

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
November 14, 2022

The November 14, 2022 City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 1610 Plainfield Road Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois.

The following Council members were present: Mayor Raymond Soliman, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, City Treasurer Glen Conklin, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman John Vershay, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also present were: Administrator Jim Marino, Director of Public Works Mark Siefert, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, City Attorney Mike Stiff, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz

Absent were: Assistant Public Works Director Blaine Kline, Interim Planner Maura Rigoni, Police Chief Ed Clark,

TOPIC: New City Hall Roadway and Pedestrian Lighting Discussion

Mayor Soliman presented the New City Hall Roadway and Pedestrian Lighting Discussion per the memo dated November 14, 2022. Engineer Wiedeman informed the Council that this work has not been accounted for in the current budget. If we bid the project out now, we will not see the first invoice until next year's budget. The estimated cost for the project is currently 1.2 million. This would include the engineering and construction for the project. Taking this project out to bid does not bind us to anything but does get us good prices. Alderman Cipiti asked if the cost estimate was done recently. It was. This project was discussed sometime in July or August and the price estimate hasn't changed much. Alderman Jefferson asked once we approve a bid, will it be at a fixed price. It would. Alderperson Oberlin asked if this was accounted for in the budget for the City Center. It was not. Alderman Cipiti asked if this will cause a delay moving into the building, Engineer Wiedeman explained this would not cause a delay as the building and parking lot have their own lighting. There was discussion on temporary lighting which would be solar powered to light the roadway. Alderman Albert asked if we could do any type of recapture agreement on property that is yet to be developed. Administrator Marino explained that we will eventually have to have lighting along the roadway, and this may help with future development. Treasurer Conklin thought that it was a developer's responsibility when they construct a subdivision to put the lighting in. This should have been done when the development was first done. Engineer Wiedeman went over where the lights would be located.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on the New City Hall Roadway and Pedestrian Lighting Discussion. All members present were in agreement to go out to bid.

TOPIC: Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Financial Update

Mayor Soliman presented the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Financial Update per the memo dated November 14, 2022. Treasurer Conklin informed the Council that this will be an update on the City Center and the City as a whole. In the City Center budget you will find an approximation of the cost of the street lighting. He asked that after the presentation, the Council give them feedback on what they would like to see in the future. There may be

some items in the presentation that have a deficiency which is due to a timing issue. Director Banovetz informed the Council that we are six months into the budget. We will soon be presenting the next fiscal budget for discussion. We are going to have to prioritize our expenses. When the original budget for the City Center was done it was 13.5 million with a 7% for overage, which was \$14,445,000.00. The current estimate that we have gotten from Harbour is \$20,145,491.00. We then added in the street lighting costs and subtracted the land purchase of \$1,227,206.59. This would bring us over budget by \$5,773,284.51. There are two 1 million dollar grants that the Finance Director has applied for. We are looking into reimbursement for the work that was done on Kelly, but we need to find out who the State representative was that sponsored the bill. We will eventually have the funds from the sale of the existing property. Mayor Soliman indicated that he had some contact information on the Kelly Avenue project and would provide it to Director Banovetz. Director Banovetz then went over the revenue and expenses for the period ending October 31, 2022. The fund that we should be concentrating on is the general fund. She went over the items that are covered by that fund. She went over the paperwork that was included in the packet that shows the expenditures by department. The revenue for this year is higher than it was for last year. This is mostly due to sales tax. The top five sales tax vendors were Menards, Wm. Meyer Co., Food 4 Less, Thorntons, and Speedway. Treasurer Conklin explained that you are deriving more sales tax from the gas stations and feels that the proposed Gas & Wash will be a benefit to the City. Discussion followed. Alderman Dyke questioned the sales tax we get from the car dealerships. Director Banovetz would get back to the Council with this information. Alderman Vershay asked if the dealership on Rte. 30 changed his taxing location from Plainfield to Crest Hill. Director Banovetz explained that the expenses for this year are down. This could be due in part to the unfilled staff positions. She then went over the cash & investments as of October 31, 2022. Director Banovetz asked how the Council would like to see these reports. Alderman Oberlin would like to see the reports on a quarterly basis. Members of the Council that the Treasurer and Finance Director for an informative report.

TOPIC: Discussion of the Annual Tax Levy

Mayor Soliman presented the Discussion of the Annual Tax Levy per the memo dated November 14, 2022. Director Banovetz explained that the tax levy is a process by which the City requests funding from its local taxpayers. This funding is collected through property taxes. Per Illinois Statute taxing bodies are allowed to raise tax levies annually by the rate of inflation or lesser of CPI or 5%. Director Banovetz went over how this law works. If a municipality asks for more than 5%, they will have to hold a truth in taxation hearing. She explained how this would work and also how CPI is calculated. Director Banovetz then presented what the levy would look like. It shows what we asked for last year and what we will be looking for this year. We will be voting on the ordinance for the levy at the first meeting in December. This is split between the Police Pension and the general fund. Director Banovetz and Treasurer Conklin went over how the Police Pension is funded by the City and Officers. Alderman Jefferson asked if we do investments with the fund. We do. The Treasurer gave a brief presentation on the investments. Director Banovetz informed the Council that we will be voting on the abatement ordinances at the first meeting in December. This will involve the general obligation bonds. One is for water and sewer and the other is for the City Center. Alderwoman Gazal asked if we will be getting the information on the levy from the County. Director Banovetz explained that they calculate the levy in December, and we should know by March how much we are going to get. She then went over the tax bill and the funding that the various taxing bodies derive from it. The City has a program in place where we refund the eligible residents 25% of the City portion of their real estate tax bill back to them. As far as the bond rating, we are still

at double A, which is good. Director Banovetz thanked everyone who contributes to the finance reports. Treasurer Conklin gave a brief speech about taxing. Alderman Albert asked why some of the other municipalities are so different on their tax rates. Treasurer Conklin explained that there are a number of factors such as a business district, property value, or a business such as ComEd. Mayor Soliman stated that several schools already have black boxed their tax levies. Director Banovetz commented that you really don't want to black box, this advertises to the public that you are requesting more than what you received last year. Alderwoman Gazal questioned why we would not black box. Director Banovetz explained that we would black box if we asking for more than what we know we are going to get or we had a TIF District. Another reason is if you had a large development come in. Then you would want to ask for those additional tax dollars. Discussion followed on the various communities and their revenue streams. This will be on the City Council agenda for the meeting on December 5th.

TOPIC: Network Infrastructure Upgrade

Mayor Soliman presented the Network Infrastructure Upgrade per the memo dated November 14, 2022. Administrator Marino informed the Council that we are in receipt of the updated contract with Comcast. This will include the City Center, Public Works, Treatment Plants, and Well Houses. We will need to add 11 more routers to provide adequate communication between facilities. The monthly fee will increase by \$1,845.00 and is for a 5 year contract. Comcast provides network design and engineering services, 24/7 monitoring of hardware, replacement of failing equipment at no additional cost, network changes and upgrades at no additional cost. Alderman Cipiti asked what are the 11 additional routers needed for. Administrator Marino explained they thought that the equipment we already have in place would be sufficient. Once we started working with Comcast it was determined that we needed the additional routers to transfer and monitor the information. Administrator Marino explained that Comcast provides the hardware, and the services that go with it.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote on the Network Infrastructure Upgrade. All members present were in agreement.

TOPIC: IDOC/Stateville Update

Mayor Soliman presented the IDOC/Stateville Update per the memo date November 14, 2022. Director Siefert informed the Council that on November 10th, staff met with representatives from IDOC regarding past due water/sewer invoices. Director Siefert explained how past due invoices for the State are handled. After a certain period of time, any past due invoices must be submitted to the Illinois Court of Claims. Earlier this year staff presented an invoice in the amount of \$920,000.00 for the period of 2014 to 2021. IDOC only recognized \$589,964.00. At the meeting all parties agreed on \$804,080.62 of the \$920,534.73. There is \$105,039.36 that the IDOC have preliminary agreed to, and we just have to wait for the State to approve it. After discussion with the finance department, it was decided that the best course of action is to write off the \$10,000.00 difference that the City and Stateville say they owe. This would eventually take the account to a zero balance. Alderman Cipiti asked how IDOC can pay these bills now and couldn't do it in the past. Director Siefert explained that they were paying the wrong vendors and did not resend the correct payment to the city. Director Banovetz thanked Director Siefert for all of his hard work. Part of the problem is that they were issuing a check for the water portion of the bill and a second check for the sewer portion of the bill. Treasurer Conklin commented that the payments we receive are applied to the oldest invoice. The State held back the July, August, and September payment until they could meet with us. They

indicated that the City should be receiving payment for these prior months shortly. He went over what the process entails to go through the Court of Claims, and it could take years before we have reconciliation with the State. Hopefully we can come to terms with the State and bring the account current. Director Siefert commended the group that we met with from the IDOC. They were great to work with. Mayor Soliman questioned the late fees and penalties. Director Siefert explained that this would have to go through the Court of Claims. Alderman Cipiti asked how far in arrears are they. Director Siefert went over the dollar amounts and the time frame that we could see the funds in hand. If both parties are in agreement with the dollar amount due, the process will go a lot quicker than if we just let it go through the Court of Claims. Attorney Stiff asked if the company that received the payment earmarked for the City retained the payment. They did not go into detail on this payment.

TOPIC: Graffiti Removal on Private Property

Mayor Soliman presented the Graffiti Removal on Private Property per the request of Alderman Vershay. Alderman Vershay explained that he met with Administrator Marino to talk about this problem in the past. Administrator Marino suggested looking into an outside company similar to the one that the Village of Romeoville has. They charge the homeowner \$135.00 per hour to remove the graffiti. Administrator Marino explained how this program works in Romeoville. Alderman Vershay explained that he would like to see the City purchase a steamer, have the residents sign a hold harmless form and have the City remove the graffiti. What if we have a resident who is out of town and is unable to remove the graffiti themselves. They stand a chance of getting a ticket if it's not taken care of. Alderwoman Gazal asked how many properties have had graffiti on them. Roughly 6 or so. Alderwoman Gazal commented that we are currently short staffed. She felt that we should have a private contractor do this work, and the City pays the bill. This will keep the City off private property and in case damage is done we are not responsible for it. Alderperson Oberlin agreed that a professional company would also be covered by insurance. Attorney Stiff commented that the hold harmless is only as good as the paper it is written on. It doesn't mean that the City cannot be sued. Attorney Stiff said that if you are going to do this type of program for a homeowner, you are also going to have to do it for businesses. Alderwoman Gazal agreed that the residents should not have to pay to have graffiti removed, but it should be done by an outside firm. If its on public property then the City should take care of it. Administrator Marino asked, if someone throws a rock through a window and breaks it, who is responsible to fix it. Alderwoman Gazal felt that the graffiti is a different type of vandalism. Gangs are more likely to graffiti a property. Attorney Stiff said that vandalism is vandalism. Administrator Marino had a good point. As far as someone who is out of town and their property is graffitied, are we really going to fine them if they are willing to take care of it. The solution may be to work with the property owner to get the problem fixed. Alderman Vershay said that the case in Ward I, the owner was out of town and was given 10 days to take care of the problem. Discussion followed on bringing the property into compliance. Alderman Vershay didn't think the Police wanted the graffiti to remain on the property for a period of time. Alderman Cipiti said that often the graffiti is gang related. The quicker you remove it the better. Leaving it up could cause further tagging of other properties. Alderman Cipiti asked what the basis is for the graffiti discussion. Alderman Vershay would like to see the City remove the graffiti from either a residence or business as quickly as possible. Attorney Stiff explained that we will have to have a waiver of liability and consent. Also, a hold harmless agreement, which still wouldn't prevent someone from suing the City. If they don't sign the forms then we would not remove the graffiti and ticket the property. Alderman Vershay asked what happens if the graffiti is on a wall or fence and you don't have to go on private property to remove it.

You would still need some type of waiver as you are cleaning it off of private property, even though you're not standing on it. Attorney Stiff thought that we had the name of a company that we can provide the resident with to clean up the graffiti at a cost to the resident. The question comes up as to whether the City should pay the cost in the case of a hardship. Alderman Vershay would like the City Staff to remove the graffiti. We need to start doing things for the residents to show them that the City cares. This would also be good publicity for the City. Alderman Albert feels like there are some cases that are more urgent when it comes to true gang graffiti versus some amateur stuff. He also felt that in most of the neighborhoods we help each other out. Attorney Stiff suggested having the Chief come to the Council with some statistics. Alderman Kubal would also like to get information from the Chief on this. The Mayor asked the Council if they had an idea of which direction they would like to go. City removal of the property or an outside contractor. Discussion followed on what could be considered vandalism and what we would want to remove or replace. Alderman Vershay would like to see the City get a steamer to remove the graffiti and use it for other items as needed. Director Siefert said that we need to be careful using a steamer because it could fade the color of the siding and who is going to be responsible to fix it. Alderman Oberlin feels that if it's gang related graffiti we need to get it removed right away. But the majority of the time, the homeowner will go ahead and remove it on their own. What we could do is offer assistance to those who are incapable of doing it themselves. Alderman Vershay brought up the sidewalks that are being replaced at the City's cost. Are we going to fix the one along his property that he paid out of pocket to put in. Mayor Soliman asked Alderman Vershay to talk to the Chief and we can revisit this discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

MAYORS UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman informed the Council that an invitation was sent out for the 3 Point Health Care on Plainfield Road, on December 1st for a grand opening/ribbon cutting. Mayor Soliman attended the grand opening for the new control tower at Lewis Airport today. Mayor Soliman informed the Council there is a request for a liquor license at the Gallery 1700 next to Chase Bank. The Mayor met with 2 brothers who would like to have package liquor and video gaming. They would also like to have a special area to do craft beer tasting and are also thinking of having a bistro with liquor and gaming. The Mayor informed them that we currently do not have any available bistro license and one would have to be created. They would divide the space into a package liquor establishment with a bistro next door with a separate entrance. The proposed owners have 6 current liquor license in other areas. Alderman Albert questioned the tap room. Mayor Soliman didn't feel that it was going to be viable. Discussion followed on the creation of an additional bistro license. Treasurer Conklin asked what the crime rate is for them. It is very low. The income derived is very good. Alderman Albert said he'd like to see what type of plans they have for it. Alderman Gazal would also like to see a concept of what this business is going to look like and their plans for it.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates tonight.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

Administrator Marino informed the Council that in regard to the 200 acres that the City would like to obtain from the State, we sent them a letter of intent and are waiting to hear

back from them. In regard to the City Center, with the incoming inclement weather the landscaping and paving will be delayed. The asphalt plants will also be shutting down soon. Alderman Albert questioned the uneven areas under the monument stones that were moved to the City Center. Mayor Soliman said that there are several that need to be addressed and will be leveled out. Alderman Albert felt that we should reconsider waiving the fees that were previously discussed for the park district. No comments were made. Alderman Cipiti asked if we have had any interest in the current City Hall property. Administrator Marino did not have an update at this time. Alderwoman Gazal asked if we have gotten an update on how the property is being advertised and marketed. We had not. Alderman Cipiti asked for an update on the Economic Development Director position. Administrator Marino went over the interview process. Alderman Cipiti would like the Council to meet the final candidates before a hiring decision is made. Alderman Cipiti asked for an update on the IT position. Administrator Marino informed the Council that our current IT Directors last day is coming up. We have a new IT company that started today and will be working with Director Stinnett to get familiar with the system. He will be requesting approval at the next meeting for an agreement with the company for services until we fill the position. Alderman Cipiti asked when did we feel like we needed to take action on finding a replacement once Director Stinnett gave notice in October. Administrator Marino explained that once he gave his resignation, Director Stinnett began looking for a company to come in during the interim. Alderman Cipiti felt like the Council should have been kept in the loop as to what was going on with the process. The Council hasn't seen the contract, the IT company has already been chosen and we are being asked to approve a contract that none of us has seen. He thought that we were trying to have the Council more involved in decisions, not left out. Alderperson Oberlin agreed. The Council would like to be made more aware of the fact. She also felt that the Finance Department should have been apart of the process as they utilize the computer system a lot. If you are going to bring a firm in, at least notify the Council that you are contemplating it. We need to have IT, but the Council should have been informed before a contract was signed. Alderwoman Gazal agreed, and one of her concerns is the cost. What does this company have to offer the City for the fee they charge. Administrator Marino explained that they have a larger staff and were able to provide assistance immediately. They are certified to work with Police Departments and have the clearances. They also work with other municipalities. One of the other companies said that they would have to hire additional staff in order to service the City and several other companies do not work with municipalities and had no experience with Police Departments. The company we chose was based on their experience and capabilities. The contract is monthly, where the other companies wanted more long term contracts. We will have to hire an IT Director, but first we need to work on getting an Economic Development person in place. Discussion followed on the fees being charged. We are given a price for a block of time but may not use the full time allotted to us. Alderwoman Gazal asked if Director Stinnett had all of these qualifications and can't we get someone in house temporarily for a lesser price. Director Stinnett had all of the credentials. Administrator Marino said that he could have waited to present the request to Council next week, but this would have caused a lapse in services to the staff in the interim. Alderwoman Gazal felt that there could have been more communication with the Council. You could have emailed that you were looking for a company, checked the qualifications, interviewed them, and informed the Council which one was the best match for the City. Administrator Marino explained that he is doing his best with what he has to work with. Alderman Jefferson would like to know what is going to be spent until we can get an IT person in house again. Alderwoman Gazal felt that a quick email to the Council giving them an update would have at least given us some information instead of throwing it before us.

(Alderman Albert and Alderman Kubal exited the work session).

Alderwoman Gazal explained that no one is picking on the Administrator, but the Council needs to be kept informed of what is going on. It is also sad how things are between the members of the Council and the lack of respect that is sometimes shown for one another. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2022

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR