

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
June 9, 2025

The June 9, 2025, the City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:15 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 Treasurer Jamie Malloy, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Interim City Administrator Tony Graff, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Deserio, Police Chief Ed Clark, Community & Economic Development Director Patrick Ainsworth, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Deserio from tonight's meeting due to illness.

TOPIC: Festa Italiana Waivers

Mayor Soliman invited Dan Brandolino and Christine Hayden, co-chairs of the 25th anniversary Festa Italiana, to present their annual request for waivers.

Christine Hayden provided details about the event:

- Friday, August 8th: 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM
- Bands: Shindig at 6:00 PM, Strung Out at 8:30 PM
- Limited food menu including pizzas, snacks, and lamb skewers.
- Saturday, August 9th: 12:00 PM to 11:00 PM
- Performers: Nina Filino, Vince Amore, Sparks Fly (Taylor Swift cover band), and Cadillac Groove
- Sunday, August 10th: 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM
- Outdoor mass and procession starting at 12:00 PM
- Performers: Diva and George, Jersey Girls, and Chicago Hitmen
- Pasta eating contests for all ages and children's games.

Dan Brandolino mentioned they had been in contact with Police Chief Ed Clark regarding police presence and assistance with the procession.

The Mayor then addressed the waiver requests:

Alcohol permit waiver of \$50.00 per day for a one-day liquor license:

- Friday, August 8th: 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM
- Saturday, August 9th: 12:00 PM to 11:00 PM
- Sunday, August 10th: 12:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for a waiver for the liquor permit.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Albert.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

Mayor Soliman commented that the next request is for Police officer staffing for the parade on Sunday, August 10th from 12:00 PM to 12:30 PM.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Albert.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

Mayor Soliman informed the Festa Italiana representatives that the official vote would take place at the next Monday's meeting on June 16th and invited them to attend to provide additional promotion for the event.

Dan Brandolino mentioned that they would have a 5-piece brass band for the procession this year, reviving an old tradition.

Mayor Soliman stated that the waiver of the signage permits is included with the waiver of the liquor license. He then asked the Council if anyone had an issue with the waiver of signage permits and no Council member had an issue.

TOPIC: Midwest Industrial Funds Request to Extend Validity Period of Variation and Special Use Approval Ordinance #1990

Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer presented a request from MWI Property Group, the contract purchaser of an 8-acre vacant site at the south end of Advantage Drive. He explained that the company had obtained approval last year for a planned unit development special use permit and zoning variances to develop a 150,000 square foot industrial warehouse and office building.

Due to ongoing legal issues between the property owner and the developers of the original industrial park, MWI has been unable to close on the property purchase. As the special use permit is set to expire after one year, the applicant has requested a 24-month extension to the validity period of their special use permit and zoning variance approvals.

Representatives from MWI Property Group were present:

- Steve Gulden
- Mike Androwich (one of the owners)
- Patrick Swiszc (project manager)

Steve Gulden emphasized their intention to build and invest in the community, explaining that the extension request was due to the challenges mentioned by Consultant Mentzer.

Mike Androwich reiterated their commitment to the project and explained that while progress was being made in resolving the legal issues between the property owners, it was slow.

Patrick Swiszczy confirmed their unchanged commitment to the project and expressed hope that they could break ground within the two-year extension period.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote of the requested 24-month extension.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

Mayor Soliman instructed staff to prepare an ordinance approving the extension for the next Monday's meeting.

TOPIC: EXECUTIVE SESSION 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(1)

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Gazal, to go into an executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

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

Executive Session 7:17 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Jefferson, to reconvene from the executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

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

Reconvened 8:04p.m.

TOPIC: Ordinance to Replace the Grocery Tax effective January 1, 2026

City Administrator Blaine Wing provided an update on the grocery tax. He noted that other communities had recently voted to approve a similar tax as the state tax concludes at the end of the year.

Administrator Wing reported that the state collected just over \$400,000 in 2023, which was significantly higher than the city's initial internal estimate of \$100,000 to \$150,000.00. He recommended that the Council consider this tax, as there was not an extra \$400,000 in the budget to fill this revenue gap. Administrator Wing acknowledged that grocery taxes are regressive but noted that as a non-home rule community, Crest Hill has limited options. He then suggested that home rule status, either by population increase or referendum, would provide more flexibility in the future.

Administrator Wing emphasized that this was an opportunity to decide before October 1st to avoid a lapse in revenue. He stated that the City Attorney had drafted an ordinance for consideration a few months ago.

Mayor Soliman estimated that with inflation, the amount could be closer to half a million dollars by next year.

Alderman Jefferson questioned the discrepancy between the state's collection and the ordinance's estimate. Administrator Wing explained that the higher state figure is likely to include grocery items sold at gas stations and other shops, not just dedicated grocery stores.

Alderman Dyke clarified that this would be a new revenue stream for the city, not backfilling an existing hole. Administrator Wing confirmed this, explaining that the mechanism would change from state to local collection.

City Attorney Mike Stiff mentioned that the ordinance was based on a model from the Illinois Municipal League (IML) and would need to be codified in the city's ordinances. He explained that while the state was removing the tax, they allowed municipalities to enact it locally, with the state continuing to collect it.

Administrator Wing stated that he would gather more information from neighboring communities, both home rule and non-home rule, to provide a comprehensive list for the Council's consideration. He suggested waiting a month or two before bringing it to the next Council meeting to allow for more research and consultation with Will County and the IML.

Council members expressed interest in knowing which municipalities had passed or turned down the tax. Attorney Stiff mentioned several nearby communities that had already approved of it, including Minooka, New Lenox, Manhattan, and Shorewood.

The Council agreed to have Administrator Wing and staff gather more information and potentially bring the item back for discussion at a work session or provide an update through the administrator report before placing it on an upcoming agenda.

TOPIC: Ordinance Approving Manual Water Meter Read Fee of \$50.00 per Meter Read

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke presented an ordinance to approve a manual water meter read fee of \$50.00 per meter read. Director Gehrke explained that all water customers should have water meters capable of being read remotely. Customers without such meters would be charged the fee until they allow the city to exchange their existing meter with one capable of remote reading.

Director Gehrke stated that when water meters were initially installed, there were no obstructions. However, some residents and businesses have since obstructed the meters with appliances or property improvements. He emphasized that it is not the city's responsibility to remove these obstructions, as they were installed by property owners after the initial meter installation.

The fee would be charged per read, not per month. For bi-monthly billing, it would be once every other month. Director Gehrke clarified that residents or businesses could choose to pay the fee or remove the obstruction to allow for meter updates.

Alderman Jefferson asked about the frequency of the fee, and Director Gehrke confirmed it would be every two months under the current billing cycle. Attorney Stiff mentioned that

this ordinance had been discussed at a previous work session, and he had drafted it as directed.

Director Gehrke reported that there were fewer than one hundred households, approximately seventy-two, still with obstructions preventing meter changes. He explained that some obstructions were due to decks or other structural changes, making access difficult or costly for homeowners.

Alderperson Oberlin suggested sending out certified letters to ensure residents receive the notice. The Council discussed the possibility of waiving permit fees for residents who need to move water heaters or other appliances to allow meter access.

Administrator Wing proposed working with staff to develop a mechanism to address hardship cases and to refine the final notice. He suggested aiming for implementation by September 1st, allowing sufficient time for communication with affected residents.

The Council agreed to have Administrator Wing take the matter back to staff for further refinement, including developing a more detailed plan for mailings and communication with property owners and residents.

TOPIC: Resolution Approving a Professional Service Agreement for Design Services for the Imperial Drive and Root Street Watermain Replacement and Roadway Rehabilitation Improvement-Design Engineering Services by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd for a cost of \$197,580.00

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented a request for a professional service agreement with Christopher Burke Engineering for design services related to the Imperial Drive and Root Street water main replacement and roadway rehabilitation project. The cost of the agreement was \$197,580.

Engineer Wiedeman explained that this project was part of the city's efforts to reduce water losses below 10% to maintain their allocation from the Grand Prairie project. The water mains in question were built in 1962 and are past their service life.

Engineer Wiedeman noted that he had added a stormwater study component to this project, as the area currently lacks drainage structures. This addition increased the cost but would help alleviate drainage issues in the area, particularly on Lynnwood near Crestwood Drive.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio

This item will be on June 16th Council Meeting agenda.

TOPIC: A Resolution for Amendment No 2 to the August 31, 2023, agreement for design and bidding -related services for CIPP Water Main Rehabilitation by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. for an amended contract amount of \$480,400.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented a resolution to amend the agreement with Strand Associates for design and bidding-related services for CIPP water main rehabilitation.

Engineer Wiedeman noted that the amendment would increase the total contract amount to \$480,400.00, necessity borne from the need to incorporate an unaddressed section of Larkin Avenue into the plan. This section had not been covered originally, necessitating earlier attention due to recent issues that had become apparent.

The additional cost for Strand Associates to incorporate this design work was quoted as \$89,800. Engineer Wiedeman emphasized the practicality of addressing this section in conjunction with the Plainfield project scheduled for next year, highlighting cost and efficiency benefits.

During the discussion, Engineer Wiedeman clarified the logistical aspects of fitting this into their current work scope, noting that this oversight meant incorporating the minor but vital facets of Larkin Avenue work into future phases. Engineer Wiedeman cited recent problematic episodes in particular locales, namely near Burger King and Popeyes, which underscored the urgency of this amendment.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

This item will be on June 16th Council Meeting agenda.

TOPIC: Resolution Approving an Agreement for Phase 1-CIPP Water Main Rehabilitation by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois, and Strand Associates for an amount of \$178,500.00.

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman presented a resolution to approve an agreement with Strand & Associates for construction engineering work for Phase 1 of the CIPP water main rehabilitation project. The agreement specifically covers the construction engineering services related to the Broadway and Theodore up to Clement section. The cost for this agreement was \$178,500.00. Strand & Associates will be providing a full-time resident observer dedicated to overseeing the construction work for a duration of 16 weeks, working a full 45-hour week during the construction period.

Engineer Wiedeman explained the essential nature of approving this agreement by June 30th. The urgency is tied to the potential inclusion of this cost as part of the \$3.2 million loan forgiveness from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). This loan forgiveness is a significant financial incentive, emphasizing the importance of timely approval to ensure the city can leverage this cost-saving opportunity.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

This item will be on the June 16th Council Meeting agenda.

TOPIC: Resolution approving Professional Engineering Service agreement for review services of the Traffic Impact Study prepared for Quick Trip Development and prepare a study of Potential Traffic Calming Measures along the Knapp Corridor by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd for a not to exceed of \$59,800.00

Engineer Wiedeman presented a resolution to approve a professional engineering service agreement with Christopher Burke Engineering for reviewing services of the traffic impact study for the QuikTrip development and to prepare a study of potential traffic calming measures along the Knapp Drive corridor. The agreement was not to exceed \$59,800.00.

He explained that this study would address concerns about traffic speeds on Knapp and evaluate the impact of the new Quick Trip development. The scope includes reviewing Quick Trip's traffic study (with costs up to \$6,000.00 reimbursable by QuikTrip) and looking at the entire area to suggest potential traffic calming measures.

Engineer Wiedeman mentioned that \$50,000.00 was already budgeted for this work this year. He estimated a 4–5-month timeframe for completing the study, with results expected by the end of the year.

Council members engaged in a discussion on the concept of traffic calming measures and how they could potentially affect the surrounding intersections. Alderman Kubal inquired about traffic calming measures, and City Engineer Ron Wiedeman provided examples, mentioning possibilities such as roundabouts, reduced road widths, crosswalk enhancements, and right-in/right-out turns. Engineer Wiedeman emphasized the importance of considering these measures to address concerns about traffic speeds on Knapp.

The conversation also expanded to address the confusion regarding the correct name for Knapp Drive, as different documents and sources referred to it as Knapp Drive, Knapp Street, and Knapp Road. Alderperson Oberlin noted the inconsistencies and mentioned looking up addresses via postal service, which listed it as Knapp Road. Engineer Wiedeman acknowledged the naming discrepancies and mentioned that he would review the original construction plans to verify the official name. This attention to detail was important for the accuracy of future documents and communications regarding projects in the area.

Alderwoman Gazal asked to be notified when the study is ready and be able to open this up to the residents for discussion and was told yes by Engineer Wiedeman.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

This item will be on the June 16th Council Meeting agenda.

TOPIC: Discussion of Shred Event with Lockport Township for Future Date

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall presented information regarding a proposed shred event in partnership with Lockport Township. She detailed that the event would follow a similar format to the previous year, maintaining a 50/50 cost-sharing arrangement between the City and the Township. The proposed date for the event is October 25, 2025, to be held from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM in the city parking lot, aligning closely with the previous year's timing.

Clerk Vershay-Hall highlighted that there would be a change in the shredding company this year due to scheduling and service preferences, which resulted in a reduced event duration of two hours, compared to the three-hour event held previously. While discussing logistical modifications, she noted that the updated company schedule affected the event's timing, but it was deemed satisfactory given the anticipated volume of participants.

Despite not having formal paperwork finalized for the present agreement, Clerk Vershay-Hall communicated that an understanding with the Township had been reached, and arrangements were underway. She reassured the Council that the verbal agreements had been established and that remaining logistics were being solidified.

Council members, including those on the events committee, showed support for the event. Alderman Cipiti, who is on the events committee and had already been consulted about the proposal, confirmed his approval and cooperation if needed.

Mayor Soliman acknowledged the collaborative planning efforts and confirmed that the shred event would be included on the agenda for the upcoming Monday City Council meeting. This would formalize ongoing arrangements and allow the City to prepare necessary logistics in partnership with Lockport Township. The event, aimed at providing a secure and community-focused shredding service, was welcomed as an environmentally conscious service to residents, echoing the success of the past year's initiative.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman proposed holding a work session on June 30, 2025, at the Public Works facility to provide an update on PFAS in the water. Mayor Soliman suggested setting up one hundred chairs with the possibility of adding more if needed. The mayor proposed starting the work session at 6:00 PM to accommodate working residents.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for the meeting to start at 6:00 p.m. at Public works on June 30, 2025.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio.

Council members agreed to the work session and discussed ways to advertise it, including social media, the city website, and the sign on Weber Road. City Attorney Stiff advised that they need to post a notice about the change in meeting location.

Mayor Soliman also addressed the City's committees, seeking to update and clarify their roles and memberships. He went through the list of committees:

1. Beautification Committee: Alderman Dyke agreed to remain as Chairman. The Council discussed the committee's past activities and potential future projects.
2. Economic Development Committee: Alderwoman Gazal and Mayor Soliman remain on this committee.
3. Events Committee: Alderman Cipiti stepped down due to personal commitments. Alderwoman Gazal volunteered to take over as Chair, with Alderman Jefferson as Co-Chair.
4. Senior Awareness Committee: This committee was eliminated due to inactivity and overlapping with other organizations' efforts.
5. Veterans/Police Memorial Committee: Mayor Soliman remains on this committee.
6. WESCOM Liaison Committee: Mayor Soliman serves as the liaison, with Alderman Dyke as the backup.

The Council discussed the need to better define the roles and responsibilities of these committees, particularly the Events Committee. They agreed to revisit this topic in a future work session.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

City Administrator Blaine Wing provided several brief updates during the meeting:

1. Administrator Wing asked for feedback on the weekly administrator report, acknowledging its current format and mentioning plans to enhance it by incorporating photos. Administrator Wing suggested that adding visual elements could help make the report more engaging and informative for the Council members, highlighting upcoming events and providing a recap of past events with photos included.
2. Administrator Wing followed up on a question raised earlier about mosquito spraying in the community. Administrator Wing communicated that he had reached out to the Public Works Department, which had confirmed with the vendor that it was too early in the season for mosquito spraying. However, Administrator Wing assured the Council that as soon as Public Works or the vendor provided a date, he would keep the Council informed through the administrator report to ensure timely and transparent communication.
3. Administrator Wing announced the recent order placed for a conference phone unit dedicated to the Council chamber. This new addition aimed to facilitate better remote participation during meetings, as the current method was to use a cell phone close to a microphone, which was not ideal. The installation of a proper conference phone unit would significantly improve the quality of remote communications in future meetings.
4. Administrator Wing encouraged Council members who had not yet met with him individually to schedule meetings at their earliest convenience. Emphasizing the

importance of one-on-one interactions, Administrator Wing expressed his eagerness to gain insights, discuss priorities, and establish a collaborative working relationship with each Council member during his initial weeks in his new role.

Mayor Soliman took a moment to acknowledge that this meeting marked the last work session for Interim Administrator Tony Graff. Highlighting Interim Administrator Graff's dedicated service, Mayor Soliman, along with other Council members, expressed gratitude for his leadership and contributions to the City over the past fifteen months. Interim Administrator Graff had successfully managed transitions and challenges, leaving a positive impact while ensuring a smooth handover to City Administrator Blaine Wing.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 PM.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR