

MINUTES OF THE CROCKETT CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 5th DAY OF AUGUST 2024 IN THE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 200 NORTH FIFTH IN THE CITY OF CROCKETT, HOUSTON COUNTY TEXAS AT 7:24 P.M.

THE COUNCIL MET IN REGULAR SESSION WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS PRESENT: IANTHIA FISHER, DENNIS IVEY, DARRELL JONES, NATRENIA HICKS, AND ELBERT JOHNSON. CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: CITY ADMINISTRATOR JOHN ANGERSTEIN, CITY SECRETARY MITZI STEFKA, ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR LEE STANDLEY, AND POLICE CHIEF CLAYTON SMITH. MIKE MARSH WAS NOT PRESENT.

OPEN MEETING WITH INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Mayor Fisher called the regular session open; Council member Ivey gave the invocation, and all joined in the pledge.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mayor Fisher recognized all visitors present.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE OR COUNCIL *(At this time, anyone will be allowed to speak on City related matters only; no personnel matters or matters under litigation will be allowed. The length of time may not exceed three minutes. NO Council discussion or action may take place on a matter until such matter has been placed on an agenda and posted in accordance with law.)*

- Scott Sheley – Council should work closely together and follow proper parliamentary procedures.
- Sam James – Expressed gratitude for EDC board approval of new business.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. GOV.CODE 551.071: CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY REGARDING JAMES GENTRY LAWSUIT

Mayor Fisher stated Council would convene into Executive Session per Gov. Code 551.071 - Consultation with Attorney Regarding James Gentry Lawsuit.
Time was 7:28 P.M.

Mayor Fisher reconvened the meeting into open session. Time was 7:51 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. REGULAR SESSION: JULY 9, 2024, AND JULY 15, 2024

Council member Ivey made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 9, 2024 Regular session and the July 15, 2024 Regular session. Council member Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

BUSINESS

3. FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Angerstein introduced Sonny Rollo from the Houston County Water Control and Improvement District #1 to justify their request for a rate increase pertaining to cost of drinking water that the district provides to the City of Crockett. Mr. Rollo explained that the 4% rate increase was needed to help cover rising expenses and that the water control district has been running at a deficit for the past nine months due to inflation and a shrinking customer base. Mr. Rollo gave examples of other local water districts that charge more for treated and untreated water and mentioned previous instances when the water district had financially assisted the city. He also warned against canceling our contract and relying solely on well water due to the risk of falling water tables as more and more wells were drilled. Mr. Rollo mentioned the current contract and said the water district's attorney disagreed with the city attorney's opinion that the contract was revocable. Mr. Angerstein explained that municipal water contracts require a public vote and there was no public vote when the contract was drawn up years ago. As a result, this contract is unenforceable. The current draft budget includes the 4% increase as a city expense without passing the cost to our residents. Sonny Hubbard with Piney Woods Sanitation also spoke to council about a 3% rate increase in garbage collection fees. The current contract with Piney Woods stipulates that a 3% increase can be levied annually. Mr. Hubbard explained that rising costs of diesel fuel and dumping fees require them to ask for this increase to help cover their increased expenses. Council member Jones asked why Piney Woods had stopped putting two people on the residential truck to empty the garbage bins. J.D. Vance, manager of the Crockett facility, explained that the single worker on the truck was able to do the job by himself and the second person wasn't needed. Mr. Angerstein informed council that the Houston County Appraisal District had provided certified values for property taxes. After approving a proposed tax rate later tonight, the draft budget will be available for public review. Notice of a public hearing on the tax rate has been posted and will be held on August 19, 2024. The tax rate and budget will be voted upon by council at that meeting, as well. Mr. Angerstein explained the average value of homesteads in the taxing district had increased from \$74,501 in 2023 to \$91,353 in 2024. As a result of this increase, we must lower our tax rate to stay within the 3.5% 'new revenue' cap mandated by the Texas legislature. Our current tax rate is 0.6813/\$100. Based on the new certified values, the No New Revenue rate would be 0.6306/\$100, the Voter Approval Rate would be 0.6537/\$100 and the De Minimus Rate would be 0.7630/\$100. Mr. Angerstein presented the draft budget and explained that it funded the same services as the previous budget with the additional costs of a 3% COLA for all city employees, animal control officer and animal shelter operational expenses, new utility clerk and promotion of current utility clerk, 30% increase in street construction budget, addition of one new firefighter and 1.5% increase in garbage collection rates. This budget is based on the Voter Approval rate. If council decides to adopt the No New Revenue rate, approximately \$91,000 will have to be cut out of the draft budget. Council member Hicks expressed concern about how the city determined whether city employees were eligible for COLA increases and expressed her desire to postpone discussion on animal shelter expenses until the next budget year. She also expressed her desire to eliminate security cameras at city facilities from the capital expense items. Mayor Fisher discussed the importance of COLA for city employees and

the need for adequate animal control services to protect the citizens. Police Chief Smith urged the council to fund the animal control shelter for public safety reasons, citing several recent incidents involving aggressive dogs attacking citizens and his officers. Mrs. Hicks enquired about funding for the proposed city swimming pool.

4. CONSIDER AND APPROVE PROPOSED TAX RATE

Council member Ivey made a motion to approve the No New Revenue tax rate (\$0.6306/\$100). Council member Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

5. CONSIDER AND APPROVE BID FOR NORTH WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT CLARIFIER SAND BLASTING AND COATING

Mr. Angerstein explained the urgent need for this repair to the clarifier. Council member Ivey made a motion to approve bids from J Wyers Protective Coatings, Inc and Environmental Improvements, Inc for North Wastewater Treatment Plant clarifier sandblasting and coating with funding coming from Utility Reserves; the Grant Reimbursement Resolution will reimburse the Utility Reserves. Council member Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

6. CONSIDER AND APPROVE REMOVING PAID ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE STATUS OF CROCKETT ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Council member Hicks made a motion to approve removing paid administrative leave status of Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation executive assistant and laterally transfer the employee to the City of Crockett as a city employee in a department with similar job duties to be nominated by the City Administrator and approved by city council. Council member Jones seconded the motion. During discussion, Mr. Angerstein and Mayor Fisher warned council that the motion as stated was illegal. Motion fails 2-3. Council members Ivey and Johnson voted against it, and Mayor Fisher broke the tie with a vote against. Council member Johnson made a motion to approve removing administrative leave status of Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation Executive Assistant. Council member Ivey seconded the motion. Motion passes 3-2. Council members Jones and Hicks voted against, and Mayor Fisher broke the tie with an affirmative vote.

7. CONSIDER AND APPROVE 2024-2025 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET FOR THE CROCKETT ECONOMIC & INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Council member Johnson made a motion to approve the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget for the Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation. Council member Hicks seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

8. CONSIDER AND APPROVE PAYMENT OF INVOICES FROM CROCKETT ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Council member Hicks made a motion to approve payment of invoices from Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation. Council member Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

Council member Hicks made a motion to hold a special called meeting on Monday, August 12, 2024 to consider agenda items related to procedures for placing items on the council agenda, the number of council meetings per month, a decorum policy for public comments, removal/appointment of CEIDC board members, and relocation of CEIDC offices. Council member Jones seconded the motion. Motion fails 2-3. Council members Ivey and Johnson voted against, and Mayor Fisher broke the tie with a vote against.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, Mayor Fisher adjourned the meeting at 10:02 P.M.

Dr. Ianthia Fisher, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mitzi Stefka, City Secretary