Crossett City Council met in regular session November 16, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Crystal Marshall, City Attorney James Hamilton

Councilmember’s: CT Foster, Cary Carter, Kerstin Mondragon, Sheila Phillips were present and James Knight and Cary Carter participated via conference call.

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall and Councilman Dale Martinie

Mayor Marshall called the meeting to order with prayer and pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Motion by Councilwoman Phillips, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the minutes of the October 19. 2020 regular meeting. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Minutes are approved.

Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to approve the financial reports for October. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and financial reports were approved.

Conversation continued regarding the CWC contribution payment. Mr. Sivils added that the agreement was for a city engineer and no licensed engineer is available. He added that the city adds no value to the Crossett Water Commission. When asked if they use any city equipment, Mr. Jeff Harrison stated that they do. They use quite a bit of sewer equipment. Councilman Knight asked if the new meters are generating additional revenue. Mr. Sivils explained that currently they are not. Citizens were able to identify leaks and have them fixed. Mr. Sivils stated that the charge structure is flawed in that large users rates are significantly lower than residential rates and therefore, some corporate users are paying little more than residential users. Councilman Knight suggested that the water commission get together and come up with a fairer rate for all users. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Carter to have CWC resume payments to the general fund on January 1, 2021. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall updated council on COVID-19 Cares Act. City received $218,173 from CARES relief act. Currently applying for FEMA grant to recover some addition expenses caused by Covid-19.

Mayor also explained that she has worked closely with County Tax Accessor Beth Rush to determine that the city should expect around $200,000 reduction in ad valorem revenue for the 2021 year. Mayor Marshall added that she is currently working with department heads to prepare a trimmed budget for 2021. She will present a proposal soon. She informed the council that she is remodeling the Mayor’s office at her own expense.

Mayor Marshall stated that clean-up of zoo and pavilion is nearing completion. It is looking much better.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that the garbage trucks are scheduled to be here before December 1.

Mayor Marshall asked Fire Chief Leroy Higginbotham to address the council concerning the 80’ ladder truck. Chief Higginbotham reminded the council that the 100’ ladder truck donated by Georgia-Pacific is in full service. There has been mention of selling the 80’ truck. Chief Higginbotham asked the council to consider keeping the truck for a backup truck. He feels that this will enable our fleet to better serve the community. Plans are to keep one ladder truck at Station 1 on Main Street and the second at Station 2, close to new hotel and Wal-Mart. Chief Higginbotham explained that dropping the insurance on the truck to liability only will cost $100 per year and maintenance on the truck is around $1,875/year. A salesman has stated that he feels like the city can get around $12,000 if the truck sells, but there are similar trucks on the market that have been on the market for over a year. Chief Higginbotham added that he feels that the truck is more valuable to keep than to sell. Councilman Knight asked if it will be a liability to the city since the truck failed the pump test. Chief Higginbotham stated that the truck failed the test because it overheated. Chief Higginbotham explained that his firefighters are familiar with the truck and know how long it can run without overheating. Councilman Carter added that he doesn’t want the city to put more money into the truck just to keep it in service. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to retain the truck as a back-up unit in the fleet. Roll call vote. Carter – no, Knight – yes, Mondragon – yes, Foster – yes, Phillips – yes. Motion passed 4-1.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to approve the contract between the City of Crossett and Crossett Economic Development Foundation. She added that she feels that they are essential to our city at this time. Councilman Carter asked if they help existing businesses. Mr. Mike Smith, CEDF director, stated that each year they have 8 ½% of their budget reserved for the Revamp Crossett campaign. Councilman Carter asked that this be put in the contract to ensure that this continues. Mr. Smith asked that this not be added to the contract, as this campaign requires the merchant to add funds as well. With the current economy, it is unknown if there will be any businesses willing to participate in this program. Councilman Knight added that the Crossett Economic Development Foundation is a model for many foundations around the state due to their business retention plan. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to renew the contract. Roll call vote. All vote yes.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to have City Attorney Hamilton draw up a resolution honoring Mr. David Harbour for his service on the Crossett City Council. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to have CA Hamilton draw up the resolution. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that the volunteer group has began painting the Crossett Tennis Courts.

Mayor Marshall asked if council had any other business to discuss. Councilman Knight asked if the Crossett Auditorium Board is active. Mayor Marshall stated that they are and are working on their by-laws.

Mayor Marshall opened the floor for public.

Mrs. Wanda Runyun asked if tax payers can get financial reports of the Crossett Economic Development Foundation. Mayor Marshall stated that any information the city receives can be reviewed by the public.

Mrs. Charlotte Hollimon inquired as to the status of the Bio-Diesel plant that was considering coming to Crossett. Mr. Smith explained they were unable to get financing.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Jesse Walthall, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor