

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
September 22, 2025

The September 22, 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, City Treasurer Jamie Malloy, Alderman Angelo Deserio, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: 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 Scott Dyke, City Administrator Blaine Wing, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Interim Public Works Director Julius Hansen, Community Development Consultant Ron Mentzer, Interim Human Resource Manager Dave Strahl.

Mayor Soliman excused Alderman Dyke's attendance for the meeting.

TOPIC: A Resolution approving an Engineering Design Agreement for Caton Farm Road over CN Railroad (formerly EJ&E) by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois, and Christopher B. Burke Engineering Ltd. For an amount of \$79,650.00

City Administrator Ron Wiedeman began by explaining that the City is required by law to conduct surveys on its structures every couple of years. He noted that Crest Hill has two structures meeting this requirement: the Caton Farm Bridge over the CN Railroad and the culvert just north of Theodore on Gaylord by the west plant. This year's report showed no significant changes, but the total structure rating has been hovering around "fair."

Engineer Wiedeman provided critical context about the bridge's history saying that the project structure was built in 1986 and he could not find any records of any type of work being done on that bridge since its construction in 1986. He also emphasized that after 40 years it is well past its time of where we need to start doing some work on it.

The proposed work scope from Burke Engineering includes replacing the bridge deck, replacing bridge joints, performing patching work, and replacing the abutments. Additionally, he said that cosmetic work is needed on the rails where the guardrail attaches to the bridge to update them to current standards.

Engineer Wiedeman explained his approach into two phases where the first phase would be the substructure work, which would be everything down below. He stated this would be where we have railroad flaggers and will not require a full-time closure of the bridge. Then the second phase, involving the bridge deck replacement, would require a full closure since the bridge is only two lanes wide.

Engineer Wiedeman estimated the total project cost at three-quarters of a million dollars for construction, with engineering and railroad flagging bringing the total to one million dollars. He emphasized the need to coordinate with the nearby school, planning to complete the deck work during summer when school is out of session.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve an agreement with Burke Engineering for \$79,650.00 for design bid plans for the Caton Farm Road Bridge.

AYES: Ald. Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio.

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Dyke.

This will be on the October 6th Council meeting.

TOPIC: Discussion and Direction on Liquor License Hour Adjustments

Community & Economic Development Director Daniel Ritter began by acknowledging the historical context of the current restrictive liquor license hours, highlighting that both the Mayor and the Police Chief provided background on past challenges warranting these restrictions. He noted that there is valid rationale behind these early measures due to previous issues. However, Director Ritter pointed out that the City now enjoys effective enforcement and accountability. He outlined two focal concerns raised by local stakeholders:

The first area of concern is Restaurant Liquor License Closing Times. Presently, restaurants with Class H liquor licenses must cease alcohol service by 10:00 PM. Director Ritter has elaborated on the operational difficulties this poses, stating that typically, restaurants close around 11:00 PM or later, especially in sports-oriented venues such as Buffalo Wild Wings and Miller's Ale House, which often operate until midnight in alignment with sports schedules. The current constraints lead to awkward situations, such as curtailing Monday Night Football viewings.

The staff recommends extending service hours until midnight for restaurants, maintaining compliance with current regulations: 75% of the establishment's space must remain for dining purposes, food should be available throughout liquor service, and outdoor patio service should stop at 10:00 PM. This extension would also lengthen associated gaming hours.

Regarding Sunday Service Hours, brunch culture widely includes beverage service, and various entertainment venues increasingly face similar needs. Staff suggests uniformity with weekly hours, adopting a 6:00 AM to midnight framework to ease enforcement.

Mayor Soliman voiced unequivocal support for Director Ritter's proposals, marking a significant policy shift from 2009, acknowledging improved conditions, and underscoring the municipality's need to remain competitive in hopes to attract venues like Buffalo Wild Wings or Miller's Ale House which requires parity with neighboring regulations, to avoid losing potential business to other communities.

Police Chief Ed provided insights on striking the right balance between public safety and revenue stating that public safety is paramount, but revenue considerations are equally

crucial. Surveillance and regulatory compliance are ongoing to preempt issues, with immediate actions if warranted.

All Council members commended Director Ritter's efforts for initiating the proposed changes. The sentiment echoed among members who asserted the necessity for progress, and as times evolve, so must the City.

Alderwoman Gazal commended Building Commissioner Don Seeman for everything he does for the Council and the City and stated that he goes above and beyond and thanked him for everything he does. She also thanked City Engineer Ron Wiedeman for all he has done, as well.

Alderperson Oberlin seconded the praise for Commissioner Seeman and added that he never gets angry and is always happy to help.

Mayor Soliman asked if anyone was against the proposal to change the hours of operation for restaurants and change the hours of liquor and video gaming starting at 6:00 a.m. every day of the week. There were no objections.

TOPIC: Projector Project – Council Chamber

The Mayor informed the Council that City Administrator Blaine Wing had been unexpectedly called out of town due to a family emergency. Acknowledging that he had conducted extensive work on upgrading televisions and projections systems in the Council Chambers with Stuart's involvement, the Mayor recommended tabling the discussion. He emphasized that proceeding without Administrator Wing, who had dedicated significant effort to this project, would be inappropriate.

The Council supported tabling the matter, and the Mayor confirmed it would be revisited during the work session on October 13th.

TOPIC: Consent Agenda Discussion

Mayor Soliman noted that this item also involved significant work by Administrator Wing and Attorney Stiff. Following the same reasoning as the previous item, he stated that it was only fair to table this item as well.

Council members again agreed with the decision to table the item.

The item was officially tabled until the October 13th work session.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mayor Soliman opened the floor for public comment, and no one approached the podium.

MAYOR UPDATES:

Mayor Soliman announced that he attended the grand opening for CRX Boxing Gymnasium in the fitness center at Hillcrest Shopping Center, along with approximately ten representatives from the Joliet Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Soliman also announced that on Saturday, September 20th, he attended Window World's fifteen-year anniversary celebration on Caton Farm Road with Brian Hopkins. City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall and City Treasurer Jamie Malloy also attended the

celebration. Mayor Soliman commented that it was a very nice anniversary celebration with amenities including a petting zoo, hot dogs, and games for children, with many giveaways.

Following the Window World event, Mayor Soliman stated that they visited Mr. Auto Care, located off Plainfield Road behind the French Quarters. The Mayor praised the owner, Chris, and stated that he was particularly impressed with the facility having never seen a cleaner automotive repair shop anywhere he had been. Mayor Soliman expressed hope that the business would do well.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES:

There were no committee/liaison updates.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES:

There were no updates due to the City Administrator's absence.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.

As presented _____

As amended _____

CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK

RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR