Crossett City Council met in regular session October 18, 2021 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, Clerk/Treasurer CW Terrell

Councilmembers: Cary Carter, Kerstin Mondragon, Chris Gill, Sheila Phillips, James Knight and CT Foster

Absent: None

Mayor Marshall opened the meeting with a prayer and pledge. Mayor Marshall introduced Elizabeth, Johnathon, Eowyn and Eli Hogan who led in the prayer and pledge of allegiance.

Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to approve the minutes of the September 20 financial and regular meetings. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and minutes were approved.

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

Mayor Marshall gave an update on the EDA grant. The city has been awarded $1.46 million for East Crossett Wastewater rehab project. Mayor Marshall expressed appreciation to Crossett Economic Development Foundation for working diligently to help make this grant a reality. The city is currently working on getting easements for properties affected by the project.

Mayor also updated on the ADEQ program for the city municipal building at 307 Main. This program provided for an inspection of the building to determine the amount of asbestos and other hazardous materials. This inspection would have cost the city around $10,000 had we not been accepted into the ADEQ program. Based on the findings of this report, we hope to apply for a grant for the renovation of the building.

Mayor Marshall stated that the grant for the Crossett Youth Center was rejected, but we have reapplied. There will need to be an asbestos study for this building also. Crossett Economic Development Foundation has applied for the program to have the study performed.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that the handicap sidewalk at Crossett City Park and Lucas Pond has been complete. Banks have been cleaned and trees have been cleared in the former zoo for placement of Yale Cabins. Sites will need to be marked and more fencing taken down before the cabins can be placed. Some of the bridges on the back side of the pond need significant repairs. Cynergy Cargo has volunteered to assist in the repair of the metal bridge and the Crossett Rotary Club has offered to help with the wooden bridge.

Mayor Marshall and Director of Public Works Jeff Harrison presented a proposal for an automated garbage truck. Previously, the council has expressed interest in trading the two leased rear-end loader trucks for one automated truck. This will free up manpower in order to do more street cleaning and other needed things around the city. In order to have the truck available in 2022, the city will need to reserve a truck. This is a good-faith commitment and will not obligate the city to purchase the truck if things don’t work out. The city has scheduled November 3 to test drive an automated truck borrowed from the city of Monticello. Councilman Carter asked about a back-up plan if this truck were to be out of commission. DOPW Harrison explained that the city will retain the commercial truck and can use it to pick up residential garbage if needed. Councilman Knight asked if there would be any repercussions if the city reserves the truck and backs out. He was assured that this is not a binding contract and there will be no adverse circumstances. Councilwoman Mondragon expressed concern on burdening the citizens with the purchase of the trash cans. Mayor Marshall stated that the city can purchase the cans under the lost revenue American Relief Funds. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Gill to proceed with reserving the automated truck. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that the state has reached a settlement of $216 million on litigation with two opioid distributors. This was through a joint effort of Arkansas cities, counties and the state governing bodies. This money will go to the state to help fight the epidemic of opioid dependency. This could include detox centers, purchasing Narcan for use by emergency personnel or other options.

Mayor Marshall stated that there are issues with the school crosswalks in the city. There are 3 main crosswalks across state highways. Crossing guards are at these each morning, but they have trouble getting traffic to slow down. The Crossett School District is installing flashing yellow lights in the trucks driven by the cross guards. Mayor Marshall is proposing that the city purchase four solar panel operated flashing beacon lights with signs. Two will be placed on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and two on Main Street. The cost of four signs will be around $15,500. Mayor suggested that we purchase these sign out of the general fund now and apply for a grant in February for the purchase of more. Motion by Councilman Gill, seconded by Councilman Foster to appropriate funds for 4 signs. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall asked council to consider allocating funds for the purchase of Christmas lights. With visitors coming into our area to view the Finney Christmas Light display, she would like to entice them into the city to shop in our stores and eat in our restaurants. She added that the citizens have supported the city in many fashions and would like for us to give back to the community. She proposed purchasing lights to go across Main Street (from pole to pole) from 1st Avenue to Brookshires. Mayor Marshall presented a price estimate of $13,000 - $14,000 for LED lights. She added that the state will have to issue a permit for lights to be across Main Street, but verbal approval has been granted. However, if they don’t grant the permit, backup plan is to wrap all the poles with lights. Councilwoman Mondragon stated that Crossett Chamber of Commerce along with Crossett Parks and Recreation Commission have volunteered to decorate Centennial Park. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to a lot up to $15,000 for the purchase of Christmas lights. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall and Police Chief JW Cruce expressed the need to reserve a truck for the Crossett Police Department. In order to have a truck for purchase in 2022, it will need to be reserved. Councilman Carter inquired as to why a truck was needed. He mentioned that a truck was transferred from the police department to Crossett Recreation Department early in 2020 which he feels shows that a truck is not needed. Mayor Marshall stated that the truck transferred to parks and recreation was promised by Mayor McCormick. Mayor Marshall pointed out that because of projected shortfalls in revenues and added expenses with Covid, we were not comfortable purchasing new vehicle for recreation. When assistant police chief retired, his position was not filled. Instead of purchasing the new truck, that truck was transferred leaving the police department short. Councilman Gill stated that more is being spent on repairs than a new vehicle would cost. Councilman Carter asked Police Chief Cruce to prepare an update on the number of vehicles in his fleet, the mileage on each vehicle and how many are considered “spares”. Councilwoman Mondragon asked what would be done with older, inoperable vehicles. Chief Cruce stated that they could be placed on auction at GovDeals.com. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Foster to allow Police Chief Cruce to reserve two vehicles for the 2022 budget. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall presented a proposed contract with Crossett Economic Development Foundation for the year 2022. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon enter into the contract. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilman Gill asked that Ordinance 2019-5, the farmer’s market ordinance, be reviewed. He stated that a citizen has requested that special events be allowed at the market. Mayor Marshall expressed concern stating that once the market is opened up for events, you cannot discriminate against any group. She added that no one has come to her with concerns or complaints about the farmer’s market. There are many other locations within the city that those events can take place. City Attorney Hamilton stated that the ordinance only specifies what events can be held under the pavilion at the farmers market. It does not include the grassy area to the west of the pavilion. Noise and other concerns were mentioned. Council feels that if this is going to be allowed a closing time should be enforced. Motion by Councilman Gill, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to table discussion of this matter until more research can be obtained. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and matter was tabled.

Mayor Marshall opened the floor to the council for discussion. Hearing none, she opened the floor to the audience.

Mrs. Charlotte Hollimon asked about the former code truck. This truck is being used by Crossett Street Department. She also suggested clear light across Main Street as it wouldn’t be as much of a distraction. All council agrees. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to order clear lights. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Clark Terrell, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor