

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
July 28, 2025

The July 28, 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 Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Police Chief Ed Clark, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Angelo Deserio, Alderman Joe Kubal, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl.

TOPIC: Liquor License Applicant – Mickey's Gyros

Mayor Raymond Soliman initiated the discussion by recognizing a testimonial regarding Mickey's Gyros' stating their commendable service and food quality, noting, great food every time you go through the drive-thru and quick prompt service. Mayor Soliman then outlined the status of the liquor license application stating that this is a restaurant license, which is Mayor's choice, and no action is needed, and everything is in order.

Mayor Soliman explained that the applicant, Tony, had submitted most of the necessary paperwork, and the only thing we are waiting for is the dram shop insurance certification. He further explained once he receives that, he will give him a copy of the temporary license for him to ascertain his state liquor license. Mayor Soliman affirmed that upon receipt of the state liquor license, Tony would be authorized to serve beer and wine.

Mayor Soliman concluded by congratulating Tony and explained how he can contact Marybel, so he can do a business promotion.

TOPIC: Resolution Approving an Agreement for Design and Related Services for the New Water SCADA System located in the Eastern Receiving Station for Grand Prairie Water Commission (GPWC) Delivery Points by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Strand Associates, Inc. for an Amount of \$43,000.00

City Engineer Ron Wiedeman explained that the packet contained an agreement between the City and Strand Associates to provide design services for relocating the existing SCADA system from the existing east plant into the new east receiving station. Engineer Wiedeman commented that this is to move the existing SCADA system for water from the existing east plant into the new east receiving station.

He further elaborated that the project would include upgrading SCADA systems in all well houses. Currently, right now, we are doing inspections on the well homes to find out what needs to be overhauled and updated. Engineer Wiedeman explained that the reason this work was not included in the original design scope was because the scope was not clearly defined and they did not know exactly what systems were in shape and which ones need to be replaced.

Alderperson Oberlin asked if the entire system would be new and how long they typically last? Engineer Wiedeman confirmed that it would be new, and he clarified that the biggest issue right now is that the main SCADA is in the east plant while our operators are in the receiving station. Engineer Wiedeman then commented that the new configuration would provide redundancy, with Wiedeman explaining that if something goes on at the east receiving station for water, they can still get SCADA through the sanitary plant, the sanitary plant, and vice versa.

Regarding authorization and training, Engineer Wiedeman confirmed that Water Operator John Kemp and his staff would be the primary users of the system. When asked about the typical lifespan of such systems, the discussion revealed that some existing equipment was indeed old and needed replacement.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

TOPIC: Permit Fee Waiver Update

City Administrator Blaine Wing explained that the packet contained information regarding the City's permit fee waiver policy, which he had asked staff to research by examining practices in neighboring municipalities.

Administrator Wing outlined that a few years ago, Council did approve our Community and Economic Development Director and the Building Commissioner, to be able to waive up to \$2500.00 in fee waivers for other governmental entities. However, he pointed out the absence of provisions for the City Administrator position, despite overseeing both positions.

Administrator Wing presented two primary recommendations: firstly, he sought authority to waive permit fees up to \$10,000.00 for governmental entities, reflecting standard administrator purchasing authority limits of \$20,000.00 to \$25,000.00. Secondly, he proposed adopting Joliet's approach of offering a 50% fee reduction for non-exempt and nonprofit organizations, including homeowners' associations (HOAs), with a ceiling of \$10,000.00.

Alderman Cipiti asked if there will always be third party plan reviews? Commissioner Seeman commented that he does 90% of the review for projects, except for plumbing, which is outsourced to review. Alderman Cipiti asked who would review for roads and it was stated that Engineer Wiedeman would inspect for the roads.

Building Commissioner Don Seeman articulated findings from research conducted on neighboring communities:

- **Joliet:** No permit fees imposed on government units; tax-exempt entities receive 50% off permit fees.
- **Channahon:** Residents aged 65+ charged \$10 for specific permits.
- **Mokena:** Offers reduced fees for governmental, religious, educational, or charitable purposes.
- **Romeoville:** Waived expedited review fees for solar panels and wind turbines.
- **Shorewood:** Exempts school districts, fire districts, and other governmental entities from permit fees.

The ensuing discussion primarily concentrated on HOA road and alley projects, with several Council members voicing concerns regarding the proposed policy's equitable treatment and reach.

Stuart Soifer, a resident, and an HOA president addressed the Council, highlighting the financial challenges HOAs face regarding infrastructure maintenance: they suggested that city ownership would involve greater taxpayer costs. Discussions further illuminated project qualification confusions for fee waivers, and City staff clarified that undertakings should be assumed by the HOA as an organization, not by individual members.

The Council expressed frustration over limited data on how other towns manage road work. City Attorney Mike Stiff proposed an interim strategy: endorse immediate project actions while continuing research for a more inclusive policy—achieving Council support.

Alderspersion Oberlin commented that we waive this for other taxing bodies but it will still come out of the taxpayers pocket, one way or another and she does believe that there should be an adjustment but when people buy into private entities they need to understand that is what they are, a private entity and if they do not want to be in that situation then they should not buy there. She also commented that there are private alleys in the City that are not HOAs, which will end up in this same issue.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she understands people chose to buy in a private entity, but they were not informed that the streets did not meet City code and asked why they were built to not meet City code. She then commented that looking at the big picture there will not be a waiver all the time and this is an investment for the City since they do not maintain these streets.

Attorney Stiff commented that we can give directions to staff and then ratify the decision later. Alderman Albert commented that it would be good to know which direction the Council is leaning, whether it be 50% or full amount.

Alderman Albert commented that it is unfair for the Council to have to make this decision tonight when two weeks ago this was a topic specifically about the streets and now, we have added in discussion of government entities and more instead of focusing on the streets.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote which resulted in a split decision on adopting **0% fees** for HOA street and alley projects:

AYES: Ald. Albert, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson

NAYES: Cipiti, Dyke.

ABSENT: Deserio, Kubal.

It was stated that Alderman Cipiti and Alderman Dyke would support Administrator Wings recommendation.

The recorded vote was 4-2 for 0% on streets. City Attorney Stiff confirmed staff directives to draft a policy with a full 100% waiver for HOA street initiatives, following immediate requirements for formal enactment at the upcoming meeting on August 11th.

TOPIC: Discuss Smart Water Meter Assistance Program

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented information about a program to assist the remaining sixty-seven residential water users who had not yet replaced their water meters with smart meters. Administrator Wing explained that the City had been stuck at around 75 to 67 holdouts for some time and had researched how other municipalities handled similar situations.

Administrator Wing noted that while the Council had recently imposed a manual reading fee to cover costs, staff sought additional tools to encourage conversion. Based on research of other communities, Administrator Wing proposed two assistance options: a hardship grant of up to \$300 and a 0% interest loan for up to 36 months, also capped at \$300.00.

The \$300.00 amount was determined based on quotes from local plumbers. Administrator Wing explained he reached out to our local plumbers and was given an estimate price of \$250.00 and a resident with a hardship received a quote for \$265.00.

Alderman Cipiti inquired about the reasons residents had not yet converted their meters. Administrator Wing responded that based on 3-5 contacts, the main issue was the placement of hot water tanks in small spaces that made meter access difficult. He emphasized that the City would waive the \$50 permit fee but still require inspections for safety reasons, particularly when water heaters needed to be moved temporarily.

Alderman Cipiti raised concerns about whether non-responsive residents would suddenly respond to the assistance program. Administrator Wing acknowledged that the program would not achieve 100% conversion but would provide a mechanism for those experiencing genuine hardships.

The program would be funded through approximately \$25,000.00 in interest earned on water fund accounts, not from resident fees. Administrator Wing recommended limiting the program through the end of the year to create urgency. He noted that in his experience, some households never convert until the property is sold and new owners want the automatic read and leak detection features.

When asked about situations requiring more extensive work, such as meters buried behind walls, Administrator Wing clarified that either assistance option would be capped at \$300.00, with any additional costs being the homeowner's responsibility.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to direct staff and the City Attorney to create a policy and resolution for the hardship grant and 0% interest loan program up to \$300.00 for no more than 36 months.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman had nothing to report.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

Administrator Blaine Wing reminded the Council that he is off next week, and Police Chief Ed Clark will be acting.

Mayor Soliman stated that there is a need for an executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(1) and 5ILCS 120/2(c)(2).

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Executive Session 8:16 p.m.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Deserio, Kubal.

There being (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened 9:10p.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 9:10 PM.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR

DRAFT