MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
November 13, 2025 Special Meeting
Aaron T. Shepley City Hall, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Johnston called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Thursday, November 13, 2025.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Commissioners Theo Johnston, Sabrina Noon, Charlie Benton, Jotham Becker, and Jackson Lisle were present. Commissioners Ella Hutchins and Andrew Cioper were absent. City Councilmember Denise Smith, Fire Rescue Chief Craig Snyder, and Deputy City Manager Nick Hammonds were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the October 16, 2025 Meeting

Commissioner Lisle moved to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Benton seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Public Presentation

Commissioner Johnston 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 Johnston closed public presentation.

5. Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department Discussion

Chief Snyder began the discussion by providing an overview of his role as Fire Rescue Chief and his background. He discussed the structure of the Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department. He stated that the department receives nearly 8,000 calls for service each year. He detailed how the Department responds to a wide variety of emergency situations.

Chief Snyder stated that the Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department requires all firefighters to have their paramedic license. He explained the shift schedule and the daily staffing procedures for the Department. In addition, he discussed the procedures for responses depending on the location of an emergency. The City has three fire stations and strategically utilizes resources as needed.

Commissioner Johnston asked why an emergency crew was called out a few minutes prior to the meeting. Chief Snyder reviewed his notification system and stated that the call was for a smoke sighting. He explained that a crew will go out to verify whether a fire is active and determine the cause of the smoke that was reported.

Chief Snyder discussed the various specialty response crews operated in the City. He explained that numerous firefighters will receive training and certifications in specialty areas, such as the dive rescue team, HAZMAT, SONAR, woodland fire rescue crew, and the technical rescue team.

Commissioner Johnston asked how often the dive rescue team is called for service. Chief Snyder stated that the team has responded to 17 calls already this year. Chief Snyder provided an overview of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), which is the coordination that occurs between departments to effectively share resources.

Commissioner Johnston asked if a firefighter is on a specialty response team, do they still go on routine calls for service? Chief Snyder stated that staff always comes in for their regular shift, but can also be called back to duty for specialty assignments or overtime if needed.

Chief Snyder discussed the minimum and optimal staffing levels per day. He stated that the Department has been adding additional firefighters and will be increasing the minimum staffing from 15 to 18 members per day. Commissioner Benton asked if the minimum staffing is a requirement from state law. Chief Snyder stated that the minimum staffing is approved in the union contract for the Department.

Councilmember Smith asked the Chief what happens if one fire station has multiple staff call out sick. Chief Snyder discussed how the Battalion Chief oversees the shift and will call in people for overtime if needed. Chief Snyder discussed the approved increase in staff for the Department. Councilmember Smith asked for the Chief to provide an overview of the reasons for the increase in personnel. Chief Snyder stated that the needs of the Department continue to increase, as shown in the annual increase in service calls. He also described the difficulty in hiring new firefighters in recent years.

Commissioner Johnston asked what the minimum age is to be a firefighter/paramedic. Chief Snyder stated that the minimum age is 18 to work as a part-time firefighter in Illinois, but you have to be 21 to work full time. Chief Snyder discussed the schooling requirements, training, and testing that is required to become a firefighter/paramedic. He stated that there are several programs in the area, including McHenry County College, Elgin Community College, Harper College, and various others.

Commissioner Lisle asked about licensing requirements and whether they are different depending on the state you live in. Chief Snyder stated that every state is different. Some states have very stringent requirements to get certified. Chief Snyder led the Commissioners on a brief tour of the fire station. Chief Snyder exited the meeting at 4:56 p.m.

6. McHenry County Clerk Joe Tirio

Councilmember Smith introduced McHenry County Clerk Joe Tirio to the Commission. Mr. Tirio discussed his duties as County Clerk. He discussed how the voter turnout for federal elections is always much higher than local elections. Local elections do no generate as much publicity, and candidates running for local office usually do not spend large amounts of money to campaign or promote themselves. Mr. Tirio explained how impactful local elections are for the community.

Mr. Tirio stated that the voter turnout for the last local election was 16%. The turnout for federal elections is usually around 80%. He explained how voting is important for the community and that local elections affect people more on a daily basis than national elections. Mr. Tirio discussed his focus on improving voter turnout and educating the public about the importance of voting.

Mr. Tirio provided information for the Commission regarding the election judge program. He stated that the County offers a student program for high school aged students to participate as election judges at polling locations. He provided an informational pamphlet to share with the Commission for anyone interested. Some schools may even offer class credits for participating in the program. Mr. Tirio stated that there are two elections held every year. Although there may be additional elections depending on unique circumstances. He discussed referendum questions as well.

Commissioner Becker stated that the Commission is working on a civic engagement event project to educate local youth about voting and elections. The Commission welcomes Mr. Tirio's support

in starting a civic engagement event. Councilmember Smith asked if Mr. Tirio believes town hall type meetings are beneficial in getting interest from the public in learning more about elections. He said it is interesting because there has to be a balance between keeping people informed while making sure one political candidate or party is not being promoted over another.

Mr. Tirio stated that the County has opened an election center where ballots are processed. He stated that the center is used for school tours, conducting mock elections, and showing how the ballots are counted and secure. Commissioner Benton asked if a group or club is allowed to tour the facility. Mr. Tirio stated that any group is welcome to coordinate a visit.

Councilmember Smith discussed how the County administers elections and helps candidates to make sure they have everything they need to run for office. She stated that the County Clerk's office administers elections and provides information for candidates and voters.

Commissioner Lisle asked if there is a central place to find information regarding candidates. Mr. Tirio explained that there really is no centralized place to find information regarding candidates for local offices. He discussed how his duty is to remain impartial and he cannot show favor to any one party or candidate. A potential option is being pursued that would provide fair representation for any and all candidates running for office. The process is not fully developed or approved yet.

Councilmember Smith asked if the County would be able to create a web page that includes links for any candidates running for office. She inquired if the Commission believes this would be beneficial. Commissioner Benton stated that her only concern is with people that may not have internet access. She wants to ensure that everyone has the ability to locate information regarding candidates. Mr. Tirio stated that the County publishes a voter guide in the newspaper and online. He explained that there can be 100 to 600 candidates on the ballot depending on the election term.

Commissioner Noon asked if the Woodstock election facility is the central voting location for the County. Mr. Tirio stated that the facility is the central location, and it is the only place where any County resident can place a ballot for their local election. Commissioner Noon stated that the Commission's goal is to educate youth about how to register to vote, where to vote, and how to find out information regarding the candidates that will be on the ballot.

7. School Survey and Civic Engagement Forum

Councilmember Smith stated that the Commission can create how-to videos, pamphlets, and brochures to disseminate to the youth in the community. Commissioner Benton stated that each school can host and the Youth Commissioners can all attend at each school to coordinate the events.

Councilmember Smith asked if each Commissioner can contact their principal or school administration to get the ball rolling. Each Commissioner agreed to reach out to their school officials to inquire about spaces and dates when a civic engagement event can be held. Councilmember Smith stated that each Commissioner should work on finding out what their school will allow.

8. Open Discussion

None.

9. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Benton moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:44 p.m. Commissioner Lisle seconded the motion. On voice vote, all present voted yes. Motion passed.