Crossett city council met for a joint special session with Ashley County Quorum Court at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 13, 2017 at the Ashley County Courthouse

Present: Mayor McCormick, City Attorney James Hamilton, Consultant Clark Terrell

 Council Members: Martin, Foster, Rowe, Knight, Rodgers and Marshall

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Walthall

Ashley County Judge Jim Hudson stated that the purpose of this meeting it to discuss the ambulance proposal between the city of Crossett and Ashley County. Judge Hudson asked Quorum Court member Buddy Lawrence to bring the council up to date.

Mr. Lawrence explained that the ACQC has been in discussion with Crossett Fire Chief Leroy “Bo” Higginbotham concerning an agreement allowing Crossett Ambulance Service to cover the entire county. On October 1, 2017 the area of Ashley County outside Egypt Township will be without ambulance coverage since FAST Ambulance service will be closing. Mr. Lawrence added that the Quorum Court had elected to seek a ¼% county sales tax to help fund an ambulance service for rural Ashley County and had requested that Crossett Ambulance Service offer a proposal. Of the ¼% tax collections, half would be earmarked for the City of Crossett to help cover the current ambulance service and half would be paid to cover county service. When questions arose by the Crossett City Council concerning this proposal, the Quorum Court rescinded the motion to seek the sales tax.

Mr. Lawrence explained that three options had been discussed in detail, two of which involved the Crossett Ambulance Service. The first option is to contract with Crossett Ambulance Service with the ¼% sales tax issue as mentioned above. The second option is to contract with Crossett Ambulance Service and the Ashley County Quorum Court appropriate funds to pay any outstanding debt not covered by the amount generated with ambulance runs. The third option is to seek a private service to cover the entire county.

The council and quorum court discussed in detail all options. Councilwoman Rodgers mentioned that the city of Crossett has asked a professional team from UALR to conduct a feasibility study. The results of this study could help this group make more informed decision.

When asked if options other than sales tax issue for covering the cost had been discussed, Mr. Lawrence stated that it is not legal to add these charges to personal property tax collections, and membership fees would not generate enough revenue to make up the difference.

Quorum Court member Buddy Lawrence insured that the proposals will not cost the city of Crossett. Financial responsibility of the startup cost and any shortfalls from collections for the ambulance service will be the burden of the county.

City Council and Quorum Court members agree that this is a very important and essential service for the entire county and will look at the feasibility and move forward.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

Jesse Walthall, Clerk/Treasurer Marshall S. McCormick/Mayor