Crossett City Council met in regular session January 26, 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

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

Absent: None

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

Motion by Councilwoman Phillips, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2021 financial and regular meeting. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passes.

Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to approve the preliminary December financial statements. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

Mayor Marshall introduced the elected officials and the department heads to the audience. She commended the city staff on dedicated service and performance. She added that the citizens of Crossett are to also be commended on their community support. Mayor Marshall spoke of the challenges that 2021 is likely to bring, including loss of revenue from GP partial closure and the ongoing COVID pandemic. She recognized the Crossett Economic Development Commission for their work to recruit new businesses and assisting the city to find and apply for more grants. She reminded the gathering of the REVAMP CROSSETT campaign that the CEDF sponsors. This is a $2,500 matching grant for local businesses for updating and beautifying their front entry. Mayor Marshall stated that her vision and mission statement is to **STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE WITH INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS.**

Mayor Marshall presented the maintenance records for the new garbage trucks for the council’s inspection.

Mayor Marshall entertained a motion to have City Attorney Hamilton read proposed resolution R-2021-1, a resolution honoring Jesse Walthall for his service as Crossett City Clerk/Treasurer. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to have Mr. Hamilton read the proposal. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and the proposal was read. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to adopt Resolution R-2021-1. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and resolution was adopted.

Mayor Marshall entertained a motion to have City Attorney Hamilton read proposed Resolution R-2021-2, a resolution honoring Dale Martinie for his service on the Crossett City Council. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Gill to have Mr. Hamilton read the proposed resolution. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read the proposal. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to approve Resolution R-2021-2. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Resolution R-2021-2 was adopted.

Mr. Greg Sivils, Crossett Water Commission chairman, addressed the council on a water rate increase. In prior months, Mr. Sivils has spoken to the council on the shortfall of revenue. He reminded the council that there has not been a rate increase on water rates since 2015. Upon the advice and recommendations of Arkansas Natural Resource Commission he presented a proposal which would increase rates approximately 30% over a 2-year period, increasing 15% now and 15% in one year. Mr. Sivils explained that there is no clear data on how much extra revenue the new meters may generate as they haven’t been in use but for a few months. Councilman Carter stated he would like to approve the first year (15%) for now and re-evaluate once more data is in on the meter upgrades. Councilwoman Mondragon asked Mr. Sivils if that plan would work for the Crossett Water Commission, and he stated he felt it would. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to have City Attorney Hamilton prepare an ordinance to increase water rates according to the scale presented for the first year only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mrs. Mary Jo Jones, Crossett Water Commission, presented the 2019 annual audit. Motion by Councilman Gill, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to accept the audit as presented. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to approve the appointment of Mike Chisholm to the Crossett Water Commission for an eight (8) year term. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Carter to approve the appointment. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall stated that it is customary in January to set council meeting assembly and organization procedures for the year. She added that currently the meetings are set for 3rd Monday of each month with the financial discussion beginning at 5:30 and regular meeting starting at 6:00. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Foster to continue meetings on that schedule. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall also presented a recommended Code of Ethics established by the Arkansas Municipal League. She stated that she would like to have a resolution prepared to adopt these procedures. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to have City Attorney Hamilton prepare a resolution for the Code of Ethics. Roll call vote. Phillips – yes, Foster – yes, Carter – no, Mondragon – yes, Gill – yes, Knight – yes. Motion passed 5-1.

Mayor Marshall recognized Councilman Foster, Councilman Knight and herself for completing Arkansas Municipal League Continuing Education Certification.

Mayor Marshall stated that the City of Hamburg has expressed interest in purchasing the 1990 Ladder Truck. She feels that because of the close proximity between our cities, this truck could still be used in emergency situation through mutual aid. If the council wants to proceed with this, it will require a bid process. Advertising in state paper and local paper will be required. She added that she would like to put a minimum bid amount in the proposal and suggested $30,000. Councilman Gill asked Fire Chief Higginbotham’s opinion on this. Chief Higginbotham stated that if the city can get as much for it as offered, he feels that it should proceed. Councilman Knight suggested that the low bid be set at $35,000. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Carter to proceed with the bid requirements to sell the fire truck setting a minimum bid amount of $35,000. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that she has been chosen to serve on the Arkansas State Street Aid Committee. This board is made up of 9 mayors from across the state. Three appointments are recommended by the Governor, 3 by the Senate Speaker and 3 by the Speaker of the House. She was sponsored by the Senate Speaker. Being a member on this committee will allow Mayor Marshall to represent the City of Crossett, Ashley County and the southeast region. She is excited and honored that she was chosen to fill this position and looks forward to serving.

With no other agenda business, Mayor Marshall opened the floor to the council for comments or announcements. Hearing none – she opened the floor to the audience. Mr. Titus Warren asked again about safety issues if the fire truck is sold. Mayor Marshall reiterated that she feels like if Hamburg has the low bid and purchases the truck, it will be a non-issue. She added that even if another city purchases the truck, we have another ladder truck and other fire engines.

With no other business, motion by Councilwoman Phillips seconded by Councilman Knight to adjourn.

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Clark Terrell, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor