

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
July 14, 2025

The July 14, 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 Treasurer Jamie Malloy, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, 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, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl.

TOPIC: Approving a Supplemental Resolution for Improvement Under the Illinois Highway Code for Section No 19-00051-01-MS in the amount of \$9,199.00

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained that they were in the final process of closing out this project. He noted that MFT dollars were used for a portion of the project. When they originally started, the project had a resolution amount set for \$423,000. Due to additional expenses, they spent \$432,199.00 out of the Motor Fuel (MFT) fund. Engineer Wiedeman clarified that a supplemental resolution would be needed to officially close the paperwork with Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

Engineer Wiedeman emphasized the necessity for a motion to approve the supplemental resolution for the improvement under the Illinois Highway code for the section number listed, with the specific amount of \$9,199.00.00.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Approving a Resolution for Improvement Under the Illinois Highway Code for Section No 23-00056-00-TL in the amount of \$676,488.75

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained that they were in the process of closing out the Theodore Street/Cedar Street/Gaylord Road traffic signal modernization resurfacing project. Initially, the plan was to fund this project using general funds. However, when additional funding became available in the Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) fund, it was decided at the last minute to utilize MFT funds instead. Engineer Wiedeman acknowledged that he had forgotten to prepare the necessary resolution at that time. To finalize the project's closure with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), a resolution for \$676,488.75 needed to be completed.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: West STP Vissering Pay App #30

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen addressed the Council about the payment request #30 for Vissering Construction with permission to send it to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). The amount discussed for this payment application is \$1,108,332.12, associated with the ongoing project at the west water treatment plant, which remains under construction.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: East STP Emergency Purchase and Service

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented an emergency purchase at the east storage treatment plant (STP), where it was noted that three of the four WAS pumps failed on June 20th. Two of these pumps required complete replacement. In order to address this urgent issue, Interim Director Hansen obtained two quotes from different companies. They decided to go with Metropolitan Pump Company because they had the required pumps readily available on their shelves and could schedule the work for the next day, which was a Saturday. This was discussed with Administrator Wing.

The total cost for the purchase and service of the two replacement pumps from Metropolitan Pump Company amounted to \$32,428.00.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Well 4 Out of Service

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen presented the ongoing issue with Well #4, stating that this specific well was the fourth requirement of substantial work in the seven months since he joined. He explained that Well #4 had been reliable for the City, needing little maintenance over the past decade. However, recent evaluations revealed that significant repairs were now necessary. Considering this, Interim Director Hansen requested approval for an amount not to exceed \$150,000 to complete the necessary construction work on Well #4.

The discussion on Well #4 brought attention to the City's broader efforts in improving maintenance operations. Interim Director Hansen mentioned initial attempts to fix the well by inserting an isolation valve to facilitate repairs, which unfortunately did not resolve the underlying issues. Therefore, the team sought a thorough inspection and quote from Lane,

the company that had successfully worked on Well #10, another well previously affected by lightning strikes leading to high repair costs. Interim Director Hansen noted that the quote from Lane for Well #4 exceeded the previous well repair expense due to additional required work, including extended labor hours and significant piping requirements.

City Administrator Blaine Wing contributed to the discussion by emphasizing the essential need to develop a robust electronic work order system. This initiative is intended to support the City in establishing preventative maintenance schedules for pumps and other critical infrastructure components, aiming to preemptively address potential issues before they necessitate emergency repairs. Administrator Wing acknowledged that the City had fallen behind on preventative maintenance over the past years but assured the Council that the administration was committed to resuming diligence in maintaining City infrastructure moving forward.

During the meeting, Council members and staff explored the potential for implementing a maintenance database to systematically track and schedule required services that would extend the life expectancy of the various wells and infrastructure. Being proactive in terms of tracking and managing these assets was highlighted as a strategic priority.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Community Garage Sale Discussion

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall explained that at the last meeting, Alderman Albert had inquired about placing an advertisement in the newspaper for the upcoming community garage sale. Despite the current cost of \$71.00 for newspaper advertising, the event is already widely advertised through several other media. Clerk Vershay-Hall highlighted that the garage sale is being promoted on electronic signs around the City, on the City's official website, Facebook page, and will also be included in the water bills sent to residents. The garage sales are expected to have a lower participation rate compared to the previous event, which saw seventy-seven participants, due to the start of the school year.

A brief discussion ensued among the Council members regarding the necessity of spending additional funds on newspaper advertising. In response to concerns about the cost, Clerk Vershay-Hall offered to contact the newspaper vendor to check if a better rate than the current \$71.00 could be negotiated and promised to update the Council with any new information obtained. The consensus was in favor of optimizing current expenditure while ensuring effective community engagement through the existing advertising channels.

TOPIC: Codification of Deputy Liquor Commissioner Salary

Mayor Soliman explained that he had been working with City Attorney Mike Stiff, and it was brought to his attention that several years ago when they increased the rate for the Deputy Liquor Commissioner, it was never codified. The Mayor proposed that the most senior and experienced commissioner be paid \$100.00 per month, and if there are two, the least senior and experienced commissioner be paid \$50.00 per month. He noted that this structure reflects the existing practice and had been approved by the Council in the past but

was never officially recorded in the ordinance book. The change involves codifying the office of Deputy Commissioner itself, which had not been officially established in the ordinances even though it is permissible under the state liquor code. This position, filled at the Mayor's discretion, assists in overseeing liquor-related matters in the City.

City Attorney Stiff further added that not only was the policy for paying Deputy Liquor Commissioners not codified, but the position itself was not formally documented in the City ordinances. He confirmed that the Liquor Commissioner, Mayor Soliman, is empowered by law to appoint any person to assist him in fulfilling the Liquor Commissioner's duties, which include reviewing liquor license applications and ensuring compliance with necessary regulations and renewals. They emphasized the importance of formalizing this role in writing to prevent any future ambiguities regarding the duties and compensation of Deputy Commissioners.

Alderman Cipiti raised questions regarding the duties and workload of the Deputy Liquor Commissioners. Mayor Soliman explained that the Deputy Commissioners support him by overseeing liquor application reviews, sitting in on meetings with applicants, checking licenses throughout the city, and ensuring that taxes and other obligations are current. It was clarified that although they do not work every day, they have periodically busy months—specifically May, June, November, and December—when license renewals are due.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Soliman informed the Council that Mima Sazon is behind on her Places for Eating Tax, so they had to remove her liquor license from her establishment. He commented that she can remain open and serve food, but no alcohol can be served. According to the owner of the business her accountant is out of the Country and does not know when he will return to take care of the things she needs to do to make her up to date.

TOPIC: A Resolution Designating and Appointing City Administrator Blaine Wing as the Alternate Delegate to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Grand Prairie Water Commission

Mayor Soliman initiated the discussion regarding the temporary appointment of City Administrator Blaine Wing as the alternate delegate to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Grand Prairie Water Commission.

The current structure has City Engineer Ron Wiedeman as the primary representative, overseeing technical aspects for the commission. Traditionally, the Public Works Director assumes the role of the alternate. However, in the absence of a permanent Public Works Director, City Administrator Blaine Wing would temporarily step into this position.

Administrator Wing clarified that his role as the alternate would be solely to step in when necessary and that Engineer Wiedeman continues to fulfill primary attendance duties. It was noted that Crest Hill was the only participating organization in the water commission that lacked an appointed alternative, underscoring the need for this resolution to ensure the

City's full representation in meetings and decision-making processes. Administrator Wing expressed intentions for this arrangement to be temporary, anticipating that once a Public Works Director is hired, that individual would assume responsibilities as the alternate.

The City Attorney confirmed that the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Grand Prairie Water Commission stipulated that the alternate must be a City employee, and Administrator Wing met this requirement. Assurance was also provided that the appointment adhered to all existing bylaws of the Grand Prairie Water Commission. This decision aligns with a strategic emphasis on thorough representation and influence in technical discussions affecting the water commission activities, crucial for the City's interests.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Discussion of Recruitment Firms for Public Works Director Search

City Administrator Blaine Wing initiated a discussion regarding the recruitment firms that could be involved in the search for a new Public Works Director. Outlining the details, Administrator Wing mentioned that three firms had been considered for this important task: MGT, Local Government Staffing Solutions, and Ardent Municipal Support Inc.

Administrator Wing pointed out that MGT, which Crest Hill has previously used for staffing purposes, presents the highest cost for a full recruitment search, quoting \$26,000.00. Notably, MGT has also removed its guaranteed policy, which is used to cover instances where the successfully hired candidate leaves their position within a year. This lack of a fallback plan prompted Administrator Wing to recommend dismissing MGT as a choice for this recruitment effort, leaning instead towards the other two options, which both offer some form of assurance if the placed individual decides to part ways with the City prematurely.

Delving further into the proposals from the alternative firms, Administrator Wing shared that Local Government Staffing Solutions offered to slash its usual full search fee down to \$17,100.00 for Crest Hill, acknowledging the City as a potential new client, while Ardent Municipal Support Inc's offering sits at \$21,500.00. Despite being distinct in pricing, both firms remained competitive in terms of scope and guarantee, providing a safety net if there are initial hiccups concerning the fit and stability of the newly appointed Director.

Administrator Wing commented that he plans to return with information, alongside a precise recommendation for Council consideration at an upcoming meeting.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Stuart Soifer, an HOA president and resident, addressed the Council regarding permit fees for their upcoming street resurfacing project. He requested consideration for waiving or reducing the \$2,400.00 permit fee for their 99-home community. During the discussion, Stuart clarified that he serves as the HOA president for the single-family homes and that there are ninety-nine homes in the community. He emphasized the financial burden that the permit fees impose on the HOA and highlighted how the resurfaced streets benefit not just their community but the City by contributing to overall property values.

Mayor Soliman responded by stating that there are about twenty-four other HOAs in the City, and waiving fees for one would necessitate considering waivers for all others. He pointed out that the City had previously worked with the HOA to explore cost-saving measures, including meetings where City staff, including City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, offered guidance.

City Administrator Wing suggested exploring the possibility of setting a maximum fee for HOAs and other nonprofits, which could potentially reduce the cost by \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00. He noted that while the city needs to cover inspection costs, there might be room to adjust the fee schedule to assist HOAs better. Administrator Wing offered to research what other communities are doing regarding such initiatives and come back with a proposal. He mentioned that some communities implement maximum fees for nonprofits to alleviate financial pressure without entirely waiving inspections or administrative costs.

The Council expressed interest in seeing what other municipalities are doing and acknowledged the need to balance recouping costs with supporting HOAs in maintaining infrastructure that benefits the wider community.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman provided several updates regarding ongoing developments and initiatives in the City of Crest Hill:

The City anticipates the submission of a liquor license application for a package liquor store at the former Subway location on Broadway and Stern. The property owner, Sonia, confirmed her intention to submit the necessary paperwork soon. This development is expected to bring a new business to the area, utilizing the building's existing structure, which presents limited parking suitable for package liquor operations.

Another update concerned a special request from Manny's Bar Manager, who expressed interest in installing a Route 66 sign on their property. The mayor supported this idea, highlighting its significance considering the upcoming 100-year anniversary of Route 66. Such a sign could enhance local heritage and tourism appeal along Broadway Street, which aligns with the historic Route 66 path.

Additionally, potential new owners have shown interest in the old Jitterheads location, having already applied. They are exploring the possibility of extending operating hours on Saturday nights from 10 PM to 11 PM and starting Sunday brunch service at 9 AM. In response to this inquiry, Mayor Soliman proposed considering amending the current liquor ordinance to accommodate these extended hours, not just for the Jitterheads site but for all restaurants in the City. He emphasized that extending operational hours, especially on

weekends, could benefit local businesses and create a more vibrant community atmosphere, aligning with broader economic and cultural growth efforts.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

Administrator Blaine Wing provided a comprehensive update on the ongoing effort to transition the remaining sixty-five homes to smart meters, emphasizing the critical role of improved communication and streamlined processes in this initiative. He detailed the refinement of their approach, which includes adjusting the language in the letters sent to homeowners to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. Administrator Wing noted that instead of the letters being sent from Interim Director Julius Hansen, they will now come from him, aiming for a softer and more approachable tone that encourages homeowners to participate in scheduling appointments for their smart meter installations.

Administrator Wing also highlighted the collaboration with UMI, allowing direct scheduling through a phone number included in the letters, optimizing the appointment process to prevent confusion and encouraging timely responses. Additionally, they have allocated responsibilities to the new temporary administrative staff member, Brian, who will provide a supportive role in addressing any challenges residents face, ensuring the process is handled with diligence and efficiency.

In parallel to these procedural improvements, Administrator Wing mentioned the City's ongoing research into potential financial assistance for residents facing hurdles in completing the smart meter installations. With examples from other communities that have set precedents for offering such aid, Administrator Wing underscored their commitment to exploring sustainable solutions. These solutions include potentially implementing fund allocations for unforeseen circumstances during installations, like approaches adopted by cities like Naperville, which had integrated costs for associated adjustments or upgrades alongside smart meter placements to alleviate financial strain on homeowners.

Furthermore, Administrator Wing informed the Council that coordination efforts are in place to manage data through cross-referencing rental property lists, thus ensuring comprehensive outreach extends to all relevant stakeholders, including property owners and tenants, to facilitate broader community involvement. The goal remains set on encouraging full participation, significantly reducing the remaining number of households, and aligning the City's smart metering system with modern standards to promote better resource management and service efficiency.

Mayor Soliman stated that there is a need for an executive session for Personnel under 5ILCS 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, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

There being eight (8) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:06 p.m.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

There being eight (8) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 8:30p.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 8:30 PM.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR