

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**February 17, 2015**

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order. Pat Salome, City Clerk, took roll call. Members present at roll call were: Mayor Ravi Bhasker, Councilor Ernest Pargas, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Peter Romero, Councilor Michael Olguin and Councilor Gordy Hicks. Councilor Toby Jaramillo and Councilor Donald Monette were absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Socorro Elite basketball team led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 17, 2015 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

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

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

**a. February 2, 2015**

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

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Eric Heinz, from the El Defensor Chieftain, invited everyone to attend the open house at the El Defensor Chieftain on February 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. Mr. Heinz stated that the 2015 Discover Socorro Visitor's Guide will be debuted at the open house.

Eldon Offutt, from the Socorro Firefighter Training Academy, thanked the City of Socorro for continuing to support the annual Fire and EMS Expo. Mr. Offutt presented bags, t-shirts and a framed photo to the Mayor and Council. Mr. Offutt stated that the most recent Expo was a week-long event with over 300 attendees representing 78 Fire Departments from around the state. Mr. Offutt stated that the Expo offered 163 classes which provided over 4,000 hours of education. Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Offutt for the gifts and stated that the City is proud to be a sponsor for the event.

Marie Watkins stated that she feels the statistics used regarding SEC electricity rates in a recent report by Smith & Christensen LLP are inaccurate. Mayor Bhasker stated that City staff has also reviewed the information and has provided Smith & Christensen LLP with corrected information. Mayor Bhasker stated that there is an SEC meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Watkins stated that she feels the SEC Board will pass policy changes that are in violation of the bylaws at the meeting. Mayor Bhasker stated that at the request of Smith & Christensen LLP, he will be meeting with SEC Manager Joseph Herrera on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will follow through with the acquisition by the City if the changes are not made.

Doug May stated that he is concerned that there is not enough employment in Socorro for youth workers. Mr. May stated that he feels the youth need work experience. Mr. May stated that he would like to see the City do a study to see how many youth are working in Socorro. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City of Socorro provides a summer youth program every summer (since 1992) for youth ages 16-19 and that the program employs over 100 youth each year. Mr. Salome briefly described the City's summer youth program and stated that every worker who applies in a timely manner gets placed for work. Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels youth workers should not get paid lower than minimum wage. Mayor Bhasker further stated that he feels employing only youth workers would leave no jobs for adults who are trying to earn a living and support a family. Councilor Olguin stated that he agrees youth workers should have an opportunity to be exposed to different jobs. Councilor Olguin stated that the Chamber of Commerce is participating in the Jump Start for Juniors Program which places juniors in high school in a position where they can shadow workers and meet with mentors. Mr. May stated that he would like to see youth as young as 12 have the opportunity to work. Mayor Bhasker stated that employers have labor laws that need to be adhered to.

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Josh Kerns, Recreation Director, introduced the Socorro Elite AAU Basketball Club Team. Garee Apodaca, who is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, thanked the City on behalf of the team for their support of the basketball program. Ms. Apodaca stated that the team will participate in four tournaments. The members of the team gave t-shirts and a signed basketball to the Mayor and Council. Each member of the team introduced themselves. Mr. Kerns stated that the team practices four times a week. Mr. Kerns stated that the team has time set aside at Finley Gym to do their homework. Mr. Kerns stated that the first tournament is March 28-29 at Rio Rancho High School and that the Socorro tournament will be held June 5-7.

Isaac Burleigh stated that on February 13<sup>th</sup>, Parkview Elementary had a mile-run event in which 40 kids participated. Mr. Burleigh stated that the grand opening of the pump track went well and had 30-50 attendees. Mr. Burleigh thanked the City for their support. Mayor Bhasker congratulated Mr. Burleigh on the successful events.

**FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES – APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION ONLY**

**a. Ordinance No. 15-02-17a – Convention Center Fee**

Mayor Bhasker presented Ordinance No. 15-02-17a which, if approved, adopts a convention center fee in the amount of \$1.50 per room for each day that a room within the City limits in a qualified lodging facility is occupied. Mayor Bhasker stated that the revenue will be used for the costs of design, construction, equipping, furnishing, landscaping, operation and maintenance of a convention center and payments of principal, interest and any other charges pertaining to revenue bonds authorized by the Convention Center Financing Act. Mr. Salome stated that the legal publication for the ordinance in the newspaper will have a summary and the proposed ordinance in its entirety will be available at City Hall. Mayor Bhasker stated that the proposed effective date of the ordinance April 1, 2015.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the ordinance is on the agenda for approval for publication only.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 15-02-17a for publication only. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**b. Ordinance No. 15-02-17b – Industrial Park Land Sale – Dialysis Center**

Mayor Bhasker presented Ordinance No. 15-02-17b which, if approved, authorizes the sale of approximately 2 acres of land (to Choice One Development, LLC) in the City's Industrial Park for \$37,000.00. Mayor Bhasker stated that the land will be used for a dialysis center. Mayor Bhasker stated that preliminary approval was given by the Socorro City Council at the December 15, 2014 City Council meeting. Mr. Salome stated that the legal publication for the ordinance in the newspaper will have a summary and the proposed ordinance in its entirety will be available at City Hall. Councilor Olguin asked what the benefit of selling the land is rather than leasing the land. Mayor Bhasker stated that private companies prefer to own the land so that they can borrow funds against the property for improvements. Mayor Bhasker stated that leases do not generate property taxes or income for the City. Mr. Salome added that it is hard to sell a company that is on leased land. Mayor Bhasker stated that selling the property also releases the City from any environmental issues the property may have during use by the private company.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the ordinance is on the agenda for approval for publication only.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 15-02-17b for publication only. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING & CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL**

**a. Ordinance No. 15-01-20 – Utility Rate Increase**

Mayor Bhasker presented Ordinance No. 15-01-20 which, if approved, changes the per unit charges and the basis for charges for gas, water, wastewater and residential sanitation. Mr. Salome stated all of the legal advertising requirements had been completed. Mayor Bhasker stated that the new rates will be reflected in the City's April 2015 utility bills which are mailed the last week of March.

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Councilor Hicks made a motion to go into public hearing. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

There were no comments from the public.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to go back into regular session. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez asked how a customer would know where they fall on the new rate schedule. Lloyd Martinez, Division Director, stated that the new charges go by meter size and that City crews can identify a meter size for the customer. Mr. Salome stated that the last rate change was in 2011. Councilor Olguin asked what kind of increase the customers would experience. Mable Gonzales, Treasurer, stated that the rate increase would cost approximately \$5.00 more per month for residential customers. Mr. Salome stated that he feels the City should only increase rates when necessary and only to cover what the City needs to operate and not more than that amount. Ms. Gonzales stated that the Socorro Electric Cooperative has been changing City meters and transformers which has caused a large increase in City electricity costs.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Ordinance 15-01-20. The motion was seconded by Councilor Fleming. After a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

**a. Amendment No. 1 – Dennis Engineering – WWTP Improvements**

Steve Williams, from Dennis Engineering, presented Amendment No. 1 for the WWTP Improvements Project. Mr. Williams stated that Amendment No. 1 accounts for the preparation of bid documents, a bid opening and related services for the purchase of a new mechanical bar screen, new influent pumps and a pump control panel. The amendment increases the payment from \$5,000 to \$17,000.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Amendment No. 1 for Dennis Engineering for the WWTP Improvements Project. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

**b. Amendment No. 4 – Dennis Engineering – Waterline Replacement Project**

Mr. Williams presented Amendment No. 4 for the Waterline Replacement Project. Mr. Williams stated that Amendment No. 4 increases the Construction Phase Services by \$9,800. Mr. Williams stated that although there have been claims for the project, there are enough project funds to cover all of the claims.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Amendment No. 4 for Dennis Engineering for the Waterline Replacement Project. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Resolution No. 15-02-17a – Hope Farms Road Sewer Connections**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 15-02-17a which, if approved, approves the connection fee schedule for sewer connections (previously adopted by Ordinance No. 09-12-21) for residents on Hope Farms Road. Mayor Bhasker stated that through funding from NMED-CWSRLF, the City was able to add City sewer mains along Hope Farms Road. Mayor Bhasker stated that residents will have one year to take advantage of the reduced rates for connections.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 15-02-17a. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

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**d. Resolution No. 15-02-17b – Application for MAP Funding**

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 15-02-17b which, if approved, authorizes the submittal of an application for the 2015-2016 NMDOT Municipal Arterial Program (MAP) funds for street and drainage improvements to Fairgrounds Road from Raychester Road heading south and west approximately 1.8 miles to the City Rodeo Facility. Jay Santillanes, Division Director, stated that project will include sidewalk, gutters and bicycle lanes. Mr. Santillanes stated that Dennis Engineering will prepare and submit the application.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 15-02-17b. Seconded by Councilor Pargas, motion passed unanimously.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mayor Bhasker read a letter submitted by Patrick Sylvester on behalf of the Library Board in which the Board thanks the City for approving a new job description for Library Director and asks the City to advertise the position. Mr. Sylvester was present at the Council meeting. Mayor Bhasker explained that City policy would have the position advertised in-house to current City employees prior to being advertised to the public. Mayor Bhasker stated that the job is currently being held by Donald Padilla who, he feels, is doing an adequate job. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Library Board Ordinance would have to be reviewed to see what the function of the Library Board is as it relates to hiring for the position. Mr. Salome stated that it would be up to the City Administration whether the position will be advertised. Some discussion regarding the Library Board Ordinance followed. Mayor Bhasker requested that City staff advertise the position in-house only. Jamie Fassett, another Library Board member, also attended the meeting.

Mr. Santillanes stated that Aviation Day at the NM Legislature would be held on February 20<sup>th</sup> in Santa Fe.

Savannah Morris stated that the Teen Center is open Monday through Friday from 3:30 to 5:30. Ms. Morris stated that the Teen Center will soon receive referrals from JPPO and Teen Court for after-hours classes on anger management, substance abuse prevention and parenting.

**DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Lupe Tarango, Dispatch Director, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Dispatch Department stats from January 2015 (total calls were 2,176). Mr. Tarango stated that funding for the primary (City Dispatch Center) and secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) (NM State Police in Socorro) was approved in the amount of \$266,000. Mayor Bhasker asked if City police officers respond to calls outside of City limits. Mr. Tarango stated that City police officers will respond when assistance is requested from NM State Police dispatch.

Mike Winders, Police Chief, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Police Department stats from January 2015 (145 arrests, 161 citations, 2 DWI arrests, 211 police reports filed, 27 traffic accidents, etc.). Mayor Bhasker asked if City police officers are commissioned to respond outside of City limits. Chief Winders stated that the commissions expired and have not been renewed with the new Sheriff. Chief Winders stated that officers would be covered under “good faith” if they needed to respond. Chief Winders stated that the department received two new cars. Chief Winders stated that two new officers will be leaving to the Police Academy next week. Mayor Bhasker stated that with the large number of accidents reported in the handout, he feels it is important for officers to continue to work on traffic issues.

Mable Gonzales, City Treasurer, stated that she has started to work on the new budget which includes reviewing contracts and lodger’s tax requests.

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Jay Santillanes, Division Director, stated that the levy reconstruction project is ongoing. Mr. Santillanes stated that in regards to the trucks hauling materials, he has been working with the contractor on safe driving issues and roads repairs. Mr. Santillanes stated that the hauling of materials will last for approximately one year. Mr. Santillanes stated that Gas Department crews continue with natural gas line replacement on College Avenue. Mr. Santillanes stated that Street Department crews continue to work at the rodeo facility installing drains and fill where needed. Mayor Bhasker stated that the trucks hauling materials can no longer use the Otero-6<sup>th</sup> Street intersection as there are sewer issues and will use 5<sup>th</sup> Street instead. Mayor Bhasker stated that the contractor has been responsive to complaints.

Lloyd Martinez, Division Director, stated that the sewer line extensions are complete on Hope Farms Road and customers can start to connect to the lines. Mr. Martinez stated that the water line replacement project was inspected and there will be one more inspection to make sure everything on the punch list was addressed. Mr. Martinez stated that Parks Department crews will be preparing the soccer fields and Sedillo Park for upcoming events and replace mulch on the playgrounds. Mr. Martinez stated that City crews are running irrigation lines and planting trees at the RV park at the rodeo facility. Mr. Martinez stated that several components will be replaced at the wastewater treatment plant.

Joe Gonzales, Fire Chief, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Fire Department stats from January 2015 (205 ambulance runs, 8 fire calls, etc.). Chief Gonzales stated that there are four employees in the EMT intermediate class. Chief Gonzales stated that the new hires are currently in the EMT basic class.

Josh Kerns, Recreation/Youth Center/Tourism Director, stated that the weight room is complete with all new equipment. Mr. Kerns stated that approximately 150 people utilize Finley Gym each day. Mr. Kerns stated that the St. Patrick's Blues Festival, Girls Fast Pitch Tournament and Striders and Riders 5K Run would be held on March 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Kerns stated that the fishing derby would be held March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Michael Lucero, Sanitation/Landfill/Recycling Director, stated that operation at the Landfill, Sanitation and Recycling departments are normal. Mr. Lucero stated that the engine was replaced on the loader. Mr. Lucero stated that the tub grinder was repaired and is back in operation. Mr. Lucero stated that the new solid waste truck is on the route.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Councilor Olguin asked about the status of the fixed-route that was presented at the last City Council meeting. Mr. Salome stated that it will take time to review the budget and implement the route.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**a. Axiom – Gross Receipts Audit**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the gross receipts is currently 8% ahead of the same time last year. Mayor Bhasker stated that Axiom would like to approach NM Taxation and Revenue on the City's behalf and audit the City's gross receipts to see if businesses are reporting in the proper area. Mayor Bhasker stated that there is not a cost unless they recover funds. Mayor Bhasker asked the City Council to look at the proposal and see if the City should move forward with the audit. Mayor Bhasker stated that he has been working closely with Representative Tripp and Senator Morales regarding gross receipts issues. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to ask Axiom to attend the March 16<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting and make a presentation.

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**b. Personnel Changes**

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the personnel changes as read by Mayor Bhasker:

Rick Silva – 2-16-15 – Fire – New Hire (Admin. Asst.) – A-20

Chelsea Lyons – 2-23-15 – Library – New Hire (Adult Services Librarian) – A-31

Orlando Martinez – 2-1-15 – Fire – Completed Probation – A-26 to A-27

Carlos Savedra – 2-15-15 – Transportation – Change from Permanent Part Time to Permanent Full Time – B-25 (no change)

Victoria Murphy – 3-1-15 – Animal Shelter – New Hire (Director/Manager) – A-43

Temporary New Hires: None

Temporary Renewals: Tony Montoya, Paul Marquez, Albert Hernandez, Elias Jacquez, Tony Silva, Regina Valencia, Sergio Cuevas, Angelica Vega, Michael Padilla, Jeremy Chavez, Kevin Gonzales, Shaina Lopez, Felipe Romero, John Ferguson, William Maldonado, Rebekah Claussen, Billy Romero, Brad Winton

Student Workers: Giovanna Rosas, Samantha Maldonado, Mariah Jaramillo, Jeremy Gallegos

Referees (10), Zumba (2)

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Business Registrations**

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the business registrations as read by Mayor Bhasker:

NAPA Auto Parts – C-2 – 602 California Street – Tom Gallagher – Auto Parts

Isabel Padilla – C-2 – 106 E Baca Street – Isabel Padilla – Cakes

Ortiz Jerky LLC – C-1 – 110 Willow – Lisa Ortiz – Beef Jerky

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Voucher Run**

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve vouchers 132758 to 133014 in the amount of \$1,229,064.21, plus Payroll Transfers (\$292,191.76), for a total of \$1,521,255.97. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

**e. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Date and Time – March 2, 2015 @ 6:00 p.m.**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting would be held on March 2, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:10 p.m., Councilor Hicks motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
/s/

**Ravi Bhasker, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
/s/

**Pat Salome, City Clerk**