Crossett City Council met in regular session on September 16, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Crystal Marshall

Councilmembers: Dan Pevy, Kerstin Mondragon, James Knight, CT Foster

Absent: Clerk/Treasurer Clark Terrell, City Attorney Tyler Mills and Councilwoman Sheila Phillips

Mayor Marshall opened the meeting with prayer and pledge of allegiance led by Madacina and Marlee Robles.

Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Pevy to approve the minutes of the August meetings. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Motion by Councilman Knight, seconded by Councilman Foster to approve the August financial statements. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall updated on several projects:

* EC Crossett Youth Center grant project (Phase 2) is underway. Flooring is complete, working on plumbing and HVAC this week.
* Auditorium HVAC Phase 2 specs and design is complete and submitted to the granting agency. CEDF is paying the match on this phase of the project.
* Director of Public Works Jeff Harrison stated that the East Crossett Sewer Project is 84% complete. Target date for completion is November 26th.

Mayor updated the group on the city website. The CGI videos are complete and the website is nearing launch. This website will have links to Crossett Parks & Recreation, Crossett Water Commission, Crossett Economic Development Foundation and others. It will have city codes, minutes and financials for the city. It will also feature a place where citizens can report a concern. Completion is near and once kinks are worked out, the page will be activated.

Mayor Marshall updated on the traffic light at Hwy 82/Main. This is the light that was taken out by the 18-wheeler accident several months ago. The original settlement with the insurance company didn’t include the foundation and an additional $8,000 was requested. City Attorney Mills is working with the insurance company to secure that funding.

Mayor announced that the Mayor’s Youth Council for 2024/2025 had more applicants than expected. They will have to limit the number of interviews as they can only have 13 participants. Interviewees will be chosen by teacher referrals, GPA and completion of application.

Mayor Marshall presented the 2022 Audit for the City of Crossett. There were no reportable findings, but there is a note included about the check that was intercepted in the US mail. The City of Crossett was not the only victim of this and police reports were filed. CenturyNext Bank did repay the check so the city was not out any funds.

Mayor Marshall introduced SRO Robert Black. Officer Black requested that the city consider allowing Crossett School District to use the city repeater for district-wide radioes. This will be at no expense to the city. The school district will be on a complete different frequency and this will not interfere with any Crossett Police Department operations. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Pevy to allow the Crossett School District to use the city repeater. Roll call vote. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall presented a proposed resolution for a grant application for ambulance lifts including 5 cots, 5 chairs and 2 compressive arm CPR machines. Fire Chief Leroy Higginbotham explained the need for this equipment on ambulance runs. The total of the grant application is $350,000 and is 100% funded by the granting agency. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Pevy to have Mayor Marshall read the proposed resolution. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Mayor Marshall read proposed resolution. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Pevy to adopt Resolution R-2024-4. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed and resolution was adopted.

Mayor Marshall added that another provision of the grant is to host a public hearing to identify and prioritize community needs. This public meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18 at 4:00 at the CEDF building.

Mayor Marshall informed the council that she and Grant Writer Hali McNeice have been searching for grants for the city building at 307 Main. The ADEQ is working with the city to identify contaminates in the building. They will apply for an EPA grant up to $4 million to remove those contaminates. Mayor Marshall added that for the grant application there has to be a clear idea of what the building will be used for. She stated she is interested in moving the court room and council chambers back to that building. She added that she would also like to move the City Hall there, and eventually move the Police Station back to that location. She asked the council and public to consider other ideas and feel free to bring any suggestions.

Mayor Marshall updated the council on a zoning issue in Lakewood Subdivision. Recently a homeowner in purchased a building and is getting ready to start a home occupation. According to State Statute 14-1-106 the city cannot prohibit any home occupation, but can regulate it. She added that our current ordinance needs to be looked at and revised. It needs to be made clear and be something that can be enforced.

Doug Webb, a part of the organization that build the subdivision, acknowledged that there are a lot of gray areas in this ordinance. He added that there is a standing covenant for all residents of Lakewood. An ordinance was passed but it only accepts the property into the city. Legal determinations have been made and the city cannot enforce a covenant. Enforcement should be by the land developer. Marsha Scott, a neighbor, asked if the city ordinance prohibits home occupations to be outside the lived in home. According to state law, a residence means permanent dwelling unit or accessory structures. Jenny Allen, another neighborhood resident, added that she feels that the ordinance should be modified and clarified. There is a lot of the current ordinance left to interpretation. Dale Martinie agreed and added that it should be something that everyone understands and can follow. Connie Kelley added that when she purchased property in Lakewood, she had no idea there was a covenant. There was nothing attached to the deed, but she has since discovered that it is attached on the property description filed in the Ashley County Courthouse. Freddie Guin added that a precedent had been set and that city cannot supersede state law.

With no further comments, Mayor Marshall opened the floor to the council for other discussion. Hearing none, she opened to the audience.

Richard Welch mentioned that when defining the ordinance, it should include something about the portable car sheds.

Sarah Stagg added that it should be something best for the entire city and not just one neighborhood.

Charlotte Hollimon stated that the contractors working on the sewer expansion project had tore up the sidewalk on 5th Avenue. Jeff Harrison said that the contractor will be responsible for repairing everything they tear up. He added that it is on the punch list and if citizens see any more concerns, they should report them so that they can be addressed.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Clark Terrell, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor