Crossett City Council met in regular session December 21, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Scott McCormick, City Attorney James Hamilton

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

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall, Councilman Robert Freeman

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

Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 16, 2015. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Financial reports for November 2015 were presented. Councilwoman Rodgers called attention to a posting error made on the monthly financials. Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilwoman Jeffress to approve the financial reports with noted correction. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked that the CARD lease be finalized in regular meeting. City Attorney Hamilton stated that a modified agreement was presented and finalized at the December 17, 2015 special meeting. He is awaiting a final survey with legal description in order to draft the document. As soon as this is done, the agreement will be ready to be signed.

Mayor McCormick informed the council of a proposal from Verizon for the continued lease of lot at the Crossett Port for cell tower. Currently Verizon pays around $793 per month for the lot. They are seeking a pre-paid lease until the year 2065 of $110,000 or a perpetual lease of around $130,000.

Dan Pevy, Crossett Port Authority Board Chairman, explained that with current updates, he feels that the perpetual lease would be the best option for the city. He added that they have some electrical work that needs to be done and several other projects that the payment could help accomplish. He added that the pre-paid lease may or may not still be an offer. City Attorney Hamilton stated that the city doesn’t sell property, and the perpetual lease would be doing that. He feels that the pre-paid lease would be the best option if that offer is available.

Council members had reservations concerning the perpetual lease, but are willing to consider the pre-paid option. Council asked Mr. Pevy to see if Verizon is willing to enter into the pre-paid lease. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Foster to wait on making a decision until more information is available. Voice vote was taken. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed.

Mrs. Ruth Pellow, Crossett Friends of the Crossland Zoo, spoke to the council. She wanted to make the council aware that their organization is again active and intend to help CARD with projects necessary to make the Crossland Zoo successful. Mrs. Pellow added that they would like to see a raptors rehabilitation program activated as in the past. She also inquired as to the whereabouts of some of the hand tools and equipment purchased by Friends of the Zoo. Mayor McCormick requested a list of the tools and equipment and he will attempt to locate.

Mayor McCormick introduced Bishop Singleton to the council. Bishop Singleton asked the council what their intentions were to create economic development within the city of Crossett. He stated that the population of Crossett is down significantly over the past few years while cities around us are growing. Mr. Singleton also stressed the importance of passing the Crossett School millage tax proposal and the Ashley County Hospital tax proposal. Mayor McCormick asked Economic Development Director Mike Smith to inform Mr. Singleton of projects. Mr. Smith elaborated on the projects at the Crossett Industrial Park and the companies who are looking into our area to locate.

City Attorney James Hamilton requested that his base salary be increased to $31.510.00 per year. He explained that he is serving in his 5th term as city attorney and this increase would reflect a 3% increase per year. He recommended the council to consider a salary schedule based on years of experience. Mr. Ronnie King, a member of the audience, asked if this proposal would include all city employees. This proposal does not include any position except for the city attorney position. Councilwoman Jeffress stated that while everyone values his expertise at that position, she cannot see giving him a raise when no other city employee is getting one. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Knight to table this request. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and the discussion is tabled.

Mayor McCormick asked the council to consider giving him an allowance for vehicle expense since he is now driving his personal vehicle.

Police Chief JW Cruce made the council aware that the vehicles that were approved in the 2016 budget included the 2 SUV’s for CID officers. Councilman Knight stated that he felt like that was understood. Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Jeffress to allow Police Chief to go forward with the purchase. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked for an update on the armory. Chief Cruce explained that stud walls are up and progress is being made each day. He invited the council to come and tour the building. Councilwoman Rodgers asked if the council would consider hiring a structural engineer to examine the building at 305-307 Main to determine the best options for the city.

Mr. Justin Reed spoke to the council concerning the city pool. He asked that the council work with CREST for options to keep the pool open. Mr. Powell Millard reiterated the desire for the city council to work with all available options to keep the pool operating.

Councilwoman Rodgers asked Fire Chief Bo Higginbotham about balances from 2014 billing. Chief Higginbotham explained that they have an aging report and continue to collect on those debts.

Motion by Councilwoman Rodgers, seconded by Councilman Knight to include a letter stating total benefit package for each city employee with W-2 forms. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Rowe to give permission to city clerk/treasurer’s office to pay the remainder of the 2015 bills and finalize 2015 budget. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mr. Kevin Cosby, 2707 Main Street, asked the council to consider passing a No Jake Brake ordinance. He stated that he lives on the south end of Main Street and as trucks approach the city limits they are extremely loud. Motion by councilman Knight, seconded by Councilwoman Rodgers to have City Attorney Hamilton prepare a “No Jake Brake” ordinance. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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