

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
July 29, 2024

The July 29, 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 Scott Dyke, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

The following Council members were Absent: Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin

Also Present were: Interim Administrator Tony Graff, Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Finance Director Carron Johnson, Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz, Interim Community Developer Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Police Chief Ed Clark, Interim Employee Relations Dave Strahl, Interim Planner Maura Rigoni.

**TOPIC: City Center – Basement Foundation Water Leak Update with Damage and Repair Options**

Building Commissioner Don Seeman commented that he received a proposal with Concrete by Wagoner for patching. They do not do waterproofing, and they recommended a waterproofing company called Wet to Dry located in New Lenox. They will come out to City Hall Thursday, August 1, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. They will hand dig and inject the water sealer and we will have a warranty/guarantee.

Alderwoman Gazal would like the electrician to come to check all the electrical wires and make sure we are good since this has been having water over this for a while.

Alderman Cipiti wants to hold the company that did this responsible and make them pay to correct it and not the taxpayers.

Alderwoman Gazal would like the insulation checked for mold since it had gotten wet at some point, as well.

A few Council members would like another proposal.

Pictures were presented to explain what has happened and showed the void in the concrete where the problem is.

Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz commented that they have been looking at all the roof drains and after reviewing the plans they are trying to verify what pipes go into which catch basins and try to verify if there is an issue in the drains or they are just full.

**TOPIC: Esscoe the Engineered Systems Company for Life Safety System Testing, Inspection and Documentation for City Center Facility including the Police Department**

Building Commissioner Don Seeman stated that Esscoe is the company that does the monitoring of all our alarm systems, sprinkler systems, and the dry systems within the IT offices.

We need to have this testing yearly and right now we are not in compliance since we have no agreement in place and no one to inspect our systems. Once we have an agreement in place they will inspect everything.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he would like to see proposals from other companies since this is a lot of money. Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that Esscoe is already in our system and this company is going to add a seven-year warranty as part of this service agreement with a locked-in price.

Attorney Stiff would like to request that we add a termination clause that we can terminate with thirty days' notice at the end of any one-year term.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the Esscoe Service Agreement for the cost of \$9,378.00.

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

NAYES: Ald. Cipiti.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

This will be on the August 5, 2024, agenda.

**TOPIC: Ordinance Naming Certain Real Property in the City of Crest Hill Surplus**

Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz commented that he would like to surplus the 2022 Ford Explorer with the agreement that if we do not get the amount, then we do not have to sell it. He also commented that he would like to get some cash for this vehicle so we can put the money into the vehicle replacement program to possibly buy something more suitable down the road, possibly purchase a pickup truck for their needs.

It was asked if this is the luxury vehicle that the former Public Works Director ordered and drove, and it was stated that it was that vehicle.

Alderman Dyke asked what the mileage on the vehicle is and it was stated that there is 3300 miles on it. Interim Director Eulitz commented that he would like to see \$44,000 out of it and if we do not then we could keep the vehicle.

Alderman Dyke would like to keep the vehicle at City Hall since we will have full time permanent employees who could utilize the vehicle.

It was asked to get the true mileage on both vehicles and come back to the Council with the information.

**TOPIC: Request to add Todd's Towing & Recovery to City's Towing List**

Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk commented that in the past we had four towing companies on the tow list. Since then, the tow company list is now down to two companies. He then commented that two companies are not enough for the amount of towing needed.

Deputy Chief Dobczyk stated that he would like to add Todd's Towing, located on Lincoln Highway in Plainfield, Illinois. They have been using them for the last couple of years.

It was stated that a slight adjustment will need to be made since they are out of district and amend the language to use an out of district company since the language reads it must be in city limits.

Alderman Albert asked if an officer calls for a tow and a response is not received do they move on to the next company, and Todd's Towing would be third on the list. Deputy Chief Dobczyk commented that it is a rotating list, so they are all utilized in rotation. It was stated that there is no guarantee that there is a certain number of tows per company.

Alderman Albert asked if a fourth towing company would need added to help. Deputy Chief Dobczyk stated that adding a third towing company will be a substantial improvement.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to add Todd's Towing to the Police tow list.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

This will be on the agenda August 5, 2024.

**TOPIC: Approval Request of Special Event Police Services Agreement**

Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk commented that they are looking to hire some officers for the Fest Italiana which is being held August 9-11, 2024.

It was stated that they are looking to have one officer on the 9<sup>th</sup>, three officers on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and one officer on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the request of the special event officers for Fest Italiana.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Albert, Cipiti.

ABSENT; Ald. Methvin.

**TOPIC: Plan Commission Rezoning Recommendation for 1817 N. Broadway Street**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that at the Plan Commission Meeting on July 11, 2024, a Public Hearing was conducted for the rezoning of the property located at 1817 North Broadway Street. The owner would like to rezone

the property from R-1 Single Family Residence to R-2 Two Family Residence. At some point in the past, the property was illegally converted into a two-family residence and the city has no records of any permits for this conversion.

This request was heard in the past in 1998, that was brought forward to the city and was denied by the City Council due to the City Comprehensive Plan for that corridor. The Comprehensive Plan was that the long-term desire of the city's was to have these properties along the east and west side of Broadway utilized commercially. After the Public Hearing, the Plan Commission unanimously denied the rezoning request.

It was asked if the property is habitable, and it was stated that there is one family currently living there.

According to Zoning Ordinance Section 5.5 Sale of a Non-Conforming Use, when a property is sold, non-conforming use must be brought into conformance with applicable city zoning requirements.

Attorney Daniel Stefanczuk, the attorney for the property owner, approached the podium and stated that the property was purchased as a single-family home that was in violation of a two-unit rental. He stated that after ten years of having an economic plan, nothing has happened and all around the property is vacant and maybe the city can have this area rezoned residential to increase the property taxes and the city can benefit from this.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to agree with the Plan Commission for a DENIAL rezoning 1817 North Broadway Street.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

This will be on the agenda August 5, 2024.

**TOPIC: Resolution Approving Amendment #1 to the September 21, 2022, Agreement for Design and Bidding Related Services for Well 14 by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County and Strand Associates, Inc.**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that the staff is looking for the Council to approve the contract with Strand Associates, Inc. The amendment is being requested to cover out of scope work not originally included in the original agreement. These items are as follows:

- Update and revise the final plans from a designed raw water supply line to a finished water supply.
- Prepare and submit a revised application for construction permit to IEPA for approval.
- Provided coordinated the design engineers working for the GPWC on potential conflicts.
- Additional effort to coordinate with ComEd regarding potential utility conflicts.

This work was not included in the 2025 budget and the cost is \$12,000.00.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote requesting a resolution approving an amendment No. 1 to the September 21, 2022, agreements for Well 14 with Strand Associates Inc. in the amount of \$12,000.00.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

This will be on the agenda August 5, 2024.

**TOPIC: A Motion to Authorize City Staff to Coordinate the City's Completion of the Four School District Conditions Required to Complete the Dedication of N. Center Street Right-of-Way and a Five-Foot Wide Public Utility Easement Along the West Edge of N. Center Street Adjacent to the School District Property**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that Chaney-Monge School has submitted plans for a new 4,765 square foot building addition. This addition is being proposed along the east side of the school adjacent to N. Center Street. It was found that the school property extends to the center line of North Center Street and the school is willing to voluntarily dedicate the portion of North Center Street currently owned by the school district from the existing centerline of N. Center Street to the edge of the west curblane of N. Center Street to the city at no charge.

This is contingent on the city satisfying the following conditions:

- Coordinate and pay \$2,500.00 for the preparation of the Plat of Dedication.
- Coordinate and pay to update the boundary survey and legal description of the school's property which is approximately \$100.00.
- Coordinate and pay for the zoning variation public hearing process that would culminate in the City's approval of the required building setback variations necessary, which is approximately \$500.00.
- Update the City Zoning Map to reflect the dedication of a portion of the school property as public right-of-way.

This would be a total cost of approximately \$3,500.00.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

**TOPIC: Weber Rd & McGilvery Welcome Sign – South Face Options**

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman commented that he had reached out to the contractor after the meeting when Alderwoman Gazal had stated that the back of the sign is very plain. It was mentioned that we have three options, which are:

1. Carve out the lettering for the back and paint it and add another light, this would match what is on the front. This is the most expensive option at a cost of \$5,460.00.

2. Cut dimensional lettering in PVS, mount it on the back side of the sign and paint it and light it for a cost of \$3,350.00.
3. Cut a rectangular panel and stud mount it to the back of the sign with vinyl letters on the panel and add one light for a cost of \$2,825.00.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he feels wording on the backside would be silly and we have put enough money into these signs, and we have some that are so close together by six corners.

Alderman Albert asked if we could do some landscaping to hide the back, possibly tall landscaping.

**TOPIC: 1949 Willow Court Permit Fee and Excavation Bond Waiver**

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that the Lockport Township Park District has applied for permit to revitalize the Crest Hill Memorial Park at 1949 Willow Ct. The project involves over a million-dollar expenditure, and they are asking the city to waive the permit fees and the requirement for the excavation bond. The permit fee is over \$11,000.00 and the excavation bond fee is \$5,000.00. There were no outside consulting costs.

It was said that the city did a waiver for Will County permit fees in the past.

The bond would be refunded after the work is completed just to make sure the contractor's work is done correctly.

Alderman Albert commented that it is exciting to hear that they are making an investment of over a million dollars to a park that can really use some attention.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for the city to waive the permit fees 1949 Willow Court.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Methvin.

This will be on August 5, 2024, agenda.

**TOPIC: GovHR USA – Recruitment Services Follow Up to Decide on Implementation Date**

Mayor Soliman commented that a representative from GovHR was at the July 22, 2024, meeting but we had two aldermen absent, Alderman Dyke, and Alderman Kubal. He stated that he called each alderman, and they were in favor to wait until February or March and start the process of the search for a permanent city administrator. That would give five positive votes to wait and three negative votes to start immediately.

Mayor Soliman asked the city attorney if there is any action needed now to sign the contract to hold the numbers or do we wait until we get closer to the time.

Attorney Stiff commented that we would need to formalize this by having this on the agenda August 5, 2024, to hold it until February or March. We would have to reach out to GovHR for a price freeze.

Alderman Gazal commented that once again we are putting everything on hold.

**TOPIC: Sikich Consulting Services for Internal Control Assessment**

Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that the first engagement letter has added language of \$350.00/hour and will not exceed \$7,500.00 and this is to provide internal control review services.

Alderman Oberlin asked about the report she had questioned, and it was stated that today was the representatives first day back in the office since she was here giving the presentation and she is working on that report.

Attorney Mike Stiff commented that he had not seen this until the email came this afternoon and noticed it was dated July 23, 2024, and he has not had a chance to review this since he just received it today.

Alderman Albert asked what the Phase I is defined as. Attorney Stiff commented that he did not read the document but one of the things that struck him is that we are to direct them as to the scope of the services for Phase I, and does not see that defined anywhere, which tells him that they are looking for us to tell them what the Phase I scope of services is.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Stuart Soifer, a resident, commented that he is hoping at some point that someone will explain to the taxpayers these reasons why we are spending millions of dollars to fix things in the building that should have been caught early on and we should know how the building should be built and now we are dealing with flooding in the basement. He then commented if the building is even safe, and he hopes someone will explain to the taxpayers since they have not in over a year.

Linda Dyke, a resident, commented that she had a friend who lived in Willow Falls and when the creek would overflow it would run into his basement and over his electrical box, and it did not take this long for the repair work to be done that it is taking the city. She also commented that if this were a resident's house we would be going after them to fix it and the city would not allow the resident to even live in the home. She also stated that it is scary that someone could have been electrocuted.

Carron Johnson, the Interim Finance Director, approached the podium and commented that it has been a pleasure to work here these last three months and she tried, she really tried. She commented that Alderwoman Gazal was the most unprofessional individual she had ever encountered in her thirty plus years of working. She has listened to her disrespect the administrator and the mayor and she cannot understand how someone in her position could be so disrespectful. She also commented that we have a beautiful building and all she hears about is the issues with the building and that is the past and they all need to move forward.

She also mentioned that everyone had a hand in the building, and reminded the Council that no bills were paid without the City Council's approval. She then mentioned that Alderwoman Gazal comments that there is no leadership in the city, but the City Council is the leadership.

She then commented that every time she reached out to Alderperson Oberlin for audit purposes, Alderperson Oberlin would talk to Treasurer Glen Conklin instead and then send a condescending email stating that she is not professional, but Carron commented that she knows business professional. She then reminded the Council that she has two master's degrees, one in accounting and one in business administration and that condescending email that was sent on Sunday was offensive. Carron then suggested that the City Council look at themselves and see why the City of Crest Hill is in the position it is in and try to look at the big picture of what is really happening and stop the personal attacks on each other.

Carron then read a statement, explaining that she withdrew her application for the Finance Director after careful consideration and challenges after her interactions with key members of the City Council, particularly Alderwoman Gazal and Alderperson Tina Oberlin. She then explained that on her first day Alderwoman Gazal greeted her warmly and expressed happiness having another minority in the City of Crest Hill, and Alderwoman Gazal also mentioned her role in helping Alderman Jefferson get elected. Carron then commented that once she moved offices to a more functional space, she became a target for Alderwoman Gazal and Alderperson Oberlin. She then commented that despite her official offer of the Finance Director position which was supported by Treasurer Glen Conklin, Mayor Ray Soliman, and Interim Administrator Tony Graff, Alderwoman Gazal persistently questioned her application status and she had requested documents from the Finance Department and did not receive these in relation to how the interim staff is paid. Carron stated that after speaking to her staff it was determined that no such request was made. In addition, Alderwoman Gazal stated that she had called the Finance Department's main number, and no one answered the phone, and it was determined to be untrue.

Carron stated that at her first City Council meeting, Alderwoman Gazal questioned the mayor's leadership and that she laid awake at night praying for the city but commented that she has noticed nothing but conflict by her at every meeting. She then questioned what bible Alderwoman Gazal is reading from. Carron then read a bible passage from her bible. She then stated that the passage she read meant even if you do not like the mayor or those around you, you must respect them.

Carron commented that it is apparent by city projects and how the staff morale has been compromised by these leadership conflicts. Carron also commented that it was brought to her attention that Alderwoman Gazal researched her personal life. Alderwoman Gazal stated that she did not research Carron's personal life. Carron commented that she conducted her own research background on Alderwoman Gazal as well. She then stated that the silence from other Council members indicates complicity of Alderwoman Gazal's behavior.

Carron commented that she is not in cahoots with the mayor or the administrator but right is right and wrong is wrong. She then commented that no one has asked her the status of the audit.



Carron then stated that she thought Alderperson Oberlin's email was very inappropriate and condescending and reminded her she has two master's degrees and knows professionalism and Alderperson Oberlin's reluctances to answer questions of Carrons and instead direct them to Treasurer Conklin, which raises questions about her willingness to collaborate with an educated Black Woman.

Carron ended her statement by saying she is willing to answer any questions until her last day on Thursday, August 1, 2024.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she hopes we are not paying Carron while she is addressing the Council. Alderwoman Gazal also commented that she is elected, and she is doing her job, and it is obvious you are being put up to this. She then told Carron to not interrupt her, and to have some respect. Alderwoman Gazal then commented that Carron is not going to come and tell her how to act and how to do her job and whoever gave her information about the background check needs to show proof because she had nothing to do with that and obviously information is leaked from the executive session. A screaming match began between Alderwoman Gazal and Carron Johnson. Carron then yelled back for Alderwoman Gazal not to raise her voice at her, and Alderwoman Gazal stated this is her city repeatedly.

Alderman Cipiti then tried to stop these actions and asked for order and for the mayor to do something. The mayor then used his gavel and asked for order.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that this is all games and executive session information has been leaked once again. She then asked the mayor where the four-minute rule was, but it is okay now since they are attacking her. Carron then yelled to not raise her voice at her or point her finger at her and stated that she is an adult.

Mayor Soliman finally regained order and then asked if there was anybody else who would like to make a comment. There was no one.

#### **MAYOR'S UPDATE:**

Mayor Soliman commented that he received a letter from Rick Cabay regarding the three concrete benches that are at the Old City Hall at the Memorial Garden which were donated by individuals that are no longer with us. It was stated that Rick would like to place them at St. Joseph Cemetery off Raynor Avenue. Mayor Soliman commented that he is making the Council aware of this that he will offer them to him since St. Joseph's Church will use them.

Alderman Dyke commented that he went by there the other day and wondered if there is anywhere around the new City Hall that we could use them before giving them away. He also asked if the employees could use them to sit on and it was stated that there are already benches for the employees that Tony Halaska had made.

#### **COMMITTEE/LIASION UPDATES:**

There were none.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

There were none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

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

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

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

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

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