

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
November 28, 2022

The November 28, 2022 City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 1610 Plainfield Road 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 John Vershay, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also present were: Administrator Jim Marino, Director of Public Works Mark Siefert, Police Chief Ed Clark, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz.

Absent were: Assistant Public Works Director Blaine Kline, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Planner Maura Rigoni.

**TOPIC: Civil Service Commission**

Mayor Soliman presented the Civil Service Commission per the memo dated November 28, 2022. Administrator Marino explained that at a previous meeting several members had questions regarding the role of the Civil Service. John Kelly, the City Labor Attorney was in attendance to address the Council. The Civil Service Commission was put in place by a referendum voted on by the residents of the City. The Civil Service oversees the hiring, promotions, and terminations of City staff. It was in place for the merit based employment. Several communities have this in place to avoid patronage or political hiring of individuals that were not qualified. Mr. Kelly explained that the merit system of hiring takes on different forms such as Police and Fire Boards, Civil Service, and other various forms. All of these boards are in place to test and hire those who are qualified and fill positions when City needs staff. Members of the Civil Service are appointed by the Mayor with the Councils approval. The State Statute does exempt certain persons from the hiring process such as elected officials, the municipal manager, one deputy and one private secretary for each elected municipal official. You cannot change the Civil Service without home rule authority. Mr. Kelly said that he was asked to research how many communities have a Civil Service. He went over a list of communities that he found to have a Civil Service. The State of Illinois has its own Civil Service Commission separate from the other municipalities. Mr. Kelly has worked with the Civil Service Committee when Mr. McGuire was no longer the Civil Service Attorney. The act does require the appointment of a chief examiner. This person would facilitate the examinations and must be residents of the municipality. Typically City personnel would take care of the secretarial and clerical portion of the Commission. Historically when unions began to represent public employees, discipline was taken over by arbitration with the union. Alderman Jefferson asked in the oversight of the Commission, does each community need an oversight commissioner in place. Mr. Kelly explained that the way its structured, its anticipated that there's really no oversight of the Commission. The Commissioners are appointed for a specific term by the Mayor. The way of regulating the work of the Commission is appointing the Commissioners that you want to see do the job. This is to try to eliminate some one attempting to control or influence the Commission for hiring.

Alderman Vershay asked who does the interviewing. The Commission typically does it themselves, but it can be contracted out to someone else with the approval of the commission. For example the Police Department can have the testing organization help with the interviews. Alderman Vershay asked if anyone else can do the interview. They could not unless the Civil Service requested a department head or staff member to be present. Does the Civil Service have to be in attendance during the interview process. They would have to be unless they contracted it out to someone else. Good practice would be to have some one from Civil Service in attendance during the interview process. Director Siefert explained that the Civil Service designated Lindsay Cabay as chief examiner to do the interviews. If it is for Public Works, then its Ms. Cabay, Director Siefert, and Assistant Director Kline. The Civil Service designated a different representative from the various departments to take part in the interview process. Mr. Kelly explained this is within the authority of the Civil Service to do so. The results of the interviews are then provided to the Civil Service. Alderman Vershay asked if some of the rules have changed over the years. Mr. Kelley explained that some of the rules were amended about 4-5 years ago per the request of the Commission. Also, the Commission is not as familiar with the day to day job duties. Alderman Cipiti asked if the Commission gives authorization to the staff to conduct interviews, then what is the purpose of Civil Service. Mr. Kelley explained that they are still the ones that oversee the hiring process and establish the hiring list. Alderman Vershay said that in the past, if a department head wanted to terminate an employee, they had to go through a Civil Service hearing. They were the ones that made the decision as to whether the employee would be terminated or continue employment. Mr. Kelly explained that with the Union being in place, arbitration is preferred. Alderman Vershay questioned the interview process. Mr. Kelly said that there are many factors you have to look at to try to make sure that someone is not biased. You have to trust that by having the Commissioner there, it would eliminate some of the factors. Mr. Kelly informed the Council that he is on the hiring board in another community. Years ago, they used to do all of the interviews and hiring. Now, they contract this out. Discussion followed. Alderman Jefferson asked if the test is viewed as a guide in the hiring process. Mr. Kelly explained that the rules mandate that a written test be administered, and the outcome of the exam be a part of the score for hiring of the employee. You have to pass the test in order to continue with the process. Alderwoman Gazal asked why then do we have an HR Department. They would cover the daily functions of the employees. Mr. Kelly went over the functions of the department. Alderperson Oberlin asked what would happen if we don't follow the hiring list. Mr. Kelly said it would not be appropriate. Alderperson Oberlin asked how can we verify that the appropriate steps are being taken. Mr. Kelly said that the Commission should be holding meetings with minutes where these actions are discussed and taken. The lists are made public. The Mayor explained that the hiring lists are posted in the foyer. Mayor Soliman said that the Civil Service was created by referendum that took place in the 1960's. The only way the Commission can be abolished is by another referendum voted on by the residents. This was true. Mayor Soliman asked if the Council wanted to create a Police board could they establish one. They could. Mr. Kelly explained how the Fire and Police Commission is similar to the Civil Service Commission. Attorney Stiff explained that with a Fire and Police Commission you normally have retired officers on the board for the expertise. Alderman Jefferson said that you have to depend on the integrity of the members of the board to do the right thing. This is basically true of any type of board. Alderwoman Gazal asked how the referendum would take place. Mr. Kelly explained the steps that would need to be taken. You would need to get 1000 signatures to get a referendum on the ballot. Alderwoman Gazal asked if the Commissioners are compensated for the meetings they attend. The Chairman get \$50.00 per meeting and the other members get \$40.00 per

meeting. The Commission meets 6 times per year and can also call for special meetings. Alderman Albert asked if he has any knowledge of a municipality that removed Civil Service. Mr. Kelley commented that he has not heard of any that have tried to remove the Commission. If you are a home rule Community, you can modify the duties, but it does not dismiss Civil Service. Mr. Soifer asked what happens if we don't have a Civil Service. We would have to still have a Police and Fire Board, but other employees would be hired through a different process.

**TOPIC: Building Commissioner Appointment**

Mayor Soliman presented the Building Commissioner Appointment per the memo dated November 28, 2022. Mayor Soliman informed the Council that Don Seeman is present. He is the individual that the Mayor feels meets the qualifications for the Building Commissioner position. The Mayor introduced Mr. Seeman. He informed the Council that he was born and raised in Joliet. He started doing construction in 1987 and has worked in schools, hospitals, and municipalities. Alderperson Oberlin asked what type of municipal projects has he been involved in. Mr. Seeman explained as the superintendent of the building he was there from start of construction to finish. He would do the walk throughs with the architects and was part of the inspection process. He does not have the experience of working for a municipality but has the background in the inspection process. Alderwoman Gazal stated that you have done inspections with commercial. What type of inspections was he responsible for. Mr. Seeman commented that he was part of the total process, and he would oversee the electricians, plumbers, etc. Alderwoman Gazal asked if he would be able to do home inspections. Mr. Seeman commented that he could, but he has never done a home inspection, that he is registered with the ICC and has gone over our zoning books and regulations. Alderwoman Gazal said that you are not walking through a project with an architect. Can you go and do a home inspection if necessary. Alderwoman Gazal is concerned that he does not have the background in inspecting residential properties. Administrator Marino commented that he would not be doing plumbing and electric inspections, his job would entail reviewing the plans, making sure that everything is done for the permit, and going on site to look everything over with the exception of plumbing and electrical. He will also review the plans and make sure they are up to code. Large construction projects plans would also be forwarded to an engineering firm for review. Alderman Dyke asked if he was knowledgeable with underground construction such as footings, etc. Mr. Seeman commented that yes he is familiar with it and went over the projects he has worked on. Alderman Kubal commended Mr. Seeman on his references. The Mayor then told Mr. Seeman he was welcome to leave the work session. Mayor Soliman opened the meeting up for Council discussion. Alderman Jefferson said that we have 3 candidates for this position. Are any others attending tonight's work session. Administrator Marino explained that 1 candidate withdrew, and we were unable to contact the other for a 2<sup>nd</sup> interview. Alderperson Oberlin was concerned over the lack of municipal experience the candidate had. She asked Director Siefert who is a reference if he had anything to add. Director Siefert explained commented that he has seen his demeanor personally but has not seen his professional side. Alderwoman Gazal questioned how many inspectors will we have. We are hoping to have a Building Commissioner, a Building Inspector, and a part-time inspector who we currently have in house. Administrator Marino explained that Mr. Seeman would be a better fit for the commissioner and another candidate that we already interviewed would make a better inspector. Discussion followed on Mr. Seeman's qualifications. Alderwoman Gazal asked if we would be paying for the training with the ICC that he would need. We would. Alderperson Oberlin asked if Mr. Seeman owned his own business. He did not. Alderman Jefferson asked what the salary range would be. Starting pay would be between \$73,000.00 to \$90,000. Administrator Marino

thought that a starting pay of \$85,000.00 was agreeable. Alderwoman Gazal felt that if we are going to pay for the certification classes, we should designate a period of time he must be employed. If not, then it would have to be paid back. Discussion followed on a time frame. Administrator Marino felt that it should be a year from when he gets his certification.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on the Building Commissioner Appointment. Aldermen Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Jefferson, Dyke, were in agreement for the hiring of Mr. Seeman with several members requesting the clause be in place that he remain employed for a minimum of one year after he gets certified, or he will have to reimburse the City the full amount of the certification cost. Alderwoman Gazal, and Alderperson Oberlin were undecided.

#### **TOPIC: Park District Intergovernmental Agreement & Office Space Lease**

Mayor Soliman presented the park District Intergovernmental Agreement & Office Space Lease per the memo dated November 28, 2022. Administrator Marino had a conversation with Bill Riordan from the Lockport Park District. There are three changes to the terms of the agreement that they would like made. The Park District will install, maintain, and replace the playground equipment. The \$350,000.00 contribution by the Park District to the City will be eliminated since they City will no longer be responsible for the playground. Strengthen the language requiring the City to provide Police Officers at park District events held at the City Center Park to make it clear that this applies only to those events held at the City Center Park. Administrator Marino said if these terms are agreeable to the Council then we can forward this to the Park District for their approval. Alderperson Oberlin questioned the office space We have provided the Park District with an office free of charge for several years. She doesn't want to hear in the future how we aren't willing to negotiate or work with them. Alderman Vershay asked what the duration of the contract would be. The intergovernmental agreement we proposed would be for 20 years. Attorney Stiff explained in regard to the \$350,000.00, this was not only for the playground equipment, but to also offset the cost of the bandshell. Alderman Cipiti asked if the Park District constructs the playground and maintains it, does the City have any say so as to what can go in there. Attorney Stiff thought that there was already a proposed design concept. Administrator Marino said that there was a design for the park but did not know if there was a separate one for the playground. Alderman Albert thought this was part of the entire plan that we were originally shown. He doesn't feel that we are going to get a playground and a monetary donation. Playground equipment can be pricey, and we are looking for a decent size one for this acreage of land. He questioned the repair and replacement of the equipment. Administrator Marino explained that we can add verbiage in regard to the replacement of equipment and to make sure it is done in a timely manner. Alderman Cipiti feels like we should have some type of input into the playground to ensure that it meshes with the rest of the plan. Alderperson Oberlin agreed that she would also like to make sure that any repairs are done as quickly as possible. Alderman Cipiti has a concern with the language regarding the Police as far as events. He would like to make sure that the Park District bears the cost of Police presence during any of their events. Attorney Stiff went over the verbiage regarding inspections, maintenance, and replacement of equipment in the playground. Treasurer Conklin said that it shows the City would do the replacement. Attorney Stiff explained that this would need to be corrected. The Park District would also contribute \$5,000.00 annually for the City Center Park. Alderwoman Gazal asked if the Park District has their own Police. Chief Clark explained that the Park District has their own Police Department. They have Officers who are sworn in and carry weapons. At various times there are part-time personnel from other agencies who are part of their force.

Alderwoman Gazal said that when she contacts the Park District in regard to repairs needed in the parks, they are usually pretty quick to respond. Alderman Albert agreed. Attorney Stiff explained that per the agreement, the City is responsible for any design work if necessary for phase 1 of the project. This is defined as the walking path, playground, grading and seeding. This can be modified to indicate that the City gets the final approval of the design. Alderperson Oberlin is concerned with the language in section 2.13 addressing the Police and the cost. Alderwoman Gazal asked if we are going to form a committee made up of Officials and residents for input. Attorney Stiff discussed 2.4 of the agreement which addresses one event hosted by the Park District. They would be responsible for all of the costs for the event. This would be in the summer months following completion of Phase One. Attorney Stiff explained that section 2.13 refers to Police presence paid for by the City in section 2.4. Section 2.4 states "a concert". Alderman Cipiti asked that this be amended so there is no confusion in the future. Discussion followed on the verbiage. Attorney Stiff explained that the Park District requested 2.13 be a part of the agreement. We do not have a specific date for the first event, as we don't know when this might take place. Alderperson Oberlin would like the verbiage to be very specific that we will provide and pay for Police presence at one annual event only. Alderwoman Gazal questioned 2.5. They are asking that all liquor and food license fees be waived for the one annual event only. Any revenue derived from this one event will be theirs. Attorney Stiff explained that we can combine 2.5 and 2.13 into 2.4. He explained that it was the Park Districts legal counsel that split these items up in the agreement. Alderman Albert questioned the annual \$5,000.00 fee. Administrator Marino said that since they are going to maintain the park, this wouldn't be necessary. Attorney Stiff explained that this wasn't for the playground, it was for the maintenance on the park itself. Administrator Marino was with the understanding that the City was going to hire a private company to maintain the grass on the grounds. The \$5,000.00 would go towards this. No official decision has been made on this at this time. Treasurer Conklin did not believe that we had gotten any quotes on this. Alderman Jefferson felt that the proposed bandshell is going to be a draw for this property as far as events. Alderwoman Gazal asked why we are discussing the park now, when it is proposed for the future. Alderman Albert felt that we could at least get the playground built. Attorney Stiff said that we still have to have funding for the design. Alderman Albert suggested having them build the playground and then finish the park around it. Discussion followed on what needs to be accomplished prior to the playground being constructed. Alderman Albert asked if we could view the engineering plans for the park. Discussion followed on the original concept drawings. Administrator Marino asked if we want to have one agreement for the playground and a separate one for the remainder of the property. Administrator Marino asked if we want to put a date on the playground. Alderman Albert felt that we should talk to the Park District and ask them what they need from us to get the playground built.

Attorney Stiff asked if we need to have a separate conversation on the proposed Park District office. Alderman Albert said that it is a convenience for City residents to be able to register for the activities there rather than going all the way to Lockport. Alderman Kubal said that a large number of residents utilize the Crest Hill office. Alderwoman Gazal thought that we already had an office space for them at the City Center. Attorney Stiff said that the question was, do we want to have a written lease agreement with them. Also, do we want to charge them a fee. Usually it is \$1.00 per year. Mayor Soliman said that they are providing their own computer, internet, phone service and office equipment. They have also agreed to pay for blinds in the new office and contribute towards the signage for the office. Attorney Stiff said that this can all be spelled out in the agreement. Treasurer Conklin asked if we could have a stipulation designating the number of hours someone

needs to be in the office. Discussion followed on staffing and a termination clause. Alderwoman Gazal would like to see the office be kept professional. Administrator Marino said that currently they have their own entrance, but at the new building, they will be sharing the main lobby.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote Park District Intergovernmental Agreement & Office Space Lease. All members present were in agreement for a \$1.00 lease agreement per year. Attorney Stiff recommended having the office lease separate from the other items that were discussed in the agreement that was before the Council. Alderman Vershay would like to see the concept plan so that we have a visual to look at during the discussion.

**TOPIC: TIF District Interested Parties Registry**

Mayor Soliman presented the TIF District Interested Parties Registry per the memo dated November 28, 2022. Administrator Marino explained that the registry needs to be approved before the TIF agreement can be approved. If someone would like information as we work towards the TIF District, they can add their name to the registry and the information will be sent to them. This will need be done by resolution. Alderman Cipiti questioned the interest of parties in the property covered by the TIF. What if you work for a business that is within the district. This would only affect someone who owns property or a business that would benefit from the TIF. Not an employee of the business.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on the TIF District Interested Parties Registry. All members present were in agreement.

**TOPIC: Graffiti Removal on Private Property**

Mayor Soliman presented the Graffiti Removal on Private Property per the memo dated November 28, 2022. Police Department did a review of graffiti complaints. Chief Clark explained that as of June 2021 there were 7 complaints. Were any of these instances gang graffiti. There was 1 gang defacing, and the person was apprehended and charged for the damage. The Chief explained that a lot of times there is graffiti that is removed before it can be reported. We have had a lot more graffiti in the past versus what we recently experienced. Attorney Stiff asked if we have had any problems getting the property owner to remove the graffiti. Chief Clark said that he has not gotten a report back from the Building Department. Alderman Vershay felt that we should assist the residents in the removal of the graffiti. Alderwoman Gazal said that her concern is if there is damage done during the removal and the property owner comes back to the City for restitution. Alderman Albert liked the idea of assisting the property owner but is concerned about the liability. Alderwoman Gazal suggested providing the owner with the name of a company that can remove the graffiti. Administrator Marino said that we can do this and perhaps the company would give a senior citizen or someone that can't afford the full fee a break. Alderperson Oberlin suggested that since the building department sends out the letter to remove the graffiti we add the company name that can help assist in removal of the graffiti. Alderman Vershay said that quicker we get the graffiti down the better. Alderman Jefferson asked if we could provide the owner with some type of waiver. We could, but they could still file a lawsuit if there is damage to the property. This would incur further court costs and attorney fees to the City. Chief Clark sited in the past we used to open car doors for citizens if they locked their keys in them. Now we only do it if a child is in the car or if there is a life/safety issue. We have them sign a waiver, but we could still be sued.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on the City not providing assistance to the homeowner on the removal of graffiti. Alderman Dyke felt we should pay 50% of the cost

of removal. They would pay the full bill, then we would reimburse them. Alderwoman Gazal voted yes. Alderperson Oberlin voted yes. Alderman Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Jefferson voted yes.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**MAYORS UPDATES:**

There were no mayor updates

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

There were no committee/liaison updates.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

Administrator Marino informed the Council that we have been conducting interviews this week for the Economic Development Director. The landscaping in the Memorial Garden is nearly complete. Alderwoman Gazal questioned the leveling of the monument stones. This will still be done this year. Alderman Cipiti asked for an update on the hiring for Economic Development. There are 5 interviews that have been scheduled for this week, with the second round taking place next week. Various Council members would like to meet the final candidates before the hiring takes place.

Alderman Vershay questioned three hydrants that were open and running for several hours on Renwick Road. Director Siefert explained that valve at Renwick and Rankin blew. In order to reduce the pressure to do the repairs we had to open the hydrants. Alderman Vershay asked how much many did we lose. Director Siefert thought 20 to 30 thousand gallons. When we switch to Lake water, we will have to shut the main down completely. Alderman Cipiti questioned the painting of the hydrants. Director Siefert explained that this is an ongoing project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022

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

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

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CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

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RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR