MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
September 11, 2025 Special Meeting
Aaron T. Shepley City Hall, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Cioper called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Thursday, September 11, 2025.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Commissioners Theo Johnston, Sabrina Noon, Ella Hutchins, Andrew Cioper, Jotham Becker, and Jackson Lisle were present. Commissioner Charlie Benton was absent.

Mayor Haig Haleblian, City Councilmember Denise Smith, and Deputy City Manager Nick Hammonds were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the May 8, 2025 Meeting

Commissioner Cioper moved to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Johnston seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Introductions

Councilmember Smith led the Commissioners through an introduction exercise.

5. Public Presentation

Commissioner Cioper 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 Cioper closed public presentation.

6. Commission Purpose and Objectives

Mayor Haleblian and Councilmember Smith provided an overview of the objectives of the Youth Commission. The Commission members are encouraged to engage with other youths in the community to bring items to the Commission meetings. Members of the public can speak at public comment during the Commission meetings to bring new items to the City's attention. Councilmember Smith stated that the Commission will meet with Department Heads and officials from other agencies such as the Library, State's Attorney's Office, and the County Sheriff.

Mayor Haleblian provided an overview of how the Youth Commission came to fruition. He stated that he and Councilmember Smith had discussed a potential Youth Commission for years, and Councilmember Smith put the Commission into action. Mayor Haleblian discussed how impressed he was with the Youth Commission last year and looks forward to building on the efforts from the past year.

Councilmember Smith stated that her goal for the Youth Commission is for each member to understand that they can make a difference. The voice of the young people in the community needs to be heard and the City wants to hear their opinions, such as the issue in school parking lots last year. She stated that her goal is for the Commission to work on a project this year for the youth in Crystal Lake. In addition, she stated that Youth Commissioners are encouraged to invite their schoolmates to attend Commission meetings.

7. Mayor and City Council Objectives for the Commission

Deputy City Manager Hammonds discussed potential projects to pursue. Mayor Haleblian and Councilmember Smith narrowed the proposed projects to two options, a youth town hall series or a youth voter registration and civic education drive. The Commission is welcome to add other projects as well.

Councilmember Smith stated that voter turnout for the recent presidential election was over 60% in Crystal Lake. Turnout for the May local election was 7%. She discussed how important your local government, and how local decisions impact citizens the most. Increasing awareness of local civics is an important focus and local students may not know how to register to vote or find information on the candidates running for office.

Commissioner Cioper stated that the youth voter registration and the town hall series can be combined into one. Mayor Haleblian asked the Commission how they envision the town hall would work. Commissioner Cioper stated that Prairie Ridge has a theater and library space where the forum can be held. He discussed how to disseminate information via the school newsletter, morning announcements, and superfan accounts on social media.

Commissioner Hutchins and Commissioner Johnston discussed whether an event before or after school would work. Councilmember Smith stated that the forum would most likely have to be held during school hours to ensure the best attendance at an event. Commissioner Becker stated that MCC allows booths to be setup in the hallways, which could be staffed with a Councilmember to engage with students. Councilmember Smith asked how many students at Marian central live in Crystal Lake. Commissioner Noon stated that a large amount of the students are from Crystal Lake. Councilmember Smith discussed how the Commission will have a wider reach with Marian Central and MCC included in the survey results.

Councilmember Smith asked the Commission for their feedback to gauge whether students would want to attend. She also asked about discussion topics for the event. Commissioner Cioper stated that it depends on the audience. He stated that playing to the students in civics classes would likely result in higher attendance. Commissioner Johnston stated that mental health is a topic of interest to many students.

Commissioner Hutchins suggested the Commission could survey students for feedback to be addressed at a forum. Commissioner Cioper discussed the survey sent by the Youth Commission last year, and the results from that survey could be used to provide topics for the public forum. The Commission will refine the questions on the survey and send a new survey over the next month to find interested students and potential topics to discuss at a civic engagement event. The survey will include a question asking if students would be interested in attending.

The Commissioners agreed to work on getting survey responses and reviewing the results at the October meeting. Councilmember Smith suggested the Commissioners could attend a Council meeting to present the results of the survey. Commissioners Becker and Cioper stated they are available to attend the Council meeting on September 16th.

8. Commission Code of Conduct and Policies

Deputy City Manager Hammonds provided a brief overview of the Commission Code of Conduct and Policies. The Commission will follow Robert's Rules of Order for the conduct of running an official meeting. The Youth Commission meetings will occur at least six times per year, and the regular meeting date is the second Thursday of the month. Meetings will be held at 4:00 p.m.

Deputy City Manager Hammonds provided an overview of the harassment training requirement for elected and appointed officials. In addition, the Commission members will be receiving the link to complete Open Meetings Act training.

9. Open Discussion

Commissioners Cioper discussed how he plans to create a brief write-up to summarize each Youth Commission meeting. Commissioner Johnston suggested the Commission should take a new picture at the beginning of the year. Councilmember Smith suggested waiting until next month so that all the Commission members can be included in the picture.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Cioper moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Commissioner Johnston seconded the motion. On voice vote, all present voted yes. Motion passed.