

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL OF CREST HILL
WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
January 19, 2026

1. OPENING OF MEETING

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.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

Following the pledge, Mayor Soliman addressed the Council and stated that we are honoring audience, saying "Today in our country we honor the life of Martin Luther King." He spoke at length about Dr. King's legacy, noting "So we certainly would like to celebrate his life. He's a wonderful man who was killed and died way too early in his life." Mayor Soliman emphasized that "he did change the course of history for this work for this country. And his death was not in vain because it was because of his promotion of civil rights in the 1960s that made many changes that were long overdue."

Mayor Soliman reflected on the nation's progress: "We as a country have come a long, long way, but we're not there yet. We still have a lot of work to do. But again, he did not die in vain." On behalf of the City of Crest Hill, Mayor Soliman offered condolences to the King family and asked everyone to keep them in their thoughts and prayers. He then requested a moment of silence in honor of Dr. King's life.

3. ROLL CALL

Roll call indicated the following 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, and Alderman Nate Albert.

Also present were: City Administrator Blaine Wing, Police Chief Ed Clark, Finance Director Glenn Gehrke, City Engineer Ron Wiedeman, Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter, and City Attorney Mike Stiff.

Absent were: Alderman Joe Kubal.

Mayor Soliman commented that he received a message from Alderman Joe Kubal, and he is excusing him from tonight's meeting.

4. CITIZEN/SPECIAL REQUEST/PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Business promotion-Mr. Auto Care.

Mayor Soliman announced that the scheduled business promotion for Mr. Auto Care, located at 2424 Plainfield Road, unit number five hundred, would need to be rescheduled. The owner, Chris Maycooth, had called at 6:00 PM to report that a late customer had arrived at his auto repair shop. Mayor Soliman noted that "like any good businessman, he's going to take care of that individual." The business had held its grand opening ribbon cutting in September and had been operating for about five months. The promotion would be rescheduled for a future City meeting.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:

No one approached the podium to make public comments on the consent agenda items.

6. CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Soliman asked if any of the Council members wished to have any items removed from the consent agenda for further discussion.

Alderman Jefferson requested to remove item 6B (Approval of Work Session minutes from January 12, 2026).

Alderwoman Gazal requested to remove items 6C (Approving text amendment ordinance) and 6L (Approval of the list of bills).

Mayor Soliman proceeded to read the consent agenda items:

6A. Approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting Held on January 5, 2026.

6B. Approve the Minutes from the Work Session Meeting Held on January 12, 2026. (REMOVED for Discussion)

6C. Approve an Ordinance Approving Text Amendments to the City of Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance, Code of Ordinances and Development Handbook with Respect to Regulations Governing Non-Conforming Uses and Structures, Court Reporter Requirements for Development Applications, and Parking Lot, Driveway, and Street Access Regulations (Case # TXT-25-2-12-1) (REMOVED for Discussion) **Ordinance #2045**

6D. Approve an Ordinance Granting Lockport Township Fire Protection District's Request for a Minor Change to the Non-Residential Planned Unit Development Conditions in Ordinance 2016 Passed on April 7, 2025. **Ordinance #2046**

6E. Approval of Pay Request #36 from Vissering Construction Inc. with Direction to Send it to the IEPA for Approval and Disbursement for a Total Amount of \$241,593.01

6F. Approval of a Right of Way for Fiber Optic Network Agreement by and between the City of Crest Hill and Metro Fibernet, LLC. **Resolution #1374**

- 6G. Approval of a Right of Way Use Agreement for Fiber Optic Network by and between the City of Crest Hill and Ripple Fiber Illinois, LLC. **Resolution #1375**
- 6H. Approve a Resolution Approving a Professional Services Agreement by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois, and Azavar Audit Solutions, Inc. and Approving a Joint Engagement Letter by and between Azavar Audit Solutions and Cozen O'Connor to Assist in the Collection of Municipal Taxes and/or Fees. **Resolution #1376**
- 6I. Approve a Resolution Approving a Snapshot Audit Agreement by and between the City of Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois, and Spyglass Group, LLC. **Resolution #1377**
- 6J. Approval of the Regular and Overtime Payroll from December 28, 2025, through January 5, 2026, in the Amount of \$ 305,183.41
- 6K. Approval of Additional Payroll Police Retention Bonus in the Amount of \$75,000.00
- 6L. Approval of the List of Bills Issued through January 31, 2026, in the Amount of \$1,418,132.16. (REMOVED for Discussion)

Mayor Soliman asked for a motion to approve the 9 Consent Agenda items, excluding items **6B**, **6C** and **6L**.

Aldersperson Oberlin asked a question on the January 5, 2026, minutes. She had a note that there was a motion made, but the second was not included in the minutes on page 11. Mayor Soliman asked City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall to make those changes.

Aldersperson Oberlin made a motion to Approve the Consent Agenda with changes to 6A regarding the seconds. Seconded by Alderman Albert. Roll Call: Ayes: Dyke, Deserio, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert. Nays: None. Abstain: Jefferson. Absent Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Soliman commented that they would now discuss the items that were removed from the Consent Agenda to discuss separately.

- 6B. Approve the Minutes of the Work Session Meeting Held on January 12, 2026.

Alderman Jefferson raised concerns about the remote attendance of Alderman Deserio at the January 12 work session. Alderman Jefferson stated they had a motion that was granted for remote access to the meeting and that the reason for the remote access for Alderman Deserio does not follow with the City Ordinance. The reason given for Alderman Deserio to remote in was that he was out of town.

Alderman Jefferson then read from the Ordinance, explaining that members could only attend remotely for four specific reasons: personal illness or disability, employment purposes or city business, family or other emergency, or an unexpected childcare obligation. He emphasized: "The reason stated that he was out of town, which doesn't fall into the criteria of acceptability for being remotely attending a meeting."

City Attorney Mike Stiff responded that he had understood the absence was due to employment reasons, based on staff discussions. However, Alderman Jefferson countered: "That's not what was said. I came in and reviewed the minutes and I replayed it several different times to see if I heard something of that nature, but the reason was just being out of town."

When asked directly if it was employment related, Alderman Deserio clarified: "I'm retired, so it was not employment related. It was family business." Mayor Soliman asked City Attorney Mike Stiff if that answer would suffice. This statement led to further discussion about whether this met the Ordinance requirements. City Attorney Mike Stiff stated that it would not suffice. The Ordinance that was passed was consistent with what was changed in the Open Meetings Act to allow remote attendance absent in a disaster declaration. The categories of legitimate reasons for it would mirror what was in the Open Meetings Act. City Attorney Stiff further explained that there were internal discussions with staff stating that it was business/employment related and would suffice for a reason to be remote at the meeting.

Alderman Deserio asked if his position in the Civic Organization that he belongs in, which that trip to Arizona was for, justify a business trip because he is on the Board of Directors for that organization. City Attorney Mike Stiff responded that it gets into the interpretation of employment. City Attorney Stiff asked if Alderman Deserio was compensated. Alderman Deserio responded that he is compensated for being a Director of one of the charities that the Civic Organization manages, yes. City Attorney Stiff stated that he can make an argument both ways. Attorney Stiff explained that he does not know what a court would say, and he has not looked at any Open Meetings Act PAC opinions as to what constitutes employment, whether that has ever been looked at. The City has amended the ordinance to mirror the Open Meetings Act. As a non-home rule community, City Attorney Stiff stated that he did not think the City could change what employment means, so it really depends on what the PAC thinks what employment means, and he has not looked at that.

Alderwoman Gazal stated that next time the Council can be a little more specific, so we do not have to go through these issues. City Attorney Stiff stated that from now on Council is going to have to ask the person who wants to be remote when they are hooking in remotely, if they are not making the three-day notice requirement where they can make it in writing, to state on the record one of the four reasons met.

After extensive debate about the validity of the work session and whether its actions were null and void, City Attorney Mike Stiff stated that the attendance was either authorized or not authorized as there was a quorum with one Council member still there, everything is still valid that occurred at the last workshop. There is a quorum currently within this Council also.

Alderman Jefferson clarified that it is not the vote that he is concerned over, it is the violation of the ordinance and believes this should be suspended until legal opinions are in place.

City Administrator Blaine Wing commented that the vote is still valid since with or without Alderman Deserio, there was a quorum. He then stated to address the item that was pulled tonight, which is 6B, what the Council would need to do is just reflect that in the minutes to adjust it.

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall suggested: "We could just table it and put it on the next Council Meeting approval." She also stated that they have thirty (30) days to approve these minutes.

Alderwoman Gazal made a motion to TABLE Consent Agenda Item 6B to Approve the Minutes of the Work Session Meeting Held on January 12, 2026. Seconded by Alderman Cipiti. Roll Call: Ayes: Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Dyke. Nays: Albert. Absent: Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

- 6C. Approve an Ordinance Approving Text Amendments to the City of Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance, Code of Ordinances and Development Handbook with Respect to Regulations Governing Non-Conforming Uses and Structures, Court Reporter Requirements for Development Applications, and Parking Lot, Driveway, and Street Access Regulations (Case # TXT-25-2-12-1).

Alderwoman Gazal asked Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter to explain the Ordinance to the public. Director Riggs provided a detailed explanation of three main Amendments:

1. **Court Reporter Requirements:** "We removed the reporter requirements that required a physical court reporter to be here and do a court reporting of any special use or rezoning. That cost was paid by any applicant." Director Ritter explained this was redundant now that meetings are recorded and live-streamed. The City took that out as a cost savings to applicants.
2. **Section 5.5 Amendment:** Director Ritter described this as "an unclear section of our code that's been interpreted 10 different ways before I got here." The section had required properties to be brought into full compliance with every aspect of the code upon sale, which created legal conflicts. The Amendment clarified this to align with existing nonconforming use regulations.

3. **Driveway Requirements:** The previous code limited all properties to 30-foot driveways. The Amendment created different standards for commercial and industrial properties, as "30 foot's just not even really sufficient for a commercial driveway width."

Alderwoman Gazal asked about website updates, and Director Ritter confirmed a full update was in progress that would include all Amendments since 2018. The City Planner is compiling those Amendments, and we will have a fully up-to-date Ordinance up on our website within a month or so.

Alderman Albert made a motion to Approve an Ordinance Approving Text Amendments to the City of Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance, Code of Ordinances and Development Handbook with Respect to Regulations Governing Non-Conforming Uses and Structures, Court Reporter Requirements for Development Applications, and Parking Lot, Driveway, and Street Access Regulations (Case # TXT-25-2-12-1). Seconded by Alderperson Oberlin. Roll Call: Ayes: Jefferson, Gazal, Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Deserio. Nays: None. Absent: Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

- 6L. Approval of the List of Bills Issued through January 31, 2026, in the Amount of \$1,418,132.16.

Alderwoman Gazal raised several questions about the bills totaling \$1,418,132.16. She first asked Police Chief Ed Clark about Flock cameras listed at \$25,000.00, inquiring whether this was an annual expense. Chief Clark confirmed that it is an annual expense, and they have ten cameras. Chief Clark also added that the City is getting eight additional cameras and those were paid with a grant.

Alderwoman Gazal then questioned payments to interim employees, specifically Julius Hanson who received two payments: \$20,977.88 and \$30,210.75. She asked: "Is this a mistake, or an error? How can somebody make all that money for an interim?"

City Administrator Blaine Wing explained these were bills for November and December submitted together at year-end. Alderwoman Gazal expressed frustration: "Still November and December this guy made \$50,000.00. I am like, are we all in the wrong business here?" City Administrator Wing stated he wished we can all get paid an hourly rate that is much higher but that is when you have an interim and that amount is what the City agreed upon. Alderwoman Gazal also noted disappointment that the interim worked Winterfest instead of allowing regular employees to earn overtime.

Regarding the winter newsletter costing \$5,101.00, Alderwoman Gazal questioned whether this was more expensive than previous years when newsletters were included in water bills. City Administrator Wing confirmed previous costs were around \$3,600.00, but the current newsletter

had more pages and utilized a graphic designer. Alderman Dyke asked if we could put the newsletter together in-house to reduce the cost, but City Administrator Wing stated it would be cheaper to have the graphic designer create the newsletters now that the graphic designer has a template to do so. Because of that, it will be cheaper to get these made in the future.

Finance Director Glenn Gehrke said that he looked up the payments for the interim employees questioned and it was bills submitted by MGT for November and December which included snowplowing overtime and an additional payroll week in December.

Alderman Albert made a motion to Approval of the List of Bills Issued through January 31, 2026, in the Amount of \$1,418,132.16. Seconded by Alderman Dyke. Roll Call: Ayes: Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Deserio. Nays: Gazal, Jefferson. Absent: Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

7. REPORTS & COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENTS & ELECTED OFFICIALS

7A. MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Soliman reported on the grand opening ribbon cutting at Soprano's Pizzeria on Saturday at 20641 Renwick Road. The owners are Manny Serna, his family, and his father Hector. Present at the event were Treasurer Jamie Malloy, Alderman Albert, Alderperson Oberlin, Alderwoman Gazal, and Alderman Dyke. Mayor Soliman welcomed the Serna family to Crest Hill, noting they also have a location in Lockport.

7B. CITY CLERK'S REPORT:

City Clerk Christine Vershay-Hall provided the Resolution and Ordinance numbers:

- 6C: Ordinance # 2045
- 6D: Ordinance # 2046
- 6F: Resolution # 1374
- 6G: Resolution # 1375
- 6H: Resolution # 1376
- 6I: Resolution # 1377

7C. CITY TREASURER'S REPORT:

City Treasurer Jamie Malloy raised concerns about having to FOIA information from the Finance Office. She stated she is noticing that when she requests items from the Finance Office she finds out that they are not being sent over to her and that she must FOIA to get the information.

City Treasurer Malloy specifically mentioned requesting overtime information for an employee and payment information for the past HR representative who had 87 hours on a report. City Treasurer Malloy noted: "Per his contract, it states he cannot go over 40 hours without the Mayor

and the Council approving it. So I requested a copy of his payment. I never got the copy and then I had to FOIA them."

City Administrator Blaine Wing responded that the information had been sent to her email and IT had confirmed delivery. He explained the 40-hour limit applied to work weeks, not pay periods, clarifying that the employee "never worked over 40 hours in a work week" but could work up to 80 hours in a two-week pay period.

7D. CITY ATTORNEY:

City Attorney Mike Stiff reported no agenda items. Alderwoman Gazal questioned him about the SWARM presentation from the previous Monday, expressing frustration that promised legal representation had not materialized. She stated: "We were told that by repealing the ordinance, we will be presented by an attorney from SWARM. We all witnessed that meeting that none of that happened."

Alderwoman Gazal criticized the Council for not granting an extra week for more information and expressed concerns about the repeal of legal defense coverage stating some Council, because the rest didn't care, were paying the price because one female elected official used that ordinance to defend herself and now the rest of us must pay the price. She then questioned why in the past an alderman used the ordinance to help him and there was not an issue, she questioned if it was because a female tried to use it now.

7E. CITY ADMINISTRATOR:

City Administrator Blaine Wing reported no agenda items.

Alderman Dyke inquired about the status of live streaming work sessions, referencing his November 3rd inquiry. City Administrator Wing explained that the third camera, which had failed, was just repaired and received the past week. He anticipated having the system operational within 30 days, explaining: "That third camera would be the one that would actually, during our work sessions would, allow us to stream our meetings."

Alderman Cipiti also requested adding drainage issues in the Jasmine Creek area to the next work session agenda, noting: "There's been a lot of hardship, lot of financial loss. Some homeowners have been dropped by their insurance companies as a result of damage in this area."

Alderwoman Gazal questioned City Administrator Blaine Wing about a seven-month investigation that began shortly after his hiring. She asked what initiated the investigation and requested an executive session briefing. Administrator Wing explained that the investigating attorney was on maternity leave, causing delays.

Alderwoman Gazal also raised concerns about an employee eating lunch in a storage area near dumpsters, calling it "inhumane." City Administrator Wing responded that he had addressed the issue with department Directors,

and the employee was now eating in her vehicle by choice, having declined to use available lunchrooms.

7F. PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT:

There were no items to report.

7G. CITY ENGINEER:

There were no items to report.

7H. FINANCE:

There were no items to report.

7I. POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Police Chief Ed Clark entertained questions. Alderwoman Gazal inquired about cameras being non-functional from December 25 to January 7. Chief Clark explained that Administration (himself and two Deputy Chiefs) oversees the cameras, and they believed a warning system was in place, but it was not working. IT has now installed proper notifications that will alert both Police Administration and IT if issues arise.

7J. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

1. Approve a Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a "Fourth Amendment to Contract for Purchase of Real Estate" by and between the City of Crest Hill and QuikTrip Corporation for the Purchase of Property Located at 1610 Plainfield Road, Crest Hill, Illinois.

Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter explained this was the fourth Amendment to the sale contract for the former City Hall to QuikTrip Corporation. The first three Amendments addressed IDOT's review delays regarding site access. This extension would provide either another 90 days or 30 days after zoning approval, whichever comes first. QuikTrip is scheduled for February Planning Commission review with Council consideration in March.

Alderman Albert made a motion to Approve a Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a "Fourth Amendment to Contract for Purchase of Real Estate" by and between the City of Crest Hill and QuikTrip Corporation for the Purchase of Property Located at 1610 Plainfield Road, Crest Hill, Illinois. Seconded by Alderperson Oberlin. Roll Call: Ayes: Albert, Dyke, Deserio, Oberlin. Nays: Cipiti, Jefferson, Gazal. Absent: Kubal. MOTION CARRIED. Resolution #1378

Director Ritter also announced a joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting tentatively scheduled for March 9th for the comprehensive plan kickoff with consultants Houseal Lavigne. He noted: "They'll be here all day. They will be meeting with Directors. But at night, we want to do kind of a combined meeting."

Director Ritter reported that St. Anne's Church is under contract with a potential buyer who contacted the City today. The proposed use would need to meet the previously approved special use conditions or require new approvals. The buyer intends a religious use.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There was no unfinished business.

9. NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business.

10. COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS:

Alderdwoman Gazal invited residents to Crest Hill's First Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 28th at 12 PM. Alderman Jefferson added that children could take pictures with the Easter bunny. The location would be at City Hall with more information forthcoming.

11. CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Alderdwoman Gazal shared a Martin Luther King Jr. quote: "He stressed the need for leader with the sound of integrity who loves justice over publicity." She continued with another favorite quote: "We must use time creatively in the knowledge that the time is always right to do right."

12. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No one approached the podium for public comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

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

Alderman Dyke made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Seconded by Alderman Deserio. Roll Call: Ayes: Oberlin, Cipiti, Albert, Dyke, Deserio, Jefferson, Gazal. Nays: None. Absent: Kubal. MOTION CARRIED.

Approved this 2 day of February, 2026.

As presented ✓

As amended _____


CHRISTINE VERSHAY-HALL, CITY CLERK


RAYMOND R. SOLIMAN, MAYOR