter is going out.

Consultant Gulden commented that he received an email from Engineer Wiedeman going to several other individuals about an event meeting this Friday, September 1, 2023 at 10:00a.m. Discussion about this email followed and who it was sent to. Consultant Gulden stated it came from Engineer Wiedeman and went to City Clerk Vershay-Hall, Public Works Assistant Director Kline, Commissioner Seeman, and Alderman Cipiti and Alderman Albert received a copy. Alderperson Oberlin stated that those people should not be calling meetings.

Treasurer Glen Conklin asked if we are paying staff that are attending the open house who are working and/or attending. Alderperson Oberlin commented that she does not feel we would pay staff for attending. Alderperson Oberlin commented that we should not be deciding that right now. Consultant Gulden commented that a date for the event and a date

for the committee to meet should be made tonight and the rest will be discussed by the committee.

Mayor Soliman asked if anyone has a problem with the date of Saturday, October 21, 2023. There were no objections. He also asked if anyone had a problem with the time of 10:00 to 2:00p.m.

Consultant Gulden recommended to do the open house from 10:00a.m.to 1:00p.m. He also stated we should have a tour but that we should not have a touch-a-truck or trunk-or-treat at the same time. We should be focusing on this building and the grand opening. He commented that we need to hire a caterer and have a trinket of some sort that could say they attended the event.

Aldersperson Oberlin and Alderwoman Gazal agreed with everything that Consultant Gulden had stated and said the residents should be touring the facility and meeting people, elected officials, and staff. Consultant Gulden commented that the residents absolutely need to meet the officials and staff and see how the government works.

Consultant Gulden commented that there will be a meeting and salaried staff will be required to attend. Alderwoman Gazal commented it needs to be during working hours, so overtime is not paid. Consultant Gulden stated that there will be some overtime for public works to clean before and after and handle the garbage.

City Attorney Mike Stiff asked who all would be meeting, and it would need to be posted 48 hours in advance of the date of the meeting. It was discussed that the committee meeting will be held on Friday, September 1st at 6:30p.m. Only salary staff should be here for this meeting. Consultant Gulden stated he believes that the Police Chief needs to be at the meeting as well.

Mayor Soliman commented that Friday, September 1, 2023 at 6:30p.m. will be the committee meeting and Aldersperson Oberlin is the only person who spoke that wanted to be on the committee and whoever else wants to be present can be present. He also stated that the open house will be held on October 21, 2023 from 10:00a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Alderman Albert asked if this meeting will be posted as a work session with a discussion of the open house? Attorney Stiff stated that it should be posted as a committee of the whole. Alderman Albert asked if it would still be considered a work session even if one or two Council members attend? It was stated that if two Council members attend nothing will need to be done but if three or more Council members attend it will be held as a work session. Alderman Albert stated he wanted to make sure that the council is not getting paid for this committee meeting.

Alderman Kubal commented that if this is an event planning committee meeting there are only two aldermen on this committee. Alderwoman Gazal stated so far there are five alderspersons. Alderman Albert stated he cannot make it. Alderwoman Gazal commented that she will be attending. Alderman Jefferson commented that he plans on attending. Alderman Dyke commented if he attends, he will be late. Alderman Kubal commented that he will not be attending and to just let him know when and where.

Attorney Stiff commented that if it is just two alderpersons and staff, you can gather ideas and do not need the other six alderpersons there and those ideas will come back later to the Council. Alderperson Oberlin commented that the ideas do not come back to the Council and that is why we want to participate and want to have our say in this. Alderman Albert asked Alderperson Oberlin, how did the rest of the Council have a say in everything you did for the ten years you were on the committee? Alderperson Oberlin said that was different. Alderman Albert asked Alderperson Oberlin why it was different, and Alderperson Oberlin commented that it was different because it was private money. Alderperson Oberlin commented that the Council should be included since they are expending city funds. Attorney Stiff commented that we should just call it a special meeting of the City Council. Alderwoman Gazal asked if it could be done an hour before a City Council meeting. Consultant Gulden commented that he will not be at the Council meeting on September 5, 2023.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we are having this big event and we do not have an evacuation / emergency plan in place and have not done a drill.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that all that really needs to be decided is the catering.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that why don't we just put the committee meeting on the agenda for the work session on September 11, 2023 and we won't have to call a special meeting. Consultant Gulden commented that that would be a good idea.

TOPIC: Consideration to create a Social Media Specialist Position

Consultant Gulden informed the Council that we have received 27 applications for the Information Technology Manager position and 11 applications for the City Planner position. He commented that in the past they have discussed the probability of a social media/communication/public information type of position and wanted to know if this would be something we would like to pursue.

Consultant Gulden commented that we need to figure out how to promote the city and our great residents and staff within this city. He also commented how we need to be consistent on notifying the residents when there is an emergency and how to get this information out to them. Consultant Gulden stated he talked to the Finance Director Lisa Banovetz to see if the budget could support this salary and the benefits that the position would cost, and Director Banovetz told him the budget can support it.

Consultant Gulden commented that this person could do several things, for instance, create articles, work with non-profits, food drives, work with newspapers, manage our webpage and do surveys, etc. He commented that we need a spokesperson for the city.

Consultant Gulden commented that we should not have department heads worrying about social media content. This should come from a consistent, strategic individual that works here at City Hall. Alderwoman Gazal asked if the communication person can handle events as well. Consultant Gulden stated that that person could handle special events. He also stated that Romeoville has two people that did the communication to the residents. If we look over the past 15 years surrounding communities are all on social media.

Alderman Gazal asked about our cable channel and how it is not updated. Alderman Oberlin commented that our cable channel is very outdated and needs to be kept current.

City Treasurer Glen Conklin commented that the job description for this Social Media Specialist seems too narrow of what the Council is wanting. Consultant Gulden commented that the job description is a sample we can update the job description to include more of what is wanted.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he sees the positives in a position like this, but it should be more of a higher priority to fill upper management positions first and a City Administrator first and then have that person fill these types of positions.

Alderman Gazal stated that she disagrees because she feels it is good to hire these types of positions first, that way when the upper management position is filled, they are not overwhelmed.

Alderman Albert stated he is in full support of this and feels public relations needs to be in the title and this will help the negative views that we have.

Mayor Soliman stated that no action will be taken on this tonight. Consultant Gulden stated he will bring it back at the next work session in two weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Stuart Soifer, a resident, commented that there are three major colleges and universities in the area and maybe we can possibly fill the Social Media Specialist position with an intern.

Mackenzie Reinhart, 1700 block of Raynor, asked if a house is habitable when there is no running water. Mayor Soliman commented that it is not habitable and asked for the address. Mackenzie stated the address is 1907 Kelly Avenue. She also stated that she talked to a Police Officer about a person with a warrant that was listed at a house on Wilcox and the officer was not interested in it. She stated she has a list of addresses with people who have warrants and the Police Officer did not seem interested in doing anything about it. Mackenzie also stated that cars are speeding down the street and there are children getting off the school bus and that she has not seen a Police Officer around the neighborhood patrolling for the speeders. Alderman Oberlin asked Consultant Steve Gulden to get a copy of the list that she has. Mackenzie stated that these residents are stealing other people's water, as well. Consultant Gulden asked which streets were the speeders on? She commented that there is a lot on Kelly going towards Theodore and Raynor, as well. Mayor Soliman asked if the Police Chief had her name and number. She commented he does but he has not reached out to her yet and she has more things to discuss.

Linda Dyke, a resident, commented that the garbage is overflowing at that same address. She commented that a neighbor stopped her and told her about the overflowing garbage and now there is a mattress out there and she questioned what happens when the garbage service comes tomorrow, and the garbage is not picked up since there is no water service being paid. She commented on why US Bank, the owner, is not doing anything about this home. She also asked the city attorney if we had sent a letter to US Bank regarding this address. Attorney Mike Stiff stated he has not. Linda commented that we, as a city, have done nothing about this for a year now, to get rid of this problem. Linda asked what it will

take, should she bring every neighbor from Wilcox, Kelly, Inner Circle, Burry Circle, and Prairie Avenue here. She also commented that this has been going on for over a year and nothing is being done and this is now snowballing, and we have highly paid people in the city doing nothing. Linda asked Mayor Soliman what he was going to do about this. Mayor Soliman stated at the last meeting the Police Chief gave you a very detailed report of what they have been doing and that the Police Chief and Building Department are working on it and they must follow the law in doing so.

Consultant Gulden stated that because Crest Hill is not a home ruled community, we do not have the same process as a home ruled community to evict them. Consultant Gulden also stated that we do not have the right to go knock on the door and see if their water is off, we would have to have a warrant to enter the house. City Attorney Stiff commented that we need to put pressure on the bank since they own the property, and the bank can allow our officers entry to the property.

Alderpersn Oberlin commented that she had a problem in her neighborhood where there was a squatter that had taken over a house and it took nine months to get something done. Consultant Gulden commented that it takes a long time to evict someone and that the law really protects squatters. Mayor Soliman commented that part of the problem is during Covid Will County could not evict anyone, but he stated that the Police Department is working diligently on these properties. Alderman Vershay asked why squatters can not be arrested for breaking and entering? Attorney Stiff commented that you must catch them in the act of breaking in because once they are in and established residency the law looks at it differently.

Linda commented that she thought that Section Eight Housing could not have police calls at the residence or they would be evicted. Consultant Gulden stated that that is correct, and he explained how the former Section Eight Housing, which is now called the Voucher Program, works.

MAYORS UPDATES:

There were no mayor updates.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

Alderpersn Gazal asked why the Route 66 sign was placed behind the handicap sign? Alderman Albert commented that it does look awkward behind the handicap sign. Mayor Soliman stated it is temporary and will eventually be taken to Lucky Brothers when they are built.

Attorney Stiff commented that according to the M.O.U. agreement they were supposed to contact the city on when it would be delivered and certify there was no damage. Alderpersn Oberlin commented that this is another case of people doing things without going through the channels. Alderpersn Gazal commented that she reached out to Assistant Director Blaine Kline to see if he was responsible for putting it there and he was not. Alderman Albert commented that it was agreed by the Council to place it here at the City Center until the main location is available but not to place it behind a handicap sign. Consultant Gulden commented that it would look nice to install a concrete pad and put it at the corner by the City Center. Alderman Cipiti commented that the idea is for people to

take pictures by it, and it needs to be placed somewhere with a nice background to allow that activity without causing congestion or by a handicap sign. Alderman Albert commented that he feels it should stay here and not be moved.

Attorney Stiff commented that we have the right to choose where it goes, but we must have a temporary location until we finalize where we want to place it and we must have a joint ceremony to recognize it for the 100th year anniversary.

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 Oberlin seconded by Alderperson Cipiti, 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 8:20 p.m.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

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

Reconvened 9:01 p.m.

Alderman Cipiti asked Consultant Gulden if he was familiar with the situation with the executive session room not being soundproof. Mayor Soliman commented that the Executive Session Room, Mayor's Office, and Administrators Office have been insulated already and he has noticed a big difference. Alderman Cipiti asked when the work was done. Mayor Soliman stated that Building Commissioner Don Seeman had informed him it was done a couple of weeks ago. Alderman Cipiti commented that he was wondering since we approved the work to be done months ago and have not heard anything and have been holding executive sessions in the Chambers. He commented that we paid for the work to be done and are not going to be using it. Mayor Soliman commented that he feels it would be better to stay at the dais. Alderman Cipiti stated that we paid to be able to use the executive session room. Mayor Soliman asked him if he would like to meet in the executive room instead of the Chambers. Alderman Cipiti stated that the point is we never use that room and every time we ask the residents to leave the building because we can't use the room that the taxpaying dollars helped build. Mayor Soliman stated that we will move executive sessions in the room and informed City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall to set it up for each meeting. Alderman Cipiti stated he feels like he is getting the impression that the mayor is doing this begrudgingly and not because it is the right thing to do. He also commented that we built the room for a reason. Mayor Soliman commented that there are

three people sitting here and if the residents would reasonably leave, we could stay here but if they want to stay, we can go back there. Alderman Albert commented that we should decide this as a group. Alderman Cipiti commented that he does not understand, and he is the only one saying anything about it. He stated we paid to have the room to use it, why are we not using it. Alderman Albert commented that some people are having trouble hearing in the Chambers. Mayor Soliman asked what everyone thinks. Alderwoman Gazal commented that that was the plan from the beginning. Alderman Albert commented that we need to be walking outside to see if residents are still here and alert them that we are back in session. Alderman Albert stated we need to be very clear to the residents that we are back in session. Mayor Soliman asked if anyone would have a problem meeting in the executive room for the executive session. All were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2023

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR