

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
November 4, 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 Michael Olguin, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez and Councilor Gordy Hicks. Councilor Deborah Dean, Councilor Peter Romero and Councilor Toby Jaramillo were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 4, 2019 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. October 21, 2019

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

PUBLIC FORUM

Sara Demorest attended the meeting. Ms. Demorest previously applied for a City business registration. Approval of the business registration was postponed from the October 21, 2019 City Council meeting. Ms. Demorest stated that she teaches yoga classes and was at the meeting to answer any questions the Council may have. Mayor Bhasker explained that the location of the business was in question because the location is in "The Hub". Councilor Dean stated that the programs in The Hub are financed with grants funds and feels there could be a better place to have a for-profit business. Ms. Demorest stated that she makes donations to The Hub. Mayor Bhasker stated that the concern is the use of public funds, which the City is a fiscal agent for, being used for rent for a for-profit business. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to know the arrangements between The Hub and the business and if the option is open to all of the public. Mayor Bhasker asked if anyone had spoken to the Director of The Hub, Kirsten Kellar. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that he had spoken to Kirsten and she stated that it is part of The Hub's charter to provide a meeting place for the community. Mayor Bhasker stated that if The Hub charged a small amount for rent the situation would be okay. Mayor Bhasker asked that Kirsten be contacted the next day to answer more questions. Mr. Monette stated that City staff would read the grants and see if the situation is allowed.

Bill Stone, the NM Tech liaison, stated that NM Tech received a \$93 million grant from the Air Force to be used in the area of cybersecurity. Mr. Stone stated that the funds will be used over 7 years and will be used in Playas and on main campus. Mr. Stone stated that since enrollment has been slightly down the last couple of years, NM Tech is working on a program with surrounding states to make tuition more affordable. Mr. Stone stated that there will be a meeting regarding NM Tech's strategic plan on November 8th. Mayor Bhasker stated that Dr. and Mrs. Wells have been very helpful in community projects.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Fairgrounds Road/Rodeo Road Land Swap

Mr. Monette stated that in order to complete the next phase of the Fairgrounds Road Improvement Project, the City will need to exchange property on Fairgrounds Road/Rodeo Road with the Bursum Family Trust. Mr. Monette stated that this has been done in the past when the City has needed property to complete a project. Mr. Monette stated that this process does not typically come to the City Council but for transparency, the Administration is presenting the matter for approval.

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
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November 4, 2019

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the exchange of property on Fairgrounds Road/Rodeo Road with the Bursum Family Trust. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

b. Leyla Gallegos – 4th Street Vacation Update

Mr. Monette stated that Ordinance No. SA-8-99, which was approved on December 9, 1966, stated that the portion of property to be vacated to GC Kroggel is identified as “All of Fourth Street located between Blocks 24 and 32 of the New Mexico Town Company Addition and bounded on the south by the north right of way line of Manzanares Avenue and on the north by the south right of way line of Abeytia Avenue”. Mr. Monette stated that a survey done in 1989 shows that the street had previously been vacated. Mr. Monette stated that Leyla Gallegos had asked the City to do a quitclaim deed to show that the City has no interest in the property. Mr. Monette stated that doing this would leave Mrs. Gallegos to do all of the title work. Councilor Salome stated that he is still unsure about doing a quitclaim deed which states that the City has no interest in the property. Mayor Bhasker stated that Jerry Armijo, the City’s attorney, had attended the meeting to discuss public streets and answer any questions. Mr. Armijo stated that all City streets originated from being private land. Mr. Armijo stated that years ago, a plat and a survey were done, a developer would designate a public street and the plat would then be filed in the County Clerk’s office. Mr. Armijo stated that some of those streets were never improved. Mr. Armijo stated that today, these streets are either: 1) being used and maintained 2) were used in the past but are no longer used today 3) platted but never built at all. Mr. Armijo stated that the City has two options: 1) continue to recognize a public street or 2) vacate the property. Mr. Armijo stated that there is not an option to sell and there is not an option to put a billboard on the property. Mr. Armijo stated that the only use for the property is a public street. Mr. Armijo stated that in this situation, there is a 2-step process: 1) make a determination that the property is not needed for a public street 2) issue a quitclaim deed or conveyance title for the property. Mr. Armijo stated that the property in question was vacated in the 60’s to GC Kroggel but it seems that the paperwork that needed to be filed at the County Clerk’s office was not filed. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City is attempting to finish what was not completed in the 60’s and that is a quitclaim deed filed with the County showing the City vacated the property. Some discussion followed.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the quitclaim deed. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Olguin asked about the process that was discussed previously regarding making a final determination for a piece of property. Mr. Monette stated that he is working on creating a process. Councilor Salome stated that the statute says that a formal determination must be made. Councilor Salome stated that the process should have objective criteria that is used and should transcend the City Council. Councilor Salome stated that when people ask about vacating property, the City should be able to just provide a form with the process. Councilor Salome stated that the process should be one that can be used by future City Councils. Mayor Bhasker stated that if someone has a piece of property with an unused street next to it, it would seem that the property would become theirs (or shared if there is another property owner adjacent to the property). Councilor Salome asked about the formal determination. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels the City should accommodate those requests. Councilor Salome stated that the process is for the City Administration to provide a formal determination to the City Council and then the City Council votes. Councilor Salome stated that if the process happens any other way, it is the Administration making the decision and the statute says the City Council should decide. Councilor Hicks stated that if the land was given to the City for a street, the land must be used for that purpose and nothing

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
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November 4, 2019

else. Mr. Monette stated that as City Administrator, he would never keep anything from the City Council. Mayor Bhasker stated that he is on the side of the public and would most likely approve these requests. Councilor Salome stated that he feels it is the City's job to protect public assets.

c. City of Socorro Cash Handling Policy and Procedures

Ruby Lopez, Finance Officer, presented the newly-created City of Socorro Cash Handling Policy & Procedures. Ms. Lopez stated that the City's auditors have recommended that the City have this in place. Ms. Lopez stated that this policy applies to all City departments.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the City of Socorro's Cash Handling Policy and Procedures. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

d. Municipal Liquor License Application Forms

Jim Dewey Brown, Tourism Director & Events Manager, stated that the City is looking into acquiring the City's own municipal liquor license for the rodeo arena. Mr. Brown stated that part of the process is the Mayor and City Council completing the personal affidavit forms located in their packet. Mayor Bhasker stated that NM Tech and many other municipalities have their own liquor license. Mayor Bhasker stated that he does not feel the City is gaining much by using a 3rd party vendor. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City is open to hearing concerns and comments from the public regarding a municipal liquor license. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Administration will be asking its liability insurance carrier what the City's coverage would be. Councilor Dean asked what the City was thinking as far as staff. Mr. Brown stated that some City employees have a server's license or we can contract with an outside server. Ms. Dean stated that security for events also has to have a server's license. Councilor Olguin asked if this was due to the City not getting enough from the 3rd party vendor to which Mayor Bhasker replied yes. Councilor Olguin asked about concession at the arena to which Mr. Brown replied the City will be exploring opening the concessions to all vendors with a structured cost. Mayor Bhasker stated that the arena is three years old and City staff are still learning how everything works. Some discussion followed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Administration will be meeting with individuals from NM True this month who would like to be a part of the Annual Chile Taste-Off event. Mayor Bhasker stated that he still feels the Annual Chile Taste-Off could be combined with other events such as Socorrofest, the Pow Wow and a carnival. Mayor Bhasker stated that it could become a two or three day event.

Lloyd Martinez, Division Director, stated that there was recently a public meeting about what programs Socorro residents would like to see at Finley Gym. Mr. Martinez stated that the attendees were shown three possible remodels of Finley Gym and most seemed to prefer the model that included additional parking. Mr. Martinez stated that the City Council will ultimately decide how to best utilize Finley Gym. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that she would like to see programs for special needs children. Mayor Bhasker stated that he presented the remodel of the facility to Gary Whitehead, the City's CDBG liaison, who can assist the City in making this a CDBG project. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Police Department needs a more secure facility and the City could get a special gross receipts tax specifically for police use. Mayor Bhasker stated that there is a state statute that allows a municipality to dissolve a municipal court but the City would like to see what the public thinks before exploring that option. Mayor Bhasker stated that many more public hearings will occur before any decisions are made.

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
November 4, 2019

Mr. Martinez stated that one lane of traffic is currently closed on Bullock Avenue while crews replace water lines. Mr. Martinez stated that two lanes of traffic will have to be closed when the sewer lines are replaced. Mr. Martinez stated that City crews began demolition on the convention center and are also planting trees on Grefco Road and Enterprise Road.

Mayor Bhasker stated that Senator Ramos will be visiting Socorro on November 5th and will be touring various City projects around Socorro. Mayor Bhasker stated that Representative Armstrong will be visiting Socorro on November 6th.

Councilor Salome stated that the NM Downwinders held a very nice candlelight vigil on October 26th and the group organizers once again thanked the City for supporting the cause. Mayor Bhasker stated that there will be a speaker at NM Tech on November 6th to discuss Trinity Site.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

Jorge Sedillo - 10-21-19 – Landfill - Landfill Certification - B-24 to B-26

Alma Leon - 10-31-19 – Dispatch - Resignation

Jeriana Contreras - 11-4-19 - Animal Shelter - New Hire*(Kennel Assistant) - A-20

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Administration will speak to Kirsten Kellar regarding the business registration for Sara Demorest. Mayor Bhasker stated that he thinks it would be fine to grant Ms. Demorest a business registration.

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

Rebecca Lukens - C-2 - 110 Park Street - Rebecca Lukens - Property Management

Sara Demorest - Postponed from Last Mtg. - C-2 - 101 Manzanares - Sara Demorest - Yoga Teacher

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

c. Next City Council Meeting Announcement

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting will be held on Monday, November 18, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
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ADJOURNMENT

At 7:10 p.m., Councilor Hicks 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