

MINUTES OF THE CROCKETT CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 21st DAY OF APRIL 2025 IN THE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS, LOCATED AT 200 NORTH FIFTH IN THE CITY OF CROCKETT, HOUSTON COUNTY TEXAS AT 6:00 P.M.

THE COUNCIL MET IN REGULAR SESSION WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS PRESENT: IANTHIA FISHER, DENNIS IVEY, NATRIENIA HICKS, ELBERT JOHNSON & MIKE MARSH. CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT: CITY ADMINISTRATOR JOHN ANGERSTEIN, CITY SECRETARY MITZI STEFKA, ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR LEE STANDLEY, POLICE CHIEF CLAYTON SMITH, AND FIRE CHIEF JASON FRIZZEL. DARRELL JONES WAS ABSENT.

OPEN MEETING WITH INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Mayor Fisher called the formal session open and Council member Ivey gave the invocation. 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.)*

- Mayor Fisher – Expressed her gratitude to the community for the Easter festivities.
- City Administrator Angerstein – Reminded the public that early voting for the May election begins tomorrow, April 22, 2025 and announced that the 2024 Consumer Water Quality Report is available to review.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. REGULAR SESSION: April 7, 2025

Council member Ivey made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2025 regular session. Council member Hicks seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

REPORTS

2. POLICE DEPARTMENT MANPOWER & CRIMINAL INCIDENT REPORT FOR MARCH 2025

Chief Smith reported for the month of March 2025: 16 total manpower, 2,905 total manpower hours, 412 total calls and 11 total accidents. A breakdown of the criminal report is included in the packet.

Chief Smith read the following statement concerning the Crockett Economic & Industrial Development Corporation investigation:

In April 2021, the Crockett Police Department received a criminal complaint from a member of the Crockett City Council. The complaint was based on findings from a forensic audit conducted by Axley & Rode, LLP.

Due to the complexity of the allegations, I initially consulted with the Texas Rangers. Following that discussion, it was recommended that I contact the Office of the Texas Attorney General, which maintains a specialized division focused on financial and white-collar crimes.

In my formal request to the Attorney General's Office, I specifically asked that they assume primary responsibility for the investigation. The financial nature and scale of the allegations require resources and expertise beyond the capabilities of our department. Given our limited staffing, undertaking an investigation of this scope would have placed considerable strain on our administrative personnel. Additionally, such an in-depth financial investigation was unprecedented for a department of our size.

During discussions with the Attorney General's Office, I was informed that the Houston County District Attorney's Office had also submitted a request for an investigation into the same matter. On May 3, 2021, I submitted our department's request to the Attorney General. Several days later, I was contacted by an investigator from their office and informed that a criminal investigation had been officially opened.

Several months later, upon completion of their investigation, the Attorney General's Office turned their findings over to the Houston County District Attorney's Office for presentation to a Houston County Grand Jury.

Concurrently, the City of Crockett retained the firm Weaver & Tidwell to conduct a forensic audit of the Crockett Economic and Industrial Development Corporation (CEIDC). The audit was completed and submitted to the city on January 5, 2023. During a City Council meeting held on January 9, 2023, a motion was passed to temporarily suspend all activities of the CEIDC. As part of the motion, the Police Department was directed to open an investigation into the audit's findings, identify any responsible parties, and request external support if necessary.

That same evening, the Crockett Police Department opened a preliminary investigation. The following day, I notified the Attorney General's Office investigator of the new request by the City Council and the findings of the Weaver & Tidwell audit. During that conversation, we discussed the potential for the Attorney General's Office to take the lead, given their prior involvement and the likelihood of overlapping evidence.

On January 11, 2023, I met with the Houston County District Attorney to discuss the newly completed forensic audit and the possibility of the Attorney General's Office assuming both investigative and prosecutorial responsibilities. It was agreed that the District Attorney's Office would formally request the Attorney General to oversee prosecution related to both the initial and subsequent investigations into CEIDC.

On April 19, 2023, the Attorney General's Office confirmed that they would assume prosecutorial duties for the CEIDC case previously submitted by the Houston County District Attorney. It was also determined that their office would obtain a copy of the Weaver & Tidwell audit, as well as any related documents or evidence collected by the Crockett Police Department, and would handle the investigation initiated by the January 9, 2023, City Council request.

At around that same time, we met with agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to discuss potential federal violations that may have occurred. We also provided them with a copy of the forensic audit for their review. Shortly thereafter, I was informed that the FBI would not be opening a case. Instead, any potential violations identified would be referred to the Attorney General's Office for further consideration.

In May 2024, I was informed that the Attorney General's Office had concluded its investigation. I was also notified that the assigned prosecutor had declined to present the case to a grand jury. No specific reasoning was provided beyond the prosecutor's determination that the case would not proceed to grand jury review. To my knowledge, as of the date of this statement, the case has not been formally closed by the Attorney General's Office.

Regarding comments and concerns expressed indicating corruption, political pressure, and incompetence, related to the Crockett Police Department and or the City of Crockett. Everyone has the right to their own opinions and beliefs which I respect. It is my considered opinion that a larger agency, possessing no political affiliations and staffed with personnel highly specialized in financial crime investigations, would be far better equipped to conduct a comprehensive and impartial inquiry.

Once that decision is made and acted upon, control over the outcome is no longer within our hands. If the result of that decision later becomes unpopular, I cannot and will not undermine or contradict the determination of the agency I requested assistance from. Seeking to overturn their findings or reopen the same investigation solely in pursuit of a different outcome constitutes what is commonly referred to as lawfare. It is to be expected that some will agree with the decisions made, while others may disagree, and that is their right.

At this time, we are unable to provide any additional information to preserve the integrity of ongoing criminal investigations and active civil litigation.

As many of you are aware, I maintain an open-door policy and welcome the opportunity to engage in constructive conversation with any member of our community.

Chief Clayton W. Smith

3. FIRE DEPARTMENT MONTHLY ACTIVITY & STATUS REPORT FOR MARCH 2025

Chief Frizzell reported for the month of March 2025 the following: 31 calls. A breakdown is included in the packet.

Council member Hicks asked Chief Frizzell if he could provide a report that showed which precinct the calls came from. Chief Frizzell responded that with the current software used he would not be able to, but he is hoping for an upgrade in next year's budget.

BUSINESS

4. AWARD BID: SEWER REPAIR AT E. HOUSTON AVENUE AND S. GRACE STREET TO BE PAID WITH FUNDING FROM UTILITY FUND RESERVES, IF NECESSARY

Mr. Angerstein explained to council the segment of sewer line replacement is 250 feet of 8-inch sewer line, 2 manholes and 7 service lines. He also noted that this expense qualifies for exemptions to the competitive bidding requirement, (Sec. 252.022) Four bids were requested and received:

Crockett Construction: \$49,800

Ramrod Utilities: \$49,990

Terry Black Construction: \$69,500

Duplicchain Contractors: \$96,464

Mayor Pro Tem Marsh made a motion to award the bid for sewer repair at East Houston Avenue and South Grace Street to Crockett Construction to be paid with funding from Utility Fund Reserves, if necessary. Council member Ivey seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, Mayor Fisher adjourned the meeting at 6:26 P.M.

Dr. Ianthia Fisher, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mitzi Stefka, City Secretary