MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
January 9, 2025 Special Meeting
Aaron T. Shepley City Hall, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Wolfe called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Thursday, January 9, 2025.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Commissioners Lauren Wolfe, Charlie Ann Benton, Jackson Lisle, Alyssa (Theo) Johnston, Leo Camasta, and Andrew Cioper were present.

Mayor Haig Haleblian was present. Police Officer Dimitri Boulahanis and Deputy City Manager Nick Hammonds were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the December 12, 2024 Meeting

Commissioner Cioper moved to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Camasta seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Public Presentation

Commissioner Wolfe asked if there was anyone in the public who wished to speak on an item not found on the agenda. No one wished to speak. Commissioner Wolfe closed public presentation.

5. Crystal Lake Police Department Discussion

Commissioner Wolfe introduced the agenda item for discussion: The Crystal Lake Police Department. School Resource Officer Dimitri Boulahanis introduced himself to the Commission. He stated that he is the School Resource Officer at Crystal Lake Central High School. He has served in the position for going on five years, and this will be his last semester in the rotation.

Officer Boulahanis discussed parking lot safety at the local schools. He stated that there are limited spaces available, and students must obtain a pass to park in certain lots. Some students will park on nearby roadways, however, the time limitations for certain on-street parking causes some students to move their cars multiple times throughout the day. Officer Boulahanis stated that his approach is always to inform and teach first, and issuing tickets is a last resort. He also discussed his outreach efforts to communicate with local homeowners prior to the start of each school year to work together on parking related concerns.

Officer Boulahanis discussed the potential remedies and constraints to addressing parking concerns at the high schools. There are budget constraints that prevent immediate solutions to problems. The school district has plans to budget in future years for additional parking lots and cameras. These projects require additional planning, including zoning or permit approvals required by the City.

The Commission asked about adding cameras to the parking lots. The Commission has previously discussed the difficulty in determining perpetrators who damage cars because there are very few (if any) cameras in the lots. Officer Boulahanis stated that adding cameras requires that electric lines are run through the parking lots, which increases costs and logistics to implementation.

Commissioner Johnston inquired if parking passes are available to new drivers who just turned 16. Officer Boulahanis stated that the parking passes are limited, and are offered on a first come, first served bases, with seniors receiving priority choice at the beginning of each year. Commissioner Johnston asked if the passes could be limited to juniors and seniors only. Officer Boulahanis stated that many sophomores who turn 16 and get their license may need to seek overflow parking passes, or wait until closer to the end of the school when parking spaces open up.

Commissioner Cioper asked if the schools have considered allowing students to park in the grass, similar to the parking configuration during football games or large events. Officer Boulahanis stated that they will allow vehicles to park in the grass during events. But, there are concerns with rain and overuse causing damage to the fields.

Commissioner Wolfe inquired if it would be beneficial to conduct more frequent parking pass checks. Officer Boulahanis stated that, for many years, District 155 employed a third party contractor for security at the schools. Recently, the district began to hire in-house security personnel, and he stated that the school hired two security officers, one of which is a retired police officer, and the change in process has been positive. The security officers conduct frequent checks through the parking lot to verify parking passes.

Commissioner Camasta asked about the procedures taken when a cars park in the lot without a valid pass. Officer Boulahanis stated that the school usually does not tow vehicles, and the City cannot issue parking tickets. The potential remedy for this issue is to place signs that state: "Parking allowed unless prohibited by sign." This would allow there to be specific spots marked by sign that delineate where a person could receive a ticket for improper parking. Although tickets cannot be issued, the standard practice has been to issue detentions to students who park without a pass.

Commissioner Johnston discussed announcements in the morning regarding safe driving in the winter and general parking lot safety. Officer Boulahanis stated that Community Relations Officer Stoltzman created a video that addresses these topics and can be shared with the schools. Officer Boulahanis also discussed his practice of being a presence out in front of the school so that drivers are mindful of their actions. People tend to slow down when they see a squad car parked nearby. He stated that he had a recent interaction where he was able to give a warning to a student to slow down and drive more carefully.

Mayor Haleblian arrived at 4:30 p.m. and inquired the Commission for their feedback regarding safety overall in the community. Commissioner Johnston discussed Huntley Road speeding. There are safety concerns with the new development near Wedgewood and a lack of safe crossings for pedestrians. Officer Boulahanis stated that speeding has been an ongoing concern on Huntley Road. He stated that residents often request speed bumps to be placed around town to curb speeding. He discussed how the City cannot lower the speed limit for a specific road on a whim, and installing speed bumps requires review by engineers and traffic consultants.

Commissioner Johnston stated that crossing Randall Road is particularly difficult. For example, crossing Randall to get to the new Starbuck's requires a pedestrian to cross part of the road, wait in the median until the light changes, and then proceeding to the destination. Officer Boulahanis stated that the City will monitor certain areas, but there are areas with overlapping jurisdictions. For instance, Randall Road is a County road, and Lake in the Hills is responsible for certain portions of road monitoring. Certain roads in town are maintained by the City, while others may be maintained by the State or the County.

Commissioner Johnston asked if the Police Department offers internships. Officer Boulahanis stated that the Police Department offers internships for college aged students. However, the citizen police academy allows people 17 and older to join. The academy is accepting applications through the end of January 2025.

Officer Boulahanis discussed his experience working for the City of Crystal Lake. He stated that he now in his 25th year of service, and he believes this is the best City with the best Police Department. His experience working with the Mayor, City Council, administrative staff, and each department has been excellent. Mayor Haleblian agreed, stating that the structure of the City, its staff, and the residents all make Crystal Lake a great place. He discussed how everyone at the City pulls in the same direction, and this approach ensures that people are serving with the public's interest at heart.

Nick Hammonds discussed how the Crystal Lake Police Department is an accredited agency through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Being CALEA certified is difficult, requiring extensive training and reporting to show that the department is operating with the utmost efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Commissioner Cioper asked how many officers are in the department. Officer Boulahanis discussed how the City performs staffing studies to evaluate the needs of the department based on the community's needs. He stated that when the Holiday Inn was built years ago, the Fire Department did not have a ladder truck big enough to reach the top floor of the six-story building. The City must constantly re-evaluate processes and procedures to make sure that each department is appropriately staffed and equipped to respond to the community's needs.

Commissioner Cioper asked if Officer Boulahanis thinks that Crystal Lake is an attractive place. Officer Boulahanis stated he has no doubts that Crystal Lake is a great place to live and work. Specifically for the Police Department, he stated that the Police Chief does an excellent job in managing the department providing steady leadership. Mayor Haleblian agreed that the City's Police Chief provides steady leadership in a difficult position. He sets an example of excellence that is followed top-down through the department.

Officer Boulahanis discussed the importance of positive interactions with the public. He stated that Crystal Lake is a safe community, but there will always be crime or potential threats to some degree. Fostering positive interactions with the public, and allowing residents to familiarize themselves with the City and its officers, helps to foster a positive relationship in the community.

Officer Boulahanis thanked the Mayor and the Commission for inviting him to join the Youth Commission meeting today. He stated that he will be slated to go back to patrol once the school year ends, however, he may have an opportunity to serve briefly as the Community Liaison Officer as well. Officer Boulahanis exited the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

6. School Surveys and Announcement

Commissioner Wolfe introduced a topic for discussion, surveys and announcements at schools to share information. Mayor Haleblian asked the Commissioners if their schoolmates were aware of the Youth Commission and the efforts in progress by the Commission members. The Commissioners agreed that most people are not aware of the Commission. Mayor Haleblian asked for the Commissioner's thoughts on how to spread awareness of the Commission purpose.

Commissioner Johnston stated that the Activities Director at Central High School has offered to assist with posting school announcements. The Commission discussed who would be a point of

contact at each school to assist with announcements. Whether a teacher, dean, or principal, the Commission will work on finding the best person to assist with messaging at each school. The Commission agreed to work on finding these contacts before the next Commission meeting.

7. Open Discussion

Mayor Haleblian discussed internship opportunities for the Commissioners and local students. The City may have internship opportunities over the summer. In addition, the Commission can assist with posting information regarding internship opportunities generally in the City for students who are interested.

Commissioner Johnston discussed a pamphlet to share amongst the group to assist with outreach efforts during school announcements and posting in school newsletters. The topics on the pamphlet will include safety and recap of today's discussion, seeking feedback from local students, placing a QR code to link to the community survey, and a notice that public presentation is available at upcoming Youth Commission meetings. Commissioner Johnston will share the pamphlet with Nick Hammonds, which will then be shared with the Commission for distribution.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Camasta moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m. Commissioner Cioper seconded the motion. On voice vote, all present voted yes. Motion passed.