

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
February 21, 2023**

Mayor Bhasker called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk, took roll call.

Council members present at roll call:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Deborah Dean
- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Gordy Hicks
- Councilor Peter Romero

Councilor members present remotely:

- Councilor Anton Salome

Councilor members absent:

- Councilor Damian Ocampo
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of February 21, 2023 City Council Agenda

b. Consideration of Minutes

i. February 7, 2023

c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 157875 to 158115 in the amount of \$1,426,434.41 plus Payroll Transfers \$401,092.63 for a total of \$1,827,527.04.

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

PUBLIC FORUM

None

ORDINANCES

a. Ordinance No. 23-02-21 – Repealing the Authorization of the Sale of Lot 2, Block 4, City of Socorro Industrial Park to Carolina’s Choice, LLC

Mayor Bhasker stated there was a problem with Carolina Choice LLC, a cannabis company acquiring the property and if approved would repeal the sale.

Donald Monette, City Administrator, informed the Council that Carlina’s Choice was no longer in communication regarding the sale of the land and another entity is interested in leasing, and possibly purchasing the lot. Administrator Monette went on to state that the

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repealing of the previous ordinance would take affect after 45 days, if approved. Mr. Monette also informed the Council that after the 45 days have passed, a new lease/purchase Ordinance would be presented to the Council for consideration.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 23-02-21. Seconded by Councilor Dean, Mr. Pineda took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Resolution No. 23-02-21a – Disposition of Vehicles

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-21a. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Resolution No. 23-02-21b – Municipal Arterial Program Funds – Otero Avenue

Mayor Bhasker stated that Otero Avenue was damaged by the traffic from the Levy Project and if approved would pave the road and improve drainage problems.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-21b. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez.

Councilor Romero asked what portions of Otero Avenue would be included. Mayor Bhasker replied from California Street east to approximately RAKS Building Supply.

Motion passed unanimously.

c. Resolution No. 23-02-21c – Local Government Road Fund (LGRF) – McCutcheon and Center Streets

Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that Lloyd Martinez, General Services Director, received two separate quotes for the LGRF application. One for McCutcheon Avenue from Park Street to California Street and one for Center Street from McCutcheon to Spring Street. Both quotes came in over \$100,000.00. To have enough funds to do both, the City may have to apply through the Local Government Road Fund in two separate years. Mr. Martinez stated that he would like to have the roads completed in time for the re-opening of Finley Complex.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-21c. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

d. Resolution No. 23-02-21d – Transportation Project Fund – Fowler Street

Administrator Monette stated that this is funding through the New Mexico Department of Transportation and initially was going to apply through the Local Government Road Fund or the Municipal Arterial Program, but because of the cost and size of the project it would not be feasible.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-02-21d. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

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NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Hicks asked if the City could check into who is doing the demolition at the vacant El Sombrero Restaurant. Mayor Bhasker said the City does not have a building inspector and according to Michael Lucero, Landfill and Sanitation Director, the dumpster at the location is from Valley Sanitation. New Mexico Construction Industries Division would have the authority to check. Councilor Hicks asked if there are any business licenses for the company that is doing the demolition. Mayor Bhasker will have Code Enforcement make a visit and speak with them.

Mayor Bhasker asked the Council to view the handout that Mr. Lucero provided the Council of the newly constructed Cells at the Landfill. The Mayor encourages all to go and make a visit. Councilor Hicks stated Mr. Lucero gave him a tour and commented on how great the facility is.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Romero asked if something was going on with the media covering the Council Meetings. Mr. Pineda replied that the wireless microphones are the newest version and currently not completely compatible with the software running the system. Mr. Pineda further stated that a representative from CTI will be on site the following day to update the system.

Mayor Bhasker stated he will be meeting with the executive director of the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District and NMAAA to discuss Socorro County stepping away from managing the Senior Centers after the Council Meeting. The Mayor invited members of the Council to attend, but stated their could not be a quorum. Mayor Bhasker expressed his disappointment in Socorro County in its decision and further stated that the County has eight million dollars in reserves sitting in investment funds. In the Mayor's opinion, governments are not supposed to be banks and invest the public's tax money that should be used for services. The Mayor said he is not sure what the Senior Center people from Santa Fe will ask of the City, but in his opinion Socorro County is mandated to run the Senior Centers county wide. No communication from Socorro County or the Commissioners was ever received on why they made this decision. Mayor Bhasker let the Council know what he will tell the state that the City is not mandated to run the Senior Centers because they are a county wide operation mandated by statute.

Councilor Hicks asked what date the centers will close. Mayor Bhasker replied March 17th but was not aware if the state would carry on the operations until the meeting at 1:00 pm.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez was made aware the state was giving more money to other Senior Centers and Socorro County was not receiving their fair share. Mayor Bhasker heard from employees and other people that Socorro County has said they will no longer run the Senior Centers.

Councilor Dean asked if Socorro County has come to the City for assistance. Mayor Bhasker stated they have but the City has no funds at this time and the City does contribute \$18,000.00 annually.

Councilor Salome reported, as a member of the Senior Center Board, that it was stated from the

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director that they themselves would undertake the preparation of the meals for the seniors. The Board thought that would be a huge undertaking preparing approximately 240 meals per day, including congregate meals, meals on wheels, and grab and go. They were told it was a big undertaking but there was not budget for it. After the Board meeting letters were sent to legislators stating the center needed funding and only received one response, that from Representative Tara Jaramillo. Some America Recovery Funds were funneled down to the State in the amount of six to eight million dollars and only \$100,000 was allocated to all of the senior centers across the state. The Board made it aware that it is Socorro County’s statutory responsibility to provide senior centers. It is known that people pay county taxes for that purpose. Councilor Salome also heard that the State will produce meals but there will be nothing else. Mayor Bhasker stated that Socorro County did not put any sunshine on this as there was nothing in the newspaper or anywhere else that they were going to vacate the role of not running the senior centers. The City owns the building where the city senior center operates and is one of the City’s in-kind contribution.

Ruby Lopez, Finance Director informed the Council the City’s natural gas bill is 1.8 million dollars and stated the Mayor approved to take out funds from the American Rescue Plan, Special Utility Fund, and General Fund to supplement payments for the high gas bills the customers will receive. Mayor Bhasker stated the natural gas price went from a dollar to three dollars a unit. Ms. Lopez stated that with the supplement from the City, the customer’s price per unit is still forty-nine cents higher than last month. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City’s portion remains at thirty-nine cents regardless of what the market price is. Ms. Lopez said the City will work with the customer during the high prices. The Mayor sent a message to the State to have the Attorney General look into the gas companies supplying natural gas to see if there is any price gouging.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR’S REPORT

a. Job Descriptions

- i. Rodeo & Sports Complex Facilities Manager**
- ii. Recreation Facilitator**

Mayor Bhasker stated he met with employees of the Rodeo, Convention, and Receptions departments since Mr. McNeil resigned, and have since rearranged duties to have a Rodeo & Sports Complex Facilities Manager and a Recreation Facilitator.

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve the Job Descriptions. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

b. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Matthew Jojola	02/21/2023	Fire	EMT I Certification	E-55 to E-57
Henry Jojola	02/21/2023	Wastewater	Additional Job Duties	DZ-49 to DZ-53

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Kenneth Greenwood	03/01/2023	Police	Completed Probation	X-69 to X-71
Angel Garcia	03/01/2023	Police	Completed Probation	Y-75 to Y-77

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZOING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYP E
Honey Do's	R-1	807 Sean Ave.	Leopoldo Baca, Sr.	Residential Repair & Maintenance
Jo-Jo's Jammin Candy	R-3	430 Terry St.	JoAnn Romano	Candy and Jam's
Star Steak LLC	Transient Vendor	Mississippi	Lois Lokey	Frozen Food
Stacy Crafts	Transient Vendor	708 sunset	Stacy Calvillo	Crafts
Game Changer Grill	Transient Vendor	Belen, NM	Chris Montano	Food Truck
Tri-State G & T	Out of Town	Westminster, CO	Adrian Garcia	Building Power Lines

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Dean asked if the City could make it clear where the transient vendors are allowed to park. It seems they park where ever they want. When they come in to apply, make it clear where they are allowed to park. Kirsty Padilla, Planning and Zoning Manager, stated that transient vendors are only allowed to park in the lot north of Red Roof Inn and the lot south of Radio Shack.

d. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk