

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
March 10, 2025

The March 10, 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 Glen Conklin, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, 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 City Administrator Tony Graff, Community & Economic Development Director Patrick Ainsworth, Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

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

TOPIC: EXECUTIVE SESSION 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(11)

Attorney Stiff commented that there will be an executive session for potentially pending litigation.

(#1) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Gazal, to go into an executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

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 7:01 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Gazal to reconvene from the executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

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.

Reconvened 7:50 p.m.

TOPIC: Independent Contractor Consulting Services Agreement with Ronald Mentzer

Interim City Administrator Tony Graff commented that Interim Director Ron Mentzer is with MGT, but we would like to have him as an independent contractor for consulting services. He stated that the reason we are requesting this is because this would be at a lower cost than what we are paying MGT currently and because he is working on projects for the plan commission, and we would like him to be a mentor for the new Community & Economic Development Director while he is learning about the city and our processes.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that Interim Director Mentzer would only be paid for the hours he would work, and the hourly pay would be \$115.00.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if the Community & Economic Development Director is capable of doing these projects/jobs. Interim Administrator Graff commented that Director Patrick Ainsworth can do these projects/jobs, but Interim Director Mentzer would be providing resources of support for Director Ainsworth.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the city still needs a City Planner, and she is fine with Interim Director Mentzer taking the City Planner position.

Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that there is a lot of work that goes into these projects once the Council approves to make sure the terms and conditions are followed. He also commented that this type of contract is just for hours as needed.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he feels Director Ainsworth is seasoned and has a lot of experience in the field and is capable of doing these projects and would not need a long mentorship like requested.

Alderman Oberlin asked what we are paying MGT for Interim Director Mentzer and what portion they were paying him? Interim Administrator Graff commented that we were paying \$126.00 to MGT but he did not receive all of that since some went towards insurance and other things.

Alderman Oberlin asked if Ron Mentzer comes onboard as a consultant, we will still need Maura Rigoni's services? Interim Administrator Graff commented that she brings the GIS mapping with Robinson Engineering for the city and Director Ainsworth would have to decide on that.

Alderman Oberlin asked Director Ainsworth how he would feel having Interim Director Mentzer as a consultant. Director Ainsworth commented that the Community Development Department has been severely understaffed for many years and without a full-time City Planner and Director. He then commented that there are dozens of hours that go into a case and not just the one thing that the City Council sees, there is a lot more work involved. He then commented that without Interim Director Mentzer that would mean he would have to work on every case himself and then he could not go knock on doors, attract businesses, fill vacancies, follow up with brokers, and deal with code enforcement issues. He then stated that he appreciates Interim Director Mentzer being there and they do bounce ideas off each other and with him being at the city would help take things off his plate so he can deal with other items.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that the taxpayers are her boss, and she does not want to see any wasting or people doing the same roles. She also commented that she believes Interim Director Mentzer needs to be reporting directly to Director Ainsworth since he is the head of that department. She then stated that she thinks the contract should read a renewal at two-month increments.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she would like to see Interim Director Mentzer in Maura's role as a City Planner.

Alderman Cipiti commented that the contract reads twenty-four hours unless more is needed then City Council and the Mayor would approve more hours, and he then asked how that would work? Director Ainsworth commented that it would be a contract amendment and would go back to the City Council for approval.

Interim Director Mentzer thanked the Council for their kind words, and he commented that he enjoyed his time with Crest Hill and has worked hard to do his best in the limited time and believes he made a positive difference on the culture in the department and the service the department provides to the community.

Interim Director Mentzer then commented that it is important for Director Ainsworth to have support so he does not need to be working on Planner type projects which would pull him away from Economic Development if he has no support.

Interim Director Mentzer then commented that he has other opportunities with the agency he works for that would carry him more than two months, he is not saying he would not work for the two months with the city, but he would have to really consider since he has other opportunities.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she feels Interim Director Mentzer would be an asset to the city and she would like to see him in the Planner position.

Alderman Jefferson commended Interim Director Mentzer for his knowledge and experience he has brought to the city. He then commented that he is not in agreement to pay three people since Maura Rigoni will still be on as retainer when needed.

Director Ainsworth commented that he has contacted Maura Rigoni regarding Plan Commission cases since she has the files, and her hours are extremely limited.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to hire Interim Director Ron Mentzer as an independent contractor with consulting services not to exceed four months with two changes:

- Ron Mentzer would report to Director Patrick Ainsworth
- The Mayor is removed from approval if more than 24 hours is needed.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

TOPIC: East STP Pumps and Flow Meter Expenditures

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen commented that three pumps were not working at the east STP and since that time one pump has been repaired for very little cost but there are two pumps that have been disassembled, evaluated, and found to be at a cost of \$93,702.46 to have rebuilt. Unfortunately, the bad news is that it would be twenty-five weeks to get the parts, which is six months, and this is not good.

Interim Director Hansen commented that there is another option to get a quote for two new pumps, which we thought would be more expensive than rebuilding the pumps we had but the quote for two new pumps was \$93,279.00 but it is still twenty-five weeks to receive the two new pumps. He then commented that out of the two choices he would recommend the two new pumps over the two rebuilt pumps, but he is concerned about the twenty-five weeks wait time.

He then mentioned that there is a third option which would be to purchase two new pumps from a different manufacturer if they are compatible with the location of these pumps. These two new pumps would be \$70,818.68 but there would be engineering involved to make sure they fit and work properly, but this would need to be investigated.

He is requesting to approve a new reduced amount not to exceed \$175,000.00 in total to complete the work of two influent pumps, the transfer pump, and the flow meter.

Mayor Soliman asked Interim Director Hansen how long it will take to find out if these others are compatible. Interim Director Hansen commented that he will make a call to the engineers to see if they have heard anything from Flygt and he is hoping to have an answer by the end of the week.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

TOPIC: Well 12 Change

Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen commented that Well 12 has been under construction since November 18, 2024, and we need to get this back by April. The contractor needs to do some welding on the vessel that contains the filter mechanism. Every time they weld to the steel on the vessel that has been there a long time the welds fail because of the heat of the steel existing. This was unforeseen when they did the quote back in April of 2024.

Interim Director Hansen commented that this would be a change order of a not to exceed amount of \$65,000.00 to weld steel around the bottom of the tank. If approved the work can begin next week.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no public comments.

MAYOR UPDATES:

There were no Mayor updates.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

Interim City Administrator Tony Graff commented that the Finance Director has given an update to let us know that the Property Tax Rebate checks are completed and will be at the post office for delivery by Friday, March 14, 2025.

Alderman Jefferson requested to address the situation regarding what happened with the resident from Willow Falls last week with the Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen. He commented that he received a ton of calls, emails, and text messages from residents from Willow Falls Community that was upset because of Interim Director Hansens conversation with a resident from that community. He then asked the Interim Director what his account of that conversation was and why this resident was made to feel less than nothing after that conversation.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the resident was Donna.

Interim Director Julius Hansen commented that he received a call from Donna, the president of the townhome association, with a request to have litter picked up immediately on Knapp Road. He also commented that she said they contacted the Public Works Department the day prior and was told that the litter was picked up and then stated that the employee lied to her stating it was picked up when it was not picked up. Interim Director Hansen then expressed his concern that a Public Works employee would not lie about litter pickup and said there must be some miscommunication because that employee would not lie about picking up litter. He then commented that he guessed that a crew was dispatched to pick up litter and that crew picked up what they thought was being requested. Interim Public Works Director Hansen then explained to Donna that litter pick-up, in his opinion, is a low priority and there are a lot of things to do in Public Works, but he stated he never told her we would not pick up the litter. He did not want to call a crew away from jobs they were doing to pick up litter which would be inefficient. He then explained to the resident that it would be picked up but not picked up that day since it was a low priority.

Interim Director Hansen then commented that later that day he received a call from Alderwoman Gazal asking what is so important that Public Works would be doing to not be able to pick up litter. He then stated that the department is very busy, but he would find out and that is when he found out they had five employees at training in Romeoville and others were doing J.U.L.I.E. locates. He commented that it was handled correctly in his opinion but believes his comments were taken out of context and he did not mean to offend anyone in doing what he thought was a triage type of thing within the department.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the resident called the city three times, and she also called the Clerk's Office since no one was answering at Public Works. She then explained

that the resident told her that she had spoken with Director Hansen about all the garbage along the road and we are on the bottom of his list when it comes to picking up garbage on our roads.

Alderwoman Gazal then commented that she called Interim Director Hansen, and he relayed the same thing stating that they were busy, and litter pick up is at the bottom of the list. Alderwoman Gazal then commented that there is no snow plowing, grass cutting, and no watermain break, so telling the resident it is not your job is not right. She then asked what is being done during the free time since the job of Public Works is to clean the city.

Interim Director Hansen then asked if he answered everyone's questions and if there were any other concerns and he said again that it was taken out of context. He then commented that he has not been with the city that long to know the history in how you handle these situations, and he is just an interim trying to help and doing the best he can in a department that has a lot going on.

Alderman Cipiti commented that we are not disputing how busy or not busy your department is but when you interact with a resident or businessowner, especially over the phone, there should be a high level of customer service. He then commented no matter we agree or not agree with the person, we need to have a high level of professionalism when responding to them.

Interim Director Hansen commented that the customer service he provides with Public Works is the best that he can, and this is just a litter pickup. He also commented that he has provided extremely good customer service with many other factors that are more significant.

Alderman Jefferson asked if there is a secretary at the Public Works Department that should be answering the phones? Interim Director Hansen commented that there is an Administrative Clerk who answers the phone, and an Administrative Assistant, and if that does not work then the calls are routed to his phone. He then commented that in this particular case those two people did not pick up the phone for whatever reason and it went to his phone.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

A resident approached the podium and commented to Interim Director Hansen that Willow Falls is a retirement community, and she would suggest in the future that he takes their name and their number and tell them that you will put it on the list and get back to them because that is what those residents want to hear. She then commented that those residents pull out of their area and see 'crap' all over and that it is upsetting to them, and it might be on the bottom of your list, but it is on the top of their list.

Attorney Stiff commented that there is a need for an executive session for personnel.

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

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Executive Session 9:06 p.m.

(#4) 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. Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Methvin, Jefferson.

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Reconvened 9:24 p.m.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR