

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
February 20, 2024

The regular meeting of the City of Crest Hill was called to order by Mayor Raymond R. Soliman at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 20600 City Center Boulevard, Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison. Mayor Soliman asked everyone to remain standing after the pledge. Mayor Soliman asked for a moment of silence for William Sklare who passed away on February 6, 2024. William was the husband of Barbara Sklare. Barbara is a resident of Crest Hill and served the City of Crest Hill for a total of twelve (12) years. She was on the Plan Commission Board for four years and served as an alderwoman for Ward Two for eight years. Mayor Soliman wanted to extend our deepest condolences to the Sklare Family, and he asked that we keep this family in our prayers during this difficult time.

Roll call indicated the following present: Mayor Raymond Soliman, City Treasurer Glen Conklin, City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall, Alderman Scott Dyke, Alderman John Vershay, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert.

Also present were: Interim City Administrator Tony Graff, Police Chief Ed Clark, Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz, Interim Director of Community Development Ron Mentzer, City Attorney Chris Spesia and Deputy Clerk Karen Kozierka.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Finance Director Lisa Banovetz, Building Commissioner Don Seeman.

Mayor Soliman commented that he received a message from Alderman Kubal, and he has excused Alderman Kubal from tonight's meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mayor Soliman presented the minutes from the Work Session meeting held on January 22, 2024 for Council approval per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

(#1) Motion by Alderman Jefferson seconded by Alderman Vershay, to Approve the Minutes from the Work Session Meeting Held on January 22, 2024 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Mayor Soliman presented the minutes from the Regular meeting held on February 5, 2024 for Council approval per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

(#2) Motion by Alderwoman Gazal seconded by Alderman Jefferson, to Approve the Minutes from the Regular Meeting Held on February 5, 2024 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

CITY ATTORNEY: City Attorney Chris Spesia commented that there were no agenda items for discussion but could answer any questions.

Alderman Dyke commented that a resident asked him when they come out of executive session why is the meeting not televised. He stated that they wondered if that is in violation of the Open Meetings Act since the end of the meeting is not televised. Attorney Spesia commented that the meetings are published and open to the public and under the Open Meetings Act televising a meeting is not a requirement.

Mayor Soliman commented that it is audio recorded as well.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR: Interim City Administrator Tony Graff announced he has an update from GovHR regarding the search for the City Administrator position and he gave the semi-finalist candidate list, which the candidates will be reviewed in executive session.

Interim Administrator Graff stated that there are currently twenty-three applicants and Ryan Cotton from GovHR felt very strongly about eleven candidates. He also stated that the closing is March 4, 2024 and they will give a presentation on March 25, 2024.

Alderperson Oberlin commented that a resident's name is incorrect on page seven of the January 22, 2024 minutes. City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall commented that she would have that corrected.

Alderwoman Gazal asked if there would be weekly updates on what is happening in the city. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he is keeping a journal and his first week was more of an orientation, but he would provide more updates and reports of projects that the Council is involved with on Friday. Alderwoman Gazal also asked if he would have the non-union employees' raises ready so they can be able to review them. Interim Administrator Graff commented that each department head has a task to start working on recommendations and performance reviews, but he did not give them a deadline to complete this and he also mentioned there is a place holder for the raises in the budget. He also commented that there will be an executive session to go over these results. Alderwoman Gazal asked since it would not be the next meeting then when would it be. Interim Administrator Graff commented that he should have them in two weeks.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we cannot continue with the sound issues during the meetings, and she has asked in the past that we involve Jeff Prah, our Audio-Visual Specialist, in the meeting and after talking to Jeff, he was not involved in this meeting. It was discussed that Building Commissioner Don Seeman had a meeting with a sound company. Alderwoman Gazal asked again if we can make sure to include Jeff Prah in these

meetings. She also commented that we need to take care of the sound issues before the warranty is over.

Alderman Dyke asked if we could have discussion on the next agenda for the delinquent Places for Eating Tax and business licenses. He also stated that he would like to discuss how we are going to move forward with these businesses.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT: Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz requested Approval of Pay Request #18 from Williams Brothers Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for Total Amount of \$24,479.41 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

Alderpersoon Oberlin commented that the documents show the old address of 1610 Plainfield Road and would like these documents updated with our new address. She also commented that the names also need updated since some of the documents still mention our former Public Work Director Mark Siefert. Interim Director Eulitz stated that he would take care of that.

(#3) Motion by Alderpersoon Oberlin seconded by Alderman Dyke, to Approve Pay Request #18 from Williams Brothers Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for Total Amount of \$24,479.41 per the memo dated February 20, 2024

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz requested to Approve Change Order #4 with Vissering Construction for the West Treatment Plant Project for an Addition of \$43,398 per the memo dated February 20, 2024. Interim Director Eulitz stated that the total value of all change orders to date is a deduction of \$1,281,819.00 including this change order. He also commented that the contractor did not ask for a time extension and the project will remain on schedule.

(#4) Motion by Alderwoman Gazal seconded by Alderpersoon Oberlin, to Approve Change Order #4 with Vissering Construction for the West Treatment Plant Project for an Addition of \$43,398 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Interim Public Works Director Mike Eulitz requested Approval of Pay Request #13 from Vissering Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for a Total Amount of \$821,186.40 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

(#5) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Jefferson, to Approve Pay Request #13 from Vissering Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for a Total Amount of \$821,186.40 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

CITY ENGINEER: Interim Director of Public Works Mike Eulitz commented that he would be requesting the next agenda items in the absence of the City Engineer Ron Wiedeman.

Interim Director Eulitz requested to Approve a Resolution Approving an Agreement for 2025 Sidewalk Cutting Program-Survey by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Safe Step, LLC. for a Cost of \$60,000.00 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

(#6) Motion by Alderman Dyke seconded by Alderman Jefferson, to Approve a Resolution Approving an Agreement for 2025 Sidewalk Cutting Program-Survey by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and Safe Step, LLC. for a Cost of \$60,000.00 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal

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

Resolution # 1207

Interim Director Eulitz requested to Approve a Resolution Approving an Agreement for Old City Hall-Phase 2 Assessment by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and ECS Midwest, LLC for an Amount of \$15,635.00 per the memo dated February 20, 2024. Interim Director Eulitz commented that asbestos and lead paint were found in the old City Hall and this agreement would be for further investigation on how we can remove the items found.

(#7) Motion by Alderwoman Gazal seconded by Alderman Jefferson, to Approve a Resolution Approving an Agreement for Old City Hall-Phase 2 Assessment by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and ECS Midwest, LLC for an Amount of \$15,635.00 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Resolution # 1208

Aldерwoman Gazal thanked Interim Director Eulitz for taking over everything so quickly and she also apologized for bothering him on a holiday, she forgot the city was closed. She also mentioned that the last time we had a city-wide hydrant flushing was April 29, 2022 and asked if he is planning to do a hydrant flushing. Interim Director Eulitz commented that it is on his schedule to do once we get nice weather. He also commented that they will take care of the hot spots first and then start flushing hydrants.

Aldерwoman Gazal also mentioned that the last time the hydrant painting program was done was in October of 2022 and stated that she knows it is budgeted every year and would like to know if we still have the money and why is this not done and if we will be doing this. Interim Director Eulitz commented that he will verify there is still money in the budget and get someone to do this once the weather warms up.

Mayor Soliman commented that last year he was told there was a delay with the paint color and the product.

Alderman Dyke asked if there is a warranty for some of the hydrants, we have painted in the past that have faded to a pale blue. Interim Director Eulitz ask Alderman Dyke to email him with an area and he will look and check into the warranty.

Aldерperson Oberlin complimented Interim Director Eulitz stating that she has talked to several people from his past employer, and they all had remarkedly wonderful things to say about him.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT: Interim Director of Community Development Ron Mentzer commented that there are no agenda items for discussion but wanted to provide an update on the status of Walgreens located at 2379 Plainfield Road. He commented that it was brought to his attention that the store would be closing. He then reached out to the store manager and then reached out to the district manager and confirmed the store was closing. He commented that initially the store was closing on March 19, 2024 but they extended that date, and they did not know at that time what the date would be, but he would reach out to the city once he has that information. Interim Director Mentzer asked the district manager what the reason for the closing is and if there is any contact information for the property owner since it is a leased property. He also stated that he is supposed to be hearing back from another corporate employee since this manager could not answer any of his questions.

Aldерwoman Gazal asked if they could schedule a meeting with Roger Duba in regards to the strip mall off Division Street and discuss what is going on with the property and how we can collaborate with him to promote the property. She also commented that the signs are gone, and it is looking more vacant, and many residents do not like how it is a ghost town in that area.

Alderman Jefferson commented that the realtor signs are in the grass and the paint is peeling and you cannot see them.

POLICE DEPARTMENT: Police Chief Ed Clark announced that March 9, 2024 the Police Department will be participating in the Special Olympics Polar Plunge in Braidwood at the Recreation Center.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that she has received several text messages and phone calls regarding the striping on Gaylord and Cedarwood after being redone in the fall. She commented that the residents, especially the elderly, are concerned since it is very unsafe when merging. She stated that if it was not wrong and doing well why would we change it. She also stated that she would like this on an agenda for discussion.

Dominic Gattone with Strand & Associates commented that in the next year or two as the Lake Michigan Water improvements approach that entire area will be torn up and redone to allow a sixty-inch watermain.

MAYOR: Mayor Soliman commented that we have received a phone call from the Joliet Herald News informing us that they conducted a survey, and the City of Crest Hill will receive an award from the Joliet Herald News for one of the top workplaces to work at in Will County. Mayor Soliman congratulated all the employees of the City of Crest Hill for all the hard work they do, and he thanks them for the loyalty and dedication they have for the City of Crest Hill.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that Bill and Barb Sklare are close friends of hers and she sends her condolences to Barb. She also asked the mayor if he picks and chooses for whom he wants to have a moment of silence. She also commented that her father passed away in December and the mayor did not say a word regarding her father passing away. She then asked if that is because the mayor does not like her or if he just picks and chooses.

Mayor Soliman apologized to Alderwoman Gazal if he had offended her in any way.

CITY CLERK: City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall requested Approval of Six (6) Additional Temporary Sign Permits for Scorpion Dance per the memo dated February 20, 2024. She also commented that this is because his permanent sign is not ready for use yet.

Maria Aguirre, the mother of Michael Vallejo, who is the owner of Scorpion Dance approached the podium and stated that the problem is that her son has temporary business signs on the side walls of the building, and he is being made to take them down. She commented that everyone has signs that have been there for years and now my son owns a business and is being made to take them down. She asked if we pick and choose who gets to keep their signs and who does not.

Interim Director Mentzer commented that if he can get her number, he would be happy to discuss this with the building commissioner and see if we can get these questions answered.

Maria commented that they are only giving him a ten-day sign and he needs to promote his business. She also stated that he had asked to put wood lettering on top of his business and was told it is not allowed but the business across the street is doing the same thing he wants to do.

Alderman Albert explained that one of the businesses face Sweetbriar which is the only frontage this business has to place signage.

Maria then approached the dais and showed the Council members pictures.

Mayor Soliman told Maria before she left the meeting to give Director Mentzer her phone number so he and the building commissioner can discuss this with you.

(#8) Motion by Alderman Albert seconded by Alderperson Oberlin, for Approval of Six (6) Additional Temporary Sign Permits for Scorpion Dance per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall requested a Waiver of Late Fees for Three (3) Business Licenses per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall commented that we have a business owner in the audience who is requesting a waiver of his late fees. Tom Hooks, owner of Taboo, approached the podium and introduced himself stating that he has been in business at this location since 1992. He explained that he received the renewal packet, and he placed it on his desk, and he simply forgot to fill the forms out and send in on time. He then commented that when he realized that he had forgotten to submit his renewal and immediately went to turn in the packet, but it was late and now the late fee is approximately \$4,000.00. Mr. Hooks asked for forgiveness from a person who has been a merchant of the city for a very long time who has always paid on time.

Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that he has paid for his license renewal but not the outstanding late fees.

Alderman Cipiti asked what the penalty fee is. Clerk Vershay-Hall stated that the penalty alone is \$4,050.00.

Interim Administrator Graff commented that there are other businesses who have contacted the Clerk's Office regarding their penalty fees, and they all have good reasons why they forgot. He commented that there is a list of three different businesses who would like a waiver, also and their penalty fees are \$450.00 each. There are some businesses that have paid the penalties without questioning it. Interim Administrator Graff commented that these penalty fees are steep, and this was put in place a long time ago and will need to be discussed.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that there is a business that has received a \$750.00 fine for missing the administrative hearing but if we waive one where does this stop? Interim Administrator Graff commented that a fee of \$4,050.00 for a senior moment is steep when he has 32 years of being on time.

Alderman Albert asked what other reach outs we do to the businesses after receiving the renewal packet. Deputy Clerk Karen Kozierka commented that we will usually email around the week of January 31st and we will call if no email is given.

Alderwoman Gazal asked how many letters were sent to the business. Deputy Clerk Kozerka stated that he was mailed the renewal packet and given two emails.

Alderman Albert commented that he appreciates the honesty, but this is a slippery slope to go down. He also commented that he is late on every water bill that comes, and he does not get a waiver on the fee. Mr. Hook commented that he understands the penalty fees on the burglar alarm, but the sexually oriented fee is \$3,600.00 which is very high. He also commented that businesses are struggling these days. If Walgreens is closing imagine the little businesses that are struggling. He also reminded everyone that he has never been late.

Treasurer Glen Conklin commented that when looking at our income for the year, we base it on the income on the cost of the business license and not the fees. He commented that we like to see compliance more than penalty and penalty fees should not overburden because it is too harsh.

Mayor Soliman asked the Council to table this until the first meeting in March when we bring back the list of delinquent businesses that Alderman Dyke asked for earlier.

Alderman Albert commented that there needs to be an understanding that no citations will be issued. City Clerk Vershay-Hall commented that she would notify the Building Department to hold off on the citation issuing.

Alderman Cipiti asked how we will be managing the penalty fees for other businesses since we are tabling this issue. Interim Administrator Graff commented that the businesses are coming in and paying the actual license fees and not the penalty fees until we discuss this.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we need to send more than just one letter by mail since the mail can get lost.

(#9) Motion by Alderman Jefferson seconded by Alderman Dyke, to Table the Waiver of Late Fees for Three (3) Business Licenses until February 26, 2024 for further discussion.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

Clerk Vershay-Hall informed the Council that there are forty-nine other businesses that have not paid for their license.

CITY TREASURER: City Treasurer Glen Conklin presented the regular and overtime payroll from January 29, 2024 through February 11, 2024 in the amount of \$257,602.12 per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

City Treasurer Glen Conklin requested Approval of the list of bills issued through February 21, 2024 in the amount of \$3,223,844.81 for Council approval per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

(#10) Motion by Alderperson Oberlin seconded by Alderman Cipiti, to Approve the list of bills issued through February 21, 2024 in the amount of \$3,223,844.81 for Council approval per the memo dated February 20, 2024.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS: There was no New Business on the agenda.

COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS: There were no Committee/Liaison reports on the agenda.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Alderman Albert announced that the Knights of Columbus for St. Annes and St. Ambrose is hosting a Corned beef and Cabbage dinner on Saturday, March 16, 2024 at St. Ambrose Hall. Tickets are \$20.00 for a corn beef and cabbage dinner, and there is a macaroni and cheese dinner option for the children for \$7.00. If you are interested in the dinner and want to purchase tickets, you may call Harry Blackburn at (312) 401-2236.

Alderman Albert also announced that the Crest Hill Lions Club is hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. in the field near Richland School. This will be for all children ages 0 through 10 years old.

Alderwoman Gazal announced that Saturday, March 2, 2024 is the Kids Pop-Up Pantry in the parking lot at the City Center from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Roxanne Greztich, a resident at 1621 Wilcox, approached the podium and publicly thanked the Council for listening to her at the last meeting and she especially thanked the Police Chief Ed Clark. She commented that the police department is showing their presence tremendously in her area. She commented that she appreciated the chief acting on this immediately and asked to give a heartfelt thank you to all the officers for helping with this, as well.

Stuart Soifer, a resident, commented that he wanted a follow up about the discussion regarding the city receiving credit from Republic Services for the loss of pickup. City Treasurer Glen Conklin commented that we have requested and received a letter of intent for \$3,000.00 worth of in-kind service to the City of Crest Hill at any future date that we request. He stated that this is not a physical credit. Stuart then asked what the intention would be for that \$3,000.00. Alderperson Oberlin commented that if the city requests a special pickup from a storm or a special event held in the city the credit would be used for that. Stuart commented that the residents who were damaged by not getting serviced are paying for some other service that the city will use. Treasurer Conklin commented that the answer is yes, the refund would have been \$2.00 per household but we received additional monies for the in-kind consideration, and he understands it is not fair to the ones who did

not receive services. Alderwoman Gazal commented that it would have cost the city more to process a \$2.00 refund check.

Alderwoman Gazal commented that we should not forget to thank Mrs. Dyke, for all the years of work and time she has put into these homes. She also thanked the Police Chief Ed Clark.

There being no further business before the Council, and no action needed from the executive session, a motion for adjournment was in order.

(#22) Motion by Alderman Dyke seconded by Alderman Vershay, to adjourn the February 20, 2024 Council meeting.

On roll call, the vote was:

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: Ald. Kubal.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Approved this 4 day of MARCH, 2024
As presented ✓
As amended _____


CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK


RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR