Crossett city council met in special session April 9, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. in the executive chambers of the Crossett Economic Development building.

Present: Mayor McCormick

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

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Walthall, City Attorney Hamilton, Councilman Foster

Mayor McCormick announced the purpose of this meeting is to review March financial statements, discuss lease/purchase for Crossett Recreation Commission and to hear Quorum Court concerning City of Crossett running entire county ambulance service.

Mayor McCormick asked Councilwoman Marshall to explain the request for Crossett Recreation Commission. Councilwoman Marshall introduced Shelley Carter, chairman of the commission. Mrs. Carter stated that the commission requested and was granted $18,000 in the 2018 budget to lease a wide-area mower to be used at the sports complex and other areas. They have had two equipment demonstrations, one from Jacobsen and one from Toro. The consensus is that the Jacobsen mower would be more suitable for our needs. This could mow 10 ½ acres per hour, allowing the recreation crew to mow the complex in 1 ½ days as compared to one week with the current equipment. The mower will not be able to be used at the park, but they are looking into other options for equipment to assist there. The mower will be housed under covered shed at the complex. It is estimated to take 4-6 weeks for delivery. The terms of the lease agreement will be $1,267 for 48-month fair market lease. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to have City Attorney Hamilton prepare a resolution to memorialize the council’s intent to enter into the lease/purchase for a Jacobsen 600 mower agreement as presented. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilwoman Marshall informed the council that there has been vandalism at the restroom at the city park. She explained that they have looked into cameras with DVR recording equipment. The price quoted from Arnet Computers for 5 cameras with room on the DVR to add an additional 3 cameras if needed is $1582.00. Motion by Councilwoman Marshall, seconded by Councilwoman Rodgers to make the purchase. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick introduced County Judge Jim Hudson and Quorum Court members Rhonda Pippen, Ronnie Wheeler and Buddy Lawrence as well as Ashley County Attorney Richard Byrd. Judge Hudson asked the council if they would consider Crossett Ambulance Service running the entire county. He explained that the hospital will no longer fund FAST ambulance service as of June 1, 2018 and it is not legal for the county to donate funds to a private company. Therefore, the county will not be covered by any ambulance service as of June 1. Judge Hudson added that the county has considered a 1/4 % sales tax to fund the service as well as a user fee or a fee added to water bills of the residents out of Crossett service area to help supplement the income generated by the ambulance service. They do not feel that a user fee will be enough to cover expenses and other options will need to be looked into.

In discussions concerning a sales tax election, some council members expressed concern about asking city residents to pay a tax for a service they already have. Councilwoman Marshall inquired as to a private service taking over the county coverage. Judge Hudson explained that the biggest part of the county’s population is in the Crossett Ambulance coverage area. Most likely, if a private service was to run it, they would have to take all coverage except for city limits of Crossett. Fire Chief Leroy Higginbotham stated that approximately half of the money generated from ambulance runs is for runs outside city limits.

Questions were raised about the discrepancy in the amount of supplement required through FAST proposal. Justice of the Peace Buddy Lawrence stated that the supplement will depend on how many ambulances are needed through the county. Chief Higginbotham explained that this can be worked out with the contract once the uncertainties are figured out. Chief Higginbotham added that with a user fee it will take up to 24 months for any funding to be secured. That is why a sales tax issue may need to be discussed.

Councilwoman Marshall expressed concern over who would be responsible for any expenses that are not covered by revenues generated. JP Lawrence stated that he doesn’t feel that there will be any risk to the city.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked Chief Higginbotham to come up with realistic figures and meet with council on April 30. All councilmembers expressed interest in hearing the proposal.

Financial reports for March 2018 were presented. Questions were asked and answered. Third party billing for Crossett Ambulance Service will begin 60 days after contract is signed. Projected to start by June 1.

Council asked Chief Higginbotham why he would be interested in covering county for ambulance service. Chief Higginbotham stated that he does not want to lose any of the current coverage area, and this is sure to happen if a private service comes in.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

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