Crossett city council met in special session July 7, 2017 in the Genealogy room of the Crossett Library.

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

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

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Walthall

Also in attendance was Blake Hamilton, Gregory Hamilton and Randy Wright with UALR Institute for Economic Advancement.

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

Mayor McCormick announced that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss with the research analyst the pros and cons of Crossett Ambulance Service taking on ambulance coverage for the county.

Mr. Blake Hamilton presented a list of questions and concerns including the services provided by Crossett Ambulance Service and FAST Ambulance Service.

Mayor McCormick asked Fire Chief Leroy Higginbotham to explain the current status of the proposal.

Chief Higginbotham explained that currently FAST Ambulance Service is covering the rural areas of Ashley County, with the exception of Egypt Township and city of Crossett. He explained that as of October 1, 2017 FAST will no longer be operational. This will leave the city of Hamburg and all areas outside Egypt Township with no ambulance coverage at all. The Ashley County Quorum Court has decided to seek a ¼% countywide sales tax to provide ambulance coverage for the area. The ACQC also requested that the Crossett Ambulance Service expand and take on the county coverage.

Chief Higginbotham added that the ¼% sales tax is projected to generate about $650,000 per year and will be shared between City of Crossett and Ashley County for ambulance coverage. Chief Higginbotham stated that the money generated from county runs should bring in around $500,000. This money with the $325,000 generated from sales tax proceeds will be around $825,000. He projected cost for county service to be about $800,000, which includes $100,000 earmarked for capital expense each year. Chief Higginbotham feels like the funds will be adequate to cover the expense.

Suggestions were made by the research analyst including researching other rural services, consolidating with surrounding counties, and renting a private ambulance service. Chief Higginbotham explained that there would be no savings to the city, but could cost the city revenue as the city stands to lose service area. Councilman Knight added that the ISO fire rating will go up and citizens will pay more on insurance coverage and this is something the council does not want to happen.

Councilwoman Marshall asked for an estimate on start-up costs. Chief Higginbotham stated that the cost to fully furnish will be around $600,000. He has talked with representatives from banking and money can be borrowed and paid back on a quarterly payment of around $35,000.

Councilwoman Rodgers stated that if this comes to be a reality, she would like to look into third party billing. She feels that more time can be dedicated to collections if outsourced.

Councilwoman Rodgers also inquired as to cost of a feasibility study. Mr. Wright assured that the cost will be minimal.

Councilwoman Marshall stated that she would like to go ahead and set up joint meeting between Crossett City Council and Ashley County Quorum Court. ACQC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 11 at 2:30. Chief Higginbotham asked that a representative from the council attend this meeting along with him. None of the council will be able to attend, but Mayor McCormick stated he will attend.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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