Crossett City Council met in regular session November 21, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Scott McCormick, Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall,

Asst. City Attorney Tim Leonard,

Councilmembers: Eddie Rowe, James Knight, C.T. Foster, Lynn Rodgers

Absent: Councilmembers Robert Freeman and Candace Jeffress

Mayor McCormick called the meeting to order with prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the minutes of October 17 regular meeting and special meeting of November 14 as well as financial reports for October 2016. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick introduced Willie Barker on behalf of CARD. Mr. Barker informed the council of the closing of Crossland Zoo due to inadequate funding. Most animals which belong to CARD have found homes in other facilities including Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo in Monroe. The bear will be housed in Springfield, Missouri and all other animals will be picked up by their owner, Jason Clay. Mr. Barker thanked the council for allowing CARD to lease the property and attempt to keep the zoo operating. He added that the organization would like to continue to lease the property and try other ventures. Mr. Barker also expressed interest in some of the enclosures, exhibits and buildings.

Mayor McCormick presented a proposed 2017 budget to the council. He added that this is preliminary figures and further meetings and discussion will be needed.

Mr. Teddy Huff had asked to be on the agenda to discuss concerns about the gravel road behind Cap Gates Arena. Mr. Huff was not present. Mayor McCormick explained that Mr. Huff had complaints about the dust created by traffic on this road. Mayor added that this is a private road owned by Crossett Riding Club and Georgia-Pacific and city funds cannot be used to improve the road.

Director of Public Works, Jeff Harrison, informed the council of an issue with a portable carport owned by Mr. Cliff Bailey at 1102 Beech. The structure does not meet code. The Board of Adjustments met on October 20 and denied a variance. Mr. Bailey is present to ask for more time to remove the carport. Mr. Bailey stated that he is in the process of preparing land outside city limits on which to move the carport, but due to rain in the spring and hours of work he hasn’t been able to get the land ready. Mr. Bailey asked the council to extend the time allowed to remove the structure for a year. Mr. Harrison explained that there are similar structures around town which have been grandfathered in or are on corner lots and not a code violation. Councilman Knight asked the council to consider allowing 6 months to remove. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers seconded by Councilman Knight to allow Mr. Bailey until March 31, 2017 to have the structure removed. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilwoman Rodgers updated the council on Centennial Park. Mrs. Rodgers met with Centennial Garden Club and other interested parties to discuss the park. The park is in need of several repairs, including issues with the sprinkler system. General maintenance including painting and cleaning is also needed. Councilwoman Rodgers asked that volunteers along with city crews work together to bring this city asset up to standards. She added that the city has budgeted $5,000 for Centennial Park expense and asked council to consider raising this to $10,000 for 2017.

Councilwoman Rodgers inquired as to status of the city’s disaster plan. There has been a meeting with Mayor McCormick, Police Chief JW Cruce, Fire Chief Bo Higginbotham, Director of Public Works Jeff Harrison and Councilman Eddie Rowe. Several issues were discussed including mutual assistance from outside agencies. Georgia-Pacific and Ashley County Office of Emergency Management will be vital to any disaster plan the city has.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked the council to consider once-per-week garbage pickup. A motion was presented by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Knight to go to once per week garbage pickup. In discussion, Mrs. Rodgers explained that she would like to form a committee comprised of city employees, private citizens, local media and logistics specialist to research the proposal. She would like to get an idea of how this could save on wear and tear of equipment, manpower hours, and financially. She feels that a work board should be prepared to better utilize the manpower available. There are concerns as to the amount of trash that may accumulate on the streets, but Mrs. Rodgers feels that this can be addressed by enforcing city ordinances. Other concerns raised were increased garbage rates and discontinuing garbage bags. Mrs. Rodgers feels that these issues can be addressed in the research committee. Mrs. Rodgers added that 30 days after the research committee has made recommendations, the once-per-week pickup should begin. Committee will meet again to review progress thirty days after implemented. Committee will also meet for review thirty days after mowing season begins and then again thirty days after leaf season begins. Audience members asked council to consider providing recycle bins. This will drastically reduce household garbage and help out the Ashley County Sheltered Workshop at the same time. They are currently accepting plastic refuge and cardboard.

Mayor McCormick reminded the council that there is a motion and a second on the table. He called for a roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick asked the council to consider the ruling of the Fair Standard Labor Board concerning salaried employees and overtime. Councilwoman Rodgers asked how compensatory time is kept. Each department keeps up with their own time. Rodgers feels that all comp-time, both accumulated and used, should be reviewed by Mayor McCormick and submitted to payroll department for keeping. She also recommended a time clock for all city employees. This will make everyone more accountable. Mayor McCormick recommended that overtime be paid for up to 10 hours per pay period, after which the employee will have to take time off. It was mentioned that, because of responsibilities, there is so little time to take off. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Knight, effective December 1, 2016, to put city employees on an hourly rate, pay overtime for all hours over regularly scheduled hours, and cause each department to use timeclocks to keep up with hours. Also a detailed list of comp-time currently on the books should be submitted by December 1, 2016. Employees with over 480 hours will be allowed up to 2 years to take the time, less than that must be taken in 1 year. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Justin Reed, Crossett Recreation Commission Chairman, presented the council with a copy of the ordinance setting up the commission and explaining their duties. He added that the commission met in October for an reorganizational meeting, and again in November for a business meeting. Mr. Reed explained that the commission is in place to help the council and run Crossett Recreation with as little stress to the city’s general fund budget as possible. The commission feels that with the current facilities, this can be done. He asked the council to re-establish the guidelines that are set in the ordinance. Mr. Reed added that he has asked for job description for the director and the assistant director, but hasn’t received anything. He added that if the commission is allowed, they can help better manage time and have more accountability.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked Mr. Clark Terrell to work with Fire Chief Bo Higginbotham and fire administrative assistant Rhonda Johnson to find ways to collect on old bills.

Mrs. Charlotte Hollimon asked about the sewer pump owned by Jack Reynolds. Jeff Harrison, director of public works, explained the situation and that the council has ordered the Crossett Sewer Committee to assume responsibility of the system.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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