

**City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**July 8, 2019**

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 Anton Salome, Councilor Michael Olguin, Councilor Peter Romero and Councilor Deborah Dean. Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Toby Jaramillo and Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez were absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF JULY 8, 2019 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

**a. June 17, 2019**

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

**b. July 1, 2019**

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

**PUBLIC FORUM**

**a. Beta Sigma Phi**

Rosie Tripp and Keri Penner brought the Mayor and Council gift bags from the Beta Sigma Phi NM State Convention and thanked the City for co-sponsoring the event with Lodger's Tax funds. Ms. Tripp stated that 140 members attended the event from all over the state. Ms. Tripp stated that there are 45 members in Socorro. Ms. Tripp stated that Beta Sigma Phi is involved in many service projects with past projects including sponsorship of the neonatal unit at Socorro General Hospital, purchasing the first set of playground equipment that Sedillo Park ever had and providing local scholarships for high school seniors. Mayor Bhasker and the City Council thanked Ms. Tripp and Ms. Penner for attending the meeting and providing the gift bags.

Jimmy Capps, Director of Communications from the Socorro Electric Cooperative, presented a letter to the Mayor and City Council. Mr. Capps read the letter which requests that members of the City Council meet with members of the SEC board to discuss the City developing a municipal electric utility. Mayor Bhasker stated that he had attended a meeting of the SEC board, was given only 4 to 5 minutes to speak and the board had no comments on what he had spoken about. Mayor Bhasker stated that he is unsure why the SEC has chosen to communicate now and fears it may be to undermine the progression the City has made in providing lower electricity rates. Mr. Capps stated that the SEC has tried to communicate in the past. Mayor Bhasker disagreed and further stated that this request was presented during public forum and that action cannot be taken during public forum. Mayor Bhasker stated that he wished a member of the SEC board would have come to make the request. Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Capps for attending the meeting.

Tom Aldrich asked how the residents in the Socorro County would be impacted should the City provide a municipal electric utility. Mayor Bhasker stated that presently, the City has no leverage outside of the City limits. Mayor Bhasker stated that inside the City limits, the SEC has their lines on City property and has a month to month franchise agreement. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City would like to start in the Industrial Park corridor and work towards expanding City and possibly County-wide. Mayor Bhasker

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stated that the City already operates municipal gas and water utilities and may have to hire a 3rd party for maintenance and operations of an electric utility. Mayor Bhasker stated that SEC may have to raise their rates if the City takes 20% of their business. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Industrial Park corridor will take a year to set up. Mayor Bhasker stated that the SEC may go bankrupt and dissolve and their contracts will be null and void. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City's contract for electricity would be good for at least 7 years. Mayor Bhasker stated that the SEC was originally formed for a good reason but that those same reasons no longer apply today.

Mr. Aldrich stated that he would still like to see the State Police office (located next to Eagle Picher which is a designated superfund site) relocated.

Cheri Lerew stated that there will be an EPA Community Information Meeting on August 8, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. Ms. Lerew provided a handout regarding the meeting. Ms. Lerew asked if the City would be willing to put the information regarding the meeting in the City utility bills to which Mayor Bhasker responded yes. Ms. Lerew provided extra handouts to have at City Hall and stated that she will also be placing posters around Socorro.

**FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES – APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION ONLY**

**a. Ordinance No. 19-07-08 – Loan Agreement for Convention Center**

Ruby Lopez, Finance Officer, presented Ordinance No. 19-07-08 which, if approved, authorizes a loan agreement between the City of Socorro and the New Mexico Finance Authority for the purpose of designing, constructing, installing, equipping and improving the convention center. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that the 20 year loan is for \$1,064,799 and that the NMFA looked at the City's convention center fee and is lending the City what the City can afford to borrow. Councilor Olguin asked if the convention center fee will ever be stopped. Mayor Bhasker stated that it could be lowered or stopped in the future. Ms. Lopez stated that it may be needed for maintenance of the building. Councilor Olguin asked if the hotels are aware of the fee. Ms. Lopez stated that all hotels had been notified and given new reporting books. Mr. Monette stated that the first process for the building will have to be asbestos removal.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the ordinance is on the agenda for approval for publication only.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 19-07-08 for publication only. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

**a. Sun Zia Power Line Presentation – Gina Dellorusso**

Sandra Knowle, a member of the Citizens for the Rio Grande and Migratory Birds, stood in for Gina Dellorusso who was unable to attend the meeting. Through a power point presentation, Ms. Knowle explained that the Sun Zia Transmission Project, a 520 mile long, 500 kilovolt transmission line, will cross the Rio Grande in Escondida in an area that is a migratory bird flyway. Ms. Knowle stated that the natural areas and viewscapes and the economic value they generate through tourism needs to be protected. Ms. Knowle stated that since Sun Zia is unwilling to look at alternative crossings that are less disruptive, the group would like Sun Zia to bury the lines at the Escondida Rio Grande crossing. Ms. Knowle stated that negative impacts could include migratory bird mortalities (of over 350 different species of birds), funding grants could be lost and the film industry may become uninterested in the landscapes. Ms. Knowle stated that the power lines could have a negative effect on tourism. Ms. Knowle stated that the State of NM is planning on creating a

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Rio Grande Trail parallel to the river from the Sevilleta NWR to the Bosque del Apache NWR which could be affected. Ms. Knowle asked that the Mayor and Socorro City Council use their influence to let other elected officials know about the group's concerns. Councilor Romero asked what the resistance is to burying the lines to which Ms. Knowle replied "the cost" for the 2.2 miles of line. Mayor Bhasker asked about the status of Sun Zia's permit. Ms. Knowle stated that the permit had been denied by the PRC and they had not refiled their application yet. Mayor Bhasker asked if the group had contacted Senator Heinrich. Ms. Knowle stated that they had already met and toured the area of concern. One of the group's members stated that the group would like to see more supplemental environmental work done as the original environmental impact statement is incomplete and outdated. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to see the matter looked at more closely. Councilor Salome asked about endangered species laws. Ms. Knowle stated that the migratory bird act has lost some "teeth" over the years but not many of the species migrating here are endangered. Ms. Knowle stated that the group has spoken to some legislators and would also like to speak with the Governor, the Public Lands Commission and NM Game and Fish. Mayor Bhasker stated that if the group provides the City with a plan of action, the City will assist in any way it can as the crossing is not within the City but the negative impact will be felt in the City. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City could partner with the County on the issue. Ms. Knowle stated that they have also made the presentation to Socorro County.

**b. Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08a – Wastewater Collection Line Improvements**

Chris Muirhead, bond counsel for the City, presented Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08a which, if approved, allows the City to move forward with financing for improvements to the City's wastewater collection lines. Mr. Muirhead stated that the resolution is part of a list of conditions provided by USDA. Mr. Muirhead stated that the resolution is similar to the bond ordinance which will be presented to the City Council at a later date. Mr. Muirhead stated that the lender does have the ability to require a municipality to raise rates if the debt cannot be covered. Mayor Bhasker stated that the rates have already been increased to cover the loan.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08a. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08b – Improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant**

Mr. Muirhead presented Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08b which, if approved, allows the City to move forward with financing for improvements to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The discussion in "b" above is the same for this resolution.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Loan Resolution No. 19-07-08b. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**d. RFP Award – Long-Term Wholesale Power Supply, Scheduling Services & Project Capital Financing**

This item was postponed from the May 20, 2019 City Council meeting.

Mayor Bhasker stated that no City funds will be expended by approving this RFP award. Mayor Bhasker stated that Guzman Energy will bear the costs and wrap them into the loan after the engineering report is complete and the cost of electricity has been determined.

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Ed Reyes, an independent consultant for the City, stated that the project will be completed in two phases: 1) financing (engineering, legal fees, etc.) and 2) financing for the construction of the station and line to the service area.

Councilor Romero made a motion to award the RFP for Long-Term Wholesale Power Supply, Scheduling Services & Project Capital Financing to Guzman Energy. The motion was seconded by Councilor Salome. A roll call vote was taken: Those in favor were Councilor Dean, Councilor Salome and Councilor Romero. Those against were Councilor Olguin. Motion passed.

Mr. Reyes stated that the next step will be to develop a contract between the City and Guzman Energy which will come back to the City Council for approval. Mr. Reyes stated that the loan will start out as a bridge loan and eventually become a NM Finance Authority loan. Mayor Bhasker stated that if the SEC wants to raise rates because of this, they will have to follow the same process with the PRC that they are going through now. Mayor Bhasker stated that Tri-State could still look at Socorro and offer a lower rate like they did in Gallup, NM.

**e. RFP Award – Broadband Design and Deployment**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City did an RFP for broadband and has been able to find a company that can provide wireless transmission of wifi with the same speed as fiber at a lower cost. Mayor Bhasker stated that Sacred Wind has worked with USDA in providing communities with a reconnect grant for broadband. Mayor Bhasker stated that the company has asked that the City fund a \$45,000 feasibility study using the reconnect grant. Mayor Bhasker stated that the system works using a direct line of sight so a tower will need to be placed in a high location. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Council could award the RFP with the contingency that the City will not put up the funds for the feasibility study and will seek a grant to cover the funds for the study. Councilor Olguin asked why Sacred Wind cannot do this on their own. Mayor Bhasker stated that Sacred Wind feels the City will be the vehicle through which the City can get the reconnect grant. Councilor Olguin stated that he wants to make sure the City is not violating any franchise agreements. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City is not asking Century Link to leave but to be competitive. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City would have to negotiate terms with Sacred Wind. Mayor Bhasker stated that there has been frustration about internet speeds for over 10 years and now the City has a chance to get a grant from USDA to solve the problem. Mr. Monette stated that if the City pays the \$45,000, Sacred Wind will use it as a credit against whatever business model the City chooses. Councilor Olguin asked what the project would consist of to which Mayor Bhasker replied the City would have to connect to their switch, put up a tower and the purchase the equipment. Mayor Bhasker stated that the RFP has to be awarded before the City can negotiate any terms. Mayor Bhasker stated that the feasibility study will show what Sacred Wind can offer and whether their speed is faster than the current internet speeds in Socorro. Councilor Olguin asked if there has to be an RFP in order to do the feasibility study. Mayor Bhasker stated that USDA requires one from the ISP partner. Mayor Bhasker stated that the request was sent to TDS and they were not interested. Mayor Bhasker stated that Sacred Wind has 10 years of putting wireless internet in remote areas. Mr. Monette stated that Sacred Wind would release the fiber into a tower in Socorro and the tower would send wireless internet to homes and businesses.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to award the RFP for broadband design and deployment to Sacred Wind. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

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**f. Resolution No. 19-07-08c – South Central Council of Governments Participation for FY 19-20**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 19-07-08c which, if approved, would allow the City to participate in the South Central Council of Governments for FY 19-20. Mayor Bhasker stated that the grant writer provided by the SCCOG has been very helpful to the City.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approved Resolution No. 19-07-08c. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**g. City of Socorro Infrastructure Capital Improvements Plan (ICIP) – Public Input**

Councilor Salome made a motion to go into public session. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Monette stated that the City is currently working on its ICIP and asked anyone who would like a project added to the ICIP to present their information to the City for consideration. Councilor Olguin asked if there had been any responses from the public. Mr. Monette stated that the request had only just recently been sent to residents with their utility bills.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to go back into regular session. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**h. Resolution No. 19-07-08d – Resolution to Open Bank Account with State of NM Treasury**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 19-07-08d which, if approved, would allow the City to open a bank account with the State of New Mexico Local Short-Term Investment Fund. Ms. Lopez stated that originally the City was going to use Wells Fargo but this account has a better rate and is easier to access than a CD.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 19-07-08d. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**i. Budget Resolutions**

**1. No. 17 – Rodeo Arena/Convention Center Fund**

Resources are Transfer from Revolving Loan – Amount is \$60,000 – The transfers are needed to cover FY 19 expenses with anticipated reimbursement in FY 2020.

**2. No. 18 – Rodeo Arena Fund**

Resources are Transfer from General Fund – Requirements are Telephone & Utilities – Amount is \$10,000 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures.

**3. No. 19 – Lodger’s Tax Fund**

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance Available – Requirements are Other Administrative Expenses & ADV-> Miles/Other – Amount is \$20,000 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures to June 30, 2019.

**4. No. 20 – Joint Enterprise Fund – Solid Waste Department**

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance Available – Requirements are Vehicle Fuel, Vehicle Maintenance & Governmental GRT – Amount is \$35,000 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures to June 30, 2019.

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**5. No. 21 – Joint Enterprise Fund – Fiber Optic Department**

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance Available – Requirements are Repairs & System Maintenance – Amount is \$8,000 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures to June 30, 2019.

**6. No. 22 – Special Utility Replacement Fund**

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance Available – Requirements are Other Administrative Expenses – Amount is \$42,254.18 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures to June 30, 2019.

**7. No. 23 – Landfill Fund**

Resources are Scraper Loan Proceeds – Requirements are Capital Outlay & NMFA Administrative Fee – Amount is \$294,519.33 – The increase is needed to allow for the purchase of the tractor-scraper loan requirement.

**8. No. 24 – Municipal Street Fund**

Resources are Transfer from General Fund – Requirements are Vehicle Maintenance – Amount is \$25,000 – The increase is needed to allow for expenditures to June 30, 2019.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Budget Resolutions 17 through 24. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Councilor Dean asked if the City could get a committee together to discuss Finley Gym and how it can be used for the community. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City received \$100,000 to be used to upgrade the bathrooms and hire an engineer/architect to recommend how to upgrade the facility. Mayor Bhasker stated that a group of people from outside the City Administration had met to discuss how to use Finley Gym. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City owns the building and the City Council ultimately makes the decisions regarding how the facility is used. Mayor Bhasker stated that it would be best for people to talk to the City Administration to see how the City plans to use Finley Gym. Mayor Bhasker stated that residents should familiarize themselves with how State appropriations work and come to a City Council meeting with suggestions for use of the facility. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has Finley Gym on the ICIP. Mayor Bhasker stated that there may even be parts of the building the City knocks down because they can't be used. Councilor Salome stated that he attended the meeting about Finley Gym and it was mainly a planning meeting. Councilor Salome stated that the people in the meeting are trying to find ways to support kids in what could hopefully be a multigenerational place. Councilor Salome stated that the library supplies a lot of what the people wanted. Councilor Salome stated the group also discussed uses for other buildings and economic development. Mayor Bhasker stated that the best way to find out about City facilities is to ask City staff.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

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**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**a. Reporting on Personnel Changes**

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

Ignacio Chavez - 7-5-19 – Dispatch - Resignation

Brandee Beachy - 6-13-19 - Animal Shelter - Resignation

Felipe Romero - 7-1-19 – Tourism - Permanent Part-Time to Permanent Full-Time Office Manager  
- B-25 to B-30

Tiara Jojola - 6-1-19 – Library - Completed Probation - A-16 to A-18

Joe Lopez - 7-8-19 – Production - New Hire\*(Technician I) - A-19

Ricky Silva - 8-1-19 – Fire - New Hire\*(FF/EMT Recruit) - A-27

Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

**b. Business Registrations**

None.

**c. Next City Council Meeting Announcement**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting will be held on Monday, July 22, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:30 p.m., Councilor Olguin motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

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

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ravi Bhasker, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

/s/

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**Stephanie Saavedra, City Clerk**