

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
November 25, 2024

The November 25, 2024, 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, City Treasurer Glen Conklin, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderwoman Jennifer Methvin, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: Interim Administrator Tony Graff, Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

TOPIC: Presentation by Mary O’Conner, Sikich LLC – Proposal to Provide Internal Control Review Services

Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that Mary O’Connor is here to present and discuss what the next step is to access the internal controls.

Mary O’Connor from Sikich gave a brief presentation since most of the information is summarized and given to each Council member. As discussed last time, the goals were to give us an opportunity to have confidence that the information you are receiving is accurate, timely, and in conformance with our policies and procedures, not everything that goes on but the things that truly deserve the Council’s attention. That is what a good sound internal control system does for the Board. This is something you do slowly and methodically and not all at once.

During this process, Sikich will map our systems, and look at the system and learn how information could flow more efficiently, and more verification of our policies, function of disbursing payments, handling of Human Resources, and our documentation. Sometimes, this just needs reorganization, and suggestions will be made on how to improve the flow to solve the deficiencies.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she feels this is a good thing and there is always room for improvement, but we have an employee handbook, and we need to follow the handbook, and employees need to be held accountable, but they are not. Mary commented that with what they are doing there is an investigative component to it, and we will go through the controls. Mary also commented that the investigation needs to start with the Human Resource Department and the issues that brought Sikich here.

Treasurer Conklin commented that there was an issue from not having human resource involvement and a poorly made decision and the initiation and ask was for an investigation in that regard. He also commented that we currently have a very confident, capable Human

Resource Department and the incident would have not happened if there had been human resource involvement in that situation. He then commented that the departments are only as good as the procedures are implemented. Treasurer Conklin then commented that he thinks this is an unnecessary expense.

Alderman Oberlin commented that when the incident happened, we had the policy in place and the people involved needed to be held accountable and were not and now the person handling the Human Resource Department is an interim but is competent and unfortunately it is all a tangled web. Alderman Oberlin commented that the series of events and the effect it had on individuals, needs to have someone held accountable, and they are not.

It was then asked if Sikich could investigate a specific situation and hold someone accountable. Mary commented that they need to understand the way the system should work, we would need to match that against how it works compared to policy and procedures, and testing needs done, which this incident could be used for the testing part. The testing is the internal control, and we could do an investigation but that will have limited utility if you do not understand how the entire department works.

Alderman Oberlin commented that a report was done in the past and she would like to see that report. Mary commented that the correct way to transmit the report would be through our attorney and then the attorney can make that available to the Council. Alderman Oberlin commented that she will be looking for that report and Attorney Stiff replied when he has it, he will deal with it.

Alderman Dyke commented that interim employees who are in charge cannot discipline or fire anyone and that handcuffs the interims since there is no ability since they are an interim which leaves the issue in limbo.

Mayor Soliman commented that he believes \$90,000.00 is too much and would rather follow Mary O'Connor's suggestion and begin piece by piece with human resources, which would make the most sense.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that he would like more clarity which he feels could come from Mary O'Connors team. He also commented that for clarification the interims do have authority to administer the employee manual, and they can address them with disciplinary action. He then commented that if we do an investigation on something that took place it would need to be very specific, and what is that investigation and we should not be guessing at that and need to know the specific to stay on task.

Attorney Stiff commented that the ballpark estimation for Mary O'Connor's investigation was more than \$50,000.00 which is why we pivoted ourselves to not looking at the past but going forward looking at if the controls were adequate for future issues.

Mary commented that while putting together this investigation proposal, she had the specific incident that the Council was bringing up and concluded that the incident could not have happened unless there is some fault in the human resource internal control system. It is cheaper to discuss the conditions of the controls than to go through the documentation of all the things that have happened and have a much bigger report.

Alderman Gazal commented that sometimes things are worth the money to invest in because in the long term you will have transparency and hold people accountable.

Mary reminded the Council that a full investigation of events is an expensive proposition.

Treasurer Conklin commented that we cannot undo what happened, but we can learn from it, and it was not a human resource issue, it was a lack of education and people did not involve human resources.

Mary recommended taking the first module with the human resource department and going through the internal controls within the employee handbook and coming back with recommendations and keeping in mind this particular incident. It was said that the cost for this would be \$15,000.00.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for the recommendation of Sikich, LLC.

AYES: Ald. Dyke, Methvin, Jefferson, Oberlin,

NAYES: Ald. Cipiti, Albert, Kubal.

UNDECIDED: Ald. Gazal.

ABSENT: None.

Alderman Oberlin requested for the record, that she wants the first report from Sikich, LLC.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he voted no because the \$15,000.00 will not bring accountability.

Alderman Jefferson asked what will come out of the investigation, will we prosecute someone or close the book and move forward because we need to hold people accountable and have transparency.

TOPIC: Request to Implement the Oxcart Truck Permit Software Program and Fee Structure

Police Chief Ed Clark commented that their permit system is a manual system currently and there is no charge for a permit for trucks and with our new implementation of the DACRA software there is a component for truck permits. DACRA has paired with Oxcart for permitting and we can start charging for permits. Chief Clark commented that he would suggest a charge for daily, weekly, and monthly permits. The charge would be \$50.00 for daily permits, \$250.00 for weekly permits, and \$500.00 for monthly permits. This would be for trucks over 80,000 pounds. Oxcart does charge a limited fee on each permit between \$7.00 - \$15.00.

Alderman Oberlin asked if these trucks go through multiple municipalities and must get multiple municipal permits? Chief Clark commented that the trucks know through their GPS system what municipalities they are going through and what permits to have. This will also help keep overweight trucks going over older structured bridges.

Alderman Cipiti asked how these trucking companies will be notified regarding registering. Chief Clark commented that it will be on social media and when they go into the website they will be notified, and they can register there. Alderman Cipiti also asked if there would

be a penalty for not getting the permit? Chief Clark commented that there are companies who will think the risk is better than the reward they will not do it but if they think the reward is greater they will. He also commented that when the officer pulls them over it can be very costly for these companies, and at one time they had a fine that was \$150,000.00 and most companies will not want to take that risk.

Alderman Cipiti asked how the officer will know if they have a permit, and if running a plate would tell them? Chief Clark commented that the truck will need to be pulled over and the driver will need to show the officer the permit at that time.

Alderman Jefferson asked if this only applies to semi-trucks, or would it be for box trucks as well? Chief Clark commented that it is for any trucks that could be overweight on their axels, and it also applies to anyone, even if not a company, but anyone who could be moving something over 80,000 pounds.

Alderman Cipiti asked what the revenue would be from this program? Chief Clark commented that the approximate would be between \$15,000.00 and \$25,000.00.

Treasurer Glenn Gehrke commented that when he was with the Village of Manhattan, they used the Oxcart program and it monitored the trucks going through town, and monitored the truck routing, and there was no effort from the village employees, they would receive a report and a deposit in the account.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote for the Oxcart Software Program.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: State of Illinois Crime Lab Project Status Report

Interim Community Development Director Ron Mentzer commented that the State of Illinois Capital Development Board has finalized the design and is preparing to bid out the project. The Scope of the project is a two-building project that is proposed on a 12-acre site along the north side of Division Street west of the existing District 5 facility.

The City's Consulting Planner reached out to the State of Illinois around eighteen months ago and asked the State if they would be complying with any of the City's zoning regulations or the zoning process and the legal counsel for the Capital Development Board notified the City in writing submitting case law outlining that the State feels the project is exempt from complying with local regulations, including zoning regulations. The City Attorney reviewed this letter, and we are in concurrence with the findings.

The project does look like it complies with the City's zoning regulations, setbacks, and landscaping requirements. The only thing they are not complying with is the process that the City normally requires this type of project to go through because of the size.

Alderman Jefferson questioned if the State will be having berms or something in place to muffle the sound. He also commented that he feels this is something we need to approach the State with a constructive meeting or a challenge in Court if necessary since they are moving closer towards residential areas with this gun range.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that the question is if we will have any input with this? Attorney Stiff commented that the answer is no, according to the State but you can try to file something against the State and see if you can litigate in Court. He then commented that his understanding was that the City of Crest Hill was going to ask the State to do the term. Alderwoman Gazal asked if we could contact our legislature and see if they can do anything with the term.

TOPIC: Request to Purchase a 2025 Ford F-350 Pick Up for the Street Division in the Department of Public Works for a Total Amount of \$50,091.00

Mayor Soliman commented that he believes former Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz had this on his desk prior to him leaving. He then asked if there were any issues with the purchase of a Ford 350 truck?

Alderman Dyke asked what type of trucks were sent to the water division and asked why would we need a F350? It was said that this truck is budgeted. Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that he would find out what type of trucks were sent and get back to Alderman Dyke with the information.

TOPIC: 2024 Tax Levy

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke commented that the tax levy for 2024 in the amount of \$2,719,100.00. This is a suggested amount that came in from Will County at 4.99%.

The summary of amounts levied for all funds is as follows:

• General Fund	\$1,179,100.00
• Police Pension	\$1,500,000.00
• Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund	\$ 20,000.00
• Social Security Tax Fund	<u>\$ 20,000.00</u>
Total Tax Levy for All Funds	\$2,719,100.00

Included is the ordinance abating the tax levied for 2024 to pay the principal and interest on the General Obligation Refunding Bonds Series 2019A and 2019B.

TOPIC: Discussion regarding Amendment to the Civil Service Ordinance

Alderman Cipiti wanted this back to discuss to move forward passing the ordinance. This pertains to the compensation and paid absences. This would be going from a monthly paid system to only being paid for the actual meetings that take place and have been attended. There will be one paid absence after that absence it will not be paid.

Attorney Stiff commented that in 2.72.040 – Membership; Compensation in section (B) would read \$60.00 per regular meeting attended for the Chairperson and they shall be allowed one (1) paid absence per calendar year any additional absences beyond one per calendar year will be unpaid.

Alderman Cipiti asked if there is language that states if three or more absences have potential for removal of the commissioner from the board. Attorney Stiff commented that language is in section (C).

Alderman Cipiti commented that if a meeting gets cancelled the Council does not get paid and the Civil Service should not get paid either since this is misuse of taxpayer money.

It was discussed that there needs to be due process to remove a member of the Civil Service Committee after the three absences and this process would start with the Mayor. Mayor Soliman commented that it is already hard to find someone to fill these seats, and if they put this procedure in place, it will be harder to find someone.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: Ald. Kubal, Jefferson.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: Discussion – Proposed Planning Commission Ordinance Changes

The Planning Commission Ordinance #1999 will be cleaned up and increase the pay for the chairperson and commissioners. Also, it will mirror the Civil Service guidelines, but they would have two paid absences per calendar year and five absences per calendar year prior to potential removal.

Mayor Soliman asked for an informal vote.

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

NAYES: Ald. Kubal.

ABSENT: None.

TOPIC: A Resolution Adopting a Revised Policy for Remote Attendance at Public Meetings

Attorney Stiff commented that the legislature has amended the Open Meetings Act to add a fourth reason to have remote attendance, which is unexpected childcare obligations.

TOPIC: Yard Waste Pickup

Interim Administrator Tony Graff commented that it was requested for additional yard waste pickup after November 30th and after talking to Republic Services they can but there is a charge. The charge will be between \$3,500.00 and \$4,200.00.

It was commented that the weather has been good still, and the leaves continue falling.

Alderman Dyke commented that the weather is turning, and no one will be outside raking leaves, and he does not feel there is a need to extend this.

Mayor Soliman asked if anyone was in favor of extending and no one was.

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:

There were no City Administrator updates.

Mayor Soliman asked for a motion to go into executive session on 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

(#1) Motion by Alderwoman Gazal seconded by Alderperson Oberlin, to go into an executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) per the memo dated November 25, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Gazal.

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

Executive Session 9:03 p.m.

(#2) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderwoman Methvin, to reconvene from the executive session on Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) per the memo dated November 25, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

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

Reconvened 9:25 p.m.

Alderman Albert asked Alderman Dyke if 'they' were overbudget? Alderman Dyke commented that they have a \$300.00 threshold on what they are supposed to spend, and they are over. He also commented that each department has a \$300.00 limit and in the past years they have all been within the budget except for Public Works and the Sewage Treatment Plant, they are extremely over their budget.

It was discussed that it is mostly over budget for the purchase of coffee. Alderman Dyke commented that when he approached former Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz regarding the issue with the overage in coffee, he told him that there are only two people who drink coffee there.

Alderman Dyke commented that this is not a crisis where we need to go over budget, this is coffee.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if we have concluded about employees with cameras at Public Works and what we can do and what the consequences are. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he has not figured anything out yet, the labor attorney just came back from vacation, and he is reviewing the information.

Alderperson Oberlin asked someone at another municipality if an employee put their own camera up at the workplace, what would happen, and she was told that it would be grounds

for dismissal from their job. She then told the interim administrator that this is not to be swept under the rug.

Alderman Cipiti asked the Interim Administrator Graff if he at least had a discussion with this employee and he stated that he did not have a discussion because it is not his department, and the supervisor had a discussion with the person. Alderman Cipiti commented that the city administrator should be part of that discussion. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he talks to the supervisors and not the individual employees. He then commented that he works with the supervisors because these are union employees and there are rules to follow.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that we have no rules or policy stating no cameras in the workplace. Alderman Cipiti asked the administrator if he thinks there needs to be a rule stating they cannot have cameras in the workplace. Interim Administrator Graff told Alderman Cipiti that he should wait until the investigation is done, then asked questions or make any comments you want about it. Interim Administrator Graff commented that it is an open meeting, and he will not talk any further about it until the investigation is over.

Alderman Cipiti asked who is doing the investigation? Interim Administrator Graff commented that he is waiting for the city attorney to come back from vacation to get his report and he is working with Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl to create a policy on cameras in the workplace.

Treasurer Conklin commented that people around the dais knew about these cameras years ago and no one ever brought this up then.

Alderman Methvin commented that she thought the State of Illinois is a two-consent state for recording of conversations or is there no expectation of privacy in a public building.

Attorney Stiff commented that you can have video surveillance, but it needs to be posted that it is there, and they do not have to consent to it, but they must be put on notice.

Alderman Oberlin asked if it has been posted that there is video surveillance and Interim Administrator Graff commented you will find out when the investigation ends.

Alderman Jefferson commented that he believes there are certain acts that qualify as immediate dismissal and thinks this is one of the acts. Treasurer Conklin commented that the worst he has ever seen in a contract is suspension with pay until the investigation is completed.

Alderman Methvin commented that in her line of work, you are suspended until the investigation is complete and then get paid.

Alderman Dyke commented that back to the previous subject, there is also multiple paper towels and toilet paper being purchased from various places and he is not sure where it is all going. He then commented that he worked with a guy who was stealing paper towels and toilet paper who was fired but it did happen.

Alderman Dyke also commented that we are buying a lot of drill bits, and we can sharpen them instead of buying more. He then commented that he has been going through the

Menards invoices and noticing a lot of different things like bits and sockets, and he hopes these are going in the tool room and not in someone's toolbox.

Alderman Jefferson asked if inventory is done? Treasurer Conklin commented that there is no monthly inventory, but supervisors oversee that.

Alderman Oberlin asked who supervises the purchasing of things if there is no purchase order? Interim Administrator Graff commented that he would think of the crew leaders and supervisors.

Alderman Dyke also commented that Public Works get individual bottles to drink, and the City Hall employees are not allowed individual bottles, and they bring their own water or drink out of the tap or fountain.

Alderman Cipiti commented that he does not have much faith that these things will get investigated. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he would like to finish his statement since his character has been attacked and continued to state that when he hears about these things, or they are brought to his attention, he discusses it with the department heads and saying he is not concerned deserves an apology. Alderman Cipiti commented that his interpretations of the interim administrator's facial and body language would make him suggest that he is very dismissive of the Council's concerns. Alderman Cipiti then informed the Interim Administrator that he does report to the Council.

Alderman Dyke commented that every invoice he has asked for he has given him and every question he has always responded to him for everything he has ever asked and thanked Interim Administrator Graff for that.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 pm.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2024.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR