

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
October 26, 2026

The October 26, 2026, 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 Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Assistant City Administrator & HR Director Ashley Monroe, Community Development Director Dan Ritter, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Deputy Police Chief Dave Reavis and City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Mayor Soliman stated for the record that he received emails from Alderman Kubal and Alderman Deserio, who were unable to attend the meeting.

MAYOR

1. GIS Implementation Overview and Presentation by Municipal GIS Partners (MGP)

Community Development Director Dan Ritter reported that the City joined the GIS consortium and MGP in April. Since then, staff and MGP have transferred and updated the City's existing data. The basics are now implemented, with internal access for staff and Council members and a public-facing component. Director Ritter noted that MGP trainings have already produced ideas for public safety and rental inspection uses.

MGP Industry Success Manager Chris Strom explained that the GIS Consortium has about 50 member communities, with Crest Hill the newest. Membership includes project management support and three products: MyGIS, a secure internal tool for staff, The Community Portal and The Community Map Viewer, which is public-facing.

Baseline layers include water, sanitary, and storm water utilities, zoning, parcels, community boundaries, and police beats. Staff has used the virtual request assistance system for about 33 requests in roughly six weeks, including event maps and a recent road closure map. Next steps include validating and adding high-priority city data, field units for crews, expanded public-facing layers, and recurring check-ins with staff. Mr. Strom thanked Director Ritter, City Administrator Wing, City staff, and MGP's Angie Miller and Grant Dixon.

Alderwoman Gazal asked who enters data, who is accountable for entries, how long updates take, and whether MGP is available outside business hours. Mr. Strom and Director Ritter responded as follows: Data entry is a

joint effort. Most updates are submitted to MGP as tickets, and Public Works staff can also update items such as hydrants, water mains, and street signs directly. Under the new licensing, each authorized user has an individual account, so changes can be traced to a person. Public Works leadership helped determine who should have edit access. Simple updates take a few hours, typical requests one to two days, and large layers such as a full water main inventory can take weeks. MGP runs ongoing data quality checks. Requests can be submitted at any time. MGP staff are generally available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with on-call support for emergencies. The recent road closure map was produced in under 24 hours.

Director Ritter explained that the City is deliberately avoiding bulk migration of outdated data, such as a 2018 street sign inventory. The goal is to build accurate data that supports analysis of water main replacement, roads, and other capital spending. He thanked MGP and Ms. Miller for keeping staff on track. This item was informational only. No action was taken.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. WRAP Restrain Device Discussion

Deputy Police Chief Dave Reavis requested approval to purchase four WRAP restraint systems. The device is used to restrain combative subjects, protect officers and subjects, and reduce damage to police vehicles during transport to the hospital or police department. The purchase includes manufacturer training and a five-year warranty. The units are reusable.

Deputy Chief Reavis explained that one unit would be placed in each sergeant's vehicle for major incidents, with the remainder assigned to patrol officers on shift. This allows three to four units during a call if needed. He said four units is sufficient for now, with more possible if use warrants.

In response to council questions, he explained that the device is applied after the subject has been taken into custody and controlled, typically with a two-person shield. It wraps the legs, allows handcuffing in front or behind, and keeps the subject in a seated position. Nothing passes across the neck. Alderman Jefferson cited a reported incident in another state involving breathing difficulty and asked about health risks. Deputy Chief Reavis acknowledged that some risk exists in any restraint and that he could not speak to that case without further research. Alderman Dyke questioned how easily the device can be applied to a resisting subject. Deputy Chief Reavis said he had seen only demonstrations. He cited a recent local incident in which the device could have been useful. Mayor Soliman noted that the City may pursue grants for additional units.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the quote from Safe Restraints for the purchase of four WRAP restraint systems in the amount of \$6,348.48.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

At Mayor Soliman's request, and with the Council's concurrence, the Economic Development items were taken out of order, following the Police Department item, to accommodate guests in the audience.

1. **Plan Commission Recommendation for a Special Use Application for an Automobile Sales and/or Leasing business with Respect to Certain Real Property Located at 1700 Plainfield Road in Crest Hill, Illinois (Application of Jawad Hamayel – First Global Trading LLC)**

Community Development Director Dan Ritter presented the Plan Commission's unanimous October 8th recommendation of approval, subject to the conditions in the staff report, for "Drive Auto Sales." The business would operate at the rear of the existing commercial property, which also houses a furniture store that will remain. Key points:

- The office would be in about 1,200 square feet of the lower-level space with a separate rear entrance.
- Up to 10 vehicles could be displayed in front along Plainfield Road, including overnight if lighting meets code, with remaining inventory in striped stalls at the rear.
- No variations were requested.
- Site improvements include repaving and striping, landscaped islands and curbing, a rebuilt ground sign at the proper setback, new wall signs, and facade work. An optional rear gate would require a permit and a fire department-approved lockbox.

Alderswoman Gazal asked about vehicle counts and signage. Director Ritter confirmed the 10-stall maximum at the front of the property and said the sign will be fully replaced. Alderman Cipiti asked about parking on grass, lighting, locked gate for the rear of the building and completion timing. Director Ritter stated that the site plan limits vehicle storage to paved, striped areas, which is also a code requirement, and that required lighting plans and work must be completed before business operation. Alderman Albert asked about the rear of the building and whether there will be cars displayed inside the building, like a car showroom setting. Director Ritter confirmed that all vehicles will be outside and from Alderman Cipiti's inquiry that ADA access will be provided.

Petitioner Jawad Hamayel addressed the Council. He described operating in Crest Hill since 2019, his plans to expand from wholesale into retail sales, and his commitment to improving the building. Mr. Hamayel praised City Planner Atefa Ghaznawi on the great job she did and Director Ritter for working with him. Mayor Soliman confirmed with Mr. Hamayel that there would be no auto repair, no abandoned or non-sale vehicles would be stored, most sales would be online and that he agrees to all seven Plan Commission conditions.

At Alderman Cipiti's request, Mr. Hamayel confirmed on the record that no vehicles would be parked on grass and that none would be brought on-site for sale before the additional lighting is in place. Alderwoman Gazal and Alderperson Oberlin welcomed the business and the planned upgrades.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for approval of a special use permit for a used automobile sales and/or leasing business located at 1700 Plainfield Road, subject to substantial conformance with the seven conditions and application documents referenced in the October 8, 2026, Plan Commission staff report.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

2. Plan Commission Recommendation for a Special Use Permit for a Fueling Station and Variations from the Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance and Code of Ordinances with respect to Certain Real Property located at 2350 Plainfield Road in Crest Hill, Illinois (Application of Ahmed Mohsin, of 2350 Property LLC)

Director Ritter presented the Plan Commission's unanimous recommendation, following two public hearing meetings, to approve a special use for the existing, legally non-conforming gas station and convenience store. The applicant acquired the property in May 2026. The redevelopment includes:

- A new, larger convenience store with a quick-service restaurant (Wetzel's Pretzels), with pickup only, no drive-through.
- The building was relocated closer to Plainfield Road and farther from adjacent residences.
- Mechanical equipment moved to the roof.
- Removal of asphalt in the IDOT right-of-way.
- Pumps, tanks, canopy size, and access points unchanged.
- Downcast, full cut-off lighting supported by a lighting plan.
- Modernized signage, with the ground sign location possibly shifting between corners.
- A new 8-foot fence and a maintained landscaping buffer along the residential boundary.
- New sidewalks on Plainfield Road and Sycamore Street.

Director Ritter said the applicant adjusted the plan in response to resident concerns, including dropping the proposed drive-through. He does not consider this the ideal gas station location but supports the investment. Alderman Albert commented favorably on the responsiveness to the Plan Commission process, the fence and landscaping, and the sidewalks. Alderman Albert also asked about diesel service. Director Ritter explained that the large vehicle routing shown on plans is for fuel tanker and fire truck access. Applicant Ahmed Mohsin confirmed there is no dedicated diesel fueling, and also confirmed the station will operate 24 hours, will not sell

alcohol, and agreed to all nine Plan Commission conditions. He reported the Wetzel's Pretzels franchise agreement has been signed.

Resident Randy Massey raised concerns about overnight noise from loud car stereos and early-morning garbage truck pickups, and asked for signage to reduce noise pollution. Mr. Mohsin agreed to post signage. Director Ritter said the City would work with the hauler and the owner to restrict pickups to after 7 or 8 a.m., and noted the City has successfully done this with other businesses. The Council agreed to add a tenth condition requiring signage regarding noise restrictions, in effect from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on the Plan Commission's recommendation for conditional approval of a special use for a fueling station with a convenience store and the requested variations for reduced building, parking, sign, and landscape setbacks and other landscape waivers, subject to substantial conformance with ten conditions (the tenth being noise-restriction signage in the parking lot) and the application documents referenced in the October 8, 2026 Plan Commission staff report.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal, Deserio.

3. Commercial Property Improvement Grant for Front/Entrance Landscaping at Merichka's Restaurant, 604 Theodore St.

Director Ritter presented the first application under the revised Commercial Property Improvement Grant program, which replaced the little-used facade grant in July. The project is front and west entrance landscaping at Merichka's Restaurant, with a total cost of \$5,624.56. The City grant, at the 50 percent maximum, would be \$2,812.28. The applicant, which has a ceiling of \$10,000 on the property, plans to return next year for facade work. Staff requested a waiver of the multiple-bid requirement because the work was performed by The Fields on Caton Farm, a Crest Hill business that also installs the City's street trees. Staff reviewed the pricing and found it reasonable. Staff recommended approval.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on the approval of a commercial improvement grant application for landscaping improvements at Merichka's Restaurant, 604 Theodore Street, in an amount not to exceed \$2,812.28, with the multiple-bid requirement waived.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

Alderdwoman Gazal asked whether the City can recover funds if a business closes after receiving a grant. Director Ritter explained that the revised program funds only improvements that run with the property, such as landscaping, ground signs, and parking lots, rather than business-specific wall signs. He added that claw back provisions have failed in all three cases

where the City tried them, because businesses typically reopen under new LLCs and legal costs exceed recoveries.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

1. **Utility Billing – Migration to change from Bi-Monthly Billing to Monthly Billing**

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke reported that staff is preparing to migrate utility billing from bimonthly to monthly, per Council direction. The work involves:

- Reconfiguring the ERP billing cycles. The Stateville cycle is unaffected.
- Testing by the vendor on a sample of the City's database.
- Amending the relevant ordinances (Sections 13.24.050 through 13.24.055). The base allotment of 400 cubic feet per two months would become 200 cubic feet per month at half the base rate, and about 15 other rates will be reviewed.
- Coordinating with Public Works on the timing of shutoffs, turn-ons, and manual meter reads.

The vendor quoted \$200 per hour with a two-hour minimum, with an estimate of \$4,000 to \$6,000. Director Gehrke asked the Council for input on the current 7.5 percent late fee, since four nearby municipalities charge 10 percent. He also asked about moving to a due date of 20 to 21 days, because the current 45-day delinquency window would overlap the next monthly cycle. When Alderwoman Gazal asked when the monthly billing would start, Director Gehrke stated the target start is February, which would be the first even month after the necessary ordinance changes. Director Gehrke cautioned that customers carrying past-due balances will face a short-term crunch at the transition.

Alderwoman Gazal asked about credit card fees for online payments. Director Gehrke explained the portal charges a 3 percent fee and that checking account payments avoid it. City Administrator Wing recommended promoting autopay, noting that in a prior community a \$5 credit led to 50 percent enrollment within three months and significantly reduced shutoffs. He also expected monthly billing to help residents spot leaks sooner and to assist with budgeting. Director Gehrke noted that the change doubles work for the utility billing staff, while Alderperson Oberlin expected it to level out as shutoffs decline. Director Gehrke said stale and manual-reads currently number about 45, compared with an industry benchmark of about 20, a function that falls largely to Public Works.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on staff's recommendation to approve an expenditure of \$4,000 to \$6,000 to proceed with the utility billing migration to monthly billing.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal, Deserio, Gazal.

CLERK

There were no agenda items.

TREASURER

City Treasurer Jamie Malloy stated, "I wanted to take some time to reply to last Monday night's meeting. First of all, I wanted to state that I had nothing to do with revenge. I was doing my job. I have a fiduciary responsibility to the citizens of Crest Hill. When we were out campaigning for a past mayoral candidate, I told Alderperson Oberlin people were questioning the past picnics and I told you I was going to look into those when I got sworn in. I put through a FOIA requesting the documents. You advised the City Administrator there was no records. I went to Crest Hill branch of NuMark and was told there was nothing available. A resident of Crest Hill had a check copy and gave it to me. So, I went to a different branch of NuMark and got the records. If this was a private account, why was I given the copies? Now Tina, you stated that you had done nothing wrong, however your first response to me was, 'I'm going to sue you and I'm going to sue the City,' and you followed through." Treasurer Malloy continued, "I never personally went after you. I pulled the records for the past Events Committee that you chaired. You stated you used your own money; however I have a record that First Midwest account showing that you were reimbursed \$1,415.20. When the Council questioned you about this account, why didn't you answer them? I wish to go on record and make it known I never represented myself as Tina Oberlin. I walked into both banks with a business card in one hand and a lanyard around my neck with a photo ID. In speaking to the lady at First Midwest, she told me that her husband, Dave, is the person who details your car, so she knew I was not you. You have embellished the story. The credit union turned the documents over to me. They never redacted any of your information. To say I handed it out like Halloween candy is again embellishing the story. If the account was a private account, why was it listed as 'Crest Hill Events Committee' and why would you take a check for \$5,000, made out to the City of Crest Hill and deposit it in your account?"

Treasurer Malloy continued, "Alderman Jefferson never wanted to put your information out to the City. His response was to the Mayor to allow me to finish my report. However, if anyone has the nerve to question anything you're involved in, you get angry. I've heard you sit up here and speak about transparency and accountability. I am the Treasurer of Crest Hill, and this is my job. Finally, I wish to say being a victim does not erase bad decisions and you treat accountability as though it was a threat. Thank you!"

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Discussion of Payroll & HR Software with UKG

City Administrator Blaine Wing reported on a nine-month evaluation of payroll and HR software from BS&A, OpenGov, UKG, and Caselle. He gave four reasons for the change:

- The Caselle agreement expires in early 2027.
- The police union has filed payroll-related grievances tied to software limitations.
- UKG allows digital time clocks and geo-fencing.
- UKG offers an integrated HR module for training, certifications, and onboarding.

The police department already uses a UKG product. Through a public sector purchasing cooperative, staff secured a 35 percent discount. The one-time cost is \$16,018.75 and the annual cost is \$18,447. Administrator Wing is working with the City Attorney on the contract term. A five-year term would avoid an approximately 8 percent increase at renewal. Implementation typically takes four to six months, and a month-to-month arrangement with Caselle is expected to cover the transition. The proposal must be signed before November 20.

Assistant City Administrator & HR Director Ashley Monroe asserted that this move would improve the payroll and HR process by having information all in one place and in improved order. Finance Director Glenn Gehrke called the City's current HR capabilities "abysmal" and described UKG as the "gold standard." The City currently uses three separate timekeeping systems, and UKG will provide an API or journal entry integration with the financial system. Net cost will be determined once Caselle provides module-level pricing, expected the following Monday. In response to Alderwoman Gazal, staff confirmed the cost will be shared across budgets, since Caselle's modules serve multiple departments. Funding will come from the general fund and enterprise funds, split by function. Administrator Wing noted that Public Works and Community Development are also reviewing permitting and asset management software.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on the City Administrator's recommendation to move forward with UKG.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

2. Discussion of Citizen Participation & Council Rules of Order

City Administrator Wing explained that staff is seeking direction on adopting written rules for citizen participation and council rules of order, so the presiding officer has a legal basis to stop harassment, threats, or personal attacks. He stated that earlier discussions in 2022 and 2024 produced draft materials but no record of formal adoption. The packet included examples from Naperville, Tinley Park, Peru, and others, and a prior draft policy on page 39. He emphasized he was not recommending specific limits on council members. Anger and criticism are permitted, but without adopted standards the Mayor or Plan Commission chair lacks clear authority to enforce decorum.

Alderwoman Gazal asked that the term “staff” be clarified, and Administrator Wing confirmed the recommendation came from him. She objected strongly to any restrictions on how often or how long Council members may speak, citing her duty to her constituents and the First Amendment. She expressed concern about inconsistent enforcement of time limits and about unrestricted public comment being allowed for some speakers but not others. She supported a simple 3-minute public limit and asked that residents be allowed to express frustration absent threats or profanity. Alderperson Oberlin agreed that decorum rules should be basic, such as no attacks on families and no profanity. She opposed restrictions on Council speaking and on residents returning to speak, especially on matters near their homes. Alderman Cipiti inquired if this was for public comment only.

City Attorney Mike Stiff reported that prior discussions concerned public comment only. Topics included time limits, decorum, comment-only rather than question-and-answer, and recording by audience members. He noted that the City cannot prohibit recording. He advised that any policy must protect legitimate, even angry, criticism while allowing the chair to gavel personal attacks and threats. He suggested the following:

- A standard introductory statement at each meeting.
- A time limit, with 3 minutes for regular meetings and possibly 5 for work sessions.
- No question-and-answer during comment.
- Decorum language.
- A provision allowing the Council by majority to extend time.

Community Development Director Dan Ritter described Tinley Park’s experience. That village adopted a time limit, later settling at 6 minutes, with Council ability to extend it, after lacking rules led to legal challenges and unfairness to other speakers. Mayor Soliman said he generally allows leeway and cautioned against a rigid rule, but acknowledged the need for some structure. Alderman Albert expressed concern about picking and choosing when to enforce limits and about consistency when responding to commenters. Several members indicated a preference for flexibility and for the Council, not only the Mayor, to be able to extend time. No action was taken. Administrator Wing and Attorney Stiff will summarize the discussion and return with recommendations at a future session.

Administrator Wing stated that there will be a groundbreaking this week at the Grand Prairie East and West Receiving Station. He will have Marybel send out the details to the Council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Resident Linda Dyke expressed concern about activity at 1919 Kelly Avenue. She stated that a neighbor reported vehicles being dropped off and picked up from a trailer in the evenings, which some believed to be from an automotive business on Theodore Street. She also reported unhooked trailers near the roadway and items stored in the front yard, and said she had reported the property to the police department.

Ms. Dyke also stated that she would bring a poster of unkempt properties to the next meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1): The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

Alderman Oberlin made a motion to go into executive session for 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1). Seconded by Alderwoman Gazal. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert. Nays: None. Absent: Deserio, Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session: 9:56 p.m.

Alderman Jefferson made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5 ILCS 120/(2)(1). Seconded by Alderman Oberlin. Roll call: Ayes: Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Jefferson. Nays: None. Absent: Kubal, Deserio. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 11:24 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 p.m.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2026.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR