Crossett City Council met in regular session, December 15, 2014 at 6:00pm in the conference room of the Crossett Library.

Roll call vote was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Scott McCormick, City Attorney James Hamilton, Clerk/Treasurer Jesse Walthall

Councilmembers: Robert Wright, Candace Jeffress, Robert Freeman, Valerie Martin, CT Foster, and David Harbour

Absent: None

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

Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Harbour to approve the minutes of the

regular meeting of November 17, 2014. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilman Harbour, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the financial statements for November 2014. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor McCormick reminded the council that at the November meeting, there was a discussion concerning erection of a cell phone tower on private property which is owned by Doug Reed. The property is located on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive between Snap Fitness and Fiesta Linda Restaurant. Mayor McCormick opened the floor for comments from the audience. Mr. Guy Woloszyn asked if the school had been contacted about placing the tower on school property. Mayor McCormick stated that he has spoken to the school superintendant and she said they were against it. Mr. Woloszyn also asked the council if they feel that this is the best use of the property for the city.

Mayor introduced Mr. Randy Frazier, an attorney for Verizon. Councilwoman Martin asked if there were any other sites being considered. She also stated that the people she had spoken to were against the tower being located at this site. Mr. Frazier reinterated that the tower is necessary due to radio frequency design and broad band width being consumed by the smart phones and other forms of technology. He reminded the council that when this tower is complete it will offer infrastructure for the community and that two other carriers can make use of space available. Mr. Doug Reed, property owner, stated that he had issues at the beginning of the negotiations, but feels that all issues have been worked out. He also believes that the positive impact will overrule the negative. Mr. Jim von Tungeln, city planner for Urban Planning Associates informed the council of the Telecommunication Act of 1996, stating that federal law pre-empts local laws. The city must grant a location that meets the requirements of Verizon. Mr. von Tungeln said that the conditional use permit could make for specific requirements that would have to be met to keep property values intact. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Freeman to allow a conditional use permit for the said site. Roll call vote. Wright – abstained, Jeffess – yes, Freeman – yes, Martin – no, Foster – yes, Harbour – yes. Motion carried 4-1. Councilman Freeman asked that the council be made aware of the conditions before the permit is granted.

Mr. Cecil Ritter, chairman of the Crossett Water Commission, informed the council that the painting of the water towers has started and should be complete by the end of January Mr. Ritter also reminded the council of a proposed ordinance asking for a rate increase had been submitted. He explained that the product price will need to increase to stay up with the cost of inflation .

Mr. Howard Beatty, board president of the Crossett Economic Development Foundation, presented information to the council on behalf of Director Mike Smith. A copy of the statement is attached. Mr. Beatty is asking the council to extend the contract between the city of Crossett and the Crossett Economic Development Foundation. Councilman Harbour asked if it would be legal for the city to withhold sales tax funds adequate to cover the budget of the Crossett Municipal Airport. Harbour stated that he feels that the airport is vital to the economic development of the city. Councilman Freeman agreed that the airport expense should be the responsibility of the foundation. Mr. Dan Pevy, a member of the Crossett Port Authority and also Crossett Economic Development Foundation, stated that the city of Crossett no longer has to fund Crossett Port Authority. This is due to the expansions that have been attributed to the CEDF. He added that hopefully, if positive things happen for the airport, they can become self-sustaining. Mr. Larry Cantley, director of Crossett Parks and Recreations, stated that all departments of the city have been asked to cut back to bare bones and feels that the council should look closely at this contract and see where cuts can be made in this area as well.

Motion by Councilman Harbour to table the signing of this contract until more information can be gathered. Hearing no second, the motion died.

Ms. Rebecca Ledbetter, mayor’s secretary, asked specifically about salaries for the director and secretary. Around 50% of the sales tax money collected is spent on salaries and benefits for the 2 positions. Councilwoman Jeffress asked how their salaries compare to others in this field. Mr. Beatty stated that he had requested this information from Mr. Smith, but it was not received before meeting time. Ms. Lynn Rodgers, council-elect and former member of Crossett Economic Development Foundation, added that there are 13 economic development directors in the state of Arkansas and salaries range from $101,000 up to $150,000 annually. She added that the reason the foundation needs to receive the entire ¼ of 1% sales tax is that it needs to maintain reserve funds. She explained that when Georgia-Pacific was in discussions of bringing the Diamond Project to our local mill, they needed $100,000 for training which the foundation was able to give. Mayor McCormick said that it has been several years since he has signed a contract with the foundation. Mr. Beatty denied this. City Attorney Hamilton added that he has not prepared a contract in at least the past 3 years. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to have city attorney Hamilton prepare a contract as in the past. Roll call vote. Wright – yes, Jeffress – yes, Freeman – yes, Martin – yes, Foster – yes, Harbour – no. Motion passed 5-1.

Mayor McCormick asked the council to approve the appointment of Beverly Gammel to the Crossett Water Commission to fill the term of Mary Jo Jones. Motion by Councilman Wright, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to approve the appointment. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion carried.

Mayor McCormick presented a proposed ordinance to designate Crossett Police Department as the department primarily responsible for the collection of court fines. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, to have City Attorney Hamilton read the proposed ordinance for the first reading in its entirety. Motion was seconded by Councilman Harbour. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read Proposed Ordinance 2014-9. Motion by Councilwoman Jeffress, seconded by Councilman Wright to suspend the 3-day reading rule and read the proposed ordinance for the second reading by title only. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilman Wright, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to further suspend the rule and read by title only for the 3rd and final reading. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Hamilton read by title only. Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to adopt Ordinance 2014-9. Roll call vote. All vote yes and Ordinance is adopted.

Mayor McCormick introduced Titus Warren to the council. Titus is an eighth grade student at Crossett Middle School who is very interested in city government. Mr. Warren has aspirations of being president of the United States in 2035. He brought cake and punch for the council to enjoy after the meeting.

Mayor informed the council that the cost of health insurance the city has provided employees is going up by 16%. The city is forced to change carriers from United Healthcare River Valley to Arkansas Municipal League.

Ms. Celeste Harris inquired about speed limit and 4-way stop signs at 6th Avenue and Kentucky Street. Mayor said signs are ordered and should be up soon.

Mayor McCormick called for executive session.

Mayor McCormick called the meeting back to order. A personnel issue was discussed, but no decision was made.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned.

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