

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
September 6, 2022**

Mayor Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk, took roll call.

Council members present at roll call were: Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Damian Ocampo, Councilor Peter Romero, and Councilor Anton Salome.

Councilor Deborah Dean and Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr. were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Socorro Stingrays Swim Team led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 6, 2022, CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. August 15, 2022

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

Councilor Dean arrived 6:02 p.m.

PUBLIC FORUM

a. Socorro Stingrays Swim Team

Denise Gilson, Head Coach of the Socorro Stingrays Swim Team recognized the swimmers present and the seventy-five participants of this summers program. Ms. Gilson thanked the City for its financial support and commented on the teams' activities. Mayor Bhasker asked that each individual swimmer introduce themselves and invited the group to have a photo taken with the Council. The Stingrays presented the Mayor with a towel and the Council with mugs.

b. Chile Harvest Triathlon and Youth Triathlon

Beth Cadol reported that 44 youth participated in the event and said it was an entire community effort involving the City of Socorro, New Mexico Tech, NRAO, local businesses, and many volunteers. Ms. Cadol informed the Council that 14 of the 44 youth finished the course before lightning stopped the event.

Luis Contreras-Vidal reported on the adult triathlon and thanked the City for the use of the pool, tent, EMS, and police officers. 112 athletes participated, along with ten teams. Mr. Contreras-Vidal announced he would be in charge of the event next year and shared an article from the Albuquerque Journal with the Council.

c. Chris Hartman

Chris Hartman, United Projects, via telephone, asked the Council for street

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improvements on Sandstone Street for a future housing development. Mayor Bhasker requested a meeting for United Projects to present its proposal and cost out how much the road repair would take and what type of investments are in the plans.

d. Gaciella Garcia

Gaciella Garcia requested if the remainder of Avenida de Paisano could be paved. The portion in front of Ms. Garcia's house is gravel. Mayor Bhasker instructed Lloyd Martinez, General Services Director to calculate the cost of an overlay.

Councilor Romero inquired about the updated list of streets that need repair. Mr. Martinez replied that his department is currently working on it.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Home Occupation Permit – Villa Virtual Tours, LLC

Kristy Padilla, Planning and Zoning Manager stated that the Home Occupation Permit for Villa Virtual Tours, LLC has been approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission,

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the Home Occupation Permit. The motion was seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

b. Peak Holdings Lease

David Martin and Richard Rood, partners in Peak Holdings and Peak Harvest, addressed the Council explaining the use of the land at the Industrial Park. Mr. Martin stated a multi-use building would be constructed to grow hemp and other agricultural products for sale and consumption. Councilor Fleming asked what the size of the building to be constructed would be. Mr. Martin replied the project would be phased and they would build three 10,000 square foot buildings or two at 20,000 square feet. Councilor Fleming asked how large the Gambles building is that now houses Peak Harvest Cannabis. Mr. Martin stated the whole facility is approximately 11,000 square feet and the portion of the building that once was the HUB will be the retail store is 1800 square feet. Councilor Fleming said he was under the impression that Peak Harvest was only going to grow to supply stores around the state. Mr. Martin replied that it is a cultivation facility for the purpose of cultivating and packaging and they have also purchased the two-story portion of the building at the west end, in which the lower part will house their Sweet Spot shop. Mr. Martin stated the company has purchased other locations around the state that will be retail stores in Ruidoso, T or C, Alamogordo, Las Cruces, and Deming. Councilor Dean asked what attracted the company to Socorro. Mr. Martin explained because of its location in the middle of the state, which made it feasible for cultivation and distribution. Councilor Dean asked where they anticipated in getting their workforce. Mr. Martin stated that all employees live in Socorro and they will employ an additional 15 employees for cultivation and 10 for the retail store, and within the next 30 days will host a job fair. Councilor Fleming asked that during cultivation an odor is produced and what will happen with the odor. Mr. Martin explained they will deploy the most advanced mitigation measures that

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exist, so there will not be any odor. Councilor Fleming asked about Mr. Martin's background. Mr. Martin stated that between 2012 to 2018 he designed, developed and patented growing equipment. He then became a manufacturer of indoor agriculture equipment and that equipment is in seven countries around the world. Mr. Martin continued, his equipment has grown over 100 species of plants and tested the growth of cannabis in Las Vegas, Nevada for two years prior to coming to Socorro. Mayor Bhasker stated that the cannabis business is very good for Economic Development. Mr. Martin stated there is a lack of workforce in Socorro and he has taken the approach to teach employees the trade to gain experience. Both Mr. Martin and Mr. Rood have established Socorro as their home and have invested two million dollars in their businesses.

Donald Monette, City Administrator informed the Council that Leases do not normally come in front of the Council but wanted to make the Council aware that the Lease has an option to purchase.

Councilor Ocampo asked Mr. Martin if they would sell their produce locally. Mr. Martin replied all produce will be sold locally and will not leave the state.

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the Lease. The motion was seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

c. Council Meeting Days

Mayor Bhasker stated that with holidays usually falling on Mondays, and the necessity to change those meetings, if the Council would consider changing the meetings to Tuesdays. Mr. Monette stated that this is for discussion tonight and if changed, would have to amend the Open Meeting Act Resolution and the associated ordinance.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Dean inquired about the progress of the Fireworks ordinance. Mr. Monette stated that it is in review with the City's Attorney.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

• **Lawrence Baca, Fire Chief**

Mr. Baca reported that the Fire Department will be providing the BBQ for the 9th Annual Fire and EMS Expo on Saturday September, 10, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. and extended an invitation to the Council to attend. Calls are up by 210 compared to this time last year. The department is two positions short and in the process of getting everyone certified.

• **Mike Winders, Police Chief**

Mayor Bhasker congratulated Mr. Winders on his upcoming retirement. Mr. Winders

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reported the new Ford Expedition has arrived and is in the process of getting equipped. The department is in the process of purchasing a Dodge Durango and ordering equipment to equip the vehicle.

Mr. Winders explained the incentives other police departments offer for officer retention.

- **Kristy Padilla, Planning and Zoning Manager**

Ms. Padilla reported on the new Local Body Presbyterian Health Insurance plan that will come into effect on January 1, 2023. Open enrollment will take place in October and employees will have to produce marriage certificates and birth certificates for dependents.

- **Guadalupe Tarango, Dispatch and Animal Control Director**

Mr. Tarango reported that calls have doubled in Dispatch and all the new 911 equipment is up and running. Animal Control transported 52 dogs to Utah and are now still half full, and citations and court appearances are up.

- **Lawrence Montano, Code Enforcement Officer/Resource Officer**

Mr. Montano reported on an ongoing court case. Code Enforcement received a new truck and trailer. Mr. Montano gave a report on the activity at Sarracino Middle School and the number of fights that have occurred.

- **Chelsea Jones, Library Director**

Ms. Jones reported on the activities at the Library.

- **Michael Lucero, landfill & Sanitation Director**

Mr. Lucero reported that the new cell will go out for bid and will take approximately four months to get the material needed. The cost of the project will be approximately one million dollars.

- **Ruby Lopez, Finance Director**

Ms. Lopez reported that the City's FY22 Audit is complete and the 4th quarter and final budget have been approved by the state. The budget committee will meet and look into salary increases and the utility committee will meet in October to look into rates in order to support salary increases.

- **Isaac Angel, Gas Superintendent/Airport Director**

Mr. Angel reported they are waiting to hear back on the maintenance grant for the Airport building flooring and that the Captain Laura S. Haines M Mountain Fly-In will take place October 1, 2022.

- **Lloyd Martinez, General Services Director**

Mr. Martinez informed the Council that work is continuing on Bullock Avenue with the installation of the lights and landscaping to follow. Albuquerque Asphalt will deploy to repair any issues with the streets that have been recently paved. A wrought iron fence

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will be constructed around the Convention Center. Special sampling will occur on the water system. Mr. Martinez announced new trucks have been purchased for his departments. Finley Gym project is progressing, but the new transformer could take up to 50 weeks to arrive.

- **Donald Monette, City Administrator**

Mr. Monette reported that four new grant applications have been submitted, attended a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law webinar on the roll out of 5 grants every four months. Mr. Monette stated the City has received funds in the amount of \$350,000.00 for the EMRTC bridge for planning and design and \$579,671.00 for the paving of East Manzanares Avenue.

- **Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk**

Mr. Pineda state the City held a pre-bid meeting for the Cuba Street CDBG project on August 25, 2022 and the bid opening is scheduled September 7, 2022. If the bids come in over budget the City will request for additional funding at that time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

- a. **Library Board of Trustees Appointments**

- i. Gilbert Apps
- ii. David Cox
- iii. Chris Atkins

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the appointments as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Reporting on Personnel Changes**

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Pete Werner	05/18/2022	Police	Certification	B-50 to B-52
Ricky Silva	08/10/2022	Fire	Termination	
James Hollis	07/21/2022	Production	Resignation	
Waylon Billie	09/02/2022	Wastewater	Resignation	
Michael Gonzales	08/26/2022	Police	Resignation	
Pete Werner	09/06/2022	Police	Resignation	
Andres Otero	08/31/2022	Fire	Resignation	

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

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c. Business Registrations

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the Business Registrations as read by Mayor Bhasker.

NAME	ZOING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Villa Virtual Tours, LLC	R-1	717 Liles Street	Jose Angel Villa	Photography
Pecos Valley Counseling DBA Cornerstone Christian Counseling	C-2	801 N. California St.	David Wright	Mental Health Services
Sweet Spot	C-2	101 Plaza	David Wright	Dessert Shop

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

d. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held on Monday, September 19, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers – 111 School of Mines Road.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk