

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
February 24, 2025

The February 24, 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, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin, Alderman Darrell Jefferson (left at 8:57p), Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Community & Economic Development Director Patrick Ainsworth, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: City Treasurer Glen Conklin, Interim Administrator Tony Graff, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman commented that he received messages from the Interim City Administrator Tony Graff and the City Treasurer Glen Conklin will not be in attendance for tonight's meeting, they are sick.

TOPIC: American Italian Cultural Society Waiver Request on the Places for Eating Tax

John Mauzer, President of the American Italian Cultural Society, approached the podium and explained that he is requesting an exemption from the city for the two percent Places for Eating Tax. He stated that they are a non-profit charitable organization, and they have been educating and sharing the tradition in their culture for over thirty-six years to the communities. They donate over \$627.00 a month in spaghetti dinner tickets to their neighbors, the First Responders for Lockport, Joliet, and Rockdale Fire Departments, and also the Crest Hill Police Department.

They also give free hall rentals to the Crest Hill Police Department for their holiday party. They donate a percentage of the festa proceeds to local not-for-profit charities. They also allow the Lions Club to use the hall at no charge and they also donate to families in need, as well.

John then stated that the club lives 'paycheck to paycheck' and the only income besides their dues is the festa income. They raised their dues in 2023, but they are limited. He mentioned that food costs are up, and the spaghetti dinner revenue is down twelve percent.

He then mentioned that in 2023 the club lost \$18,699.80 and in 2024 they went through the budget numbers, and they made a slight profit of \$4,391.24.

It was mentioned that they are renovating the club, but it was for health department concerns and that money comes from the second and third quarter PPE Covid money.

He also mentioned that the labor union is charging them now to rent their parking lot which is \$700.00 a month and \$8,400.00 a year along with seven spaghetti dinner tickets per month and free hall rental, which costs the club \$10,030.00 a year.

He then mentioned that the two percent Place for Eating Tax is going to really hurt the club, and they know they can pass this two percent to the guest but how much can one pay for a spaghetti dinner, when it is already \$13.00 a plate?

The Club Prayer states that they want to pass the legacy on to our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren and that legacy is in dire jeopardy.

Attorney Stiff commented that he did not draft the FAQs for the Place for Eating Tax, and it is not in our ordinance and this ordinance was passed after the IML model ordinance just as the Village of Glencoe and the Village of Lombard has and he has advised the Interim Administrator Graff of this. The FAQ states to exempt them but it is not in the ordinance. He then commented that if the Council wants to amend the ordinance to exempt 501c's he can draft that and make it clear to exempt 501c's but as of now our ordinance does not state that.

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke commented that he had noticed that the documents we have on file are similar to the Village of Glencoe, and it seems to be they used Village of Glencoe as a template.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked who created the FAQ document? Attorney Stiff commented that he believed that it would have been the former Finance Director Lisa Banovetz, the former City Administrator Jim Marino and the Treasurer Glen Conklin at that time. He also stated that it was never sent to him to create or review.

It was commented that more research needs to be done, and this topic needs to be tabled.

This is tabled until the March 10th work session meeting.

TOPIC: Update on Proposed A&D Storage Facility at the Southwest Corner of Renwick Road and Borio Drive

Community & Economic Development Director Patrick Ainsworth commented that the applicant of A&D Storage would like to reapply for the special use ordinance 1931, which states in exhibit C that concrete was to be used for the driveway pavement, and they are wanting to update the pavement to asphalt.

Aldersperson Oberlin commented that it is imperative that the units are concrete and not asphalt.

Alderswoman Gazal commented that she has looked at the four storage units and found one that is gravel which is going to be investigated, and the other storage facilities do have concrete and asphalt. She also commented that no special favors will be had and if no other floor plans are changed, she stated that the residents are okay with that change.

Steve Gulden, a consultant for A&D Storage, commented that they just want a minor change from concrete to asphalt in the interior drive aisles.

Alderwoman Gazal asked for the record if there would be any other changes and was told that there are no other changes.

Alderman Cipiti asked that no other changes would be requested. Steve commented that they did submit plans to have an optional office out of one of the storage units, but they would comply with all building and fire codes, along with water & sewer Tap-Ons.

Rudy Dixon commented that they have a potential buyer for the facility, and they would like to use asphalt since that is the standard that they use with all their facilities.

Alderman Jefferson asked if the security would remain the same and was told it would still be the same as planned.

Attorney Stiff commented that this is going back to the Plan Commission and staff are reviewing the plans to make sure the plans submitted are identical to what was submitted prior, and the only change is the asphalt in the interior aisles.

Steve requested that after the Plan Commission meeting if they can forgo the work session and go straight to the Council meeting for the first Monday in April for approval. It was stated that if there are no changes to the plans that would be doable. The special Plan Commission meeting is being held on March 27, 2025, to accommodate A&D Storage. The first Council meeting in April is April 7, 2025, in which they would come before the Council for approval.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Discussion for Consideration to Amend Business & Burglar Alarm License Late Penalty Fees in General and for the Following Businesses: Del Toro Transmission, Adil Pediatrics, Hendrickson Bumper & Trim and Prestige Brick Pavers & Landscapers

Mrs. Adil, owner of Adil Pediatrics, commented that she is requesting a waiver of the business license penalty fees for 2025.

Alderman Cipiti asked her why she feels she should receive a waiver for the penalty fees. Mrs. Adil commented that in the past twenty-one years she has paid on time, and this is the first time she has missed the payment deadline. She stated that it is her fault since she was out of time and missed it, but she has never missed a payment in the last twenty-one years.

Mayor Soliman asked the City Clerk, Christine Vershay-Hall, if she wanted to comment regarding this matter. Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall commented that she feels the Council needs to follow their ordinance and leave the penalty of the late fees. All the businesses were given earlier notice this year than they have in the past.

Mayor Soliman commented that the ordinance reads that the penalty is three times the amount of the license and the license is \$50.00 which would make the penalty \$150.00 for a total of \$200.00. He then clarified that Mrs. Adil is requesting a waiver for a total amount of \$150.00, which is the penalty fee, and she commented that it was correct.

Alderman Dyke asked how the businesses were contacted regarding their license. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that they were sent the original mailing, an email and then the ones who had not paid were sent a past due notice.

She also commented that fifteen businesses have come in as of today and have paid the late fee. Alderman Cipiti asked if we would have to waive the penalty and refund the fifteen businesses who have already paid the penalty fees? Attorney Stiff commented that they would have to be refunded as well.

Attorney Stiff also commented that last year relief was given to the businesses who had come in asking for waivers. He also commented that we drafted a tiered penalty that gave everybody a grace period into April and refunded money, and this was to be a one-time deal.

Mrs. Adil commented that she did not know she could request a waiver until the Clerk's office told her. Alderwoman Gazal commented that they should not be telling you to come to the Clerk's office because if we waive for one business it must be waived for everyone.

Attorney Stiff commented that the administrative penalty fees was raised three times the license amount because it was such a little penalty before and many businesses were not paying their license on time, and we had to raise it to encourage those businesses to comply and pay on time. He then commented that the ordinance needs to have the language that there is no appeals or waivers from the City Council.

Alderman Albert commented that there needs to be a clear understanding of how the businesses are getting notified of their renewals. He then asked Clerk Vershay-Hall if the businesses were getting letters, emails and what the time frame was since it is not documented anywhere.

Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that her department sent an email out to those who were late and then a past due notice went out in the mail. She then commented that the first letter of renewal went out in November with the application, then an email went out to those that have an email on file letting them know they are late, then a second letter was mailed letting them know they are late. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that there was a total of seventy-eight businesses that did not pay on time and last year we had 124 late businesses.

Attorney Stiff commented that he recommends doing an informal vote tonight but at the Council meeting each business should be able to make their case and the Council vote on each business individually.

Raul Salazar, owner of Prestige Brick Pavers & Landscapers, approached the podium and explained that he was in Mexico taking care of his father when the business license was due. When he returned, he came to the city to pay for his license and was told there were penalties. He then came to the Council meeting to request a waiver of the penalties and was told to come to the Council meeting for discussion.

Raul commented that the penalty of three times the license cost is high and like a punishment. He understands that you have to be responsible and pay your bills but when you have family emergencies you cannot control that.

He commented that his business is very limited, and it is just his wife and himself and having to pay the penalty hurts their pocket. He commented that he is not refusing to pay but he wanted to express his feelings about this.

He also mentioned that when he paid for his credit card and mentioned they were out of town for an emergency they waived his late fees.

Laura Boyne, a representative of Hendrickson Bumper & Trim, approached the podium and commented that they had two individuals who had been with the company for a long time retire and they took care of the business licenses. She then commented that they found the envelope in some mail that had been stacking up. The new employees did not know the timing of the license requirements. Laura commented that they have never been late in the past and they have been in the community for over fifty years, and this is why she is asking for a waiver.

Omar Ibarra, owner of Del Toro Transmission, approached the podium and commented that he honestly forgot about the license and if he had the money, he would not be here asking for a waiver. He commented that \$150.00 is quite a lot of money for a penalty fee, which is why he is requesting a waiver. He also mentioned that in the past he was late with the IRS, and he gave them a call and they were generous and helped him out. He also commented that he realizes this is just a one-time thing and hopes the Council will consider the waiver.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on waiving all four businesses penalty fees in the amount of:

- Adil Pediatrics - \$150.00 Waiver
- Prestige Brick Pavers & Landscapers - \$225.00
- Hendrickson Bumper & Trim - \$450.00
- Del Toro Transmission - \$150.00

AYES: Ald. Methvin.

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

ABSENT: None.

This will be on the agenda for the March 3, 2025, Council Meeting.

Attorney Stiff commented that these businesses will need a separate vote at the Council meeting. He also commented that if the Council would like the ordinance amended, he would like guidance on how the Council would like to amend the ordinance.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if we could send the renewal letter in October to give the businesses more time. Alderperson Oberlin is fine with sending them out in October but that is not going to change business owners forgetting or being out of town.

It was decided that the Council will discuss further regarding changing the ordinance at a future work session.

TOPIC: Independent Contractor Consulting Services Agreement with Ronald Mentzer

Mayor Soliman commented that the documents in the packet were drafted by Interim City Administrator Tony Graff and since he is not at the meeting tonight, the mayor asked to table this topic until March 10, 2025. Council agreed to table the agenda item until March 10, 2025.

TOPIC: Discuss Chapter 2.12: Alderman: Section 2.12.010 Compensation

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke commented that this matter is regarding the paid absences of the Council. He commented that there needs to be some clarification on the confusion on paying Council members for their absences.

Director Gehrke commented that Attorney Stiff has redrafted the ordinance to make this clearer and to avoid any confusion in the future. He then commented that the ordinance does allow for City Council meetings to have preferential reimbursement treatment over work sessions since there are two different rates. A city council meeting is \$200.00 per meeting and a work session meeting is \$55.00 per meeting.

Attorney Stiff commented that Alderman Dyke had found overpayments of compensation for some Council members while doing research that went back to the last fiscal year. He then commented that the Finance Department is doing an audit and will come back to the Council later to discuss the findings.

Alderman Gazal commented that she thought this was supposed to be on tonight's agenda. Attorney Stiff commented that he understands Alderman Dyke has done research, but the Finance Director needs to investigate as well.

Alderman Dyke questioned if there are other mistakes in payroll being made with the employees pay benefits since the Council members pay has been wrong. He then commented that he would like to see the city have a Krono system where the employees can clock in and out with their badge since this would be more accurate.

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke commented that our ERP system has the capability, and it was rolled out to the Finance Department employees three weeks ago and today it was rolled out to the Clerk's office and Building Department. If this goes smoothly, it will be rolled out to the Police Department and then Public Works Department next. This software does have the capability to have geofencing and the time-off requests will be transmitted via e-mail so the supervisor can look at and see how much time the employee has and monitor to see if they are overusing.

Alderman Oberlin asked if the employee could clock in on their phone from their home? Finance Director Gehrke commented that they would not be able to since there will be geofencing. Alderman Oberlin then asked who would be monitoring the geofencing? Finance Director Gehrke commented that a certain location/parameter would be set up in the geofencing to only clock-in within the parameters or on a certain IP address.

Alderman Oberlin asked what if someone forgets to clock in? Director Gehrke commented that they need to tell their supervisor, and the supervisor will override and clock them in.

Alderman Jefferson asked if anyone would have the ability to override the geofencing, like a supervisor? Director Gehrke stated that he is not aware of that but would ask AIS. Alderman Jefferson asked who would have authorization for the geofencing? Director Gehrke commented that he would ask the Council who they would like to have authorization for that. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it needs to be someone they can trust.

Alderman Albert commented that he feels the discussion has gotten away from what the agenda item is and believes we need to get back on track for consistency.

Attorney Stiff commented that we still need to do an informal vote regarding alderperson's compensation.

Alderman Albert commented that he would like to clean the ordinance up regarding the language for paid absences. He also commented that he is fine with stating that if you are not at a meeting (Council or Work Session) you do not get paid at all and to take out the excused paid absence language.

Alderman Dyke commented that they allow absences for Plan Commission and Civil Services.

Discussion was held regarding changing the language in the ordinance after the election.

Alderman Cipiti asked if there is something the city can do with the overpayment? Attorney Stiff stated if someone has been overpaid and they refuse to pay it back then the remedy is to take legal action against them.

More discussion was had regarding the documents that were handed out to the Council by Alderman Dyke.

Alderman Oberlin commented that she would like to clear the air after doing the official training, that the public body can discuss an item that does not appear on the regular meeting agenda, but they cannot vote or act on something that is not specifically referenced on the agenda.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we are making it more difficult than what it needs to be, she commented to look at the sign-in sheet and pay who was there and signed in. Attorney Stiff commented that if you are going to have excused absences then the sign-in sheet will not solve the problem.

Finance Director Gehrke asked to table this topic so he can verify all the numbers and come back with an actual count and amounts that are outstanding. He also clarified that he is only going back to this fiscal year of May 1, 2024.

Attorney Stiff commented that an informal vote was never taken with changing the language and the guidance for going forward until after the election. He also commented that we are just tabling the discussion of the overpayment in compensation.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote to approve the changes to amend the ordinance 2.12.010 which is alderperson compensation on page 53 of the packet.

Many Council members were confused on what they were voting on and Attorney Stiff clarified what they are changing with the guidance on the language.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote regarding the guidance recommended by the staff.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Jefferson, Dyke.

NAYES: Ald. Kubal.

ABSTAIN: Ald. Albert, Gazal, Methvin, Cipiti.

Alderman Jefferson stated that he had a personal matter to attend to and would like to be excused for the remainder of the meeting. He also stated that he is a yes vote for the next topic regarding the squad car. Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Jefferson.

TOPIC: Request to Purchase Four Ford Interceptor Hybrid Vehicles per DCEO Grant reimbursement award

Police Chief Ed Clark commented that this is a request to order the vehicles since there is a lag time between the time they are ordered and the time they are received. Chief Clark also commented that the city was awarded a \$250,000.00 grant.

Chief Clark commented that after talking to the mechanics, they intend to repurpose as much existing equipment as possible, which will help us stay within or even under the grant amount.

Chief Clark thanked the City Engineer Ron Wiedeman for helping with the grant.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Jefferson.

Alderman Albert asked if there is any follow-up with the conversation had with Sam Chellino regarding the 5K run? Chief Clark commented that he met with Sam Friday, and they looked over the route he was wanting to run. There were not many particulars, so Sam was going back to find out more information that the chief needed. Meantime, Sam then contacted the chief and said he would not be doing the walk.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Linda Dyke, a resident, approached the podium and commented that she looked up charitable organizations in the City of Crest Hill and the American Italian Cultural Society is not listed as a charitable organization. She then commented that she talked to the

gentleman that was here from the organization and discussed this and the gentleman stated that he is not sure if they renewed that.

Raul Salazar, owner of Prestige Brick Pavers & Landscapers, approached the podium again and asked why he is paying two licenses and late fees for both licenses. Mayor Soliman commented that he has a residential business license and a commercial business storage license. The residential business license is \$25.00 with a penalty fee of \$75.00 and the commercial business storage license is \$50.00 with a penalty fee of \$150.00.

Raul commented that he only has one business, and he is paying for two licenses. He explained that his business is in his home but where he stores his business trucks is in another location.

Raul commented that he does not own the storage unit, he is just renting it. He then commented that everything to do with his business shows that his business location is his home address.

Clerk Vershay-Hall asked for a lease showing that Prestige is renting an area at the Center Street location to store equipment. Raul commented that he will not have to pay for the storage license then. Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that they will investigate and see if the owner of the property will need a storage rental license.

Raul commented that several landscapers pay to park on this property. Alderwoman Gazal asked for a lease, and he said there is not one. Raul stated that they have a verbal agreement with the owner of the property, Conte Paving.

Attorney Stiff commented that someone should contact the owner of the property and determine if that owner will need to pay a business license for operating a truck rental space business.

Economic and Community Development Director Patrick Ainsworth commented that he had read the code which does say if you conduct business and you have multiple locations, you will need multiple business licenses, but he will have to determine if a business license is required for him to store his vehicle, and he will work with the city attorney regarding this.

MAYOR UPDATES:

There were no Mayor updates.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

Alderperson Oberlin commented that George from the food pantry called her and said they are in dire need of funding for food for this month and asked if there is anything the city can do to help. She also commented that George said they need \$900.00 to \$1,000.00. George also reached out to the mayor of Joliet to see if they would help as well.

Alderperson Oberlin also commented that if there is anything that anyone can do to help the food pantry it would be greatly appreciated.

Alderman Gazal commented that she does not feel the tax rebate letter that goes out to the residents should have Mayor Ray Soliman's signature on it since it is an election year, and this is not having transparency. She feels that this letter needs to be signed by an elected official, Treasurer's Office, or the Council, otherwise, you need to wait until the election is over to send this out.

Mayor Soliman commented that this letter has been sent out for eleven consecutive years with the mayor's signature. He also commented that no one has said a word about this in twelve years, until now.

Mayor Soliman asked if changes can be made to the letter. Finance Director Glenn Gehrke commented that he believes that changes can be made but he will check with the printer. He also commented that if the letters have already been printed it will be a problem. Mayor Soliman commented that if there is time to change the letter, we will still need to meet the deadline we promised the residents and he wants all eight officials to sign the letter.

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke asked the Council if the letter has already been printed, is the Council willing to pay for a reprint of the letter? Alderman Cipiti commented that he agrees with Alderman Gazal, and he does not feel it is appropriate in an election year.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR