

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
November 16, 2020

Newly-appointed City Councilor Damian Ocampo was sworn in by Municipal Judge, Frances Cases. Councilor Ocampo will complete the City Council term of the late City Councilor Toby Jaramillo which ends in 2021. Mayor Bhasker and the City Council welcomed Councilor Ocampo to the Council. Councilor Ocampo thanked the Mayor and City Council for the appointment. Councilor Ocampo introduced his wife Kathleen and family.

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. City Administrator Donald Monette took roll call.

No Members were physically present.

Members remotely present at roll call were: Mayor Bhasker, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Deborah Dean, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Damian Ocampo, Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr., Councilor Peter Romero, and Councilor Anton Salome.

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 OCTOBER 19, 2020 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. October 19, 2020

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 19, 2020 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fleming. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

None.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. 2020 Audit Presentation

Robert Peixotto, CPA, Southwest Account Solutions, LLC presented the 2020 City of Socorro's annual audit. Mr. Peixotto reported that the City's overall financial health is economic healthy. The City has 10 to 11 months of operating capital in general funds. Overall the City has a very strong management team and great Financial Director. No findings on this audit.

Councilor Hicks thanked the staff and all involved and said it is very seldom that you get a report with no facts or findings.

Mr. Peixotto said that it is rare to have a report with no findings and this is the second year in a row. Again congratulated the staff, Mayor and Council for letting staff do their job and setting

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the tone for the direction of the organization and having good quality employees to carry out that tone and vision.

Mayor Bhasker asked when they would be back, Mr. Peixotto replied that they would return in June or July to conduct the 2020-2021 audit.

b. City of Socorro Water Rights Lease

Mayor Bhasker informed the Council that the City has water rights that would generate funds from lease agreements. The City will lease 3.706 acres of land that translates into 2 1/3 acre feet of water. The City will not run the risk of sun setting the water rights not being used. Mr. Monette said the City still would have 53 acre feet left for commercial development.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve City of Socorro Water Rights Lease as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dean.

Councilor Olguin had two questions, first how often does the City get approached for this and secondly is the \$80.00 a standard lease rate. Mayor Bhasker replied yes and according to Suzanne Smith, City of Socorro's Water Rights Consultant, the City has been approached occasionally by farmers, but not on a regular basis. Councilor Olguin wanted to clarify that this would be a 5 year lease with the option to renew. Mayor Bhasker replied yes and if the City needs the water rights it can take it back. Mr. Monette said the multiplier is \$158.00 an acre.

Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

c. Memorandum of Agreement – Use of City Facilities for Elections

Mayor Bhasker explained that an agreement to use City facilities for polling places for elections. The County wanted to use the Youth Center for the election when it was being used to tutor students on Tuesday's and Thursday's and thought it would be helpful to get an understanding so there would not be a sudden request to be used as a polling place.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement for the use of City Facilities for Elections as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Olguin.

Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

d. Bullock Avenue Amendment – Final Design and Construction Phases

Mayor Bhasker informed the Council that the City as acquired approximately 3.6 million dollars to landscape and repave Bullock Avenue from California Street to Lopezville Road. Mayor Bhasker thanked the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) for improvements on California Street, LED lighting on the North entrance and exits. This is a small amendment to the final design and construction phases with Dennis Engineering.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Bullock Avenue Amendment – Final Design and Construction Phases as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Salome.

Councilor Olguin asked when would be the anticipated state date. Mayor Bhasker replied that it looks like it would be spring. The City has been accumulating pots of money, with the MAP project, with money left over from the last MAP project, USDA, and the NMDOT with a 3

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million dollar grant. Bullock Street will look similar to School of Mines, landscaped, sidewalks, new pavement, and new ornamental lighting.

Councilor Fleming inquired how long the project will take. Tappan Mahoney of Dennis Engineering said the landscaping would begin in February 2021, followed by the road work in March and completed by the end of June.

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve the Bullock Avenue Amendment – Final Design and Construction Phases as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dean.

Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

e. Bid Award – Water Parts

City Clerk Leopoldo Pineda presented the bid award and explained that the City goes out for bid on water parts every six months. Baker Utility is the low bidder in all categories with the exception of hydrants which they split.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve the Bid Award – Water Parts as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Dean.

Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

f. CARES Act Update – Small Business Continuity Grants

Donald Monette, City Administrator reported that 15 separate individual businesses have applied and awarded money. The total awarded is \$47,714.67 and that was for expenses through June 30th. Still excepting new applications, all the information is on the City's website and for businesses that already have grant agreements need to submit expenses through October 31st and the limit now is \$6,000.00.

Mayor Bhasker encouraged businesses to apply and with the surge coming on there will be businesses that will be locked down.

Mr. Monette explained with the new State mandates that businesses that have to close that have rent, mortgages, and utilities can be helped.

Councilor Salome asked if this had to be paid back. Mr. Monette replied that this is a grant and does not have to be paid back.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported on California Street and Days Inn. While making daily rounds the Mayor noticed at Days Inn a tent, orange cones on the entrance, and a security guard. The Mayor asked the security guard what was going on and he replied that he could not say. Shortly after the Mayor received an email from Mr. Mancinni apologizing and wanted to meet to let the City know what is occurring at Days Inn. Met at City Hall and he explained the Navajo Nation had budgeted money to house people at Days Inn from the nation who are COVID positive. The Mayor said his job is to make sure the community is protected. The Mayor told him that he would not allow this to proceed and needed to know more about the program. The

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Mayor thought the City should have been notified in advance. The Mayor also instructed the Street Department and the Police Department to barricade the entrances to Days Inn.

Councilor Fleming thanked the Mayor for stepping forward and making sure the citizens of Socorro are not exposed.

Councilor Hicks agreed and stated as long as the roads are blocked off and asked if there were other ways to enter the premises. Mayor Bhasker replied that all entrances were closed off and if anyone crossed they will be cited.

Councilor Dean asked if this is an overflow from the hospital. Mayor Bhasker replied that this is an overflow from Buffalo Thunder Hotel and a hotel in Albuquerque. The Mayor is worried about more exposure in town. The Mayor went on to say that people from Alamo Reservation are members of our community, our economic community, patients, and friends and had eight people from Alamo pass away this weekend from COVID. There should have been a better effort in rolling out this program. No transparency is causing all the problems.

The Mayor reported that the National Guard will stop its testing tomorrow and there is still a lot of testing to be done. Wal-Mart will be doing rapid testing for its employees and only 75 shoppers at a time will be allowed inside. Most of the transmission is coming from social gatherings. Wear your mask and protect yourselves and stay away from people.

Councilor Salome asked if people should take vitamins or exercise, what people can do to support the immune system? The Mayor explained that zinc and vitamin C are important along with vitamin D, walking and lose weight. Mental exercise is also very helpful. This virus hits everybody.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Bhasker stated that a broadband survey is being conducted in conjunction with the feasibility study that is currently underway.

Mr. Pineda reported that the survey is on the City, County, New Mexico Tech, and NRAO's websites. There are three links, a residential survey, business survey, and a speed test. This survey is not only for the City but the entire county.

Mayor Bhasker mentioned that the speed test is very important, the data will be used to apply for funding. In last week's meeting with Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales information about broadband in Socorro County was discussed and he was very receptive about it.

a. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

David Gutierrez – 10-1-20 – Gas – Additional Duties
Michael Padilla – 11-1-20 – Fire – FF I-II Certification
Colton Wheeler – 11-1-20 - Fire – EMT-B License
Cindy Rivera – 10-31-20 - Recreation – Retirement

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James Chavez – 10-23-20 – Rodeo – Resignation

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

b. Business Registrations

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

Inner Evolution Counseling LLC – Out of Town – Lemitar, NM – Anne Lear, LPCC – Behavioral Health Therapy

Castillo’s Enterprises – Out of Town –Magdalena, NM – Angelice S. Castillo – Miscellaneous Texas Brothers BBQ – Out of Town – Magdalena, NM – Joseph & Maria Stasay – Culinary/Food Truck

Little Sheri’s Playhouse – C-1 – 225 Fisher Ave. – Joe Sheri Armijo – Resale Shop

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

c. Voucher Run

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve vouchers 151877 to 152091 in the amount of \$640,346.88 plus Payroll Transfers (\$313,823.27), for a total of \$954,170.15. The motion was seconded by Councilor Olguin. Mayor Bhasker took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

d. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Date and Time

Councilor Olguin suggested it would be beneficial to the Council to meet twice a month again. Mayor Bhasker agreed and scheduled the next virtual meeting for December 7, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk