

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
November 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 Nick Fleming
- Councilor Gordy Hicks
- Councilor Damien Ocampo
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero

Councilor members present remotely:

- Councilor Anton Salome

Councilor members absent:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of November 21, 2023 City Council Agenda

b. Consideration of Minutes

i. October 17, 2023

c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 159998 to 160287 in the amount of \$1,437,442.30 plus Payroll Transfers \$455,953.48 for a total of \$1,893,395.78.

d. Budget Resolution No. 12 – USDA Wastewater Collection

e. Budget Resolution No. 13 – Law Enforcement Grant

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

Mayor Bhasker introduced Joel D. Partridge, Jr., the newly elected Council Member. The Mayor informed Mr. Partridge the swearing in ceremony will be held December 5, 2023 and will be seated at the first meeting in January 2024.

Councilor Olguin requested a quick overview of the Law Enforcement Grant for the public's knowledge. Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, stated it is a Law Enforcement Grant for officers and support staff positions. This will enable the City to hire an additional Officer, secretary, and a dispatcher. The grant amount is \$225,000 for the first year, half the second, and 25% the third year for a total of \$393,000. This is in addition to the \$750,000 for the first Law Enforcement Grant.

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Councilor Olguin asked about the Opioid settlement. Mayor Bhasker stated the settlement is \$1.2 million and is given to the region and the region will be dominated by T or C, New Mexico for an inpatient facility.

PUBLIC FORUM

Greg Miller, 1711 El Camino Real, addressed the Council pertaining to enforcing code and ordinance violations. Mr. Miller stated a problem exists in Florida with livestock kept at a minimum of three locations that are zoned R-4 and no livestock should be allowed in R-4 zoning. Animal Control and the Livestock Inspector have both been contacted. Mr. Miller also expressed his frustration with Municipal Court and the Judge's actions toward zoning and code violations. Mayor Bhasker stated the City is in the process of getting a legal document the resident can sign off on and then can tag the items that do not meet code. The City will then be able to remove the items. Guadalupe Tarango, Animal Control/Dispatch Director, stated that, on the animal side, he would continue to issue citations for the animals that need to be removed.

PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS

a. Radiation Exposure Compensation Act

Mayor Bhasker read a proclamation in Support of the Extension and Expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Bid Award – Outdoor Digital Message Sign for the Convention Center

Councilor Olguin made a motion to award the bid to United Signs in the amount of \$54,300.00. Seconded by Councilor Hicks.

Mayor Bhasker informed the Council that the City has received the permit to open up the entrance from the Convention Center into the RV park off of Highway 60 where the new sign will be located. The Mayor thanked Pattern Energy and Sun Zia for compensating the City \$225,000.00 for assisting with their transmission line that crosses near the City's natural gas pipeline in Bernardo, NM. The compensation will be used for the payment of the sign. Donald Monette, City Administrator, thanked Councilor Dean's husband, Joel Dean, for his help with the review of the bids.

Motion passed unanimously.

b. Resolution No. 23-11-21 – Disposition of Vehicles

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-11-21. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Lopez stated that the vehicles the City is disposing of are the dump trucks and trash haulers that will be destroyed as part of the VW grant.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker gave the Councilors an update on the Municipal Electric Utility and provided a rate comparison with PNM directly from the rates filed with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission showing Socorro Electric rates to be 25-30% higher. The Mayor stated the engineering will be completed sometime in December and the City would be able have proforma

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financials that would demonstrate what rates the City Municipal Electric would be able to provide. Councilor Ocampo mentioned he has had people question why the City decided to start its own Municipal Electric Utility now. Mayor Bhasker stated that approximately eight years ago the City Council, in a public meeting, voted to pass a municipal electric ordinance and there was public comment before the ordinance was passed. The Mayor added there have been numerous public meetings over the eight-year period, so this is not a new project and all decisions made by the Council were in public with information provided. The Mayor reminded the Council the franchise agreement with Socorro Electric will terminate in May of 2024. Councilor Ocampo stated that when you're in a position of power you can make decisions that are going to positively influence our constituents and the City should not rush forward and sign another franchise agreement that would take the power out of the City's hands and the Council needs to make an educated decision. Mayor Bhasker gave a comparison to other utilities that have exited from Tri-State and stated the City would be able to purchase electricity at a lower rate than Socorro Electric purchases from Tri-State. Councilor Olguin asked when the engineering is complete, would the City have a new feasibility study. Mayor Bhasker stated it is not a feasibility study but engineering for the substation that would give us the plans to put a price on the project. Councilor Olguin asked if Guzman will finance the project. Mayor Bhasker stated that Guzman may be a bridge loan because New Mexico Finance Authority requires one year of financial statements to finance a loan. After a long discussion, Mayor Bhasker stated once the engineering is complete, the Council will have revenue and expenses to be able to make a decision.

OLD BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Job Description

i. Facilities Security Officer

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the job description, Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

b. Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Kaitlynn Garcia	11/21/2023	Dispatch	Transfer from Police	A-40
Jason Romero	11/21/2023	Police	New Hire	A-58
Joel Martinez	11/24/2023	Gas	Resignation	
Hobbs Stroud	11/16/2023	Fire	Resignation	
Audrey Romero	10/23/2023	Senior Center	Resignation	

Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

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c. Business Registrations

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the Business Registrations as presented by Mayor Bhasker.

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Los Pino's Care LLC	R-1	1258 El Camino Real	Leah Pino	In Home Childcare
Unruly Bully Kennel LLC	R-4	206 Juniper St.	Tiffany Baldonado	Dog Breeding Kennel – Transport Services
801 Entertainment	Out of Town	6 Crane Way	Rober C. Fuller	Entertainment Company
Mountain West Golfscapes, Inc.	Out of Town	Peralta, NM	John Mondragon	Landscape Construction
Keri's Salon	Out of Town	11 Sassy Lane	Keri Durkin	Beauty Shop
AAA Welding	Out of Town	San Antonio, NM	Shayton C. Atwood	Welding Services
Hospitality Network, LLC	Out of Town	Las Vegas, NV	Larry Coval	Wi-Fi Equipment Support
Joan Eckman Artist	C-2	607 Hwy 60	Joan Eckman	Still Life Oriental Paintings
Ameresco, Inc.	Out of Town	Clayton, MO	George Sakellaris	Energy Solutions
Albuquerque Asphalt, Inc.	Out of Town	Albuquerque, NM	Brian Loughridge	Construction
La Feu Follet Cajun Food	C-2	407 Center St.	Tim Ash	Food Preparation for Farmers Market
Melyssa's Wild West	C-2	201 S. California St.	Melyssa Wellborn James	Western Wear Store
Red & Green Chile	C-2	508 Grant St.	Victor Morales	Restaurant

Seconded by Councilor Dean.

Tiffany Baldonado gave a brief description of Unruly Bully Kennel.

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 Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

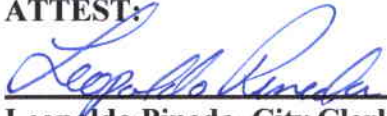
The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation



Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk