

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL  
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
December 9, 2024

The December 9, 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, Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: Interim Administrator Tony Graff, Police Chief Ed Clark, Deputy Chief Jason Opiola, Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman commented that he received a call from Alderman Kubal, and he is excused from the meeting.

**TOPIC: Request to Explore the Development of a School Resource Officer Program**

Police Chief Ed Clark commented that the Police Department has been considering this program for a while. There are two schools in town and a private school, as well. A School Resource Officer (SRO) Program is a common position in law enforcement.

This would be a partnership with the School Districts and after talking to them they were receptive, but they must go to their Boards and talk to them, as well.

Alderperson Oberlin asked when the Officer is at the school, will they be doing more than walking around the hallways. Chief Clark stated that they would be involved and merge the D.A.R.E. Program and teach, as well.

SRO works with the department on active shooter training, planning, and operating procedures and improves communication between the Police Department and the school. With an officer at the school, they will have more knowledge of the school, the layout and where the children and staff would be at any given time. There will always be communication between students, staff, and parents to help prevent potential violence before it occurs.

We want our officer to be a positive role model for the students and be part of the community.

The administration of discipline will remain the sole discretion of the school, and the school has full control over internal discipline issues. Police action will be a last resort and only for protection of the students, staff and parents.

An SRO will need to go through the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board course, and this will be updated annually and have constant continued training.

The concept is to split the cost of the Officer's salary and benefits in three ways. Chief Clark commented that a rough amount of \$150,000.00 is the starting point (split three ways = \$50,000.00).

Alderpersion Oberlin thanked the Chief for bringing this to the Council, she feels this is a marvelous idea. She commented that the earlier the officer has a relationship with children is better. This would allow the children to see the officers as good and helpful people and may stop a child from being mischievous.

Alderwoman Methvin commented that being a mother of a child with special needs she would like to know what training would be given to the officers. Chief Clark commented that the officers have training that is available to them for Autism and special needs and the officers have attended these types of training to have a positive response to those things.

Deputy Chief Ryan Dobczyk commented that the State has implemented in a mandate Crisis Intervention Training and all our Officers are required to meet that mandate and the SRO will have that training and more. He also commented that Will County has a School Safety Task Force with monthly training that an SRO will attend.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that community outreach is important and that is why they started the Meet in the Park and have the Police Department there to interact with the children. She then asked if doing this if the streets would be neglected, and if we have enough police officers to do this.

Chief Clark commented that this will not affect our patrol officers on the streets, and he would not reduce that number. He commented that his intention is to move Officer Outlaw into that role.

Mayor Soliman commented that he is in favor for this program. He also commented that he has gathered from going to the safety course at the schools that you have to be prepared. He then stated that this is beneficial for our community, and he believes it will work.

Chief Clark commented that he will meet with the schools again and start working on the Intergovernmental Agreement and then come back to the Council, but he is hoping to start this in the fall of 2025 school year.

**TOPIC: Purchase of a Ford F-350 Pick Up for the Street Division in the Department of Public Works for a Total Amount of \$50,091.00**

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen commented that they want to replace an existing truck, Unit #33, a 2011 Ford F250 truck with 58,419 miles, hard miles. This truck also has 6474 engine hours, 3,856 idle hours and was used for snow removal in the past. If we were to keep this truck, it has issues that will need to be taken care of, but we would prefer to replace the truck.

Interim Public Works Director Hansen commented that he would like to replace it with an F-350 truck for \$50,091.00. This would be through the Suburban Purchasing Cooperative to ensure we have the lowest price as specified.

It would take three months to get the truck, so it would not be used for winter operations until next year.

Alderman Dyke asked why seasonal help would need an F-350 truck and why not a smaller truck, like a Ford Ranger? Interim Director Hansen replied that you do not need a Commercial Driver's License to drive an F-350 and when all the trucks are being used the seasonal help will need a truck that a non-commercial driver's licensed worker can use and plow with.

Interim Public Works Director Hansen commented that they need to be mobile to do everything that they do in the summer and as winter rolls around, they need to be able to plow, and the F-350 is a heavy-duty truck that can do that.

Alderman Dyke asked what kind of repairs does the truck need? Interim Public Works Director Hansen commented that he was told it needs \$4,000.00 worth of work and if we put that \$4,000.00 into the truck, we will end up paying more, since the idling hours are hard on a vehicle. Alderman Dyke asked why there are so many idle hours? Interim Public Works Director Hansen commented that most of the time they are keeping the vehicles warm while the crew is out in the cold element.

Alderman Dyke would like an inventory list of all the vehicle, the years, and the mileage of each vehicle. Interim Public Works Director Hansen passed out an inventory to all the Council members.

Alderson Oberlin asked if this F-350 will be replacing the truck we have now that does cul-de-sacs, and she was told yes. She then asked if that truck will be utilized this winter. Interim Public Works Director Hansen commented that if it can be repaired, we will use the truck but if not, it will not be useable.

Alderman Cipiti commented that this was not an issue known when the budget was done, so how is this in the budget. He also commented that he agrees with Alderman Dyke to repair it since it is a less of a financial hit.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that when the budget was done \$68,000.00 was put into the budget for vehicle replacement and it was based off Brian's analysis since he knew one of the pickup trucks would need replaced but was not sure which one based on the age and fleet.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to purchase a Ford F-350.

AYES: Ald. Albert, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Methvin.

NAYES: Ald. Dyke.

UNDECIDED: Ald. Cipiti.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Consideration of Cameras in the Workplace Policy – Employee Handbook Addition**

Interim Human Resources Manager Dave Strahl commented that he was asked to draft this policy with the Labor Attorney. This is an add to the safety and equipment use area of the personnel handbook and it outlines that audio/video recording devices in the workplace will not be allowed. The city has cameras located around the facilities for safety. It was stated that they will not use recording devices as sole cause of employee discipline consideration. The police will have separate stipulations since they have body cameras.

Interim Manager Strahl commented that the cameras that were put up at the request of an employee and approved by the supervisor at the time, have been removed once they are aware of the situation.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that the Police Department examined the cameras at this department that were installed by an employee. The employee has given control of the cameras to the city and the only ones to have access to those cameras is the Police Department.

Alderman Gazal asked what the purpose of these cameras was, who allowed them, and what would be done about this issue. Interim Administrator Graff commented that the cameras are now run by the Police Department and the employee had authority to do this from the previous supervisor. He also commented that the cameras were originally installed when the building was built, and they started bringing equipment in and the employee was concerned since he had approximately \$100,000.00 of equipment. This employee had asked the city to purchase cameras for this reason and they never did, and the former Administrator Jim Marino approved for him to install his own cameras.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that he and Interim Manager Strahl are meeting with Local 150 to go over this policy because it should be the responsibility of the Local 150 to manage their members in a circumstance like this.

Alderman Oberlin asked if an employee violates this camera policy, will they not be disciplined? Interim Manager Strahl commented that if they observe something on the camera only, they cannot use that as the sole decision to call them in for disciplinary actions, there will have to be something else attached with that. Alderman Oberlin then asked if an employee is seen walking out with city property on the cameras, they cannot discipline them for that. Interim Manager Strahl replied, saying no we would call the employees in and ask for an explanation of why they were leaving with city property.

Attorney Stiff commented that to his understanding this is a union issue, not just a labor issue and the policy was done with Attorney John Kelly.

Interim Manager Strahl commented that he does not see this as a big issue, but they will discuss this with the union.

Attorney Stiff commented that if there was a creditable basis for an investigation into an employee from whatever source, the camera can then be looked at as part of the investigation because camera footage cannot be the main source of the investigation.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

**TOPIC: Discuss the Public Works Internal Controls - Recommendations**

Aldersperson Oberlin requested this to be on the agenda because she was wondering what was implemented and what was not in this document. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he was not privileged to review the document, so he does not know.

Attorney Stiff commented that he was keeping the document confidential and only circulated this to the Council members who asked for it and he did not give a copy to Interim Administrator Graff. Attorney Stiff commented that by the time this became an agenda item he was supposed to get bullet point items of recommendation to the Interim Administrator, and he did not and that is his fault.

Aldersperson Oberlin would like to know which ones are implemented and which ones are not since she believes they are there for a reason and if we have not implemented them we should.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that from what Attorney Stiff has told him, the Council will notice that many of them have been cleaned up with the additions to the employee handbook. Aldersperson Oberlin then asked if they were being enforced and was told if there were violations then they were being enforced.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that if there are rules things should not happen and every time and they keep finding out at each meeting there is something else happening, so they must not be taken care of. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he disagrees with Aldersperson Oberlin and stated that everything that has been brought up has been investigated and they were handled. He commented that he understands their frustration and there is a pattern where the Council finds things out after the fact, and that needs to stop.

Alderman Albert commented that if this is going to be a future work session item, he would like that information passed out. Attorney Stiff commented that he will take out the confidential information and copy and paste the internal controls recommendations, then circulate that to the Interim Administrator and Interim Human Resource Manager to see whether they have been instituted. He also commented that he will send the full report to the rest of the Council members, and he asks that they keep the investigatory portions of it confidential.

Alderman Cipiti asked everyone to turn to page 19 of the employee handbook about the overtime issues. He then commented that the interim administrator commented that if someone is violating the handbook that would be investigated. Interim Administrator Graff commented that only if it is brought to the administrator's attention.

Alderman Cipiti commented that in section 4.11, required overtime, reads each department head should have the right to require overtime work, and it is considered a condition of

employment and refusal to accept it can be cause for discipline up to termination. He then commented that recently an entire department refused overtime and wanted to know how that was addressed.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that the special event was posted as a volunteer overtime and not mandatory and they had a right to say no.

Alderman Jefferson commented that volunteer means you are donating time not getting paid for your time. Interim Administrator Graff commented that you cannot ask for an employee to volunteer to work for city events.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that that is not correct because at the last event when the girls from the departments volunteered none of them were compensated. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he knows it happens. Treasurer Conklin commented that they have had employees volunteering at events and not receiving compensation. He also commented that if you keep them two words together 'volunteer overtime' they have the option to work it or not and it was not mandatory or an emergency.

**TOPIC: Discussion for a Fair Stipend for the Extra Work and Responsibilities – Adalberto Martino**

Mayor Soliman commented that it was his understanding that this agenda item will be discussed in executive session.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Linda Dyke, a resident, asked why there was an employee driving a pickup truck with a plow on it? Alderman Dyke commented that there was no reason for a plow truck to be driving around on a 50-degree day. Interim Administrator Graff commented that they were doing some training of their routes. Alderman Dyke commented that the driver was also looking down on his phone in his hand when driving and he could give the vehicle number and the day/time.

Alderwoman Methvin asked if there are dashcam videos on any of the trucks? Mayor Soliman commented that he was not sure, but he is sure there is GPS on them.

**MAYOR UPDATES:**

There were no Mayor updates.

**COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:**

There were no Committee/Liaison updates.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:**

There were no City Administrator updates.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that there was a resident that called about the tax rebate that missed the deadline. Alderman Jefferson commented that the resident missed the deadline of December 6, 2024, and turned in the form on December 9, 2024, and his form was not accepted and there were words exchanged.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if we could extend the Tax Rebate Program until noon, since technically they had all weekend to place their form in the box and still be considered on time? She then commented that the ladies grabbed all the rebates out of the box in the morning but when he came in the morning, they would not accept his rebate.

Treasure Conklin commented that since you set a rule, set a grace period. Alderman Albert commented that he would be in favor of giving a deadline on the form but accepting them another week after that deadline.

Mayor Soliman commented that when this started, we gave a grace period but at the end of that grace period people were still complaining, so now we give them three months to fill the form out and the deadline was so that it gave the employees enough time to meet their deadlines.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the issue is it takes longer to argue with this resident than taking the application and putting in the information. Treasurer Conklin commented that if we took it, we would be going against what the wish and directive is from the Council. Alderwoman Gazal asked if the wishes of the Council are always respected? Treasurer Conklin commented that in this case we did, and we are darned if we did.

Alderman Jefferson agreed with Alderman Albert to have a grace period. Treasurer Conklin asked if we give them a grace period of Wednesday and what if someone comes in on Friday, then are we going to catch heck. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it is one person. Alderman Albert commented that the firmness of not taking the application is not customer friendly.

Treasurer Conklin asked if it would be the Council's wish to give a grace period without putting it into an ordinance?

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that if you do it for one you must do it for all.

Mayor Soliman asked for a motion to go into executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

(#1) Motion by Aldersperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Methvin, to go into an executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) per the memo dated December 9, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

There being seven (7) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:38 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Methvin, to reconvene from the executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) per the memo dated December 9, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

There being seven (7) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 9:07 p.m.

Alderman Albert asked if there can be a single paged memo in the packet with each agenda item?

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

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

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

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

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CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

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RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR