

## **Village of Creston Minutes Tuesday February 3, 2026**

President Byro called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Trustees M. Hibshman, Kerns, Hopkins, Ward, Elliot, and J. Hibshman were present. Attorney Wilt was also present.

President Byro introduced the minutes from January 2, 2026. Trustee Ward made a motion to approve the minutes. Trustee M. Hibshman seconded the motion. President Byro asked all in favor to vote yea. All present voted yea. He asked all who were not in favor to vote the same sign. No one responded. Minutes were approved

**Visitors & Communications** - President Byro said that he was informed on the day of the meeting that Booster Days would be held on October 3rd and 4th. There was a schedule conflict with Skinner's. Trustee M. Hibshman said that Skinners had offered another date sometime in July or August, and it was decided that it would be too hot in July or August. The October dates were the only other dates they had available. Trustee M. Hibshman said that they were able to get the fireworks moved to October 3rd. He also said that Autumn on Parade in Oregon is that weekend.

President Byro stated that Skinner's has been doing Booster Days for 40 years or more. Trustee Hibshman said that Josiah Christianson looked into other amusement ride companies and there were only one or two of them that could do it. Those options didn't pan out, so there was really no choice but to move it to October 3rd and 4th.

President Byro asked if anyone else had any communications and no one responded.

**Village Attorney** - Attorney Wilt stated that the only thing he had to report was the property condemnation at 209 W Depot St. He said he hadn't had any luck with the management company, but he did drive by the property and the sign was down. The next court date was scheduled for 2/19/26 at 9am and he said he would know more after that date. President Byro shared something that Aaron Moore had put together with Attorney Wilt. He said he didn't know if Attorney Wilt had seen it yet. Aaron said he had just given it to Treasurer Payton that day and he hadn't had a chance to talk to Attorney Wilt about it. President Byro said it was an assessment of the property and all the work that would need to be done to it. President Byro said that it would be sent to someone as soon as it was determined who it should be sent to.

Aaron Moore asked Attorney Wilt if he was talking about the For Sale sign at the house. Attorney Wilt said he was. Aaron said that the For Sale sign was for the two properties on either side of the house. Attorney Wilt said he thought there was a property management sign in the middle. Aaron said that there was one in the window and that the property had been winterized and was being maintained by that company. Attorney Wilt said he drove by the property the previous week and didn't see it, but he may have missed it. He said he would drive by again in the daylight.

President Byro asked if anyone had anything else for Attorney Wilt. No one had anything.

**Building Inspector** - Aaron Moore stated that he had issued two new permits for houses in the subdivision. He said that there were currently 3 homes being built. He

said there were two foundations, one being framed, and two other ones were through rough in inspections, and would probably receive finals in the next couple of months. He said that was all he had for new permits.

President Byro announced that the Village was in Phase Two of the permits so they now cost \$2000. Trustee Ward asked if the new construction was being done by Tim Hayden or if there were other builders. Aaron said that they were Mr. Hayden's. Aaron did say that there was one home out there that should be ready for a final inspection soon that was not built by Mr. Hayden. President Byro asked if anyone had anything else for Aaron. No one had anything.

President Byro said that Mr. Hayden was interested in building a duplex on Grove Street. Mr. Hayden was going to talk about it at the meeting, but he was not there, Trustee Ward asked if Mr. Hayden would have to go through the Planning Commission and get a special use. President Byro stated that Mr. Hayden would need to get a variance. Trustee Ward asked Trustee Kerns if it was a special use and Trustee Kerns confirmed that it was.

President Byro said that Mr. Hayden knew what he would need to do as Aaron had spoken with him about it. Aaron confirmed that he did speak to him about it.

President Byro moved onto Committee Reports.

**Finance** - Trustee Hopkins said he had nothing. President Byro said he had something for Trustee Hopkins but he couldn't locate it at that moment. He said he would give it to him later.

**Streets/Alleys/Sidewalks** - Trustee Ward said he got an email from Sean over in Ogle County. He asked Trustee Kerns if he was fog sealing Woodlawn Rd. Trustee Kerns said yes. Trustee Ward asked if there were problems with rocks being kicked up because of the higher speeds. Trustee Kerns said he'd had countless phone calls about rocks breaking people's windows. President Byro asked if it was loose. Trustee Kerns said it won't stay down. Trustee Ward said that they were going to fog seal it, which entails spraying another coat over the top to seal everything up. Sean wanted to know if Creston was interested in doing it. Trustee Ward asked Trustee Kerns if he had a price yet. Trustee Kerns said he did not, but that Sean said it was reasonable. Trustee Ward said it's usually not too bad. Trustee Kerns said that he was bringing Sean out to look at it when it gets warmer because there are so many bad spots. He said that he could go down there there with a plow now, after it's been down for how long, and all you see is the loose stuff. Trustee Elliot asked if Trustee Kerns thought they didn't put enough oil down and Trustee Kerns said that he's not an engineer so that is why he was having Sean come to look at it. Trustee Ward confirmed with Trustee Kerns that Stephens did Dement Township's. Trustee Kerns said he believed so. Trustee Ward said that Civil did the Village's. Trustee Ward said he didn't want to speculate, but he was going to get a price to do the Village's section just for continuity. Trustee Kerns said he just wants it sealed down because it's a big problem. He said that there had been damage to many vehicles, including, both of the Dement Township trucks and his own personal vehicle. Trustee Hopkins asked if it happened while following other vehicles and Trustee Kerns said it was from passing. He stated that Russ, the man who helps him, has had damage

to every one of his vehicles because he travels that road every day. Trustee Kerns said he would never use that material again. Trustee Hopkins said it was also a speed thing. Trustee Kerns agreed and he said that the damage isn't like a chip. There is no give, so the windows break. He said it's basically steel coming up and hitting the window. It's not like a limestone rock that's going to break. Trustee Ward said that the Village's seemed to be stuck down pretty good. Trustee Kerns said that he saw it all over the sidewalk on his way into the building. President Byro said it had been there since the snow. Trustee Kerns said that it had been plowed up there, and the streets were swept after the project was completed. Trustee Ward also made the point that in town, the speed limit is 25, not 55.

President Byro asked Trustee Ward if he had anything else. He said he did not.

**Water/Sewer** - Trustee Kerns said he had nothing.

**Health/Safety** - Trustee J. Hibshman said he had nothing new.

**Zoning/Planning** - Trustee Elliot said that they were waiting for Mr. Hayden to give them something.

**Subdivision** - Trustee Elliot said that everything looks good up there. He said that they are doing a good job of keeping it clean as they move along and he's heard no complaints about anything.

**New Business** - President Byro started with the Village Engineer, He said that they received requests for qualifications and they were available for Board Members to look at. Trustees Ward and Elliot and President Byro met with people from Willett Hofmann on the Saturday before the meeting. He stated that he was really impressed with them. He said they have quite a portfolio and that the people they spoke to know what they are doing. He said that they do a lot of commercial projects. He said that another company had submitted a RFQ, but he thought that the Village should go with Willett Hofmann. He said he didn't know if Trustee Ward or Elliot wanted to say anything. He said that they are on the ball and they have separate people doing separate projects. He said that he informed them that they would have to attend the Board Meetings. He said that they do water studies, and they also do grant writing. Trustee Ward said that one thing Willett Hofmann brought up regarding the water main project was that the Village should be applying for the Revolving Loan Fund, which is 30% forgivable this year. He said last year it was 50% forgivable. President Byro stated that the Village could have been getting those kinds of loans all along on the different projects. Trustee M. Hibshman asked how Willett Hofmann's pricing compared to C.E.S.'s. President Byro said that they're all about the same. Trustee M. Hibshman asked if the Village got all of the documentation back from C.E.S. President Byro said he had not pursued it yet. He said was was waiting as there were still a couple of projects that C.E.S. was working with the Village on and he wanted to wait until they were done. He stated that the Emergency Generator Grant was on its second run-through, so he was waiting to see what was going on with that, and the water tower project was still going

on. He stated that once those projects are done, the Village will move away from them and at that time he will ask them to return everything.

President Byro stated again that he was impressed with Willett Hofmann. He said that they do maps and they want to know where the water lines are. Trustee Ward said it is a very old company, but they have very good succession planning. He said that they bring in younger guys and move them up in the company. Trustee Ward said it wasn't like if the two guys they met with were fired the company would go away. Trustee Kerns confirmed that they have many people. He stated that he worked with them a couple of times. Trustee Ward said that the original water map was done by Willett Hofmann, so there may be records on the Village's water system in their archives.

President Byro asked Trustee Elliot what he thought. He stated he thought it was a pretty good meeting. He said he came more just to listen and learn, but the one thing he was impressed with was that most of the engineers were also owners of the company. He said that when your name is on the door, if there's chewing to be had, it's your backside. He said that meant a lot more to him.

President Byro made the motion to adopt Willett Hofman as the new Village Engineer. Trustee Hopkins seconded the motion. President Byro asked for any discussion.

President Byro said that he thought Trustee Ward was happy with them. Trustee Ward responded that he has been working with them at his job for years and they're a very solid company. He said that if you need something, you call them and they pick up the phone. He said they are very responsive.

President Byro called for a vote. Roll call vote was taken. Trustees J. Hibshman, Ward, Elliot, M. Hibshman, Kerns and Hopkins all voted yes. Motion passed. Willett Hofmann was hired as the new Village Engineer. President Byro reinforced that he felt the Board made the right decision. He thanked Trustees Ward and Elliot for sitting down with him to talk to them.

President Byro moved on to the Statements of Economic Interest. He said that they changed the forms and there is more information that they are requesting. He said that when the Village receives them, Clerk Payton will hand them out to everyone.

President Byro stated that Mr. Hayden was not in attendance, so he moved on to the Water Tower Project. He stated that the Board would see a bill for the electrical work that was done. He stated that they got everything done. All that is left to do is install the mixer and then hook it up to the electricity. He said that as soon as the weather changed, that project would be completed.

President Byro moved on to the South Street Water Main Project. Trustee Ward stated that the application has been turned in. President Byro stated that they had Willett Hofmann go ahead and submit that. He said that he and Trustee Ward were going to sit down and discuss what the Village needs, make some changes and see what that will cost. Trustee Ward said he touched base with Martin the previous week and he told Trustee Ward that he was waiting on prices from the supplier on a couple of pieces.

President Byro moved on to the Sidewalk Project. He asked Trustee M. Hibshman what he had in mind. Trustee M. Hibshman said that discussion has been had about using

interest income to fund the project. He said he talked to Treasurer Payton as there had been some concern about some of that income being used to pay the Village's bills. He said that Treasurer Payton said that the Village is not using that money to pay any of the bills and all of it was being reinvested. He said that he had looked through the financials and crunched some numbers. He said that the Village gets about \$187,000 a year in interest between everything. He said he did not get that figure from Treasurer Payton, so he said he could be off a little bit. He said that they had talked about using a portion of it and, getting some kind of budget set up for Spring. He stated that he thought that if the Village doesn't get Main Street done this year, the problem areas on South Street and Grove and on Depot Street still need to be addressed. He stated that he felt that the Board needed to decide how much money they want to set aside to do the project.

Trustee M. Hibshman asked Trustee Ward how much he said it would cost per square foot. Trustee Ward said he thought it would be about \$60-\$70 a running foot for 4 foot wide. He said that the driveways have to be 6 foot for vehicle traffic and ADA ramps are about \$25-\$30 a square foot, so the Village would need to budget for that. Trustee Ward said he hadn't seen any prices for this year. President Byro asked if this was something the engineers should be involved in. Trustee Ward stated that he would tell the engineers what the Village's budget is and the area of town and let them put a packet together. Trustee Hopkins said that they could pick a corner and see what it would cost to address that. Trustee M. Hibshman said to address the areas that are really bad and see how that's looking.

Trustee Elliot asked if the interest that was coming in was about \$180,000. Trustee M. Hibshman said yes, roughly. Trustee Elliot asked if the day to day expenses were being paid out of tax revenue. Trustee M. Hibshman said yes, and Trustee Hopkins added that they are also paid using the farm rent. Trustee Hibshman said that the Village is just reinvesting that interest income. Trustee Elliot stated that if the budget was set at \$150,000, that would give the Village a cushion. Trustee Hibshman went through his figures and how he projected to get the \$187,000. He said that he thought that the Board needed to decide if they want to move forward with the project and once the engineer is on board, the Village can get the project quoted out and then go from there. President Byro agreed and Trustee M. Hibshman said using the interest makes sense because the Village doesn't have to touch the principal.

Trustee Elliot moved to allocate \$150,000 of the interest toward the sidewalk project. Trustee Ward seconded it. President Byro asked if there were any questions. No one had any. President Byro called for a vote. Trustees Hopkins, Kerns, M. Hibshman, Elliot, Ward, and J. Hibshman all voted yes. Motion passed.

President Byro said that property condemnation had already been discussed. Trustee Kerns asked if there was anything on the house at 224 E Depot St. He said the work just stopped. Aaron said he hadn't had any contact with the owner. President Byro said that the Board needed to get his name and send him a letter. Clerk Payton said she sends him a water bill every month, so she can give Aaron what she has. Someone asked if the bill was being paid. Clerk Payton said she didn't think so, but she sends him the bill every month and he never responds to it.

Trustee Ward asked if anyone knows the status of the house next to the maintenance building (128 E North St). President Byro said that it was purchased by someone, but he did not know who. Clerk Payton stated that the Village received the check for the liens, so that had been resolved. Other than that, the Village had not been informed as to who purchased the house. Aaron said that he met with one gentleman over the summer and they went through the house. He said he didn't know if that was who purchased it, but his intent was to fix it up and rent it out.

Trustee M. Hibshman said that he met a couple of guys who were looking at it and he thought that they were from in towards the city. Aaron said that was who he talked to. Trustee M. Hibshman said he thought that was who bought it, but he didn't remember their names. Aaron said he seemed receptive to fixing it up and updating it to make it close to code.

President Byro said he had nothing new on the Comprehensive Plan. He said that they were still trying to figure out what to do there.

President Byro said he didn't have anything else. He asked if anyone else had anything they wanted to talk about.

Trustee M. Hibshman said he had questions that someone may know the answers to. He said he was trying to get some light shed on the streetlights on Main Street. He stated that the 4 in front of the building where the library used to be went out the previous week. He said he talked to Trustee Ward, who informed him that Lyle Headon has put those streetlights in. Trustee M. Hibshman texted Mr. Headon and asked him about it. Mr. Headon had installed them many years ago and paid for them himself. He struck a deal with RMU to maintain them. Trustee M. Hibshman called RMU and they came out. President Byro said that they were there for a couple of days. Trustee M. Hibshman said that Mr. Headon told him that he is paying the electric bill on them and Trustee M. Hibshman said he doesn't think he is. He said he doesn't know if the meter is tied into the building. He said that there is a meter on the corner, but it doesn't match any of the meter numbers on his bills, so he doesn't think it's him. He said it might be the Village. Mr. Headon says it is stubbed into the building but Trustee M. Hibshman doesn't know that it is. Someone asked if there was a breaker for it in the building. Trustee M. Hibshman said he didn't know that. He didn't know if anyone could shed any light on that who has been in town for a long time. President Byro asked if Trustee M. Hibshman thought the meter was hooked up to his building and not the old library building. Trustee M. Hibshman said to his building. Trustee Ward added that when Mr. Headon put the streetlights in, he didn't own the library building. Trustee M. Hibshman said that there is a separate meter out there. He said that he's just not sure where the power's coming into that. Is it coming from the building, or is it coming from the pole or maybe the Village is already paying for it.

President Byro said the Village does pay for streetlights. Trustee Ward stated that the Village has a per light rate, so it might just be included in the Village's light count now. Trustee M. Hibshman said he would keep on it, but thought he would ask if anyone else knew anything.

President Byro said he had nothing else. He asked if anyone had anything else they wanted to bring up.

Trustee Hopkins made a motion to pay the bills. Trustee J. Hibshman seconded. President Byro asked if anyone had any questions. Trustees Elliot, M. Hibshman, Kerns, Hopkins, J Hibshman, and Ward all voted yes.

President Byro brought up the mail box replacement for a resident. President Byro explained that Curtis Loyd was backing out of an alley and hit the mailbox. President Byro said that he told the resident that the Village would pay to replace/repair the mailbox. He said that the bill was up to \$500. The resident wants a cedar mailbox and President Byro said he agreed to replace it. He said that based on this situation, the Village needs to find a way to limit what we will pay to fix or replace a mailbox. Trustee Hopkins asked what kind of mailbox the resident had. Clerk Payton stated that the resident had a cedar mailbox. Trustee Ward said that when he was in Naperville about 20 years ago, their policy was to replace any mailbox with a USPS standard wood post and black mailbox, or they would give the resident, at that time, \$50 because the mailbox was in the village's right of way and they do get hit. President Byro wanted to know what the Village can do to find some way to limit what it will reimburse. He said he didn't know if it would need to be an ordinance or what. He asked Aaron if he'd ever seen anything like that. He said he no, he'd plowed snow for 18 years and hit a few mailboxes himself. He said that they would usually replace what was there and install it themselves. He said they would put up a temporary one until they could get the permanent one installed. He said he never had an issue, but he'd never seen a \$500 mailbox.

Trustee Ward said his daughter took out a mailbox with an ambulance over in Malta. She had a contractor replace that one and it was \$250.

President Byro stated that if someone can come up with something or if anyone finds out anything or comes up with any ideas, let him know. Trustee Hopkins said he liked the idea of replacing with a standard USPS post and black mailbox and anything beyond that would be there resident's responsibility.

Trustee Kerns addressed the fact that if people keep putting up mailboxes in front of their homes, the post office will close and it will just be an empty building. Trustee Ward discussed the fact that the residents that have post office boxes are now having trouble getting packages delivered to their homes. The addresses don't exist. Trustee Ward contacted Congressman Darin LaHood's office and explained that when they chose to put the subdivision in, they chose to serve out of Rochelle. They gave them a 61068 zip code and somewhere along the line, the national database has repopulated the entire town of Creston as Rochelle. He stated he got a call back the next morning from a lady out of Chicago and she stated that Trustee Ward didn't have mail service to his address, but she had talked to the Rochelle postmaster and if he wanted to, he could put up a mailbox. He said he has a PO Box. He stated that he has mail service. He can't get FedEx or UPS to deliver. He told her to type hi 501 W Cederholm St, Creston IL 60113 and she stated that that address doesn't exist. She then said that the Village needs to do a zoning certificate and send it to the county, and then they'll send it to them to change the address. Trustee Ward replied that the Village has around 250 properties. He asked if a change of address needed to be to be submitted for every

single address separately, or could the Village submitted one document for all the addresses. She asked Trustee Ward how long he had lived in his house. He replied over 30 years. She then asked how old his house was. He said over 100 years old. He then went on to explain that the problem was created by the USPS and she finally understood and said that she was going to have to send it to Washington DC. Trustee Ward said after a time he sent another email to LaHood's office stating that this has gone dead and asked if he could help the Village out.

Trustee Kerns said he didn't know how the census for Creston worked. He stated that every house that has a mailbox out front has a Rochelle address. He stated that Trustee Ward just showed how it all could be messed up pretty easily. He asked where it all comes together. Trustee Elliot asked if all of the post office boxes were being utilized. Trustee Kerns said no. Trustee Ward said that more and more people want to put a mailbox by the road. He reminded the Board that the postal service talked about closing the Creston post office rather than build a new one. The Village had to fight to get them to keep a post office in Creston. Trustee Kerns said that people will move to a new house in the subdivision or wherever and they'll put their gas bill in Creston IL. They don't get any mail at the Creston address. Rochelle's post office is governed by Rockford. Creston's post office is governed by Carol Stream. All of these new residents are putting their gas bills, cable bills, etc at an address in Creston IL, but they don't get their mail at that address.

Trustee Ward stated that there is a north and south Main Street in Rochelle just like there is in Creston. He had someone tell him that he has to argue to get stuff delivered to his house. They tell him to use the Rochelle address and he argues that he can't because it will get delivered to the wrong town. There are duplicate addresses between the two communities. President Byro said he didn't know what the answer is.

Clerk Payton said that this has also caused problems with the billing postcards. She stated that they are trying to find ways to be proactive about it and fix the problem. Clerk Payton says she emails the bills to quite a few people and the list keeps growing. It's very time consuming for her to do that because she can't generate the e-bills through Asyst because our municipality isn't big enough. She wants to make sure people get their bills, so Clerk Payton and Treasurer Payton discussed buying postcard sized envelopes to mail the postcards in. The problem with that is once you put them in an envelope, you have to use a first class stamp, so it raises the cost of mailing the bills. Trustee Kerns said that the mailboxes with the Rochelle addresses created the problem. Clerk Payton said that is exactly why she has packages delivered to her work address in DeKalb. It takes Amazon 7-10 additional days to deliver in Creston versus delivering in DeKalb.

Trustee Ward said that they got new reporting software for the fire department and you start putting in the address and if it's a valid address it will auto-populate, but the auto-population changes all the Creston addresses to Rochelle. Clerk Payton said it also created a problem for her when she renewed her driver's license because the system stated that her address is not valid. Trustee Ward talked about trying to order something from Tractor Supply Company for his son for Christmas and they had to basically lie about the address to get them to deliver it because the USPS doesn't see his address as valid. Trustee Ward stated that the issue is that a post office box costs \$50-\$70 per year. He said that people would rather get their mail delivered free to their house.

President Byro stated that if anyone had any ideas on how to solve this problem, he'd love to hear them.

Trustee M. Hibshman stated that he thought the Village should have an ordinance and limit replacement to a standard USPS box or a dollar amount of up to \$200. Trustee Kerns stated that maybe that's an attorney question. He asked Attorney Wilt if the Village can do that. Attorney Wilt asked do what? Trustee Kerns stated that if you have an accident and you tear up someone's property, isn't that considered an accident? If you back into their mailbox, then you have to replace it. Attorney Wilt said theoretically, you're going to have to. Trustee Kerns asked if it could be a lesser value. Attorney Wilt said that it could be because how do you place a value on it. For example, perhaps the resident paid \$500 for this mailbox 20 years ago, but a used cedar mailbox is not \$500. You basically say we will pay fair market value for the condition that it's in. He said a perfect example was that someone ran into his old car. He did not get the value that he paid when he bought it. He said he thought that the Village could cap it as replacing it with a standard USPS mailbox or will send the resident a check and then it can be capped at \$250 or whatever amount you choose. Then you can say you will write them a check for \$250 and that resident can install any kind of mailbox they want. He said that off the top of his head, he didn't see any reason why that is not legal.

Trustee Hopkins circled back to the water billing postcards. He stated that at least twice in the previous year, one came in a plastic bag because it ripped. He stated that the Village should look at getting postcards that get cut instead of being perforated because the perforation gets in the handling equipment. Clerk Payton also thought the cardstock is not as thick as it used to be, which is why they thought they would try using envelopes. The problem is it goes from a postcard stamp to a first class stamp. Trustee Ward asked if the Village can send the water bills electronically. Clerk Payton said she can. She has to scan them individually because Asyst won't allow the Village to use the eBill function through their software because our municipality isn't big enough.

More discussion was had surrounding this topic.

President Byro thanked everyone for their contributions to the conversation and asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Elliot made a motion to adjourn. Trustee Ward seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:48:39.