

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
July 13, 2026

The July 13, 2026, 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 Scott Dyke, Alderman Angelo Deserio, Alderman Darrell Jefferson, Alderwoman Claudia Gazal, Alderperson Tina Oberlin, Alderman Mark Cipiti, Alderman Nate Albert, Alderman Joe Kubal.

Also Present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, Assistant City Administrator & HR Director Ashley Monroe, Police Chief Ed Clark, Building Commissioner Don Seeman, Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter, City Attorney Mike Stiff.

MAYOR

There were no agenda items.

CLERK

There were no agenda items.

TREASURER

There were no agenda items.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR

City Administrator Blaine Wing noted that in the back corner of Council Chambers there is testing of audio and video occurring to see if the work session meetings can be televised in the future.

1. **City Hall/Police Station Plumbing Update**

City Administrator Blaine Wing presented an update on ongoing plumbing issues at the City Hall and Police Station. He introduced Building Commissioner Don Seeman and Bob Fox, President of Omega Plumbing — the firm that performed the original plumbing work on the building during construction around 2020 — who had been engaged to conduct a televised inspection of the sewer lines and assess potential solutions.

Building Commissioner Seeman explained that Omega Plumbing had recently performed a camera inspection at several locations within the building. The inspection identified a combination fitting (a double-Y with two 45-degree connections) located in the jail cell area as the primary source of recurring drain blockages, where solid waste was lodged and accumulating over time.

Bob Fox of Omega Plumbing elaborated on the findings, confirming that the combination fitting, while not a code violation in itself, creates a configuration where waste from two lines converges at the same point on a horizontal run, causing solids to accumulate and eventually plug the line. He noted that a contributing factor is the low-flow toilets currently installed in the facility, which at 1.28 gallons per flush do not produce sufficient water volume to reliably carry solids through the drain line. By contrast, commercial flushometer-style toilets can use up to 3.5 gallons per flush, providing the necessary volume. Mr. Fox also noted that the current half-inch water supply lines serving the toilets are undersized for commercial fixtures, which would require approximately a one-inch supply line.

Mr. Fox proposed that the primary repair — excavating approximately a 6-by-8-foot area of concrete floor in the jail cell area to a depth of roughly three feet, reconfiguring the problematic fitting junction so the two lines enter the horizontal run at staggered points rather than simultaneously, and then backfilling and pouring new concrete — would address an estimated 80 percent of the problem. He indicated the work would take approximately four to five days, with the epoxy floor coating requiring an additional 26 to 30 days of concrete cure time before application. The total excavation and reconfiguration work could proceed without preventing use of the facilities during that period.

Alderwoman Gazal questioned whether the proposed repair would constitute a permanent fix. Mr. Fox acknowledged it would not carry an absolute guarantee, because the low-flow toilets remain in place and some risk of future blockage persists. He warranted the work itself and maintained high confidence in the improvement, but stated the long-term complete solution would involve upsizing the water supply lines and replacing the tank-type toilets with commercial flushometer fixtures.

Alderman Cipiti asked who wrote up the plumbing plans at the time of original construction. Mr. Fox stated that Bob Gabel of United Architects was in charge of the original plans. Mr. Fox also noted that during original construction, Omega Plumbing had formally submitted a Request for Information (RFI) recommending the upgrade to commercial toilets and larger supply lines, but that the recommendation was declined by the project manager at the time, Kirk Wilkins of United Architects, in the interest of cost savings.

Mayor Soliman questioned whether the solenoid drain flush valve included as an alternate in Omega's proposal was advisable. Mr. Fox recommended against it, citing the risk that if the drain line were to back up while the solenoid introduced clean water, flooding of floor drains or shower areas could result. He confirmed the solenoid option was included only because it had been requested as an alternate but stated he personally would not install it.

Alderwoman Gazal raised concern about whether the repair fully addressed the backup event experienced during an Easter public event in the City Hall

portion of the building, and noted the issue appeared to involve separate plumbing systems. Building Commissioner Seeman confirmed that some portions of the building's drain system are on a concrete slab and are underground, while others are suspended in the basement and accessible without excavation. The proposed repair addresses the police department/jail cell section specifically.

Several Council members expressed a desire to also receive a comprehensive quote for the full scope of work — including upsizing water supply lines and replacing toilets with commercial fixtures — rather than continuing to address the problem incrementally. Mr. Fox indicated his main estimator would be available within approximately one week to prepare an additional quote for the broader scope of work.

City Administrator Wing recommended proceeding with the Phase/Step 1 repair as a necessary step that would be required regardless of future work, and requested an informal vote to place the item on the following week's Council agenda for formal approval.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on step one of plumbing repairs on the 6-by-8-foot area of concrete floor in the jail cell area for an amount of \$17,802.00 to be performed by Omega Plumbing.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

2. Final Utility Bill Code Discussion

City Administrator Wing introduced a draft ordinance establishing a final utility bill and meter read requirement applicable to the sale and transfer of residential property. He noted that the need for such an ordinance came to staff's attention several months prior when issues arose during a residential property sale in which no final utility bill was obtained. The draft ordinance was modeled after similar ordinances adopted by other non-home-rule communities. City Attorney Mike Stiff and Assistant City Administrator/HR Director Ashley Monroe had led the drafting effort, and Finance Director Glenn Gehrke also provided preliminary comments.

City Attorney Stiff presented two primary concerns raised by staff. The first was ensuring the City has a right of access to repair or replace meters as necessary to obtain an accurate final read, consistent with Council direction that no estimated final reads be issued. The second concern related to the proposed 30-day validity window for a final read certificate, which Attorney Stiff and staff agreed should be reduced to 7 to 10 days to limit the City's financial exposure. Finance Director Gehrke illustrated the risk with a pending commercial property closing where the account generates approximately \$13,000–\$15,000 in utility charges per billing cycle; allowing a 30-day window after a final read could leave a significant sum uncollected.

Attorney Stiff also proposed that if a closing does not occur within the validity window, the seller would need to restart the final read process. Discussion also touched on whether the water should be physically shut off after the final read is obtained, with Attorney Stiff and staff acknowledging this could be administratively cumbersome — requiring same-day or next-day turn-on for the new owner — but noting it may be appropriate in cases where the meter is not communicating or to prevent post-read usage from going uncollected.

It was noted that the City currently has outstanding uncollected final read accounts due to the absence of such an ordinance. City Administrator Wing outlined a plan to notify local realtors and title companies ahead of the ordinance's effective date to ensure a smooth transition. A typographical error in draft Section B of the appeals section — which referenced “City Manager” instead of “City Administrator” — was noted by Alderperson Oberlin and will be corrected before the final version is brought forward.

Administrator Wing indicated staff would continue refining the draft in consultation with the utility billing department and Public Works, and would bring a final version to the July 27, 2026, Work Session for further Council discussion.

3. Resolution Approving a Professional Service Agreement for Design Services for the Division Water Main Extension for the Illinois Crime Lab Services by and Between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois and V3 Companies for a not to exceed of \$75,203.00

City Administrator Wing presented this item in the absence of the City Engineer, who was on vacation. He explained that the City had previously approved an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the State of Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB), under which the State will reimburse the City for all professional engineering services and construction costs associated with extending a new water main along the south side of Division Street to serve the Illinois Crime Lab. Upon completion, the City will own the new water main.

City Attorney Stiff noted that the IGA had been approved at a prior Council meeting and that this resolution covers only the design/engineering services phase. He also noted that acquisition of a necessary easement along the corridor remains pending, as the Department of Corrections and the Capital Development Board have not yet delivered the easement document for his review. Construction of the water main cannot begin until the easement is in place.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on the resolution approval of a professional service agreement for design services for the Division Water Main Extension.

AYES: Ald. Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin, Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: None.

4. Confidential/Closed Session Policy Recommendations

City Administrator Blaine Wing introduced a set of best-practice recommendations prepared by City Attorney Stiff's office, covering the areas of closed session confidentiality, attorney-client privilege, and cybersecurity. He noted that the City does not currently have formal written policies addressing these topics and that the recommendations were drawn from practices in place at other Illinois municipalities. Hard copies of the recommendations were distributed to council members.

City Attorney Stiff explained that the document presents a list of best practices intended to be rolled into a formal City policy, organized across multiple topic areas. He emphasized that the Council retains full discretion over which recommendations to adopt, modify, or omit.

Discussion focused most substantially on Item A — Use of Cell Phones During Meetings. Alderwoman Gazal and Alderman Jefferson, expressed strong objections to any policy that would require them to power down or restrict access to personal phones, citing personal and family emergency needs and their status as adults responsible for managing their own conduct. Attorney Stiff clarified that the recommendation was not intended to prohibit phones entirely, but rather to flag that text messages and other communications conducted on personal devices during meetings — including research conducted on those devices — constitute public records subject to FOIA, as established by an Illinois Public Access Counselor opinion. He noted that he had previously been required to ask former staff members to produce records from their personal phones in response to a FOIA request and had encountered resistance. Some aldermen noted they use their City-issued tablets for meeting research rather than personal phones, and Attorney Stiff clarified that the recommendation pertained specifically to cell phones, not tablets. City Administrator Wing suggested the Council may prefer a “watered down” version of Item A that simply acknowledges the FOIA implications of personal phone use during meetings, rather than imposing a categorical prohibition. This framing was generally well received.

Regarding Item G — Staff Contact and Requests for Assistance, Alderperson Oberlin raised a practical question about whether contacting a staff member directly — such as Building Commissioner Seeman — regarding a constituent complaint would be prohibited. City Attorney Stiff and Community & Economic Development Director Ritter clarified that the intent was not to prohibit elected officials from speaking to staff, but rather to encourage routing formal requests for action through department heads to ensure supervisors are aware of work being assigned to their staff, to avoid disrupting union employee workflows, and to prevent potential labor relations issues. City Administrator Wing suggested adjusting the language to encourage directing most requests to department heads or at minimum looping them in.

Alderman Jefferson raised broader questions about the timing and motivation for introducing these policies. City Administrator Wing explained that the effort was part of an ongoing initiative to document the many written policies the City lacked, and that the cybersecurity component was specifically driven by requirements from the City's risk management pool (SWARM) mandating multi-factor authentication implementation.

On Item K — Cybersecurity, City Administrator Wing provided a detailed update on ongoing efforts: rolling out a multi-factor authentication (MFA) app to staff with City-issued phones, deploying physical security fobs as a secondary layer, and exploring MFA options for elected officials as the current text-message-based authentication is being phased out by SWARM at year-end. He also noted that the City's existing iPads may no longer receive security updates as of September and that IT consultants were evaluating replacement options including laptops capable of supporting USB-C fobs. Additionally, a software platform for email encryption had been partially deployed for staff.

Administrator Wing indicated that it would incorporate Council feedback, research examples of streamlined policies from other municipalities, and return with a formal draft policy for Council review at a future meeting.

5. Executive Conference Room Use Discussion

City Administrator Blaine Wing reported that obstacles previously cited for not using the executive conference room for closed sessions — specifically, audio recording capability and sound isolation — had been resolved in coordination with the Clerk's office. The conference room's speaker unit contains multiple built-in microphones that can be utilized with existing software to create a compliant recording, with a backup redundant recorder also available. He also noted the room provides a more suitable environment for Teams or Zoom meetings than the Council Chambers' current audio-visual setup.

Alderman Cipiti noted that he had advocated for resuming use of the room for several years and asked whether there were any remaining reasons not to use it. Alderman Dyke recalled that sound-deadening work had been completed, which had been one of the original reasons for reverting to the chambers for executive session. He expressed support for resuming use of the executive conference room, noting that it was built and furnished specifically for that purpose and that asking members of the public to leave the council chambers during executive sessions is not appropriate when a dedicated room exists.

Alderman Albert noted the room's heating and cooling limitations as a potential concern for lengthy sessions. City Administrator Blaine Wing acknowledged the HVAC limitations and suggested the back door could be opened for ventilation when needed and no staff are in the adjacent area.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote on using the executive conference room for executive sessions.

AYES: Ald. Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: None.

City Administrator Wing also announced that mosquito spraying was scheduled to occur the following evening, Tuesday, July 14, 2026, and that notification would be posted on the City's Facebook page and website. He noted that notification is typically provided within 24 to 48 hours of spraying based on trap testing results from the surrounding region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1. Property Owner Association (POA) Registration

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter presented a proposed ordinance amendment to add a Property Owner Association (POA) registration requirement to the City Code, complementing the existing homeowners association (HOA) registration requirement. He explained that the change would capture commercial associations, master associations, and mixed-use associations that are not currently covered by the existing HOA registration language. The City believes only one such association currently exists in Crest Hill, but additional associations are anticipated as new developments progress. There are no registration fees associated with the requirement. The information gathered would be utilized by Public Works, the Police Department, Engineering, Community Development, and Finance. City Attorney Stiff drafted the amendment.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote for an ordinance amending section 15.02.020.

AYES: Ald. Gazal, Jefferson, Deserio, Dyke, Kubal, Albert, Cipiti, Oberlin.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: None.

Director Ritter also provided the following economic development updates:
Swig Drinks is opening at the former Smoothie King location. Swig, a Utah-based specialty beverage brand with approximately 164 locations nationally, will be the first Illinois location.

Seasons of Crest Hill has closed on its property, permitting is largely complete, and a pre-construction meeting is anticipated within the next week or two. A formal groundbreaking ceremony targeting early September is being planned, and elected officials should expect invitations.

Quik Trip has a ComEd disconnect expected this week or next, with demolition of the existing building anticipated to begin in late July or early August.

Oasis Restaurant has made inquiries with staff about returning to Crest Hill.

Alderman Cipiti asked for an update on the gas station/7-11 on the corner of Larkin and Route 30 that closed. Director Ritter stated that the gas station has the same ownership, but they are changing brands to Citgo. Updates are being done to this property as well as the Midas business next door.

Alderman Cipiti also asked if Council members can be notified if a business closes or opens as that is good information to know. Director Ritter stated that sometimes he finds out about a business closing from Council members who contact him to ask why a sign is down. He said he could incorporate that into the Friday report also.

Alderwoman Gazal asked for an update on Feathered Fork. Director Ritter said the owners were looking for a different model that would fit in with that space. He hasn't heard anything in over a month, but noticed that the signs were down and items have been moved out of the space.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. Private Parking Enforcement Agreement

Police Chief Ed Clark presented a memorandum from Deputy Chief Dobczyk regarding a request from Park Place on the Green to enter into a private parking enforcement agreement with the City. Chief Clark confirmed that the association had submitted the required documentation, though on an older version of the agreement form. City Attorney Stiff reviewed the submission and prepared an updated agreement incorporating a clarification regarding the disposition of fines — specifying that fines collected through the administrative hearing process will be retained by the City rather than returned to the HOA — and will have the association execute the updated version prior to the council meeting.

The primary driver for the agreement is a persistent parking problem, particularly on Park Place Court, including vehicles parked facing the wrong direction, blocking the roadway, and obstructing fire hydrants. Chief Clark noted that the Police Department already patrols the subdivision but currently lacks authority to issue citations for internal parking violations. The agreement would authorize the department to enforce its ordinances and applicable provisions of the Illinois Vehicle Code within the private subdivision.

Alderman Cipiti asked how the agreement would change current practice. Police Chief Clark explained that currently, the HOA handles such violations itself — for example, by calling a tow company — and the Police Department only responds to criminal violations. The agreement would authorize officers to issue municipal citations for parking violations while on patrol, without a separate call for service.

Mayor Soliman conducted an informal vote to approve the private parking enforcement agreement.

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

NAYES: None.

ABSENT: None.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

There were no agenda items.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stuart Soifer, a resident, addressed the Council in connection with the Park Place on the Green enforcement agreement. He inquired whether the Renwick Club's existing enforcement agreement should also be updated to reflect the revised template prepared by City Attorney Stiff. Attorney Stiff confirmed it would be advisable to update older agreements to reflect the current template, particularly the clarified fine disposition language.

Mr. Soifer also raised the issue of parking enforcement in relation to a fire code requirement, noting that because streets within the subdivision are narrower than 20 feet, parking on both sides is prohibited to maintain the minimum fire access clearance. He stated that the subdivision had posted signs and adopted internal rules to that effect years ago following discussions with the Police Department, but that parking violations — including vehicles blocking fire hydrants and parking in intersections — remain a recurring problem. Police Chief Ed Clark indicated he would review the existing signage and citation history with Mr. Soifer and discuss the most appropriate enforcement mechanism.

Attorney Stiff noted that as a general principle, posted signage at the subdivision's entry points providing clear notice of parking restrictions would be sufficient to support enforcement, without requiring signs at every block.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. 5ILCS 120/2(c)(29): Discussion between internal or external auditors and the City's audit committee, finance committee, or equivalent body concerning internal control weaknesses, potential fraud risk areas, known or suspected fraud, and fraud interviews conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Aldерwoman Gazal made a motion to enter executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(29). Seconded by Alderman Deserio. Roll call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal. Nays: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Prior to entering Executive Session, City Attorney Stiff noted that, as he had not participated in the underlying investigation, he would excuse himself from the session. Aldерperson Tina Oberlin also recused herself from the Executive Session. The session was attended by City Administrator Blaine, staff member Ashley, independent investigator Jason Blumenthal, and a representative from Ketchum.

Executive Session: 9:13 p.m.

Alderman Deserio made a motion to reconvene from the executive session for 5ILCS 120/2(c)(29). Seconded by Alderman Cipiti. Roll call: Ayes: Gazal, Cipiti, Albert, Kubal, Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson. Nays: None. Absent: Oberlin. MOTION CARRIED.

Reconvened: 11:27 p.m.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 p.m.

Approved this 20 day of July, 2026.

As presented ✓

As amended _____


CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK


RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR