Crossett city council met in special session September 29, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. at the Crossett Economic Development Foundation.

Present: Mayor Crystal Marshall, City Attorney James Hamilton

Council Members: Dale Martinie, CT Foster, Sheila Phillips, Kersten Mondragon

and James Knight (Via phone)

Absent: Clerk Treasurer Jesse Walthall, Councilman Cary Carter

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

Mayor Marshall stated that the purpose of this meeting is to hold public hearing and consider ordinances for annexing property for solar farm project and allowing the purchase of revenue bonds for construction of the project.

Mayor Marshall explained that on Monday, September 28 the Ashley County Quorum Court passed an ordinance allowing for approximately 870.5 acres of property owned by Weyerhauser being sold to RES Renewables to be annexed into the city of Crossett. RES Renewables has requested this in order to receive city services at the location intended for construction of solar energy farm. Mayor Marshall presented proposed ordinance accepting the annexation of this land to the city of Crossett. She then opened the floor for public discussion and concerns.

Mayor Marshall asked Mike Smith, Director of Crossett Economic Development Foundation, to give a description of this project. Mr. Smith stated that this has been an ongoing project for a few years now. RES Renewables is purchasing over 870 acres from Weyerhauser Corporation south of town on which to build a solar energy farm. The company is planning to spend up to $140,000,000 to purchase land and equipment and to construct a solar energy farm. This will be returning significant tax dollars to the city of Crossett, Ashley County and Crossett School District. No personal properties are included in this annexation. The company has promised to repair street up to or better than they were when the project begins.

Mr. Mike Taunton, Ashley 6 East resident, was concerned as to what effect this would have on his property value. He added that once the trees are cleared from the property, drainage from storm waters will flood his yard and possibly damage his house. He added that there is already a drainage issue, but this will make it worse. Mr. Smith assured the council that the company has done extensive research on flood plains and drainage in the area.

Mr. Earl Murphy, another area resident, asked if the construction would be going on around the clock. The representative from RES Renewables stated that was not their intention.

Mr. Dan Kersey, Fire Chief of Frost Prairie Volunteer Fire Department, was concerned that the Crossett Fire Department would answer calls in the area. Frost Prairie Department is funded by Act 833 money which is determined by number of households and number of calls they answer. He is afraid that if the city annexes this property, Crossett Fire Department will start answering calls on the streets. Mayor Marshall explained that fire and police service is the advantage for the company to annex. While other properties will not have fire/police protection, the property where the farm is being built will have city services. Mayor Marshall agreed to meet with Fire Chief Kersey and Crossett Fire Chief Bo Higginbotham to discuss concerns.

Mr. Taunton asked how soon this construction would begin. Mr. Smith said the projected start date is spring or summer of 2021.

With no other comments from the audience, the public hearing was declared closed.

Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to have City Attorney Hamilton read proposed Ordinance 2020-6, an ordinance accepting the annexation of land to the city of Crossett. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read the ordinance in its entirety. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Foster to suspend the 3-day reading rule and read the proposal for second reading by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to further suspend the rules and read for third and final time by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Martinie to adopt Ordinance 2020-6. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion carried and Ordinance 2020-6 was adopted. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Martinie to accept the emergency clause associated with the ordinance. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to have Bond Counsel Walter McSpadden read proposed Ordinance 2020-7, an ordinance authorizing issuance of industrial development revenue bonds for the purpose of providing financing for industrial facilities; authorizing a construction mortgage securing the bonds; authorizing a lease agreement between the city of Crossett and Crossett Solar Energy. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Mr. McSpadden read the proposal. Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilwoman Mondragon to suspend the 3-day reading rule and read proposed ordinance for second reading by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Mr. McSpadden read by title only. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to further suspend the rules and read for third and final time by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Mr. McSpadden read by title only. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to adopt Ordinance 2020-7. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Ordinance 2020-7 was adopted. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Phillips to adopt the emergency clause attached to the ordinance. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and emergency clause was adopted.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

Jesse Walthall, Clerk/Treasurer Mayor Crystal Marshall