Crossett city council met in special session August 31, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room of the Crossett Economic Development Building.

Present: Mayor McCormick, City Attorney James Hamilton

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

Ashley County District Judge Reid Harrod

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Walthall,

Mayor McCormick announced that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss code enforcement.

City Attorney Hamilton presented a copy of the Ordinance 2006-4, passed July 17, 2006. This is not in the codified Code of Ordinances. This will be addressed and code books will be brought up to date for each council member.

City Attorney Hamilton suggested that the ordinance be amended to raise fines to meet state statute. State statute 14-55-504 stipulates that the fine range is $1,000-$2,000 and up to an additional $1,000 per day. For example, an abandoned car can be issued a citation and charged up to $1,000 per day until the car is moved. Councilmembers expressed concern over how this can be enforced.

District Judge Reid Harrod stated that these cases would be heard in district court. He added that each violation would be handled on the case presented. It would be at the judge’s discretion for each individual case. Judge Harrod also suggested that a separate court date be set each month for environmental court.

Councilwoman Rodgers questioned as to once the citations are issued, if the city will have the ability to file a lien on the property. This is not feasible because the procedure will call for either citations in civil court or property liens. Rodgers suggested that the city look into hiring a code enforcement officer to work with director of public works and Crossett police department. This officer, with guidance from Director of Public Works Jeff Harrison, will have the discretion to either issue citation or clean property and place a lien.

Councilwoman Martin asked that landlords be held responsible for rented properties. She added that businesses be held accountable for their properties as well. Martin stated that she would like to see the city hire the code enforcement officer, change the ordinance to stiffen the fines and hold public meetings to advise property owners of the changes and that the ordinance will be strictly enforced.

There was discussion concerning qualifications for the code enforcement officer. Jeff Harrison, DOPW, suggested that the candidate be someone familiar with the court system. Mr. Harrison will check with other cities to see if they have code enforcement officer and get job description.

Motion by Councilman James Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Lynn Rodgers to have city attorney James Hamilton draft ordinance changing the fines for violations to meet state statute. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Fire Chief Bo Higginbotham presented an ordinance from ElDorado setting fines for building code violations. Chief Higginbotham asked the council to consider passing a similar ordinance for the city of Crossett and allowing fire marshal to issue citations for violations.

Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers to have City Attorney James Hamilton get with Fire Chief Higginbotham and draft an ordinance for this proposal. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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