Crossett City Council met in regular session July 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Scott McCormick, City Attorney James Hamilton,

Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall

Councilmembers: Robert Freeman, Candace Jeffress, Eddie Rowe, James Knight, C.T. Foster, Lynn Rodgers (tardy)

Absent: None

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

Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Knight to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 20 and the special meeting of July 11, 2016. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Financial reports for June, 2016 were presented. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Jeffress to approve the financial statements. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick introduced Mr. Claude Spainhour, Crossett Sewer Committee Chairman, to the council. Mr. Spainhour explained that the sewer department operates on an annual budget of approximately $507,000. He reminded the council that the sewer system on the east side of town is in dire need of improvements. Mr. Spainhour stated that the Industrial Park Lift Station is at maximum capacity due to business expansion dumping into the system. A 2015 study showed that it would cost around $6.1 million with an increase of 3% annually to enhance the system. He feels that only way to finance this would be through a bond issue and with the current sales tax rate, doesn’t think it is feasible at this time. Mr. Spainhour added that the sewer department is well staffed and well equipped. He recognized the sewer employees as working well with the public and going above and beyond what is required for the customers. He added that the sewer crew has been able to make some improvements to the lines themselves with excess money from sewer collections. Councilwoman Jeffress thanked Mr. Spainhour for bringing this information back to the council. She added that sewers are something that are taken for granted, but feels that this issue should be addressed as soon as possible. Councilman Freeman asked if any other funding mechanisms may be available. Mr. Spainhour stated he knew of none. The last major project was completed with a bond issue which was scheduled to be paid off in 20 years. Because of exceptional collections, the bond paid off in 7 years.

City Attorney James Hamilton presented two resolutions to levy mills for 2017 collections for the council’s consideration. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Freeman to have Mr. Hamilton read proposed Resolution R-2016-2, a resolution to levy five mills general propery tax within the city of Crossett. Roll call vote. Motion passed and Hamilton read proposed resolution. Motion by Councilman Freeman, seconded by Councilman Foster to adopt Resolution R-2016-2. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and resolution was adopted.

Motion by Councilman Rowe, seconded by Councilwoman Jeffress to have City Attorney Hamilton read proposed resolution to levy 2.4 mills for the purpose of funding on-going operation of the Crossett Public Library. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read proposed resolution. Motion to adopt Resolution R-2016-3 by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Freeman. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Resolution R-2016-3 was adopted.

City Attorney Hamilton presented an ordinance to repeal Crossett Municipal Code 5.20.05 – which gives trash bags to city residents. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Knight to have city attorney read proposed ordinance for first reading in its entirety. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read proposed Ordinance 2016-5. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Rowe to suspend the 3-day reading rule and read proposed ordinance for second reading by title only. Roll call vote, all vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Freeman to further suspend the rule and read for 3rd and final time by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Freeman to adopt Ordinance 2016-5. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and ordinance is adopted.

Mayor McCormick introduced Mr. Steven Hughes with CARD to the council. Mr. Hughes updated the council on zoo activities and let the council know that CARD is now working closely with Friends of the Crossett Zoo to resolve differences. Mr. Hughes stated that CARD is operating on a budget of between $5,000-$6,000 per month. Issues regarding breeding license have been discovered. Because the city nor CARD has a breeder’s license, male and female animals must be caged separately. He is requesting that the city donate the skatepark fencing so that new pens can be built. Several issues with the current lease agreement were noted. The city of Crossett has tort immunity, so the council will not be required to purchase additional liability insurance. Since they have invested so much infrastructure to the zoo, CARD is asking to be listed as additional insured on the city’s insurance policy. Councilwoman Rodgers asked for a list of improvements and exhibits. Mr. Hughes agreed to furnish this list to the city. In the original agreement, an escrow account was to be set up by CARD. The council agrees that this can be omitted from the agreement as long as an audited financial statement is presented at least once per year. Mr. Hughes added that the broker that had taken the animals from the Crossland Zoo had violated several USDA rules. To avoid legal problems, the broker agreed to return all the animals to the city for $1.00. Mr. Hughes feels that the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will work with CARD to grant permits if the city resumes ownership of the animals. CARD is asking that a provision be added to the agreement giving them the right of disposition of all offspring. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilwoman Rodgers to have City Attorney Hamilton work with Mr. Hughes and the CARD board to resolve these issues and present an amended lease agreement. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilman Freeman, seconded by Councilman Knight to donate 400 feet of 6’ fencing to CARD for construction of cages. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick introduced Mrs. Ruth Pellow, Friends of the Crossett Zoo representative to the council. Mrs. Pellow reminded the council that the lease agreement calls for a council member to serve as ex-officio member of the CARD board. She requested that the person chosen also serve in the same capacity on the FOTCZ board. Mayor McCormick stated he will make that appointment soon.

Mayor McCormick opened the floor to the audience.

Mr. Giles Gober addressed the council concerning water usage. He explained that he has a home outside the city limits, but on Crossett water system. He works in Louisiana and spends around 6-8 days per month in his home. He presented an Excel spreadsheet showing his water bills for a year’s time. The bill showed excessive usage in some months. Mr. Gober explained that he has checked for leaks and found none. He requested that the Crossett Water Commission check the meter. Mr. Ritter, Crossett Water Commission Chairman, stated that the meter was pulled and checked and found to be working properly. He added that the consumption was typical of a commode running for a faucet leaking. Mr. Ritter stated that water went through the meter and therefore it was consumed and billed. Mr. Gober showed proof that his meter reading for April was higher than the reading for May. Mr. Ritter invited Mr. Gober to attend the regular Crossett Water Commission meeting to be held on Thursday, July 21. Councilwoman Rodgers noted that she receives complaints on a regular daily concerning the water commission. All councilmembers stated they have had complaints as well. Councilwoman Rodgers requested that Mayor McCormick attend the meeting of the commission and express the council’s concerns.

Mr. Ritter stated that the employees at CWC do an outstanding job. During the recent power outage, the auxiliary unit was used and over 1,000 gallons per minute was pumped into the system keeping all city residents supplied with water.

Councilwoman Rodgers inquired about the city’s disaster plan. Mrs. Rodgers asked that Councilman Rowe be allowed to review the city’s plan to make sure it is adequate.

 With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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