MINUTES OF THE
CREST HILL PLAN COMMISSION

The July 9, 2026, Plan Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Thomas, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the City Center, 20600 City Center Boulevard, Crest Hill, Will County, Illinois.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

Roll call indicated the following present: Chairman Bill Thomas, Commissioner Ken Carroll, Commissioner Cheryl Slabozeski, Commissioner Gordon Butler, Commissioner Marty Flynn, and Commissioner John Stanton.

Also present were: Community & Economic Development Director Dan Ritter, City Planner Atefa Ghaznawi, and Administrative Clerk Linda Riha.

Absent were: Commissioner Jeff Peterson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Chairman Thomas asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Plan Commission meeting held on May 21, 2026, for Commission approval.

(#1) Motion by Commissioner Carroll seconded by Commissioner Stanton, to approve the minutes from the Plan Commission meeting held on May 21, 2026.
On roll call, the vote was:
AYES: Commissioners Carroll, Stanton, Flynn, Butler, Thomas.
NAYES: None.
ABSTAIN: Commissioner Slabozeski.
ABSENT: Commissioner Peterson.
There being five (5) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Bill Thomas presented the discussion of Text Amendments to Chapter 15.12 Sign Code of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances.

City Planner Atefa Ghaznawi presented a preliminary overview of proposed text amendments to Chapter 15.12 of the Crest Hill Sign Code. City Planner Ghaznawi noted that this was an introductory discussion and that a formal public hearing is anticipated at the next Plan Commission meeting on August 13, 2026, at which a full draft of the proposed text amendments will be presented.

City Planner Ghaznawi explained that City staff has identified numerous provisions of the current sign code that are outdated, difficult to interpret, internally inconsistent, and not reflective of current community needs. The overarching goals of the proposed amendments are to improve enforceability, streamline review processes, enhance the visual character of the community, and align the code with the sign standards of comparable surrounding communities such as Plainfield, Shorewood, and Romeoville.

Community and Economic Development Director Ritter reinforced this context, observing that Crest Hill's signage quality is noticeably lower than that of surrounding municipalities—particularly along Plainfield Road and Weber Road—and that the current code represents some of the lowest standards in the area. He described the proposed amendments as a modernization effort that, in many respects, offers businesses more flexibility in sign area while establishing a higher standard of sign quality and design.

City Planner Ghaznawi presented the proposed changes to freestanding ground sign regulations. The current code establishes four categories of sign allowances based on lot size, permitting up to 150 square feet of sign area and a maximum height of 30 feet for the largest lots. City Planner Ghaznawi presented various examples of existing ground signs throughout Crest Hill that were permitted based on the current ground sign regulations. Staff proposed replacing these categories with two simpler classifications based on the number of tenants:
Single-tenant signs: Maximum sign area increased from 50 square feet to 60 square feet; maximum height reduced to 6 feet.
Multi-tenant signs: Maximum sign area increased from 50 square feet to 100 square feet; maximum height maintained at 15 feet.

Both categories would require a decorative base of at least 75 percent of the sign width, and landscaping around the base at a minimum of 2 square feet per 1 square foot of sign area (no less than 50 square feet total). City Planner Ghaznawi presented various examples of existing ground signs in Crest Hill and surrounding communities that are representative of the ground sign regulations that Staff is proposing as part of the Sign Code updates. Pole and pylon signs would be prohibited in all zoning districts, expanding the current prohibition that applies only to residential districts. For residential and office/manufacturing districts, decorative bases and landscaping requirements would similarly apply, with office/manufacturing sign area proposed to increase from 50 square feet to 80 square feet at a reduced height of 10 feet.

City Planner Ghaznawi presented proposed changes to wall sign regulations, noting that the current standard—limiting sign area to 15 percent of total wall area including doors and windows—produces disproportionate results across vastly different building scales. The proposed standard would tie permitted sign area to store frontage at a ratio of 1.5 square feet per linear foot of frontage. To address outliers at both ends of the scale, additional caps were proposed: tenants with less than 40,000 square feet of floor area would be limited to a maximum of 120 square feet of wall signage, while tenants exceeding 40,000 square feet would be capped at 400 square feet. Director Ritter noted that the linear footage approach is the prevailing standard in surrounding communities and is simpler to administer than the current percentage-of-wall-area method.

Director Ritter summarized proposed changes to temporary sign regulations. The current Sign Code allows temporary signs for 10-day periods with up to three permits per business per year, with the option to seek extensions from the City Council. The proposal would increase each permit period to up to 30 days, maintaining a maximum of three permits per business annually, while limiting the ability to seek extensions through the City Council in a case-by-case basis and in the interest of consistency and fairness across all businesses. The proposal would also prohibit certain sign types including feather/teardrop flags, inflatable signs, and other attention-getting devices that create visual clutter, safety hazards, or maintenance problems. Director Ritter cited a recent incident at Hillcrest Shopping Center in which an inflatable sign attached to a parapet wall and roof structure caused structural damage and nearly fell into Theodore Street.

City Planner Ghaznawi noted that the proposed amendments would expand the code's definitions section, add distinct regulatory categories for window signs, canopy signs, awning signs, and gas station canopy signs, and expand the list of prohibited signs to include all pole and pylon signs in commercial, industrial, and office zoning districts.

City Planner Ghaznawi explained that existing legal nonconforming signs that received permits under a prior code would be permitted to remain as-is, provided they are not expanded or fully replaced. Panel replacements and structural maintenance would be allowed. However, if a sign sustains damage exceeding 50 percent of its replacement cost value, or if the associated business vacates the premises, the sign must be brought into compliance with the new regulations. Illegal or prohibited signs would be required to be removed within 10 days of written notification from the City. Director Ritter clarified that the intent is to avoid any immediate financial burden to existing businesses or property owners, with compliance expected to occur organically over time as signs are replaced or properties change hands.

Commissioner Flynn stated that he liked the idea and concept that staff are going after with the proposed changes to the sign code. Commissioner John Stanton raised a question regarding a gas station on Larkin Avenue that appears to have a secondary sign located remotely from its premises. City Planner Ghaznawi confirmed that off-premises signs are not permitted under the current or proposed code. Director Ritter noted that off-site signage could be considered within the context of a planned unit development with a master sign plan, but would not otherwise be permitted. Commissioner Stanton also inquired about tent sales and associated signage; Director Ritter confirmed that temporary sign permits would be required in conjunction with temporary use permits for such events, though prohibited sign types would still apply.

Commissioner Stanton further asked whether businesses could use all three temporary sign permits consecutively. City Planner Ghaznawi confirmed this would be allowed under the proposed code, resulting in up to 90 consecutive days of temporary signage. Staff noted this was an intentional design choice for simplicity, though Commissioner Stanton indicated a gap requirement between permits could be considered as a future refinement.

Commissioner Carroll inquired about fire department input regarding sign legibility in emergency response situations, referencing a prior incident involving difficulty locating a building in poor visibility conditions. Director Ritter acknowledged this as a valid concern and committed to including the fire department in the review process. He also noted that address number visibility is addressed within the sign code and that requirements exist to ensure addresses are visible from the street.

Commissioner Slabozeski asked if existing businesses would need to conform to the proposed changes to the sign code or would they be grandfathered in. Director Ritter stated that the phrase "grandfathered in," is not an appropriate legal term. The existing signs that don't meet the current or new regulations are considered legal non-conforming. If a business is operating and has a legal non-conforming sign, they wouldn't have to change it unless the business replaces the sign in its entirety, the property becomes vacated (the new owner would need to replace sign). There wouldn't be any immediate changes that any current business or property owner would have to do. Changes would happen over time.

Commissioner Gordon stated that the changes being made to the sign code are going to work if the City stays consistent with variance requests in the future.

Chairman Thomas expressed concern about the visual impact of vacant sign panels on multi-tenant pole signs, noting the appearance of blank white panels where businesses have closed. Director Ritter acknowledged the issue and noted that chain businesses sometimes flip panels over to avoid leaving gaps and exposing the sign structure and electrical components to the elements, but that such situations generate code violation notices. Chairman Thomas also questioned whether the proposed wall sign ratio might result in some signs being less visible than those currently permitted. Director Ritter explained that the 1.5 square feet per linear foot ratio is a middle-ground standard—comparable communities range from 1:1 to 3:1—and that the Commission could consider adjusting it upward if greater visibility is desired.

Chairman Thomas raised the issue of LED sign brightness, expressing concern about light spillover affecting nearby residents. City Planner Ghaznawi noted that the sign code references the City's electrical code for illumination standards. Director Ritter added that a broader section of the municipal code addresses glare and light spillover from commercial properties, and suggested that the sign code should explicitly reference those standards. He noted that most modern LED signs are equipped with photosensors that automatically dim at night, and that he has generally found businesses cooperative when asked to reduce brightness.

Director Ritter acknowledged the broader challenge of improving sign quality in a largely built-out community where most existing signs are legally nonconforming, and noted that the City's commercial property improvement grant program—being updated to allow up to $10,000 per business/property toward overall exterior site improvements—would be one tool to incentivize voluntary compliance. He also encouraged the Commission to hold firm on to the new standards when variance requests come forward in the future, noting that consistency in enforcement would be essential to achieving the long-term vision.

Chairman Thomas emphasized the importance of applying the new standards consistently and avoiding variance approvals that would undermine the intent of the updated code. Chairman Thomas expressed optimism about new development opportunities along North Weber Road and Broadway as areas where the new standards could have an early, visible impact.

As a result of the discussion, The Plan Commission unanimously recommend that the Staff continue to complete the applicable research and draft the proposed Sign Code text amendments for review at an upcoming Plan Commission Public Hearing.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

Community and Economic Development Director Ritter provided the following updates on previously reviewed projects:

103 Elsie (Storage Building) and 1818–1820 Broadway (Concrete Lifting): Both were approved by City Council. Permits have been submitted for the 1818–1820 Broadway project, which Director Ritter noted will extend water and sewer infrastructure to the east side of Broadway Street and is expected to generate further development momentum along that corridor.

Former Bowling Alley / Soccer Facility and Restaurant: A prospective purchaser is working through a small business loan, which has delayed the anticipated late-July closing. The current owners were directed to clean up the property and relocate a block that was obstructing fire department access. Director Ritter expressed optimism that new owners would begin rehabilitation within the next several weeks.

QuikTrip at Old City Hall Site: Demolition of the old City Hall building was projected for mid-to-late July, with a possible extension into August. All abatement of lead paint and asbestos has been completed. The project is awaiting utility disconnects from ComEd and NICOR and county approval of the demolition permit. Site work permits are in place and ready to proceed following demolition.

Seasons of Crest Hill (Multi-Family Residential): Permits are nearly finalized. The plat has been signed, and Director Ritter indicated that site work equipment could begin appearing on the property within one to two months.

Mather Farm Redevelopment: The project continues to advance, with staff working through an annexation agreement and related approvals. A traffic study has been submitted. Director Ritter expressed anticipation that the project would come before the Plan Commission later in the year.

City Center Plaza: A subdivision and related variance are expected to be brought before the Plan Commission at the next meeting. The project encompasses a plaza, playground, and park to be developed between the City Hall and the library, including a parcel to be conveyed to the Park District.

Zoning Use Chart Update: Director Ritter indicated that a review of the City's permitted uses chart is forthcoming, including consideration of how to address emerging uses such as data centers.

Commercial Property Improvement Grant Program: Director Ritter described amendments to the City's grant program, which will now focus on ground signs, facades, and parking lot improvements rather than wall signs, with grants of up to $10,000 available to eligible commercial property owners. He encouraged Commission members to refer interested property or business owners to the program.

Route 66 Centennial Signage: Three new Route 66 signs have been installed at the Shell/Dunkin' Donuts location on Broadway Street, Prairie Bluff Golf Course restaurant, and Merichka's Restaurant. An existing sign is located at the City Hall. A webpage at cresthill.com/rt66 and a social media campaign were noted as forthcoming. Director Ritter acknowledged funding support from Heritage Corridor and the Joliet Arsenal Development Authority (JADA).

21225 Lidice Parkway (577,000 sq. ft. Warehouse): Director Ritter announced that a tenant has been identified for the City's largest vacant commercial building. The tenant would occupy the building in phases. Director Ritter expressed that while a manufacturing use would have been preferable, the warehouse/distribution tenancy would provide employment and generate property tax revenue for the City and its taxing districts.

There being no further business before the Commission, a motion for adjournment was in order.

(#2) Motion by Commissioner Carroll seconded by Commissioner Butler, to adjourn the July 9, 2026, Plan Commission meeting.
On roll call, the vote was:
AYES: Commissioners Carroll, Butler, Stanton, Flynn, Slabozeski, Thomas.
NAYES: None.
ABSENT: Commissioner Peterson.
There being six (6) affirmative votes, the MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

As approved this 13th day of August, 2026.
As presented X
As amended______

Bill Thomas

BILL THOMAS, COMMISSION CHAIRMAN