

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
September 8, 2025

The September 8, 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, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, Police Chief Ed Clark, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl.

Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Kubal's attendance for the meeting.

TOPIC: ComEd Agreements and Expenditure for the West Sewage Treatment Plant Electrical Upgrade

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information on the ComEd agreements and expenditure for the West Sewage Treatment Plant electrical upgrade. He explained that ComEd had notified the City that the transformer at the site is live, requiring a generator for any work to be performed. The agreement before the Council would allow the City to rent a generator for up to two weeks, with an estimated cost of \$75,000 or less.

Administrator Wing also mentioned an ongoing monthly charge of \$321.42 for additional equipment, specifically an automatic throw over switch. This equipment would be permanently installed behind the transformer, allowing for switching over in case of issues.

Dominic Gattone, an engineer from Strand & Associates, provided additional technical details about the project. He explained that the transformer's live status necessitates highly trained individuals from ComEd to perform the work due to the significant amount of power involved and the potential danger.

Council members raised questions about the uniqueness of this situation and whether similar measures were needed at other facilities. Administrator Wing clarified that while not common, similar situations have occurred in other municipalities. He also noted that this setup is specific to the West Sewage Treatment Plant due to its power requirements and future needs.

The Council discussed the ongoing monthly charge and its potential fluctuation. City Attorney Mike Stiff explained that the fee could change based on load increases or changes in ComEd's tariffs and riders.

After the discussion, Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for the approval of the ComEd agreements and expenditure for the West Sewage Treatment Plant electrical upgrade.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

This will be on the agenda for approval on September 15, 2025.

TOPIC: Discussion and Direction on Implementing an Adult-Use Cannabis Retailers' Occupation Tax in the City of Crest Hill

Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter presented information on implementing an adult-use cannabis retailers' occupation tax in Crest Hill. He explained that the tax would apply to cannabis sales at dispensaries, with the State allowing up to a 3% tax rate.

Director Ritter provided background on the City's previous actions regarding cannabis dispensaries, including zoning changes made in October 2022. He emphasized that the proposed tax implementation would not affect those regulations. Key points from the presentation included:

1. Most communities have implemented the full 3% tax rate.
2. The tax rate is not a deciding factor for dispensaries when choosing locations.
3. Staff recommend implementing the full 3% tax to maximize potential benefits for the City.
4. The tax needs to be submitted to the Illinois Department of Revenue before October 1st to be active by January 1, 2026.

Director Ritter mentioned that while there have been inquiries from dispensaries, no specific locations are currently under contract. He also noted that there is renewed interest due to additional licenses becoming available.

Alderman Cipiti asked how the City could market or promote to these types of dispensaries and let them know Crest Hill allows this in the City and adopted an ordinance for this since this is a good revenue stream. Director Ritter commented that he would be taking the approach of getting the attention of a few big-named dispensaries along with talking to some brokers who represent these dispensaries.

Council members discussed the potential use of the tax revenue, with recommendations to allocate it towards infrastructure improvements, parks, open space, and community events.

After the discussion, Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to implement a 3% adult-use cannabis retailers' occupation tax in the City of Crest Hill.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

This will be on the agenda for approval on September 15, 2025.

TOPIC: Public Comment Policy Discussion

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented a draft of a new public comment policy for Council meetings. He explained that the policy aims to create an orderly process for public comment while complying with the Open Meetings Act.

Key points of the proposed policy included:

1. Two public comment periods: one at the beginning of the meeting for agenda items and one at the end for any topic.
2. A sign-up sheet for speakers to indicate their intent to speak.
3. A 3-minute time limit per speaker.
4. A total time limit of 60 minutes for public comment, which can be extended at the mayor's discretion.
5. Speakers must address their comments to the mayor as the presiding officer.

The Council engaged in a lengthy discussion about various aspects of the policy, including:

1. Whether to allow people to sign up to speak during the meeting if they had not done so before it started.
2. How to manage public comments during work sessions, which typically involve more dialogue.
3. Whether to allow people to cede their time to other speakers (the consensus was not to allow this).
4. How to enforce the time limits and who would be responsible for timing speakers.

Several Council members expressed concerns about limiting public participation, particularly for those who might develop questions during the meeting. There was general agreement that the policy should allow for some flexibility, especially during work sessions.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked who would be interceding when a person is attacking Council members, which has happened before, and nothing was done about it. Administrator Wing commented that the Mayor has the gavel and is the presiding officer and should be the one to intervene and use the gavel. The Mayor can also have the Chief of Police remove anyone who is threatening the meeting. There should be no personal attacks.

City Attorney Mike Stiff provided input on legal considerations and emphasized the importance of consistency in applying the policy to avoid potential challenges.

After the discussion, Administrator Wing stated that he would revise the draft policy based on the Council's feedback and bring it back for further discussion at a future work session.

No formal action was taken on the policy at this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Stuart Soifer approached the podium and commented that why the State will collect the 1% grocery tax and the 2% LocalGov tax but not the cannabis tax. City Attorney Stiff commented that the 2% LocalGov tax is a locally imposed and locally collected tax that the legislatures had decided how it is to be collected.

Two individuals from a local business, My Waffle, addressed the Council regarding fines and penalties they owed to the City. They requested a reduction in the amount owed, which totaled \$9,250.00 for thirteen violations.

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke provided details on the fines, including payment history and late fees. Council members briefly discussed the request but determined that it would be more appropriate to address the issue at a future workshop, allowing for a more detailed discussion of options and contractual obligations with the City's collection agency.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman commented that he had no updates, but Alderwoman Gazal informed him that she wanted to ask a question.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if the Council/Elected Officials can contact City staff? Attorney Stiff commented that he does not know why they would not be able to. Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has been calling staff since day one when she was elected. She is in a position where she must contact staff because she represents residents, and the elderly residents that need help with something. She then commented that if she wants to contact the staff, the Clerk, the Treasurer, or anyone in the City, it is no one's business but her own and the staff should not be told to not talk to her. She also commented that she is here to do business and if there is a problem to come talk to her.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

City Administrator Blaine Wing addressed concerns raised by Alderman Deserio regarding recent street closures in Ward 1. Administrator Wing explained that the contractor had not followed the planned closure schedule, which resulted in multiple streets being closed simultaneously. He assured the Council that the issue had been corrected as of that day, with only two streets per section now being closed at a time.

Administrator Wing also mentioned that updates on the construction project would be posted on the City's website, and that he was working with the engineers to provide weekly progress reports. He acknowledged the inconvenience caused to residents, schools, and emergency services, and stated that measures were being taken to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Council discussed the importance of proper oversight by both City staff and the contracted engineering firm, Strand & Associates. Administrator Wing assured the Council

that he would follow up on these concerns and ensure better communication and adherence to the planned construction schedule moving forward.

There being no further business before the Council, and no action needed from the executive sessions, the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR