

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
January 11, 2024

The January 11, 2024 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, Alderman John Vershay, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also, present were: City Attorney Mike Stiff, Ryan Cotton (GovHr)

Absent were: Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Darrell Jefferson Public Works Director Blaine Kline, Police Chief Ed Clark, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz, Interim City Planner Maura Rigoni, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, Interim Economic Development Director Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Jefferson and Alderman Dyke from the meeting.

**TOPIC: GovHR Proposal to Conduct Recruitment**

Mayor Soliman introduced Ryan Cotton from GovHR who gave a brief slide presentation regarding the City Administrator search and recruitment process.

Ryan commented that he was the City Manager at the City of Holland before retiring after thirty-five years and has been with GovHR for the last seven years on executive search and activities.

He explained that they have merged with MGT Consulting, their mission is to be a leader in the industry and have social impact, they are national, and a woman owned firm. They are a national firm and have 1400 recruitments in forty-four states.

There are six steps, and each community is different. It will take approximately 90 days and the person chosen to hire will usually take a month's notice.

*(Parts of this presentation at the podium are inaudible.)*

- 1) Organization & Position Assessment
- 2) Develop Position Brochure & Job Announcement
- 3) Candidate Outreach & Recruitment
- 4) Complete Coordination & Initial Screening
- 5) Prepare and Present Report & Selection for Interview
- 6) Interview & Selection with Offer & Negotiation

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that on page fourteen it stated the City of Crest Hill is an administrative form of government and that is not correct the city is a Mayor and Council form of government and would like that corrected.

Ryan Cotton asked who the form of contact would be at the City of Crest Hill. Alderwoman Gazal asked who it usually is. Ryan commented that Mayor/Council municipalities is usually the mayor as the point of contact. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that if it is HR then we would all be notified. It was decided that HR would be the point of contact.

Ryan stated that if they started next week, they could have someone hired by May 1, 2024. Mayor Soliman commented that the sooner the better. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that she does not want to rush through the process but wants to make sure we have the right person.

Ryan asked what the Council would like to see the most out of the candidates. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that the candidate should be a strong, sharing, transparent, independent thinker that will do right for the city and not just for an individual or individuals.

Alderman Gazal commented that the person should have honesty, leadership, loyalty, vision for short- and long-term goals, a mentor to the staff, and able to conduct a meeting.

Alderman Albert commented that the person should have collaboration and this person should be able to work with everyone from staff to elected officials and be a real team player and listen and move the city forward, enthusiastic.

Ryan asked if there are many vacancies in other departments. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that there are vacancies in other departments.

Mayor Soliman commented that the person should be goal oriented and have a passion for the position, a good listener, good written and verbal skills and have a calm demeanor.

Ryan asked if we had a manager in the past who had all of this. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that we did, the first one a long time ago who was here about nine years.

Ryan asked if they rely on the administrator to help with these meetings. Alderwoman Gazal commented that in the past that had no comment or reactions towards questions that were asked.

Ryan asked how the staff morale is currently. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it has been bad for a while. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that they are not here on a day-to-day basis to see the day-to-day and some are here and still do not see it, but you do hear things and get a sense of things. She also commented that we need to start fostering a positive culture since there is negative culture. She stated that people need to be responsible not only for their job but for their actions as well.

Ryan asked if any Council member not speaking agrees with the other thoughts. Alderman Cipiti commented that he agrees with all the strengths that were mentioned.

Ryan asked what type of goals over the next five years do they see. Aldersperson Oberlin commented that economic development is a big one and we are landlocked, and we need

to get moving forward with what we have. Treasurer Glen Conklin commented that the vacancies need to be filled and build the team and keep the teams together. Ryan commented that retention is huge. Treasurer Conklin commented that for the right ones. Ryan commented that he is not hearing that there are any lawsuits or union issues. Alderwoman Gazal commented that there are things that they cannot discuss in open meetings. Ryan stated that he would reach out to Attorney Stiff with this question since candidates need to know what they are getting involved in.

Alderman Albert commented that there is a huge trust issues, and certain people do not trust other people, and this is causing the bad morale issues and this needs to be fixed.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the bottom line is we need someone who is very strong because the city is very broken in all aspects. There are good staff doing multiple positions and our goal is to keep the good staff. She commented that we have staff doing jobs that they were not hired to do, and they are managing them and are dedicated employees and working hard.

Alderman Oberlin commented that Alderman Alberts comment about the lack of trust is huge and will be a hard fence to mend. The person needs to be able to walk the line and needs to be able to be trusted.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that some department heads have been doing things for so long and do not want to do anything new and want to do things their own way. She also commented that there is a lot of backstabbing, gossip, manipulation, and childish games.

Attorney Mike Stiff commented that the perfect candidate is going to be someone to build consensus when there is a disagreement since this is a very very engaged and active City Council; they all have opinions and at the end of the day the Council wants to know they have been heard. The candidates need to know that they will need to collaborate very closely with the Council even behind the scenes.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that they have never been involved as extreme as they are now. She also commented that they get dragged into situations by the staff and things are being held from the Council which now has made them get more involved. She also commented that they are part-time elected officials, and they are policy makers not managers.

Alderman Cipiti commented that updates were given and bi-weekly reports which were words in an email and not all the relevant information was included in these reports; there was no transparency.

Ryan commented that he is hearing that the Council does not want to micromanage the managers and does not want to hear about the problems from staff. There are some elected bodies that have gotten into a bad habit of being a part of the details and what is going on with the administrative low.

Alderman Oberlin commented that the person should not be making decisions that should not be made or they need to include the Council. She commented that you cannot deal with a situation when the numbers are kept from them. She also commented that they

have a fiduciary duty to the residents, that they cannot make the proper decisions if they are not given the information.

Ryan asked if there is sufficient time in a meeting. He commented that the meetings that he has watched are around an hour and that there are some entities that have discussions for almost four hours. It was explained to Ryan that most of the discussion is done at a work session. Attorney Stiff commented that most is discussed at the work sessions and then the discussed topics go the next meeting to be voted on.

Alderman Vershay commented that the person needs to be able to work with groups in different ways. He commented that some people think their way is the right way and they should be able to work together to see what way is better.

Alderman Gazal commented that we had a past administrator come in and told all department heads and staff were told not to talk or answer calls from the Council, and all discussion would go through the administrator which this leads to a lack of trust.

Alderman Oberlin commented that she has a resident that calls her about the well house gate being unlocked. She commented that in the past she would call the Public Works Director and he would take care of it and should not have to go to administrator about this.

Ryan suggested that they change the management experience to 4-6 years instead of 7-10 years.

Attorney Stiff commented that on the second bullet point a change needs to be made about the city opening a 40,000 square foot building, to say they just recently opened a 40,000 square foot building. He also commented that the pictures on the brochure need to be updated, and there are a few words that are misspelled.

Ryan asked if he should visit with department heads or residents and if they would want a meet and greet. Alderman Gazal commented that a few department heads are important, and this person would be collaborating directly with the administrator. Mayor Soliman commented that it would be the Police Chief, Public Works Director, Building Commissioner. Alderman Oberlin commented and the Finance Director. Ryan commented that he would meet with all department heads.

Ryan asked if the press covers Crest Hill. Treasurer Conklin commented that we do not have a lot of active reporters and the mayor commented that Joliet gets the most publicity. Ryan also asked for a second person to be a contact and would like to carbon copy the mayor.

It was asked if there is a residency requirement and was told there is not, but some officials feel that they should live in Crest Hill. Alderman Albert commented that he feels it would be nice for them to at least be local and close.

Ryan asked if we have any internal candidates. Alderman Oberlin responded by stating there are no internal candidates.

Alderman Albert commented that we mentioned many negative things, but we also have many positive things, such as the new City Center, the Public Works building, and the water allocation.

Discussion on Lidice was talked about on how it came about in Crest Hill. Alderperson Oberlin explained how we have a ceremony every year to commemorate that tragedy.

Mayor Soliman asked about the salary for this position. Ryan commented that some communities have a higher salary than Crest Hill and the starting number should be around 170,000-210,000.

Alderman Albert commented that to obtain a good candidate we should be in close pay.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we are a smaller community than what was given.

Ryan commented that he will go back and get a closer comparison. Mayor Soliman commented that we did a salary study and should be around \$154,000 to \$204,000. Alderwoman Gazal commented that she would go about \$170,000 to \$200,000 but no more than that and a few Council members commented that they should keep it where it is at \$170,000 - \$210,000. Ryan commented that you should have a larger pay range, and that would help get a larger group of candidates.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**MAYORS UPDATES:**

There were no mayor updates.

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

No committee updates tonight.

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Cipiti, to go into an executive session on Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson, Dyke

There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:19 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Gazal to reconvene from the executive session on Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Jefferson, Dyke

There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 8:42 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024

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

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

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

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

DRAFT