Crossett City Council met in regular session May 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Middle School Cafeteria.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Crystal Marshall, City Attorney James Hamilton

Councilmember’s: Dale Martinie, CT Foster, Cary Carter, and Sheila Phillips were present and James Knight participated via conference call.

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall

Mayor Marshall asked that a moment of silence be observed in honor of deceased Mayor Scott McCormick and Animal Control Officer Curtis Gulledge.

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

Mayor Marshall updated on the COVID 19 status. She stated that the city has been closely

following the recommendations of Governor Hutchison as well as CDC directives. A tentative date for opening the city pool is June 4. Mayor added that the projected shortfall for revenue due to Covid 19 is around $300,000. To make up for those funds, she has issued a pause on capital projects, postponing dilapidated house removal with exception of burned out or dangerous properties, and a freeze on hiring for certain positions. Mayor Marshall stated that she is a part of a Southeast Arkansas Mayor Coalition that is staying on top of the Covid 19 updates and advising on the CARE Act for Municipal Aid.

Mayor Marshall stated that the zoo cleaning project has been hindered due to raining weather. Grounds must be dry to move heavy equipment in to the area.

Mayor informed the council that city crews are working on replacing some street signs around town and that more signs have been ordered. Councilman Martinie asked that a sign be placed directing people to the Crossett Sports Complex.

Mayor Marshall stated that she has had some people express interest in naming the sports complex after Mayor McCormick since he was instrumental in the building of the complex. Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilman Carter to rename the Crossett Sports Complex to the Mayor Scott McCormick Sports Complex of Crossett. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and complex will be renamed.

Mayor Marshall updated on the wastewater tax election. She stated that the tax initiative passed and should move the project forward. CRIST Engineers will prepare a report and begin the process.

Councilman Martinie updated the council on Centennial Park. He, along with a group of volunteers, have been washing and painting at the park. The work should be completed by the end of the week weather permitting.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to approve a revision to the Crossett Personnel Handbook. She stated that when the handbook was revised it was the intention not to take away any benefits of people already working for the city. There is one paragraph in the revision which can be interpreted to take away sick time and vacation time in the event of the death of an employee. She asked that the handbook be revised to clarify that paragraph.

Current reading

Unless hired prior to January 1, 2009, non-uniformed employees will not be paid for accrued sick days upon termination of employment with the city.

Changed to read:

If hired prior to May 1, 2019, at the end of the employee’s term of service upon retirement or death, whichever occurs first, any non-uniformed employee has unused accumulated sick leave, the employee shall be paid for this sick leave at the regular rate of pay in effect at the time of retirement or death. Payment for unused sick leave will not be made when the non-uniformed employee’s employment terminates for any reason other than death or retirement, or if the employee’s date of hire was post May 1, 2019. Payment for unused sick leave shall not exceed forty-five (45) days.

Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilman Carter to approve the change. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

A proposed resolution authorizing Mayor Marshall to sign an application for CDBG grant funds for Cynergy Cargo was presented to the council. Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilman Foster to have City Attorney Hamilton read Proposed Resolution R-2020-5. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read the resolution. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Martinie to adopt Resolution R-2020-5. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and resolution was adopted.

A proposed resolution establishing a policy prohibiting the use of excessive force by law enforcement agencies against individuals engaged in non-violent civil rights demonstrations was presented to the council. Motion by Councilman Martinie, seconded by Councilman Carter to have City Attorney read the proposed resolution. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read the proposal. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Martinie to adopt Resolution R-2020-6. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and resolution was adopted.

Mayor Marshall announced that a public hearing concerning Cynergy Cargo is set for May 28, 2020 at 5:30 at the Crossett Middle School Cafeteria.

Mayor Marshall presented her resignation from the council seat (Ward 2 Position 2). This will leave a vacancy on the council and it will be up to the council to appoint someone to fill the vacancy within 30 days. A meeting date was set as June 1 at 5:00 p.m. for interviews. Mayor Marshall asked that interested parties contact city hall by Friday, May 29 at 4:00.

Councilman CT Foster has agreed to serve as Mayor ProTempore in the absence of Mayor Marshall. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Martinie to approve this appointment. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall announced that Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is planning to restock Lucas Pond within the next week or two.

Councilman Martinie asked if any work has been done on the parking lot behind Dr. Thompson’s office. Director of Works Jeff Harrison stated that the money for this was taken out of the budget when cuts were made, however he is planning to have city crews do what can be done as soon as the weather cooperates.

Councilman Martinie stated that he knows that citizens are concerned about the Crossett Recreation Commission and would like to have that commission reactivated.

Councilman Carter asked about the vacancies left in the drainage department. DOPW Harrison informed council that in an effort to save money, several positions have been consolidated using personnel already in place. Employees from sewer department, street and sanitation department, code enforcement and drainage department have been tasked with extra responsibilities to cover the vacated positions. This has saved nearly $64,000 in salaries.

Councilman Carter asked about the traffic light at Millyard Road. At one time, Lawrence Electric had offered to remove the signal light at no financial cost to the city. They wanted to keep the equipment for their use. Motion by Carter, seconded by Councilman Martinie to allow Lawrence Electric to remove the traffic lights if that offer was still on the table. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilman Carter inquired about the burned-out property on Dogwood Street. DOPW Harrison stated that the homeowner is paying the city to clean up the property.

Mr. Mike Smith, Crossett Economic Development Foundation updated the council on on-going prospects. RES Renewables, the solar farm has executed financial agreement, secured engineering firm and started an agreement to purchase property. Annexation will happen as soon as possible. Councilman Carter asked if the company will upgrade and maintain the roads. This is something that will need to be discussed. Mr. Smith also asked council to reconsider taking the light down at Millyard Road as there may be some prospects interested in the GP property.

Councilman Martinie recommended setting time aside at each council meeting to have different local businesses give short description of what they do.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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