

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
October 7, 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 Nick Fleming, Councilor Peter Romero, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez and Councilor Deborah Dean. Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Michael Olguin and Councilor Toby Jaramillo were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 7, 2019 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. September 16, 2019

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

PUBLIC FORUM

a. Glen Duggins – The Great NM Chile Taste-Off

Glen Duggins, County Commissioner and local chile farmer, attended the meeting along with his neighbors Cathy and James Martin.

Councilor Michael Olguin arrived.

Mr. Duggins stated that the Great NM Chile Taste-Off was a great event. Mr. Duggins thanked everyone who helped put the event together including Jim Dewey Brown, Mike Alderete, James Chavez and Felipe Romero from the Tourism/Rodeo Department. Mr. Duggins thanked Cathy and James Martin for organizing the fireworks and for making the large red and green chilis. Mr. Duggins also thanked all the local residents and businesses who provided items/services for the event. Ms. Martin thanked Mr. Duggins for getting the event to Socorro. Ms. Martin also thanked everyone who assisted with the fireworks. Ms. Martin stated that she is excited for the 2nd annual event next year. Mayor Bhasker also complimented City staff and stated that Bueno Chile, the gentleman who owns Dion's and the Lieutenant Governor also attended the event. Mayor Bhasker stated that it was nice to show people what Socorro has to offer. Mayor Bhasker stated that next year, the event may add a carnival, a rodeo and a performer. Mayor Bhasker stated that another possibility is to combine the chile taste-off, Socorrifest and the Pow Wow into one event. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would eventually like to have a Central NM State Fair in Socorro. Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Duggins and the Martin's for attending the meeting.

b. Glen Bell – DAI – Parks & Soccer Fields Fertilizer

Glen Bell, from Drought Adaptation Industries (DAI), stated that the company has been in business for 24 years and is based out of Tularosa, NM. Mr. Bell provided a handout of a power point presentation. DAI offers Natural Way Pellets and Primordial Powder for grass, bushes, trees medians, parks and ball fields. Mr. Bell stated that during the first year of application, water usage will be cut by 33%. Mr. Bell stated that the product can be distributed by using equipment the City already has and that the product is safe for people, the environment, pets and wildlife. Mr. Bell stated that DAI hires New Mexicans and buys New Mexico products. Mr. Bell thanked the Mayor and City Council for their time.

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Mike Winders, Police Chief, introduced Sergeant Carrejo and Officer Winders, with the New Mexico State Police, who attended the meeting.

Luisa Lopez, of the NM Downwinders, invited everyone to a candlelight vigil to be held on October 26, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Plaza. Ms. Lopez stated that the vigil is to recognize the negative health suffered by people of New Mexico from the blast at Trinity Site. Ms. Lopez also stated that there was a Nevada test site and documents show that New Mexico was completely covered by fall out from that blast. Ms. Lopez stated that the original blast took place on Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Day in the Catholic Church. Ms. Lopez stated that the church recognizes this day by singing a special song. Mayor Bhasker stated that in New Mexico Magazine, people are being directed to the Alamogordo gate. Mayor Bhasker asked Felipe Romero, from the Tourism Department, to contact the magazine and let them know that the site is closer to the San Antonio gate than it is to the Alamogordo gate. Mayor Bhasker thanked Ms. Lopez for attending the meeting.

Leanne Lynch, a local resident, requested that speed bumps be placed on Padilla Street as there are no sidewalks and people are driving very fast on the street. Mayor Bhasker stated that he will contact the Street Superintendent with the request and also have the Police Department do a study on the street. Mayor Bhasker stated that the cost of a speed bump is between \$600 and \$1,200.

Bill Stone, the NM Tech liaison, stated that NM Tech is halfway through the first semester and all is well. Mr. Stone stated that the 49er's parade will be held in a few weeks and the theme this year is "Steam Punk". Mr. Stone stated that the State approved NM Tech's alternative licensure program and the school is now hiring educators for the program. Mr. Stone stated that NM Tech received two "Center for Excellence" awards from the NM Legislature in cybersecurity and entrepreneurship. Mr. Stone stated that upcoming building renovations include Brown Hall, Jones Hall and one of the dorm buildings.

Felipe Romero, from the Tourism Department, stated that Socorrofest was a great event and well-attended. Mr. Romero stated that there were 10 food vendors, 15 arts & crafts vendors and 3 wineries. Mr. Romero stated that the bands were great. Mr. Romero thanked everyone who helped with the event.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Quit Claim Deed – Leyla Gallegos

Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that there is a portion of 4th Street that has never been developed or maintained by the City. Mr. Monette stated that the property owner next to this land has asked the City to abandon the property so that she can install a security fence around the property. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels that if a property owned by the City is undeveloped and not needed by the City, the City should vacate the property if there is an interested party who will use and maintain the property. Councilor Salome stated that he feels real property is an asset to the City and it is a slippery slope to abandon property. Mr. Salome stated that the City should be the one who decides to abandon property rather than people asking the City to abandon City property. Mr. Salome stated that there should be a special fiscal reason to abandon property to a private individual. Mr. Salome stated that if the property has value, he feels the City should be compensated for the value. Councilor Olguin asked if there had been an appraisal to which Mr. Monette replied no and that this way of vacating land has been done for many years. Councilor Salome stated that the City has a right to sell property. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City should reflect on the people that live here. Mayor Bhasker stated that a different process would make sense in a large city but in small towns, where the property is undeveloped and unmaintained by the City, the process is different. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels it is appropriate to look at each request

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on a case by case basis rather than add a lot of bureaucracy. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City can do it the way Councilor Salome suggested – have all of the City land appraised and let the City Council pick which land to vacate – if that is what the City Council chooses. Councilor Salome clearly stated “that’s not what I said”. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels in order to facilitate these matters, an interested party can request that the City vacate land. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that if the City does a process one way, the City should make sure all other processes are done the same way. Mayor Bhasker stated that there should be a valid reason to say no to such a request. Mayor Bhasker stated that there also has to be research into whether or not anyone needs access to the land for easements or other utility maintenance. Mayor Bhasker stated that the last time the City said no to a request was because the City needed access to the property for a project. Councilor Salome stated that the property must cost the City more to maintain than the value of the property. Mr. Monette stated that there have been times when the interested party does get an appraisal and in one instance, the appraisal came back with a value that required the City to put the asset out for bid. Councilor Salome stated that property is a long-term asset. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that she is familiar with this area and that homeless people, who sleep there at night, do frequent that area. Councilor Olguin asked if the City was responsible for the homeless people and if yes, then there would be a cost to the City for maintaining the land. Mayor Bhasker reiterated that he feels the process should be that someone makes a request of the City, the requestor gets a survey done, the City looks into what it may need or not need the property for and the City Council makes the final decision.

Councilor Salome made a motion to postpone the vote for this matter. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

b. Bid Award – Finley Gym ADA Men’s & Women’s Restrooms

Polo Pineda, IT Director, stated that four bids for the construction of ADA men’s and women’s restrooms at Finley Gym were opened on September 25, 2019. Mr. Pineda stated that he is recommending that the bid be awarded to TFC Construction.

Councilor Salome made a motion to award the bid for the construction of ADA men’s and women’s restrooms at Finley Gym to TFC Construction. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

c. Bid Award – Water Parts

Mr. Pineda stated that bids for water parts were opened on September 12, 2019. Mr. Pineda recommended that the bids be awarded to:

Water & Sewer Line Pipe – Baker Utility Supply
Repair Clamps & Couplings – Baker Utility Supply
Brass Fittings – Baker Utility Supply
Meters – Baker Utility Supply
Meter Setters – Baker Utility Supply
Water Fittings – Baker Utility Supply
Fire Hydrants – Baker Utility Supply & Core & Main
Sewer Fittings & Supplies – Baker Utility Supply

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Mr. Pineda stated that water parts go out for bid every 6 months. Mr. Pineda stated that the full dollar amounts of the bid will not be expended but rather only the parts that are actually needed will be ordered.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to award the bid to the vendors listed above. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

d. Cost of Living Changes in the City of Socorro

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has, in the past, increased utility rates. Mayor Bhasker stated that the last rate increase was to help cover the cost of an ongoing \$25 million sewer line replacement project. Mayor Bhasker stated that Socorro County recently increased their gross receipts tax by .125%. Mayor Bhasker stated that this will make the City's gross receipts tax 7.5625% of which the County gets 1% and the City gets 2.66%. Mayor Bhasker stated that he attended a County Commission meeting and asked what would be funded by their increase. Mayor Bhasker stated that he was told it was for an animal control officer and a code enforcement officer. Mayor Bhasker stated that the County had not yet created an animal control ordinance or approached the City about taking in their animals. Mayor Bhasker stated that the County's GRT increase ordinance states that the monies will go into their general fund for general purposes. Mayor Bhasker questioned what the County Commission is doing for the City itself with their share of the gross receipts tax. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City can still increase the City's gross receipts tax by .6125% and has chosen not to raise taxes. Mayor Bhasker stated that the County has maxed out their gross receipts tax and property tax. Mayor Bhasker stated that his question about what the County is doing for the City was unanswered. Mayor Bhasker stated that the County should have approached the City regarding animal control and code enforcement to see how the two entities could work together.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the Socorro Electric Cooperative lost their battle for rate increases with the Public Regulation Commission and is now taking their case to the Supreme Court. Mayor Bhasker stated that the lawyers for the SEC are going to need to be paid and that the members will end up paying the cost.

e. Budget Resolutions

1. No. 4 - Convention Center Fund

Resources are NMFA Loan Proceeds (\$1,000,000) – Requirements are NMFA Pymts-Principal, NMFA Interest, NMFA Admin Fee, NMFA Debt Service Fee (\$48,140) – Request is needed in order to set up the new loan as per the Convention Center loan requirement.

2. No. 5 - Special Utility Replacement Fund

Resources are Transfer from Landfill Department – Requirements are Maintenance – Amount is \$85,000 – The transfer is needed to cover Compactor FY 20 maintenance expenses.

3. No. 6 – Convention Reserve Fund

Resources are Investment Income-Reserve, Reserve-Loan – Amount is \$53,135 – Request is needed in order to set up the new loan reserve as per the Convention Center loan requirement.

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Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Budget Resolutions 4, 5 and 6. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Salome stated that the Juvenile Justice Board has a lot of upcoming events including a fall festival, an escape room and a marshmallow bonfire. Councilor Salome stated that the JJB now has 10 subcontractors. Councilor Salome stated that the JJB has gone to a four-year funding cycle and received \$142,000 this year. Councilor Salome stated that the Maze of Life will be held October 23-24 in Magdalena. Councilor Salome stated that the SCCPE will hold a school board candidate forum on October 24th.

Ruby Lopez, Finance Officer, stated that the City will be receiving approximately \$8,000 per month for 24 months from internet sales tax.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has been meeting with attorneys regarding the lawsuit against the NM Taxation and Revenue Department for gross receipts revenues the City may not have received.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Romero stated that he received a call from Mr. Aguilar from A-1 Quality Redi-Mix who stated that he did not feel the City was giving his local business a fair chance. Mayor Bhasker stated that he also talked to Mr. Aguilar and explained that the City was piggy-backing on a project in Valencia County. Mayor Bhasker stated that it is a state bid with Albuquerque Asphalt. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City must follow all procurement policies. Mr. Monette stated that the City will save time and money by piggy-backing on a contract already awarded.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City did not receive funding for the CDBG project (Cuba Road). Mayor Bhasker stated that 80% of the awards were given to entities north of Albuquerque. Mayor Bhasker stated that \$750,000 was awarded to towns of less than 200 people (Elida, San Jon, Mosquero and Eagle Nest). Mayor Bhasker stated that the City was told there were not enough people on Cuba Road who would benefit from a project. Mayor Bhasker stated that he called Gary Whitehead, the Commissioner for our area, who stated he voted based on the staff recommendations. Mayor Bhasker stated that none of Commissioner Whitehead's communities were awarded any funds.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

Chris Rico - 10-1-19 – Police - Resignation

Zach Ortega - 9-29-19 – Fire - Resignation

Dustin Aldrich - 10-1-19 – Fire - New Hire*(FF/EMT) - I-41

Daniela Rivera - 10-7-19 - Animal Shelter - New Hire*(Kennel Assistant) - A-20

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Russell Rackey - 10-7-19 - Dispatch to Police - Transfer from Dispatcher to PD Administrative Asst. - B-22 to B-30

Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

Eze's Paint-Body & Auto Repair - Out of Town - Lemitar, NM - Ezequiel Rojas - Auto Repair
SmartSky Networks, LLC - C-1 - 834 Highway 60 – Corporation - Commercial Ground to Air Wifi
Rio Grande Valley Radio - C-1 - 830 Highway 60 - T. Reese Janca - Multimedia Internet Streaming Service

Enchanted Custom Homes - R-1 (Approved by P&Z) - 512 Hannah - Miguel Saavedra - Construction

V & R Painting - R-1 (Approved by P&Z) - 716 Sunset - Valente Silva - Painting/Handyman Business

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

c. Next City Council Meeting Announcement

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting will be held on Monday, October 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:37 p.m., Councilor Romero motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Stephanie Saavedra, City Clerk