

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

Mayor Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk, took roll call.

Council members present at roll call:

- Councilor Deborah Dean
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

Councilor members present remotely:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Damian Ocampo

Councilor members absent:

- Councilor Gordy Hicks

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilor Gordy Hicks arrived at 6:03 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Approval of March 21, 2023 City Council Agenda**
- b. **Consideration of Minutes**
 - i. **March 7, 2023**
- c. **Voucher Run**

The Voucher Run included vouchers 158116 to 158314 in the amount of \$998,776.50 plus Payroll Transfers \$403,410.48 for a total of \$1,402,186.98.

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

PUBLIC FORUM

- a. **Friends of the Bosque**

Juliana Bloomquist, representing the Friends of the Bosque, reported on the 2022 Festival of the Cranes. The events first year back since COVID. Ms. Bloomquist stated the Friends of the Bosque will apply for Lodger's Tax funds for this year's event to be held from December 6th through the 9th, 2023.

- b. **Socorro County Prevention Coalition Grant**

Christ Rottman, Socorro County Prevention Coalition (SCPC) Program Coordinator, presented the highlights, outcomes, and troubling findings from the 2022 Socorro County NMCS. Mr. Rottman stated that this year's survey will be advertised by placing

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a flyer in the City's utility bill, newspaper, and Facebook. Counselor Hicks asked if the program received any input from Alamo. Mr. Rottman replied that it is a random, anonymous survey, but students from Alamo, Magdalena, and Socorro School are included in the survey.

Mr. Rottman also stated that in cooperation with the Socorro Consolidated School, the SCPC is providing students with informative information about the harmful effects of E-Cigarettes and Vaping. In the Fall of 2022 SCPC presented the Catch My Breath presentation and will again in April of 2023.

Councilor Salome thanked Mr. Rottman for his work with the grant.

ORDINANCES

a. Ordinance No. 23-03-21 – Amending the Rate Schedule for Solid Waste Disposal

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 23-03-21. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Cottonwood Valley Charter School - Request for Funding

Ephraim Ford, representing Cottonwood Valley Charter School (CVCS), informed the Council the CVCS middle school team earned a place in the National Science Olympiad Division B (Middle School) Competition in Wichita, Kansas, May 19-20, 2023. The team consists of sixteen students and two coaches. Mr. Ford stated CVCS would like the City to be top supporter of \$2,000.00 which would include Sleeve ad, Facebook recognition, banner/material at STEM Fest, certificate of support, and recognition as a top sponsor in the CVCS yearbook and any newspaper articles. Mayor Bhasker stated the Council may decide to sponsor the full \$2,000.00 but recommended between \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00.

Councilor Hicks asked if the sponsorship would come from Lodgers Tax. Mayor Bhasker replied yes and gave a review of how Lodgers Tax money is distributed.

Councilor Olguin stated that this event is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the students and asked if the City was to sponsor the \$1,500.00 if there is a way for the students to do some community clean-up for the additional \$500.00. Councilor Olguin also asked what amount of money the School System is kicking in. Mr. Ford replied he does not have an answer to that yet.

Councilor Dean made a motion to approve a \$1,500.00 sponsorship. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

Each member of the CVCS team introduced themselves and took a photo with the Mayor and Council.

b. Lego League - Request for Funding

Savannah Morris, coach of the Brixel Lego League Team from Cottonwood Valley Charter School had each member of the team introduced themselves and made a request for funds to attend the Worcester Polytechnic Institute US Open Event, Worcester, MA to be held June

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9-11, 2023. Ms. Morris stated that the City's name will be put on their banner along with advertising the City of Socorro at the event.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve a \$1,500.00 sponsorship. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

c. Senior Center/AAA Discussion

Neil Segotta and Monica Abeita, representatives from the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District presented the possibility of the City of Socorro taking over the management of the senior centers in the City of Socorro and Veguita, located in northern Socorro County. They stated the Village of Magdalena will assume operations of the center located in the village. Mr. Segotta stated the Socorro Center serves approximately 400 active seniors to provide congregate meals, home delivered meals, use transportation, etc., and the Veguita is approximately 60 seniors. The rough budget to operate the Socorro Center is approximately \$490,000.00 per year.

Councilor Olguin asked if this will be 100% City or will the State have a share. Mr. Segotta replied it is 17% Federal money, 56% State, 17% local match, and 10% from the seniors that donate to meals and transportation. The City currently contributes \$15,000.00 and that's is all that is budgeted in for the City's participation.

Mayor Bhasker added that other places do not contribute and the City does have a capital investment with the building, and that building is worth a half a million dollars if not more. The Mayor's concern is that the City will not put the additional \$300,000.00 as did Socorro County and has made it perfectly clear to the AAA the City will not operate in the red and will start with a paired down program and build with recreation, transportation, and other events. The Mayor pointed out priorities/steps and asked the City Council, number one is the City going to support our seniors? Number two develop a model to be run by the current director, two cooks, and two delivery personnel, which are all very competent and the center has its own fleet of vehicles. This is a smaller staff than what is currently employed at the center.

Councilor Olguin asked if Socorro County was completely out and no contribution from them. Mr. Segotta replied that Socorro County could absolutely contribute. Mayor Bhasker stated that Socorro County has pledged to contribute \$15,000.00. The Mayor further stated that it is now a City program and will run on reimbursement and Veguita is a \$100,000.00 to a \$110,000.00 program that runs with 1.5 full time employees.

Councilor Olguin asked if it is run on a long-term contract or on a yearly basis. Mr. Segotta replied it is on a four-year RFP, but the contracts are on a yearly basis. Ms. Abeita explained the RFP that was issued is already a year in with Socorro County and if the Council is interested in taking over the program, AAA would help submit the same content of the RFP since the City is not a current provider. It is a qualified based RFP not competitive, and AAA would provide the paperwork once the City has made a decision. Councilor Romero added that the program should be evaluated after two years if the City were to continue the program to analyze if it is working and successful.

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Mayor Bhasker stated, as a public body, the City gives services to the youth and needs to give services to the seniors.

Councilor Salome (City's member to the Senior Advisory Board) asked about the reimbursement process. Mr. Segotta replied it is strictly on a cash reimbursement. The operators enter expenses into the Oasis system for the month along with the units (a unit is a meal or a trip). That is submitted and in turn the City will be reimbursed dollar for dollar, which takes about 30 days. Ms. Abeita added that at the beginning of the contract the providers have the option to take a month advance which would allow them to not be in a reimbursement mode.

Councilor Dean pointed out that the Socorro center is budgeted at \$390,000.00 and Veguita at \$110,000.00 and questioned if that is correct. Mr. Segotta replied that after talking to the City's finance department, Veguita is going to be approximately \$122,000.00. Mr. Segotta further stated that the initial budgets were on what Socorro County had done and using their numbers, but after meeting with City staff there was a better feel for the numbers and for the two sites it will be approximately \$612,000.00. Mayor Bhasker wanted to ensure the Council that the City has an A plus staff and will look at the numbers and make sure they match.

A meeting occurred earlier in the day at the center. State Representative Tara Jaramillo was in attendance and hopefully can help with obtaining funds for building expense. State appropriation funds already exist for the Socorro and Veguita centers from this year's legislative session.

Councilor Salome thanked AAA for presenting and their help for our seniors and asked what the average reimbursement for a meal is. Mr. Segotta replied prior to COVID, congregate meals were at \$4.60 and \$6.50 delivered, but since COVID, prices have almost doubled, so if meals were to be in the \$6.00 to \$8.00 range you would be doing well. Mayor Bhasker stated, that after speaking with Site Manager Linda Mares earlier in the day, she mentioned an example to save food costs. Her suggestion was when serving lasagna, make it without meat to save. Mayor Bhasker stated that this proves Ms. Mares understands the issues at the center and understands how to work within the budget. The Mayor continued that Socorro County was requesting for reimbursement \$45.00 a meal. Mr. Segotta stated that a raw meal pre-COVID, without salaries included, were approximately \$2.50 to \$2.75 and currently \$3.50 to \$3.75 average per meal. Councilor Salome asked if any School Districts with their cafeteria services have partnered up with centers to provide meals at a feasible rate. Mr. Segotta replied that he only knew of one program that has done that and the reasoning is because nutritional values are different for seniors than they are for children.

Councilor Romero asked if any of the food comes from the store houses or food banks. Mr. Segotta replied yes, but most of the food is purchased from companies like SYSCO or Shamrock.

Councilor Olguin asked if the timeline for the Council receiving information to consider is for the first meeting in April and voting on it at the second meeting. Mayor Bhasker agreed.

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Councilor Fleming asked if the \$612,000.00 was just for meals or does that include transportation. Mayor Bhasker replied that the City will incorporate its transportation department to decrease costs.

Councilor Hicks asked if the center would open in the morning because many seniors come in to have coffee, play games, and have pastries that are donated from John Brooks. Mayor Bhasker replied that initially the center will open from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for lunch and see how staff will be able to handle that and then slowly expand services.

Councilor Dean asked if this is for only one meal a day and asked about staff. Mayor Bhasker replied yes, only one meal and staff would include Linda Mares as the Site Director along with two cooks and two drivers. Councilor Dean questioned if this will be a new department for the City of Socorro that will be overseen by Donald Monette.

Councilor Hicks stated he has heard that currently they are supposed to be taking meals to seniors for the next thirty days. Mayor Bhasker said there is something called drop shipping and they are prepackaged meals. Mr. Segotta said it is a thirty-day supply and if needed will do another thirty-day supply. Linda Mares is employed part time with AAA in the interim delivering those meals. Councilor Romero asked if the seniors receiving those meals are informed. Mr. Segotta said a letter has been mailed out to the seniors that there is a thirty-day supply of meals until they find a replacement to run the center.

Administrator Monette asked when a Municipality runs a center does it keep on with the advisory board. Mr. Segotta answered yes, the City will still have an advisory board.

Ms. Abeita stated that AAA works with 56 providers in 32 counties and of the 56 providers, about three quarters of them are local governments. Most of the providers are City or County governments and 25% non-profit organizations. For clarity, all of the programs operate with the model of federal funding, matched with State funding, and then matched with local dollars and those local dollars can be a combination of in-kind or cash from different jurisdictions.

Councilor Hicks added that before COVID he would go regularly, and it would be at 70% capacity and now there are only a hand full of seniors.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Ms. Abeita and Mr. Segotta for helping our community.

Administrator Monette requested from the Mayor and Council, that even though this item is on the agenda as a discussion item, he would like to get official advice from the Council to get a motion to move forward or not to move forward.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to proceed. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

None

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OLD BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE DATE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Shaye Lee	03/21/2023	Recreation	Recreation Facilitator	A-42
Carlos Benavidez	04/03/2023	Rodeo	Completed Probation	A-35 to A-37

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZOING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Smith's Construction	C-2	312 S. 2 nd Street	Dwaine Smith	Yard Cleaning, Trash Disposal, Trenching, and Leveling

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

c. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held Tuesday, April 4, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk