MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
January 8, 2026 Special Meeting
Aaron T. Shepley City Hall, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Hutchins called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Thursday, January 8, 2026.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Commissioners Ella Hutchins, Sabrina Noon, Charlie Benton, and Jotham Becker were present. Commissioners Andrew Cioper, Jackson Lisle, and Theo Johnston were absent. City Councilmember Denise Smith, City Councilmember Ian Philpot, Assistant City Planner Darrell Moore, Assistant to the City Manager Ryan Oates, and Deputy City Manager Nick Hammonds were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the December 11, 2025 Meeting

Commissioner Benton moved to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Noon seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Public Presentation

Commissioner Hutchins 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 Hutchins closed public presentation.

5. School Survey and Civic Engagement Forum

Councilmember Smith asked Councilmember Philpot to provide his background in becoming a City Councilmember. Councilmember Philpot discussed his background with the Commission. He stated that he is a lifelong Crystal Lake resident and got involved with the City government in 2017. He started attending City Council meetings, was appointed to the Planning and Zoning Commission, and ultimately became a Councilmember in 2020.

The Commission discussed the history of Crystal Lake and the upcoming America 250 celebrations. Councilmember Philpot stated that the original Crystal Lake was founded in 1836 and there was a centennial celebration in 1936. The Commission discussed the 2014 centennial celebration for Crystal Lake and the time capsules placed at McCormick Park. Mr. Moore stated that there are two time capsules, one that is set to open in 2036 for the bicentennial, and another set to open in 2076 for the American tricentennial.

Commissioner Benton asked if someone could attend a future Commission meeting to provide an overview of the history of Crystal Lake. The Commission discussed the Historical Society and the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Commissioner Hutchins asked if the HPC handles residences or all properties in town. Mr. Moore stated that the HPC handles all properties in town.

Mr. Moore provided an overview of his role with the City and how the Planning and Zoning Commission is involved with certain approvals for properties, zoning, and land developments. Councilmember Smith asked about a recent development as an example of the approvals process. Mr. Moore discussed how the approval process works from staff, to the PZC, and then the Council.

Councilmember Smith asked the Commissioners for their thoughts on what types of homes they would like to see or live in. Commissioner Becker stated that he is not a fan of modern architecture. Buildings that look plain and are all the same is not appealing. Commissioner Hutchins stated that there is too much of the same look with properties, where everything starts to seem like a hotel with a generic feel.

Councilmember Philpot discussed how property owners have certain rights, but sometimes need City approval to accomplish their goals for development or work on a property. He discussed how the City must balance everyone's rights and treat everyone equally when considering items before the City Council.

Commissioner Benton discussed the draft presentation to be used for the civic engagement initiative. She has started a presentation for the Commission to work off of. The Commission agreed to include information regarding the general voting process, how and where to register to vote, and what college students need to know regarding voting when they go off to college. The Commission agreed to include information regarding the overlapping levels of government. In addition, the presentation and promotional materials will include a synopsis of why voting is important.

Commissioner Becker stated that he will have more information regarding meeting spaces at MCC later in January. He will follow up with more details at the February Commission meeting. Commissioner Benton stated that the model UN club is a fitting place to provide the civic engagement information. Commissioners Hutchins and Noon agreed to work with their schools' model UN clubs. The Commission agreed that providing as much information as possible is important to get buy-in and achieve their goals.

Councilmember Smith suggested making a video and using social media to educate the youth about the importance of voting. Commissioner Benton discussed the Commission's long-term goals for the civic engagement initiative. She stated that the Commission should continue to build on this initiative throughout the spring and fall, and into subsequent years. Councilmember Smith asked the Commission to work on tracking metrics to analyze the results of the civic engagement efforts. The Commission's goal is to improve voter turnout. It is important to track the results of subsequent elections and even seeing if voter registrations have increased.

Councilmember Smith asked if the Commission is still interested in taking a field trip to the County election center. Councilmember Smith will contact County Clerk Tirio to schedule a tour.

6. Open Discussion

Commissioner Hutchins inquired about the Commission's plan to submit an article to the Northwest Herald. She asked if she could interview Mayor Haleblian to provide the history behind the creation of the Commission. Councilmember Smith stated that the Mayor would be more than happy to provide an interview.

Councilmember Smith asked if the Commissioners had any requests for speakers at future Commission meetings. Commissioner Benton stated that she is interested in learning more about the legal side of local government and the history of Crystal Lake. Commissioners Becker, Hutchins, and Noon agreed that they are interested in learning more about the history of the City.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Hutchins moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 p.m. Commissioner Benton seconded the motion. On voice vote, all present voted yes. Motion passed.