Crossett City Council met in regular session August 17, 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: Dale Martinie, CT Foster, Cary Carter, Kerstin Mondragon were present and James Knight participated via conference call.

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall

Councilwoman Sheila Phillips

Mayor Marshall asked for a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Eddie Rowe, a long-time city councilman and a community supporter for his entire life.

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

Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Carter to approve the minutes of the financial meeting and regular meeting of July. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to approve the July, 2020 Financial reports. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall updated the council on the economic impact of Covid-19. She explained that while reports don’t show a significant revenue loss due to the pandemic, we have had around $100,000 held out of sales tax revenue over the past two months due to DFA audit of a local company. Department of Finance officials have stated that should not be continuing, but we won’t know until revenue is received this month. Those funds should be deposited around the twenty-sixth of the month.

Mayor Marshall gave an update on the zoo property clean-up. She stated that many of the structures have been removed from the premises. City is still waiting on Louisiana Purchase Garden and Zoo to remove one more cage and a private citizen to remove the remaining cages.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that the parking lot and alley behind Dr. Thompson’s office has been repaired. The next project will be the alley behind Baker’s Pharmacy. There is no estimate of when this will be started.

Mayor Marshall presented a proposed ordinance amending garbage rates and extra pick-up within the city of Crossett. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to have City Attorney Hamilton read the proposed ordinance in its entirety for the first official reading. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read Proposed Ordinance 2020-5. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Foster to suspend the 3-day reading rule and read the proposal for the second reading by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Carter, seconded by Councilman Knight to further suspend the rules and read for third and final reading by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read. Motion by Councilman Carter, seconded by Councilman Knight to adopt Ordinance 2020-5. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Ordinance was adopted.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to consider a resolution honoring Mr. Eddie Rowe for his service to the city of Crossett. Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilman Foster to have City Attorney Hamilton prepare a resolution. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton will prepare. He will send a rough draft to each council member for input before preparing the final resolution.

Councilman Martinie spoke of the recent violence in the city. He asked if there was a plan to ask for help from other agencies or what course of action the city was taking to curb the violence. Mayor Marshall asked Police Chief JW Cruce to address this issue. Chief Cruce presented charts of the violent crimes in Crossett as compared to the state and national average. The charts show that the city is significantly lower than the average. While there have been some spikes in violent crimes in the past, those crimes in the city of Crossett have been declining. The recent murder is the first in the city in two years. Chief Cruce added that according to FBI and Arkansas State Police there are no active gangs within the city. However, there are some groups that act as gangs. Chief Cruce stated that his intention is to keep community policing. He asked that citizens help by coming forward with suspicious activities and speaking out against illegal activity. Chief Cruce said that he is working to regain trust with the citizens of the community and feels that with the help of the citizens this recent surge can be handled.

Councilman Martinie also asked if it were possible to put a handicap sidewalk from the street on Parkway Drive to the handicap fishing pier. Mayor Marshall added that this will be an expensive task, but will look into it.

Councilman Carter asked Mayor Marshall to consider taking questions from the audience.

Councilwoman Marshall opened the floor for questions or comments. Mrs. Linda Watkins, a local business owner, asked if the council could change the rules for city elections. She added that while she doesn’t live in the city, she has a business in the city and is affected by decisions made by the voters. Mayor Marshall explained that this is a state statute and the only way to address this issue is to discuss with State Senator Eddie Cheatham or State Representative LeAnne Burch.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Jesse Walthall, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor