MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
September 10, 2026 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, September 10, 2026.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Ella Hutchins, Aly Mae Johnston, Sophia Gibson, Lucy Thome, and Alexa Clark were present. Mayor Haig Haleblian, City Councilmember Denise Smith, and Assistant to the City Manager Ryan Oates were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the May 14, 2026 Meeting

Commissioner Johnston moved to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Hutchins seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Introductions

The Commissioners all introduced themselves stating what year they are in school and what school they are attending. Further, Mayor Haleblian and Councilmember Smith introduced themselves and shared the background of the Commission. Mayor Haleblian asked the Commissioners how this year of school compares to last year and the Commissioners provided insight into the differences.

5. Public Presentation

None.

6. Commission Purpose/Objectives

Assistant to the City Manager Oates shared the Commission's purpose and objectives. He reviewed the policy and procedure manual for the Commission which provides ground rules. Councilmember Smith shared that the goal of the Commission is to give the youth a voice and encourage the City's youth to promote change. She shared that she would like the Commissioners to become engaged with how different levels of government operate and wants a presentation from all City Department Heads, county representatives and state and federal representatives to share how they play an impact in the City's operations.

7. Mayor and City Council Objectives for the Commission

Councilmember Smith reviewed the ideas for projects for 2026. The main objective Councilmember Smith would like the Youth Commission to research this year is the expansion of teen and youth spaces in Crystal Lake. Councilmember Smith stated that the City is looking into the purchase of 200 E. Congress Parkway as a space for a Community Center. Mayor Haleblian further shared information regarding 200 E. Congress Parkway. Mayor Haleblian stated the City is looking into a property that may be used as a new library and Community Center. This would not be just a library of books but would provide other opportunities. He stated that there is a vision for other spaces as well such as teen spaces, makers spaces, and potentially a recording studio. A video was shown which portrayed libraries around the country.

Mayor Haleblian inquired where the Commissioners go for gathering spaces for studying or hangouts now. Commissioner Gibson stated that there are not many places to go currently. She said that most of the time when she is with friends, they are either at a friend's house, at Starbucks, or at a restaurant. Commissioner Clark shared that she spends time at school and extracurricular clubs. Commissioner Hutchins further shared that a lot of high school students drive to the Algonquin Target parking lot and spend time there until the Algonquin Police Department removes them. Commissioner Gibson stated that the City of Crystal Lake does not have arcades or malls close by for the teens to drive and hang out at. She also shared that with the cost of gas and the distance to the closest mall; it makes it very difficult for teens to find a place to hang out.

Councilmember Smith inquired about data gathering, fact finding, and how to present ideas for youth spaces in the City. Mayor Haleblian shared that the Youth Commission can be very instrumental in getting these ideas out to other teens in the area. He recommended that the Commission create a video interviewing other teens on what they would like to see in Crystal Lake for meeting spaces. He stated that this can be posted on the City website which will show why it is important to the youth. Commissioner Hutchins stated that some Commissioners took a survey last year on teen spaces.

The Commission discussed various activities that can take place at a community center such as pickleball, an athletic area, study rooms, kid spaces, and music areas. Commissioner Clark shared that a community center can be a great place for parents to know their kids are safe. Councilmember Smith laid out the next steps to figure out what the youth would like to see. She stated that the Commission would be responsible for data collection through surveys, videos, and other methods. Mayor Haleblian stated that he would like to see our Commissioners interview their peers and create one video of all the interviews that can be shown at a Council meeting.

Councilmember Smith informed the Commission that typically, one Commissioner will attend a City Council meeting and will give updates on what the Youth Commission is discussing. Commissioner Gibson stated that she will be able to attend.

8. Commission Code of Conduct and Policies

Assistant to the City Manager Oates provided an 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 will meet every second Thursday at 4:00 p.m. unless additional meetings are added. Assistant to the City Manager Oates reviewed the harassment training requirement for elected and appointed officials.

9. Adjourn

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