

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
February 7, 2023**

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

Council members present at roll call were: Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Deborah Dean, Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Damian Ocampo, Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr., and Councilor Anton Salome.

Councilor Nick Fleming and Councilor Peter Romero were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Mayor Pro Tem Hicks for filling in during his absence.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Approval of February 7, 2023 City Council Agenda**
- b. **Consideration of Minutes**
 - i. **January 17, 2023**

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

- a. **Shanda Reed**

Ms. Reed expressed her concerns about animal neglect and abuse and loose dogs running around. Mayor Bhasker asked Guadalupe Tarango, Animal Shelter Director, to meet with Ms. Reed and do more patrols in the area where she lives. Ms. Reed and Mr. Tarango met after the Council meeting to begin formulating solutions.

- b. **Kenneth Bowen**

Mr. Bowen, a resident on Cuba Road, expressed his concerns about the width of the road being constructed on the Cuba Road Drainage Project. Allison Mazan and Steve Williams, of Dennis Engineering Co. (DEC), said that although the lanes are narrower at nine feet wide, that was the width needed for the road to be a consistent width all the way down without trying to acquire land from private property owners. The representatives from DEC went on to explain that Cuba Road is considered to be a “low-density, rural road” and was designed according to specifics contained in the “Green Book”, which engineers refer to for guidance. Mr. Bowen suggested knocking the top off the curb, but Mr. Williams said the barrier curbs help with drainage, so that water will be funneled into a ditch and off the road. Mayor Bhasker stated the City did not have the funds to acquire land from the property owners and if the scope of work changes to condemn property, the City could lose funding. Mayor Bhasker further stated that CDBG projects are targeted at low to medium income residential areas, and condemning property, or purchasing right-of-way, would be counterintuitive to the goals of the program. The Mayor suggested alternative routes to the area, should the width become an issue. The Mayor also stated the road speed limit could be lowered from 25

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
February 7, 2023

MPH to 15-20 MPH and that the street would be lined.

Councilor Ocampo inquired as to why there were discrepancies between the stated 16' with and the 19' width described by DEC. The DEC representatives explained that, once paved, the gutters would be level with the roadway and could be utilized as part of the road, making the road 19' wide.

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION ONLY

- a. **Ordinance No. 23-03-21 – Amending the Rate Schedule for Solid Waste Disposal**
Ruby Lopez, Finance Director informed the Council that tipping fees would increase by \$5.00 if the Ordinance is approved, then an additional \$5.00 over the course of the following five years (\$1.00/year for the next five years). The increase would bring in an estimated \$46,000 per year.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve the publication of Ordinance No. 23-03-21. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

- a. **Box Canyon State Land Lease**

Dezirae Armijo, Tourism/Convention Services Director, advised the Council the lease is approximately 655 acres on the South side of Box Canyon. The lease is \$5,100 per year and, over the course of 40 years, will increase to \$10,000. Administrator Monette stated that since the Council had concerns over liability, the City's Attorney and insurance representative have reviewed the lease and have no issues.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve the Box Canyon State Land Lease. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Amending the Fireworks Ordinance**

Administrator Monette explained that the following additions to the Fireworks Ordinance, if approved by the Council, would be published for 14 days and brought back to the Council for a formal vote.

Fireworks may only be ignited during the same timeframes sales are allowed. No fireworks are to be ignited during the hours of 11:00 pm and 8:00 am, other than New Year's Eve (December 31st) when fireworks are allowed to be ignited until 1:00 a.m. on January 1, and July 3 and 4 when fireworks are allowed to be ignited until 12:00 midnight.

Councilor Dean stated that fireworks should be stopped at a certain time to match the times of the sales, so when the stands are open to sell fireworks, you may light fireworks and when the stands close you need to stop lighting.

Councilor Dean made a motion to amend and publish the Fireworks Ordinance. Seconded by Councilor Olguin, motion passed unanimously.

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
February 7, 2023

c. Resolution No. 23-02-07a – New Mexico Finance authority Application – Landfill Compactor

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-07a. Seconded by Councilor Hicks.

Ms. Lopez stated the loan will be for seven years in the amount of \$810,000.00.

Motion passed unanimously.

d. Resolution No. 23-02-07b – New Mexico Finance Authority Application – Landfill Cell Construction

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-07b. Seconded by Councilor Dean.

Ms. Lopez stated the loan will be for ten years in the amount of \$1,300,000.00 and the cells will have a life of twelve years.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Michael Lucero, Landfill & Sanitation Director and his employees for their hard work saving the City thousands of dollars doing the dirt work in-house.

Motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution No. 23-02-07c – New Mexico Finance Authority Application – CNG Garbage Trucks

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-07c. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez.

Ms. Lopez stated the City is borrowing \$892,000.00 with the 13-year loan, to purchase two CNG Garbage Trucks. However, the loan will be paid off with reimbursement from the VW Grant.

Motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution No. 23-02-07d – Disposition of Ambulance

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-07d. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Chavez-Lopez gave the Council an update on the El Camino Real Housing Authority's housing project. Closing will occur on April 30, 2023, and groundbreaking will take place in the

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
February 7, 2023**

middle of May. Mayor Bhasker congratulated Ms. Chavez-Lopez in her role as Executive Director for El Camino Real Housing Authority for securing the additional 2.7 million dollars enabling the project to proceed. The Mayor added that the housing is for individuals with social and psychological issues. The residents will be able to receive services from the hospital as well as other nearby, and on-premises, providers. Ms. Chavez-Lopez stated the project took four years to develop from an initial cost of \$9 million that ended up at \$11.5 million.

Councilor Hicks inquired about the City’s natural gas increase of 100% and he has been told that Albuquerque’s increase was 18% and T or C’s was 22% and would like to know where the City purchases it’s natural gas from. Mayor Bhasker replied an article he read in the Albuquerque Journal indicated Albuquerque’s increase was at 50%, but didn’t know about T or C’s. The Mayor further stated that the City purchases its natural gas from Mesa, Arizona on the spot market. Some city’s purchase in futures that would have been purchased back in July of 2022. The City’s portion is \$0.39 and that does not change. It’s the passthrough from the price increase from the supplier that is causing bills to be so high. The City encourages budget billing and will not disconnect anyone.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR’S REPORT

a. Socorro Public Library Board Appointment

Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to appoint Daniel Jones to the Library Board of Trustees.

Library Director Chelsea Jones stated that Mr. Jones is a microbiologist at NM Tech and Is no relation to her or her family.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Mayor Bhasker’s appointment of Daniel Jones to the Library Board of Trustees. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

b. Personnel Changes

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the Personnel Changes.

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Adam Lopez	02/07/2023	Parks	Completed Probation	A-35 to A-37
Thomas Padilla	02/08/2023	Fire	New Hire	A-47
Hobbs Strout	02/08/2023	Fire	New Hire	A-47
Serferina Ortiz	02/07/2023	Police	Completed Probation	A-58 to A-60
Ryan Lopez	02/07/2023	Parks	Job Abandonment	
James McNeil	01/31/2023	Recreation/Rodeo	Resignation	
Cimarron Gonzales, Jr.	02/07/2023	Police	Hew Hire	A-58
Joseph John Silva, Jr.	02/07/2023	Police	New Hire	A-58

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
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February 7, 2023**

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

Angel Garcia, Police Chief introduced Cimarron Gonzales, Jr. and Joseph John Silva as new hires in the police department. Mr. Gonzales and Mr. Silva introduced their families, who were in attendance.

c. Business Registrations

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the Business Registrations as read by Administrator Monette.

NAME	ZOING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Peak Harvest Cannabis New Mexico LLC	C-2	101 Manzanares	David Martin	Cannabis Retail Store
Lopez Construction	Out of Town	Lemitar, NM	Joshua Lopez	Construction & Remodel
Outstanding Construction LLC	Out of Town	Albuquerque, NM	Abram Gonzalez	General Contractor
Socorro Community Pharmacy	C-2	110 California St.	Christina Elswick	Retail Pharmacy
BPW	C-2	103 6 th Street	Lora Whittaker	Accounting, Payroll, Bookkeeping & Tax Prep
JCR Electric	Out of Town	Peralta, NM	Jason Raley	Electrical - Commercial & Residential
High Mountain Hunts of New Mexico LLC	Out of Town	Massillon, OH	Nicholas Maragas	Hunts

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 Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers – 111 School of Mines Road. After adjournment, Councilor Hicks requested the next meeting be held at noon, as he would be out of town that evening on City business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk