

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

The December 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, Alderman Joe Kubal.

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

MAYOR

There were no agenda items.

CLERK

There were no agenda items.

TREASURER

There were no agenda items.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

1. Credit Card & Purchasing Policy Update Discussion

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke provided an update on changes to the credit card and purchasing policy. He explained that while the authorization levels remained the same, they had cleaned up some of the code due to changes in the reporting structure and tightened approval levels. The purchasing order requirement was removed as it was deemed redundant with the existing robust approval policy. During the discussion, Council members raised concerns about credit card access and controls, with questions about who would have the authority to use the City credit card. Director Gehrke clarified that currently there are three City credit cards assigned to departments (not individuals), with the department heads controlling physical access. However, Council member concerns highlighted the need for clarity and better tracking of card usage.

Several suggestions were discussed including requiring department heads to run purchases through them rather than handing over the physical card. This approach would ensure that the individual making the purchase is directly accountable while maintaining control within the department.

Alternatively, the idea of issuing cards with specific names on them was proposed, making individuals liable for their use. It was noted that the card

is not for personal use and department heads would manage the card, verifying the purpose and cost of purchases before they are made.

City Administrator Blaine Wing expressed that he had worked in communities using both systems, with cards either assigned to departments or to specific individuals and noted that either approach could work effectively if properly implemented, while maintaining accountability through the existing policy which requires frequent receipt checks. He confirmed that in one instance, when he used a card, the accounts payable clerk immediately followed up for receipts to ensure proper documentation and accountability.

After discussion, the Council expressed a strong preference for implementing a more stringent tracking system for card usage. There was also agreement to consider issuing cards to specific individuals rather than departments to further enhance accountability and control over credit card use. The consensus was that both measures would tighten the overall policy and provide a clearer framework for managing City expenditures.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the Credit Card and Purchasing Policy update with the additional provisions.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

2.

Consolidated Strategy & Marketing Proposal

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented a proposal for a consolidated marketing campaign management service to address the lack of strategic coordination in the City's communications. He explained that the current efforts across the website, newsletter, and social media were fragmented and without a comprehensive strategic plan. In search of a solution, Administrator Wing investigated vendors specializing in this area and reached out to both the local government professional association for managers and the local regional chamber for recommendations. Through this research, he identified Method Engine LLC, a company that has collaborated with other municipalities including the city of Downers Grove.

Administrator Wing detailed the proposal, which involved a six-month contract with Method Engine LLC, costing up to \$20,000.00. The estimated cost per month was \$3,000.00, though it would be a variable, itemized rate based on the services provided. This approach was seen as more economical than employing a full-time staff member, with the added benefit of utilizing Method Engine's expertise to both develop a cohesive communications strategy and execute tactical improvements. The plan aimed to synchronize the City's various communication platforms, ensuring that website updates, newsletters, and social media posts were part of a unified effort to enhance public outreach and engagement.

Moreover, Administrator Wing mentioned that the vendor would send a representative to a future Council meeting to provide more in-depth information about the proposal and address any further queries if needed. This opportunity would allow Council members to better understand the potential impact of consolidating the City's communications strategy with the help of a professional service.

Alderman Albert expressed support for the proposal, remarking on how it could have been particularly advantageous right after the City adopted its new logo to effectively promote the City's brand and image. He emphasized the importance of having a strategic plan and consistent messaging across all communication channels.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the Consolidated Marketing Campaign Management and Reporting proposal with Method Engine LLC for six months in an amount not exceeding \$20,000.00.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

3. Approve Ordinance Amending Title 2 (Administration and Personnel), Chapter 2.92 (Actions Against the City) of the Crest Hill City Code of Ordinances

City Attorney Mike Stiff presented a recommendation to repeal Ordinance 427 in section 2.92.0.01 regarding "City to Pay Expenses." He explained the ordinance from 1977 was vague and potentially problematic, as it allowed Council members to hire attorneys at the City's expense for various types of disputes, including disputes with the City itself. Attorney Stiff noted that the City now has comprehensive insurance coverage through SWARM that provides protection for elected officials in most circumstances, making the old ordinance unnecessary.

The Council was divided on this issue. Some members, including Alderwoman Gazal who expressed concerns about repealing an ordinance that provided protection for elected officials without first having a clear understanding of what the SWARM insurance covers. Alderwoman Gazal argued that repealing it without further information could be detrimental, especially since she believed the ordinance could serve as a privilege for Council members dealing with internal issues. During the discussion, Alderwoman Gazal stated, "If the City did something to us, we should have at least that option.

After extensive discussion, Council member Alderman Jefferson raised the point that merely fixing the ordinance might be preferable, but there was consensus to seek clarity from SWARM first. This led to the agreement that representatives from SWARM should be invited to a future meeting in January to explain the insurance coverage for elected officials before making a final decision.

Alderman Albert and other Council members, supported the immediate repeal, viewing the existing language as too vague and potentially problematic. Alderman Albert and others believed that the vagueness could lead to issues, with Alderman Albert stating his preference to repeal the ordinance and later draft a clearer version if needed.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to repeal Ordinance 427 in section 2.92.0.01 "City to Pay Expenses".

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Albert, Kubal, Deserio, Mayor Soliman.

NAYES: Ald. Cipiti, Dyke, Jefferson, Gazal.

ABSENT: None.

The informal vote concluded, resulting in a 4-4 tie, broken by Mayor Soliman voting in favor of the repeal. However, the final decision would be postponed until SWARM could provide further explanation on the insurance aspects.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1. Provide Direction on the Update of the Comprehensive Plan with Housel Lavigne Associates

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter presented a recommendation to update the City's Comprehensive Plan, which was last adopted in May 2014. He explained that comprehensive plans typically should be updated every 8-10 years to remain relevant. Rather than creating an entirely new plan (which would cost 2-3 times more and take up to 2 years), Director Ritter recommended an "audit and update" approach at a cost of \$63,400.00 with a 6-9-month timeline. This would allow the City to review what has been accomplished, what needs updating, and incorporate new priorities like walkability and transportation improvements.

Director Ritter emphasized the changing landscape since the last comprehensive plan, noting that Crest Hill's overall vision may not have dramatically changed, but the economic landscape, development patterns, and community priorities have evolved since 2014, particularly post-COVID. He highlighted that while Crest Hill's growth and development pace might seem steady, there have been significant shifts, especially in community needs and economic factors. One of the main areas of focus for the update is Weber Road, where there is a significant amount of undeveloped land, offering potential for strategic growth. Director Ritter emphasized the necessity to reassess and revise the vision for this area to align with updated economic conditions and community aspirations.

Representatives from Housel Lavigne Associates presented their qualifications and approach to the Council. They emphasized the importance of updating the plan to reflect post-COVID realities and changing community needs. The representatives noted that the firm's familiarity with Crest Hill from the previous comprehensive plan would allow for a more efficient update. In their presentation, they highlighted the

significance of addressing new priorities like walkability and transportation improvements, which have become increasingly relevant considering evolving urban development trends.

Council members engaged in a robust discussion regarding the value of updating the plan. Some members questioned the necessity of the expenditure, considering whether enough had changed to warrant the update. However, Director Ritter and several Council members pointed out that various successful projects have been realized from the 2014 plan, such as the development of the new City Hall. They also recognized that new priorities, like Lake Michigan water access, which were not considered before, could significantly impact future planning and should be included in the updated comprehensive plan.

Director Ritter and the Council acknowledged the importance of having a strategic framework to guide future development, with specific emphasis on the potential Weber Road expansions. The discussion concluded with an understanding that while Crest Hill had achieved many goals from the previous plan, an updated version could better position the City for future opportunities and challenges. The Council agreed that an update would be beneficial to guide future development, particularly along Weber Road.

After discussions, Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve direction on the update of the Comprehensive Plan with Housel Lavigne Associates.

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

UNDECIDED: Ald. Cipiti, Jefferson.

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1. Industrial Wastewater Pretreatment Program SIU Permit Revision

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented a request for revisions to the City's Industrial Wastewater Treatment Program permit for significant industrial users. He noted that Rich Products, a specific user, is seeking to increase their wastewater volume. Administrator Wing emphasized that the City's team, including the Attorney, Finance Department, Public Works, and Engineers, had thoroughly reviewed the request. The team determined that with the new wastewater treatment facility coming online, the City will have adequate capacity to accommodate the increased wastewater volume from Rich Products.

Administrator Wing reassured the Council that the updated agreement, which starts on page 72 of the packet, has been redlined to reflect the necessary revisions. He indicated that the revision process was collaborative, involving input from various departments to ensure all aspects were considered. The updated agreement aligns with the City's goals to effectively manage industrial wastewater while supporting the growth of local businesses.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the Industrial Wastewater Pretreatment Program SIU Permit Revision.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public came forward to address the Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. 5ILCS 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.

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

Executive Session: 8:40 p.m.

Alderperson Oberlin made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS120/2(c)(1). Seconded by Alderman Deserio. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 9:14 p.m.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.
As presented _____
As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR

DRAFT