Crossett City Council met in regular session on November 18, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Crossett Public Library.

Roll call was taken as follows:

Present: Mayor Crystal Marshall, Clerk/Treasurer Clark Terrell, City Attorney Tyler Mills

Councilmembers: Kerstin Mondragon, Chris Gill, James Knight, and CT Foster

Absent: Councilwoman Sheila Phillips

Mayor Marshall opened the meeting with prayer and pledge of allegiance led by Himena Martinez.

Motion by Councilman Foster, seconded by Councilman Pevy to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2024 meeting amending to show Councilman Chris Gill as absent. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

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

Mayor Marshall presented several project updates including:

* + Phase 2 of the Auditorium heat and air renovation was awarded to Mizell Heating & Air out of Dumas. Mayor asked for council’s approval to enter into the contract. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Knight to allow Mayor Marshall authority to execute the contract. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.
  + Crossett Wastewater project update was presented by DOPW Jeff Harrison. The project is 97% complete. There are about twenty-one services left to connect to the new system. Completion date is estimated to be around December 30, 2024.

* + Mayor Marshall stated that the insurance payment for the pole for the traffic light at Main and Hwy 82 has been received. Unfortunately, the pole fabrication will not be complete until March. They are expecting to have the pole installed and lights set around March 19, 2025.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to approve the renewal of the Crossett Economic Development Foundation contract. This is the same proposal as in the past. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Knight to approve the contract renewal. Roll call vote. Councilman Pevy abstained as he is a member of the CEDF board. Roll call vote. All others vote yes. Motion passed.

Mayor Marshall told the council about Retail Academy which she and Mike Smith (CEDF Director) were able to attend. There were only six communities invited to this meeting and were honored that Crossett was included. The Retail Academy aids cities in networking & marketing strategies in recruiting small businesses to the community. They presented a pamphlet with data specific to Crossett and the surrounding area. There is a trade show in Dallas in early 2025 that she and Mr. Smith will be attending to meet with investors and promote the City of Crossett as a potential site for future growth.

Mayor Marshall asked the council to approve the reappointment of Mary Jo Jones to the Crossett Water Commission board for another 8-year term. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Gill to approve the appointment.

Dianne Marter, Crossett Water Commission office manager, presented the financial statements for September 2024. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon, seconded by Councilman Gill to accept the reports. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Mrs. Marter also asked the council to consider a rate increase for the commission. In 2021, the commission had asked for a 2-tier rate increase. The council approved the first tier of the increase but asked the commission to come back to them before they approve the 2nd tier.

Mayor Marshall informed the council Arkansas Rural Water Association has performed a rate study which shows that Crossett Water Commission needs a substantial increase. Their proposal has the minimum user increase of over 100%. Act 605 was passed by the Arkansas Legislature which mandates that the city use the rates presented in their study by July, 2026. Mayor Marshall is concerned with the increase that this study shows and she has reached out to legislators to see if it is possible for the city to work to get to the same results without hitting the low/fixed income customers with such an increase. Mr. Greg Sivils, Crossett Water Commission Board Chairman, agrees that the increase presented was not feasible for city customers. He added that their commission is asking for a 20% increase. He stated that this year’s expenses included payment of a contract for painting the elevated tanks. He went on to say that this year’s expenses are up and water sales are down a bit. He is asking council to approve the 20% increase for now and see what happens with the Act 605 proposal. Motion by Councilwoman Mondragon seconded by Councilman Gill to have City Attorney work with Crossett Water Commission to come up with a rate ordinance proposal that will get to a 20% overall increase. Roll call vote. All vote yes. Motion passed.

Councilman Gill asked Chairman Sivils what was causing all the water leaks around town. Dry ground, settling foundations and aging infrastructure are the major causes. The crew works on them as quickly as possible.

Mayor Marshall opened the floor for questions or comments. Mrs. Charlotte Hollimon about the air release valve at the corner of 5th & Main Street. Mr. Jeff Harrison stated that the valve is to release carbon build-up in the sewer lines. There was a temporary fence erected around the valve, but was not acceptable. They are working on having carbon cannisters built to help with the odor discharge. Fence will be rebuilt around the canisters.

Mrs. Hollimon also inquired about the alleys between 5th & 6th Avenues. Mr. Harrison answered that these alleys have been repeatedly patched, but to fix the problem will have to have a major repave. He asked that for now the residents continue to inform the city of the holes and allow us to patch as needed until a permanent solution can be reached.

Mayor Marshall announced that SRO Officer Robert Black has been named as Ashley County Police Officer of the Year. A presentation will be made by the Attorney General in December.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Clark Terrell, Clerk/Treasurer Crystal Marshall, Mayor