

City of Socorro Special City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
July 29, 2020

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Mayor Bhasker took roll call.

Members physically present at roll call were: Mayor Ravi Bhasker

Members remotely present at roll call were: Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr., Councilor Anton Salome, Councilor Deborah Dean, Councilor Peter Romero, Councilor Gordy Hicks and Councilor Nick Fleming. Councilor Toby Jaramillo passed away July 6, 2020.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Bhasker stated that this City Council meeting is in compliance with the standards set forth by the NM Attorney' General's Office for teleconference meetings held during the COVID-19 pandemic.

APPROVAL OF JULY 29, 2020 CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dean. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. NMDOT Resolution-LGRF CN L100418 (Western Hills) Project Timeline Extension

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to approve the extension as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Romero. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

b. Final Budget Approval FY 2021

Councilor Hicks mad a motion to approve the Final Budget FY 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilor Romero. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Bhasker stated that Judge Murdoch denied the City's motion to dismiss in the City's case with the Socorro Electric Cooperative. Mayor Bhasker stated that there will be a planning session to determine what the next step is regarding the case.

a. Personnel Changes

i. Personnel Changes tabled on July 20, 2020

Councilor Romero made a motion to bring back the postponed item from the July 20, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fleming. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Hicks mad a motion to bring back Personnel Changes that were tabled on July 20, 2020. Councilor Romero seconded the motion.

Councilor Fleming discussed options that were brought up at the Budget Committee Meeting held on July 22, 2020. Options were to pass as is or wait to January 1, 2021 to see the status of the economy to put the changes into effect at that time.

City Administrator Monette clarified that there would be no duplicate increases if the 2.5% raises and the tabled raises were to pass.

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Councilor Olguin stated that he is not saying these employees don't deserve raises but is concerned over what the economy will look like in 6 months.

Motion failed 5 to 2 with Councilors Dean, Chavez-Lopez, Olguin, Romero, and Salome voting no.

ii. Personnel Changes contained in FY 2021 Budget

Mayor Bhasker stated that this item is 2.5% raise for all employees.

Councilor Olguin motioned to approve Personnel Changes contained in FY 2021 Budget.

Councilor Salome indicated that he attended the Budget Committee Meeting but his position is the same and presented a prepared statement.

Councilor Salome's Statement:

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My position regarding this change in salaries is the same position I made regarding the proposed changes last week. Just because the distribution is different, the fact still remains we are asking our community to support an increase in city employee salaries at a time when people are being laid off, businesses are closing and the programs and projects available to the people that voted us in these seats have a diminished considerably.

Its not how the additional money is being spent it is that it IS being spent.

Our first obligation to our employees is to ensure that we can continue their current level of employment and current level of benefits and allow them to maintain their current standard of living.

Changing salaries under these uncertain economic conditions endangers that obligation.

If as a council we can accomplish this during these difficult times we have done a good job representing both our employees and our community.

Stimulus checks, Payroll Protection Checks and Unemployment Checks are NOT a sign of a healthy economy. This is NOT sustainable economic growth. Economic growth is needed to sustain recurring costs like increases in salaries.

When Stimulus funds, Unemployment funds and Payroll Protection stop coming in. We will see the bottom of the Economic situation caused by the Pandemic.

My position is to save all the funding that we can in order to be ready for the worst, which is yet to come. I want to keep every employee at 40 hours with no lay offs, not raise GRT or property tax on our residents and not raise utility rates on our residents to support these recurring increases in salaries.

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The motion was seconded by Councilor Dean. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed 6 to 1 with Councilor Salome voting no.

iii. Landfill Personnel Changes

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

Jiberto Chavez - 7-1-20 – Sanitation – New Hire – A-26

Jorge Sedillo - 7-1-20 - Landfill – Promotion to Operator II – B-26 to B-30

David Montoya - 7-1-20 – Landfill – Outstanding Work Performance – H-40 to H-42

Bert Guerrero – 7-1-20 – Landfill – Outstanding Work Performance – H-38 to H-40

The motion was seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the Romero family is suing the City for damages (sewer damage) and the case has been turned over to the City's insurance company for review.

b. Update on Utility Collections

Finance Director Ruby Lopez reported that meetings with customers with high balances have taken place and funds have been collected. Have continued with door hangers and calling informing that funds are available through Mid-West New Mexico CAP and LIHEAP Assistance.

c. Mayor's Report

Mayor Bhasker reported that on July 19, 2020 there were 7 positive COVID-19 cases and as of today's meeting there are 14. Need to work on contact tracing and quarantining, don't go to casinos, some positives came back from the casinos and stated that some business are reluctant to follow guidelines.

f. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Date and Time

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting will be a special meeting on Monday August 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. GoToMeeting online.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Leopoldo Pineda, Acting City Clerk