

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**March 2, 2020**

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

Mayor Bhasker stated that Councilor Jaramillo had been in an auto accident and was unable to attend the meeting.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MARCH 2, 2020 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

**a. February 18, 2020**

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

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Dr. Bill Stone, the NM Tech liaison, stated that interviews are nearly completed for ten faculty new hires. Dr. Stone stated that enrollment numbers are looking healthy. Dr. Stone stated that the recruiting office has been working with two-year colleges, surrounding states and STEM events.

Councilor Hicks arrived.

Dr. Stone stated that March is Women's History Month and there will be events on campus throughout the month to celebrate. Dr. Stone stated that NM Tech has been working with their health center and the local hospital to put together a plan in the event of a coronavirus outbreak. Mayor Bhasker stated that Fire Chief Gonzales has also met with the local hospital. Mayor Bhasker stated that he is waiting for the state epidemiology office to release a flyer regarding the coronavirus. Mayor Bhasker stated that the hospital recommends that people avoid trouble zones. Dr. Stone stated that some international conferences for faculty have been cancelled.

Dr. Peter Anselmo invited everyone to participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Inventors and Entrepreneurs Workshop on March 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> in the NM Tech Fidel Ballroom. Dr. Anselmo thanked the City for once again providing scholarships for community residents who are interested in participating. Dr. Anselmo stated that some changes have been made to the workshop such as expanding the student day. Dr. Anselmo stated that there will be high school and college age students participating.

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

**a. Ordinance No. 20-03-02 – Adopting a Municipal Gross Receipts Tax**

Mayor Bhasker presented Ordinance No. 20-03-02 which, if approved, adopts a municipal gross receipts tax in the amount of .2500 effective July 1, 2020. Mayor Bhasker stated that the increase would be a way to fund the municipal electric utility and move forward with hiring a marketing person for the City. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that the only thing that may change on the ordinance will be the signature lines. Mayor Bhasker stated that after the increase, the City

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will still be on the lower end of other tax rates in the state. Mayor Bhasker stated that the increase will cost approximately \$3.50 per month per household and generate \$300,000 per year.

Councilor Romero arrived.

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

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 20-03-02 for publication only. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

### **a. Levee Update**

Jay Santillanes, the City's contracted flood plain manager, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of the "river" levy. Mr. Santillanes stated that the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) is responsible for maintaining the newly-constructed levy. Mr. Santillanes stated that phase one of the levy project was 4.6 miles long. Mr. Santillanes stated that construction on the levy was completed approximately two years ago but the project is not finalized due to some issues with the paperwork from the contractors. Mr. Santillanes reviewed the handout, made up of maps, with the Mayor and Council. Mr. Santillanes stated that the MRGCD will work with the City to have the levee certified by FEMA. Mr. Santillanes stated that the first process is getting the documents on the levee from the Army Corps. of Engineers to our engineers. Mr. Santillanes stated that our engineers will submit the documents to FEMA for certification. Mr. Santillanes stated that once the levy is certified, the flood maps will change which will decrease the amount of flood insurance premiums for Socorro residents. Mr. Santillanes stated that it could take up to eight months to complete the process. Mr. Santillanes stated that this has been an ongoing project for over 30 years. Mr. Santillanes stated that this is a critical process and it needs to keep moving forward. Mayor Bhasker stated that while flood insurance premiums may decrease, he still suggests residents have flood insurance, especially people close to ditches. Mayor Bhasker stated that people have been riding four-wheelers and dirt bikes on the newly-constructed levy and are causing damage. Mayor Bhasker stated that the MRGCD may have to block access if this continues.

### **b. Legislative Update**

Matejka and Jay Santillanes, lobbyists for the City, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council. Ms. Santillanes stated that the handout includes a list of capital outlay projects for Socorro and a bill tracking list. Ms. Santillanes stated that there were 914 pieces of legislation introduced at the 54<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. Ms. Santillanes stated that of the bills introduced, 234 passed the 1<sup>st</sup> house, 95 passed the second house, 66 were sent to the Governor for signature and so far, 8 have been signed into law. Ms. Santillanes stated that the House of Representatives has 46 Democrats and 24 Republicans and the Senate has 26 Democrats and 16 Republicans. Ms. Santillanes stated that a \$7.604 billion budget plan for FY 2021 was sent to the Governor. Ms. Santillanes stated that high-profile bills that did not pass the session included legalization of recreational cannabis, a \$300 million gas tax increase and an attempt to restructure the Public Regulation Commission. Mr. Santillanes stated that there will be changes to PERA including an employee and employer increase of .5% a year for four years beginning July 1, 2020. Mr. Santillanes stated that the retirement cap for earnings was increased to 100% but that this section was removed and the cap will remain at the current 90%. Mr. Santillanes stated that for retirees, COLA has been suspended for three years and the new COLA calculation will be tied to investment performance. Mr. Santillanes stated that Retiree Health Care employer and employee contributions also increased. Mr. Santillanes stated

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that all of the mentioned changes are effective July 1, 2020. Ms. Santillanes stated that the tobacco age was raised to 21 years old. Mr. and Mrs. Santillanes reviewed several other bills. Ms. Santillanes thanked the Mayor for attending several committee meetings in Santa Fe. Ms. Santillanes stated that the City of Socorro received \$300,000 for the Eagle Picher Superfund Site Security Fence, \$750,000 for 911 Emergency Radio Equipment Replacement and \$350,000 for Community Center Construction. Ms. Santillanes stated that the City also received \$200,000 for Reconstruction of Bullock Avenue and \$100,000 for General Repaving Improvements. Ms. Santillanes thanked our local legislators, Representative Gail Armstrong and Senator Gabriel Ramos, as well as Governor Lujan-Grisham for Socorro's awards. Ms. Santillanes stated that they will present a final report to the Mayor and Council after March 11, 2020. Lastly, the Mayor and Council recognized Bill Fulginitti, the Executive Director of the NM Municipal League, who recently passed away.

**c. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Save our Bosque Taskforce**

Mayor Bhasker presented an MOU between the City of Socorro and Save our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF). The purpose of the MOU is to strengthen the working relationship established between the Save our Bosque Task Force and the City of Socorro and provide a framework for cooperative activities of the Save our Bosque Task force and for the City of Socorro to develop and maintain the riverine parks and trails within the City limits of Socorro. Gina Delarusso, Chair on the Board of Directors for the SOBTF, stated that the task force was formed in 1993 and in 1998, became a non-profit. Ms. Delarusso stated that the goal of the SOBTF is to research, plan and implement projects along the river. Ms. Delarusso stated that they also have an internship program. Sara Anderson, Program Director for the SOBTF, stated that there are 3 miles of trail connecting parks/picnic areas along the river. Ms. Anderson stated that SOBTF would like to add signage to the area, continue with their two cleanup days a year, improve amenities, increase access and continue to maintain the parks and trails. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has approved up to \$5,000 for the SOBTF, has provided police patrols in the area and was a charter member of the SOBTF.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the MOU between the City of Socorro and Save our Bosque Task Force. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Resolution No. 20-03-02a – Surplus Equipment**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 20-03-02a which, if approved, deems the old animal shelter building (12 x 24 contractor's office building) as surplus equipment. Mayor Bhasker stated that the company delivering the new building has shown interest in purchasing the old building.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 20-03-02a. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

**e. Resolution No. 20-03-02b – Dispatch/Animal Shelter Job Description Updates and Salary Adjustments**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 20-03-02b, which, if approved, increases the base salaries of certified City of Socorro dispatchers and changes the starting salary for new dispatchers. Mayor Bhasker stated that this is an attempt to improve the benefit package for dispatchers as the City keeps losing dispatchers to jobs that have higher salaries.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 20-03-02b. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

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**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Jerry Griego, the City's Airport Manager, stated that he made the first pass at the airport with the new street sweeper. Mr. Griego stated that New Mexico has 60 public-use airports which generate approximately 3 million passengers annually. Mr. Griego stated that these airports have over 18,000 employees. Mr. Griego stated that Holloman Air Force Base would like to create a new military operation area west of Socorro that would affect the airports in Socorro, T or C, Grant County and Silver City. Mr. Griego stated that the new operations would squeeze Socorro's flight path down to 10 miles from 500 feet above ground to 51,000 feet. Mr. Griego stated that NM State Aviation would like that ceiling raised. Mr. Griego stated that he provided a response to Holloman's request. Mayor Bhasker asked Mr. Griego in what capacity did he respond. Mr. Griego replied that he responded as a pilot in Socorro and as an airport employee. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels the response should have been provided by the City Administration. Mayor Bhasker stated that he knew nothing about Holloman's request. Mayor Bhasker stated that if the request squeezes the corridor, the City Administration should know about it. Mr. Griego stated that there was a public hearing on the matter in November of 2019. Mr. Griego stated that he will forward the environmental impact study to the Mayor for review. Mr. Griego stated that the new sweeper was received February 4<sup>th</sup> and it is a great piece of equipment.

Ruby Lopez, Finance Officer, stated that she will begin working on the new budget this week.

Councilor Hicks stated that there will be an off-road race on March 14<sup>th</sup> at Gordy Hills.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the HOLI event at Socorro Public Library is March 10<sup>th</sup>.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Councilor Fleming asked if anyone had been applying for building permits. Kristy Padilla, Administrative Assistant, stated that building permits are handled by State of NM personnel.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mayor Bhasker stated that in regards to the request for abandonment/vacation of City property by Veronica Chavez (heard at the last meeting), Ms. Chavez is getting a survey done. Mayor Bhasker stated that once the survey is done, the item will be placed back on the agenda.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**a. Library Board Appointment**

Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to appoint Aga Gabor to the Library Board.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Mayor Bhasker's appointment of Aga Gabor to the Library Board. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**b. Personnel Changes**

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the Personnel Changes as read by Mayor Bhasker:

Jeremiah Gonzales – 2-7-20 – Parks – Resignation

Zach Anaya – 2-20-20 – Recreation – Completed Probation – A-20 to A-22

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Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Business Registrations**

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

D & M Kitchen – Transient Vendor – Will be present at events only (Socorro, NM). – Margaret Martinez – Food Truck

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Date and Time**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Road).

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

**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**