

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**November 19, 2018**

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Stephanie Saavedra, City Clerk, took roll call. Members present at roll call were: Mayor Ravi Bhasker, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Deborah Dean, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Anton Salome, Councilor Michael Olguin, Councilor Toby Jaramillo and Councilor Peter Romero. Councilor Gordy Hicks was absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 19, 2018 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

**a. November 5, 2018**

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Jay Armijo, the Executive Director of the South Central Council of Governments, introduced Gwen Valentino who will be doing grant research for the Socorro County area. Ms. Valentino stated that the City Administration can send her potential projects and she will seek grant funds for the projects. Ms. Valentino stated that she has already visited with Donald Monette, City Administrator, and reviewed the projects on the City's ICIP. Mayor Bhasker stated that there should be some sort of process for submitting requests so as not to inundate Ms. Valentino with requests. Mayor Bhasker stated that the process should include how entities submit a request and how to track and prioritize those requests.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Councilor Romero for organizing the Veteran's Day ceremony on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

Bill Stone, the NM Tech liaison, stated that NM Tech is making an effort to recruit graduate students from Mexico and South America. Mr. Stone stated that NM Tech already has a program in place for students who have attended college in China and wish to attend NM Tech to earn additional degrees. Mr. Stone stated that students have shown an interest in having an off-leash dog park. Mr. Stone stated that NM Tech has identified possible locations (on campus) for the dog park. Mr. Stone stated that there would be two areas – one for small dogs and one for large dogs. Mr. Stone stated that financing for the project is being considered and that NM Tech may ask the City to assist with financial support and maintenance of the park.

**DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

**a. Request for Vacation of I Street, a Portion of Mississippi Avenue and a Portion of Colorado Avenue – Betty Houston - Discussion**

Betty Houston, a local realtor, stated that she has a potential buyer for 14 acres of land located in the vicinity of Mississippi Avenue, Colorado Avenue and I Street (south of Tractor Supply). Mayor Bhasker stated that the person already owns the land. Mayor Bhasker stated that the owner is requesting that the City vacate the easements surrounding the land. Mayor Bhasker stated that the easements are for streets that could be built by the City but that the City has no intention of building said streets. Ms. Houston stated that owner is planning a commercial venture. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City's attorney has recommended that these requests for vacation be considered on a case by case basis and in this particular case, he feels that the vacation would allow a new business to come to Socorro. Councilor Salome stated that he feels the City needs to carefully consider

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giving public land away. Mayor Bhasker stated, in response, that the land itself does not belong to the City. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City merely has the right to build and maintain streets in that area and that the City cannot afford to do that. Mayor Bhasker stated that if the City vacates the easements, the property owner is responsible for that parcel of land. Mayor Bhasker stated that the situation may be different if there were an existing street there but there is not currently a street there. Some discussion followed. Mayor Bhasker asked that there be a resolution regarding the vacation on the next agenda which states the City will release the easements upon commercial development of the property which must be complete within 5 years.

**b. Potential Participation in City of Albuquerque et al v. NM Taxation and Revenue**

**Department - Discussion**

Jerry Armijo, the City's attorney, stated that the City of Albuquerque (as well as Artesia, Farmington and Moriarty) has filed a lawsuit against the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department regarding the alleged improper way NM Tax and Rev handles refunds to gross receipts tax payers. Mr. Armijo stated that the improper handling of accounting by NM Tax and Rev has caused municipalities to suffer. Mr. Armijo stated that NM Tax and Rev will not share their accounting information regarding how they collect and disburse and now that this lawsuit has been filed, NM Tax and Rev will have to disclose that information. Mr. Armijo stated that there is one law firm representing all of the interested entities and attorney's fees will be on a contingency basis based on the amount of recovery. Mr. Armijo stated that attorney's fees may include witness fees, deposition fees and accounting fees. Mr. Armijo stated that the fees would be 10-15%, which he feels is reasonable, and will be prorated among the entities involved. Mr. Armijo stated that he feels the City should join the lawsuit.

Councilor Jaramillo made a motion to include the City of Socorro in the lawsuit. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Natural Gas Safety Information**

Isacc Angel, Gas Department Superintendent, stated that the Gas Department recently mailed out a brochure to utility customers titled "Living Safely with Natural Gas". Mr. Angel stated that if residents have concerns, the City will do an inspection free of charge. Mr. Angel stated that customers should not stuff rags or any other items in the return air vent. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City is required to mail out this brochure annually. Joe Gonzales, Fire Chief, reminded residents to clean their woodstoves and fireplaces. Chief Gonzales stated that the Fire Department will do woodstove inspections free of charge.

**d. Local Election Act Information**

Mayor Bhasker continued the discussion from the last Council meeting regarding the Local Election Act. Ms. Saavedra stated that she feels the City should not opt in. Ms. Saavedra stated that the municipal election process is when City staff gets to know the candidates and teach them things about City operations. Ms. Saavedra stated that by opting out, voters will get a ballot with just municipal candidates on them, whereas, opting in could mean the municipal candidates get lost on a ballot with several other elective offices. Ms. Saavedra stated that she feels the City should maintain control of their elections. Ms. Saavedra stated that for the next election cycle, an opt-in ordinance would need to be sent to the Secretary of State by January 31, 2019. Councilor Dean asked about costs. Ms. Saavedra stated that if the City opts in, the assessment fee would be approximately \$1,500 annually. Ms. Saavedra stated that last election cycle, the City spent approximately \$12,000 on supplies and poll workers. Election turnout numbers were discussed.

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Mayor Bhasker suggested that at the next City Council meeting, both the ordinance to opt in and the resolution to opt out be presented and the City Council can decide which option to choose.

**e. Proposal of New Monthly Council Meeting Times – First Meeting of Month @ Noon and Second Meeting of Month at 6:00 p.m.**

Mayor Bhasker asked if any of the Councilors would be interested in having one noon meeting a month and one 6:00 p.m. meeting a month. Councilor Romero stated that the 6:00 p.m. meetings seem to have more attendance than the noon meetings.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilor Salome stated that the Senior Center Board would like to thank the voters for passing the bond which will enable the center to fix the roof and update their kitchen supplies. Councilor Salome invited everyone to the Senior Center Thanksgiving dinner on November 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:00 a.m. Councilor Salome stated that the first Senior Center bingo will be on January 11<sup>th</sup> at the Teen Center.

**DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Isacc Angel, Gas Department Superintendent, stated that training and evaluations are ongoing for Gas Department employees. Mr. Angel stated that the department is switching regulators in order to increase gas pressures. Mr. Angel stated that one of the employees, Rene Perez, is busy working on the annual survey. Mr. Angel stated that crews pulled 29 illegal meters.

Mike Winders, Police Chief, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Police Department stats from October 2018. Chief Winders stated that there is still an active Silver Alert for a gentleman who is missing in Socorro. Chief Winders stated that the Police Department will hand out toys during the Christmas Parade.

Jim Dewey Brown, Tourism and Events Manager, provided the Mayor and Council with new Tourism Department “swag” bags to showcase some of their new items. Mr. Brown stated that the Christmas Parade would be held December 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Brown stated that other events on December 1<sup>st</sup> include the Fire Department matanza, Santa Claus visits and the luminaria stroll.

Cindy Rivera, Recreation Director, stated that turkey bingo was well attended. Ms. Rivera thanked all of the merchants who donated items for turkey bingo. Ms. Rivera stated that next week, her department will start decorating in the Plaza. Ms. Rivera stated that youth basketball will be starting soon. Ms. Rivera stated that the new gym floor is finished and it is very nice. Ms. Rivera stated that she would like to have an open house at Finley Gym in January. Councilor Jaramillo thanked the City and Ms. Rivera for the food donations (collected during the turkey bingo event) for his annual food drive.

Lupe Tarango, Dispatch & Animal Control Director, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Animal Control, Burglary and Traffic Accident stats from October 2018. Mr. Tarango stated that Animal Control has started issuing citations. Mr. Tarango stated that the new animal control ordinance is in the process of being adopted.

Chelsea Lyons, Library Director, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of circulation stats from FY 19. Ms. Lyons stated that the library continues to hand out books for the Reading is Fundamental Program and preparations are underway for the winter reading program. Ms. Lyons stated that with the retirement of Candice Smith, there will be some interdepartmental job changes. Ms. Lyons reviewed the library’s grants and donations. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to reappoint William Stone and Penny Lommen to

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the Library Board. Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Mayor Bhasker's appointment of William Stone and Penny Lommen to the Library Board. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

Ruby Lopez, Finance Officer, stated that she had been working with auditors on FY 17-18. Ms. Lopez stated that she recently attended a conference to get updates on the State's reporting system. Ms. Lopez stated that both payroll and accounts payable have started using "positive pay" to prevent any fraudulent checks from being cashed.

Lloyd Martinez, Utilities Division Director, stated that the Parks Department has been busy pruning shrubs, picking up leaves and will assist Cindy's crew with the decorations in the Plaza. Mr. Martinez stated that the Water Department has been removing concrete from the National Guard parking lot, doing new water connections and repairing water leaks. Mr. Martinez stated that the Production Department has been performing maintenance on the lift stations and winterizing storm pumps. Mr. Martinez stated that the Wastewater Department has been doing routine maintenance including work on the effluent panel and the sensors. Mr. Martinez stated that the Special Projects crew has been working on the medians.

Polo Pineda, IT Director, reviewed the budget for the CDBG project. Mr. Pineda stated that the City received three bids for the power supplier. Mr. Pineda stated that bids would be received November 20<sup>th</sup> for commercial dumpsters. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City's attorney would be submitting a protest about the SEC's proposed rate increase.

Michael Lucero, Sanitation, Landfill and Recycling Superintendent, stated that operations are normal in the Sanitation, Recycling and Landfill departments. Mr. Lucero stated that cardboard continues to be picked up from local businesses. Mr. Lucero stated that all equipment is up and running. Mr. Lucero reminded everyone that regular trash pickup continues on all holidays.

Mayor Bhasker stated that Tom Stidstone and Damian Ortega are doing a good job in the Auto Maintenance Department and have been using software to track maintenance and updates. Mayor Bhasker stated that the airport will be getting a new electrical vault. Mayor Bhasker stated that the airport may get a new sweeper and a parallel runway. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Transportation Department has been busy and continues to run a shuttle to the Railrunner in Belen. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Transportation Department will be getting a new van but that there have been some problems with the natural gas vans.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**a. Library Board Appointments**

See the report from the Library Director above.

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**b. Personnel Changes**

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the personnel changes as read by Mayor Bhasker:

Marcos Chavez - 11-17-18 – Police - Resignation

Damian Ortega - 11-22-18 - Auto Maintenance - Completed Probation - A-35 to A-37

Tiara Jojola - 12-1-18 – Library - New Hire\*(Circulation Assistant) - A-16

Violet Alvarado - 11-19-18 – Library - Transfer to Circulation Manager - J-21 to J-22

Carol Hale - 11-19-18 – Library - Transfer to Technical Services/Cataloguer - L-24 to L-26

Maribel Tarango - 11-19-18 – Library - Transfer to Children’s Assistant - D-19 to D-20

Temporary New Hires: Rena Benavidez, Veronica Boyd, Dwight Dow, Joe Lopez

Temporary Renewals: Elias Jacquez, Paul Foulenfont, Jerry Griego, David Chavez, Tiara Jojola, Deekota Chavez, Eva Chavez, Mariah Jaramillo, Dustin Armijo, Matthew Lopez, Alexis Montoya, Taylor Saavedra, Jeremiah Gonzales, Zach Anaya, Enrique Robles

Student Workers: Lucas Madril, Erica Baca, Darrian Greenwood, Ashlyn Aguilar

Referees (2)

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Business Registrations**

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the business registrations as read by Mayor Bhasker:

Edward Jones – Out of Town – Ruidoso, NM – Corporation – Door to Door Sales/Investments & Financial Advisor

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Voucher Run**

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve vouchers 145902 to 146177 in the amount of \$678,912.72 plus Payroll Transfers (\$293,394.87), for a total of \$972,307.56. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**e. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held on Monday, December 3, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Road).

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:24 p.m., Councilor Fleming motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

**THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation**

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/s/  
**Ravi Bhasker, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

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/s/  
**Stephanie Saavedra, City Clerk**