

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 16, 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 Deborah Dean, Councilor Anton Salome, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Peter Romero and Councilor Nick Fleming. Councilor Toby Jaramillo, Councilor Gordy Hicks and Councilor Michael Olguin were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Robo Rosies Lego League Team led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 16, 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. December 2, 2019

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

PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS

a. Retirement Plaque – Grace Castillo – Police Department

Mayor Bhasker congratulated City employee Grace Castillo on her retirement. Mayor Bhasker, the City Council and Police Chief Mike Winders thanked Ms. Castillo for her many years of hard work and dedication to the job. Ms. Castillo, along with her husband Rudy, was present to receive her plaque and thanked the Mayor and City Council.

b. Retirement Plaque – Jay Santillanes – Transportation Department

Mayor Bhasker congratulated City employee Jay Santillanes on his retirement. Mayor Bhasker and the City Council thanked Mr. Santillanes for his many years of hard work and dedication to the job. Mr. Santillanes was present to receive his plaque and thanked the Mayor and City Council.

PUBLIC FORUM

Beth Cadall, along with the members of the Robo Rosies First Lego League Team, attended the meeting. Ms. Cadall stated that the team recently won a trophy for project design which addresses the issue of trash outside the park by their school. Ms. Cadall thanked City employee Pat Silva for helping with the project. Ms. Cadall stated the team also won the global innovation award for their project. The team gave a presentation of their project (a robot that picks up trash, bags it in a trash bag and redeposits the bag on the ground to be put in the trash). Ms. Cadall stated that the team will participate in the State Championship meet in February. Mayor Bhasker and the City Council thanked the team for their presentation.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC) recently filed a declaratory injunction against the City of Socorro to demand the City cease and desist the City's movement towards becoming a municipal utility. Mayor Bhasker stated the injunction had many inaccuracies. Mayor Bhasker stated that there are documents showing that the City started work on an updated franchise agreement in 2012. Mayor Bhasker stated that there was correspondence back and forth between the City and the SEC. Mayor Bhasker stated that the SEC was invited to attend a Council meeting to discuss the franchise agreement and they never attended. Mayor Bhasker stated that there is a letter from himself to Joseph Herrera, the SEC manager, stating that the SEC is on a month to month agreement. Mayor Bhasker stated that he, as a user, would like to know how much the SEC's legal team is getting paid and whether or not the SEC is using their funds properly. Mayor Bhasker stated that as owner of a local hotel, SEC is doing a good job with

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reimbursements for LED lighting. Mayor Bhasker stated that while they are doing a good job with LED lighting reimbursements, his bill at the hotel is still \$10,000 per month. Mayor Bhasker stated that Nann Winter has been the City's attorney on this matter since 2012 when she was assisting the City in creating a new franchise agreement. Mayor Bhasker reiterated that the City has tried to work with the SEC but the SEC never responded to the City's request for meetings.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Final Audit – Southwest Accounting Solutions LLC – Robert Peixotto

Robert Peixotto, from Southwest Accounting Solutions, presented the City's FY 2019 audit to the Mayor and City Council. Mr. Peixotto stated that there are no findings for this audit year. Mr. Peixotto stated that City staff is doing a very good job. Mr. Peixotto stated that he is happy the City is upgrading their software because the City's current software is antiquated. Mr. Peixotto briefly reviewed portions of the audit with the Mayor and Council. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that due to the City changing the software, there is a possibility that the audit for FY 20 could be late. Mr. Peixotto stated that getting the new software set up properly is worth having a late audit. Mayor Bhasker and the City Council thanked Mr. Peixotto for attending the meeting.

b. Resolution No. 19-12-16 – Surplus Equipment

Mayor Bhasker stated the Mayor of Casas Grandes, Mexico has requested to purchase a sanitation truck that the City of Socorro owns and has not used in approximately 3 years. Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 19-12-16 which, if approved, deems the following as surplus equipment:

2002 International 4900 (Refuse Collection Truck) – VIN 1HTSDAAR02H532341

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will follow all State laws in moving forward with this request.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to approve Resolution No. 19-12-16. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

c. Budget Resolutions

1. No. 7 – General Fund – Police Department

Resources are Miscellaneous Police Grant (\$16,260.00) – Requirements are Capital Outlay – Amount is \$19,852.00 – The increase is needed for the grant award and to allow for capital outlay.

2. No. 8 – General Fund

Resources are GRT (Internet) – Requirements are Other Administrative Fees (GRT) – Amount is \$85,000.00 – The increase is needed for internet distribution increase and to allow for GRT administrative fees.

3. No. 9 – General Fund – Transportation Department

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance – Requirements are Capital Outlay – Amount is \$8,000.00 – The increase is to allow for a capital outlay purchase in FY 20.

4. No. 10 – Joint Enterprise Fund – Solid Waste Department

Resources are Loan Proceeds & Investment Income – Amount is \$152,500.00 – The increase is needed for funds received and investment income.

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5. No. 11 – Convention Center Fund

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance & Investment Income – Requirements are Construction – Amount is \$1,367,384.50 – The increase is needed to allow for construction (FY 20 expenditures).

6. No. 12 – Street Improvement Fund

Resources are MAP Project – Amount is \$219,942.00 – The increase is needed for construction (FY 20 expenditures).

7. No. 13 – Joint Enterprise Fund – Landfill Department

Resources are Loan Pmt-Principal Scraper & Loan Pmt-Interest – Amount is \$60,000.00 – The increase is needed for the NMFA loan payment.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approved Budget Resolutions 7 through 13. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORTS

Jim Dewey Brown, Tourism & Rodeo Director, stated that he, along with Mayor Bhasker, James Chavez and Mike Alderete, recently traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada to accept the WPRA “Justin Boots Best Footing Award” won by the Socorro County Fair & Pro Rodeo held in the City’s rodeo arena. Mr. Brown provided a handout with pictures and a story about the award which will be in the newspaper. Mr. Brown stated that Socorro’s rodeo beat 25 other rodeos for the award. Mr. Brown also provided the 2020 events calendar for the rodeo and sports complex.

Mike Winders, Police Chief, provided a handout with Police Department stats from November 2019. Chief Winders stated that Officer Michael Chavez attended First Line Supervisor class. Chief Winders stated that the officers have also been doing a lot of in-house training.

Lupe Tarango, Dispatch and Animal Shelter Director, stated that one of the three dispatch radio terminals is down. Mr. Tarango stated that he has been looking into what grant funding is available to the City for upgrading the radios. Mayor Bhasker stated that the radios and dispatch equipment, which could cost anywhere from \$200,000 to \$400,000, is on the City’s ICIP. Mr. Tarango stated that he will be having a meeting with State personnel soon to discuss GIS mapping. Mr. Tarango stated that beginning December 1, 2019, calls for the Socorro County Sheriff’s Office will be dispatched out of District 4 in Las Cruces (rather than D5 in Albuquerque). Mr. Tarango stated that the City’s PSAP still answers the 911 call and then forwards it to Las Cruces for handling. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has discussed the County using the City’s dispatch but they have not been interested. Mr. Tarango stated that in regards to the animal shelter, there have been several transports in the last couple of weeks. Mr. Tarango stated that the new building for the shelter has been purchased and once the permits are received, it will be installed.

Chelsea Lyons, Library Director, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council. Ms. Lyons reviewed the handout. Library events include: Preschool Story & Craft Time, Battle of the Books, Teen Science Café, Adult Book Club, Family Yoga and the Winter Reading program.

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Jay Santillanes, Transportation Director, stated that he has been busy with training the employees who will take over his duties after retirement. Mr. Santillanes stated that the Transportation Department is advertising for a full-time driver but in the meantime, has hired a temporary driver. Mr. Santillanes stated that the next project at the airport will be a fog seal and paint on the main runway. Mr. Santillanes stated that the new sweeper for the airport should be delivered in March. Mr. Santillanes stated that everything in the Auto Maintenance Department is normal.

Councilor Dean asked if the Transportation Department had done a survey to find out the transportation needs of the community. Mr. Santillanes stated that due to short-staffing, the survey has not been done. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Administration has discussed cancelling the Magdalena route and possibly creating a fixed route. Mr. Santillanes stated that the on-demand system has been successful and that there would be some difficulties with a fixed route. Some discussion followed.

Demecio Silva, Street Superintendent, stated that his department has been working at the convention center preparing trenches for the electrical lines. Mr. Silva stated that the department has also been moving stored items from the convention center to a temporary building. Mr. Silva stated that he had spoken with someone from the Army Corps. of Engineers and that there will be some dirt work that has to be done on one of the bridges and along the old flood control. Mr. Silva stated that materials for pothole repairs were received and the crews will start making those repairs.

Isacc Angel, Gas Superintendent, stated that crews have been busy working on gas leak repairs, gas relocations and maintaining the regulator station. Mr. Angel stated that the crews have also been doing the annual maintenance on the odorizer. Mr. Angel stated that if needed, his department is happy to assist other departments in their free time.

Michael Lucero, Sanitation, Landfill & Recycling Department Director, stated that the current cell at the landfill is starting to fill up and work has started on the new cell. Mr. Lucero stated that other ongoing work includes baling tires, picking up cardboard, picking up litter and grinding tree limbs. Mr. Lucero stated that crews are putting dumpsters together in order to deliver and replace old dumpsters. Mr. Lucero reminded everyone that City crews still pick up trash on the holidays.

Polo Pineda, IT Director, stated that he is compiling a list of street lights that are out so anyone who sees a street light out should contact him. Mr. Pineda stated that if/when the NMDOT remodels the north entrance to Socorro, he would like to discuss the lighting issues in that area. Mayor Bhasker suggested that LED lights at the north entrance would look very nice.

Joe Gonzales, Fire Chief, stated that all equipment is up and running. Chief Gonzales stated that the Fire Department is short-staffed but that the positions have been advertised. Chief Gonzales stated that the annual matanza was successful and they were able to take a lot of kids shopping this year. Chief Gonzales stated that the Fire Department year-end reports have been completed.

Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, stated that Lena Chavez attended the meeting to observe so that she could fill in for Ruby if the need arises. Ms. Lopez stated that the utility meter reading system needs to be upgraded. Ms. Lopez stated that department employees have been cross-training with one another. Ms. Lopez stated that staff is working on collections and that the gas utility cannot be turned off for non-payment until after March 15th. Ms. Lopez stated that the department is getting ready for the software upgrade. Ms. Lopez stated that business registration renewal requests have been mailed. Ms. Lopez stated that she has been working with Mr. Lucero on a dumpster audit.

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NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Salome stated that he appreciates what a good job City staff did on the recent Christmas parade, the Christmas Expo, the lights in the plaza and the matanza.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Job Description Updates – Rodeo & Sports Complex and Tourism Departments

Mayor Bhasker explained that currently, the Rodeo & Sports Complex and Tourism departments are combined. Mayor Bhasker stated that the two departments have been separated and the job descriptions have been updated.

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve the job description updates for the Sports & Rodeo Complex and the Tourism Department. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Job Description Updates – Head Mechanic, Airport Manager, Gas Superintendent, Transportation Program Manager

Mayor Bhasker stated that with the retirement of Jay Santillanes, the job descriptions for Head Mechanic, Airport Manager, Gas Superintendent and Transportation Program Manager need to be updated to include corrected or additional information.

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve the job description updates for Head Mechanic, Airport Manager, Gas Superintendent and Transportation Program Manager. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

c. Minimum Wage Changes – Fire Department Job Descriptions and Salary Changes and Regular and Temporary Employee Adjustments

Mayor Bhasker explained that the new minimum wage for the State of New Mexico is going to be \$9.00 per hour and is effective January 1, 2020. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Fire Department job descriptions and salaries need to be updated to reflect this change. Mayor Bhasker also presented salary changes for existing temporary and permanent employees whose pay is not currently in compliance with the new law.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve the job description updates and salary changes for the Fire Department as well as the other salary changes to comply with the new law. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

d. Personnel Changes

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

John Rhodes - 12-31-19 – Fire - Resignation

Rena Benavidez - 1-1-20 – Finance - Completed Probation & Promotion to Cashier - A-20 to A-24

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Jerry Griego - 1-1-20 – Airport - From Temporary Part Time Airport Manager to Probationary/Permanent Part-Time Airport Manager - \$12.00 per hour
Carlos Savedra - 1-1-20 – Transportation - Promotion to Transportation Program Manager - G-33 to G-35
Isacc Angel - 1-1-20 – Gas - Additional Job Duties - V-53 to V-54
Cassandra Benjamin - 1-1-20 – Transportation - Additional Job Duties - N-30 to N-34
Lena Chavez - 1-1-20 – Finance - Additional Job Duties - B-41 to B-42

Temporary New Hires: None

Temporary Renewals: Elias Jacquez, Paul Foulenfont, Jerry Griego, David Chavez, Deekota Chavez, Taylor Saavedra, Enrique Robles, John Armijo, Cheyenne Cortez, Steven Chavez, Jilberto Chavez, Shree Torres, Casandra Trujillo

Student Workers: Matthew Guzman, Autumn Martinez, Bryan Peters, Brandon Esquivel, Carlos Gonzales

Referees (3)

Mayor Bhasker mentioned that the increase for Ms. Benjamin is due to the closure of the Magdalena transportation route.

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

e. Business Registrations

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

Yarnworker LLC – R-3 (Approved by P & Z) – 109 Grant Street – Elizabeth Gipson – Online Education (Weaving)

Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

f. Voucher Run

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve vouchers 149345 to 149562 in the amount of \$815,673.62, plus Payroll Transfers (\$320,545.51), for a total of \$1,136,219.13. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

g. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held on Monday, January 6, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Road).

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

ATTEST: _____
/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

/s/
Stephanie Saavedra, City Clerk