

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 19, 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 Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez
- 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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of December 19, 2023 City Council Agenda

b. Consideration of Minutes

i. December 5, 2023

c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 160283 to 160555 in the amount of \$1,255,306.11 plus Payroll Transfers \$490,008.40 for a total of \$1,745,314.51.

d. Budget Resolution No. 14 – CNG Loan

e. Budget Resolution No. 15 – Landfill

f. Budget Resolution No. 16 – Road Improvement

g. Budget Resolution No. 17 - NMED

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

PUBLIC FORUM

None

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. 2023 Audit Presentation

Robert Peixotto CPA, Southwest Account Solutions, LLC presented the 2023 City of Socorro's annual audit. Mr. Peixotto reported that the City's opinion is unmodified, which is the highest level. The City has no findings for the fifth year in a row and because of no findings the City is very well respected in the state for the way it operates and is a financial success story. Mr. Peixotto went over the financial statements and

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 19, 2023

stated the City has a strong statement of condition. Mr. Peixotto further stated the City has a solid statement of cash flow, but the City is not immune to inflation and suggested a utility rate increase that would affect the citizen in the most minimal matter, but keeps the City's utilities operating if something happens.

Mr. Peixotto gave congratulations to management, staff, and governance for a job well done.

b. Resolution No. 23-12-19 – Acceptance and Approval of the FY23 Audit

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 23-12-19. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

c. Food Truck Discussion

Councilor Dean read a prepared statement.

I've been targeted a lot on Social Media, it mostly started during my campaign saying I was abusing my power serving on city council. Comments were that I bullied folks at the hotels, and I was intimidating them to send business to Bodega because of my position as councilor. I did call hotels when we were opening on select Sundays, it was at a time when the public was begging us, meaning all restaurants to open more and to be open on the weekends. All the hotels that I contacted thanked me for letting them know that we were open. So, was this bullying? Or marketing? I think the public can decide.

More recently I've been targeted over this discussion for a resolution about food trucks. First of all, I want to make it clear I don't believe anyone here is suggesting we get rid of food trucks. Our local restaurants, as far as I am aware, are not suggesting it either. Speaking solely on behalf of Bodega, I don't believe our business is being affected by food trucks as it's been suggested on some of the posts and comments.

I did have the opportunity to talk to a few of the food truck vendors, one by phone and a couple of others face to face. I don't believe there was any ill intent on their part by their comments or replies to some of the posts on Facebook.

Although I do find the posts to be unwarranted, I'm being bullied, stalked and harassed. One of the posts suggested for people to call, text, email and to even go to our homes to talk about this issue. Once that post went up, I did receive a phone call from an individual, saying I was a horrible person, and she didn't like what I was doing with my time; That's when my heart sank, and I realized this was getting out of control. I received another call just last night. The guy said he would be here tonight, so I hope he is.

The number of posts which just keep coming and coming are very CONCERNING! My family is becoming somewhat concerned for my safety. It's been suggested to me to call the State Police and file a report, or to file a restraining order. At this time, I chose not to do either of those things, but instead, I deactivated my Facebook account as it has become too toxic. The thing about Social Media, those who post can block the comments as you choose, so, really YOU control the narrative.

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 19, 2023

So, tonight, I will not be part of the discussion on this topic, even with my experience in this area. With your permission, Mr. Mayor, I would also like to RECUSE myself from voting on the resolution you'll be bringing to this council later on.

Councilor Dean left the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

Mayor Bhasker asked for all the people in attendance representing the Food Trucks to raise their hand. Mayor Bhasker stated what is being proposed is already happening in six surrounding cities. The City would like to codify the following:

- Business Registration
- Permits from the Environmental Department
- Permission from the landowner

The Mayor stated the food truck people are bullying and trying to intimidate the City Council and the Mayor and requested a video that was posted on Facebook be displayed on the screen so all could view. The Mayor asked the person who posted the photo on Facebook to please come forward, and, getting no response, asked if they thought it was funny to threaten public officials by posting if somebody would want to kill them. Councilors Olguin, Hicks, Ocampo, Fleming, and Romero voiced their concerns over the Facebook post. Newly elected Councilor Joel Partridge stated he attended the last meeting and actually took the discussion in a different context that what was being discussed, and was actually protecting the local food trucks from the out-of-town trucks that may not have the proper paperwork. Councilor Fleming stated that with the number of food truck vendors in attendance they should form a committee to talk with the Mayor. The Mayor stated that what is being proposed will not impact the finances of the food trucks anymore that what is being already paid: business registration, environmental fees, and permission from the land owner, which needs a special use permit from the City to allow vendors on their property. Nothing more restrictive at all.

Robert Gonzales, Burritos N More, stated he does not use Facebook to post negativity and is for business use only. Mr. Gonzales stated the ordinance should also address pop-up tent vendors. Councilor Ocampo stated that many of his complaints are from food trucks about pop-up tent vendors not complying with the health code. Mr. Gonzales stated that he is up to date with all permitting and gave the Council an overview of what the health inspector looks for and has a concern with people cooking out of their houses. Councilor Olguin suggested that the commercial kitchen could be used.

Chris Montano, Big Mike's from Belen, informed the Council that he has been in business since 2000 and dealing with Socorro since 2002. Mr. Montano stated he has permits in Albuquerque, Belen, Bosque Farms, Socorro, and Valencia County and knows all about permits and the City is doing the right thing. Kristy Padilla, Planning & Zoning Manager, stated that the property owner needs to obtain a special use permit to allow transient vendors on their property and currently there are only two properties that allow the use of their property, Baymont Inn and the lot south of Radio Shack.

Eric Sanchez stated that when he applied for his business license, one of the areas listed was the plaza. Mayor Bhasker replied that the plaza is public property and can be used. Mr. Sanchez stated he owns a food cart, and the rules are more stringent, and he has been serving

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 19, 2023

people at New Mexico Tech since 2020. Mayor Bhasker asked Mr. Sanchez if he would forward the FDA guidelines to the City for cart usage. Also including carts in the ordinance would be helpful.

Ryan Norris, New Mexico Tech professor, stated he came to the meeting because he thought the ordinance would be discussed and requested if the City could make it easier to know when things are going to be proposed and how. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated the agenda is posted on the City's website a minimum of 72 hours before every meeting and meeting are on the first and third Tuesday of each month. The ordinance will be advertised, public hearings, and brought to the Council for final vote. Councilor Olguin informed the public that the Councilors phone numbers are also published on the website.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Monette informed the Council that U.S. Congressman Gab Vasquez will be at City Hall on January 5, 2024, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and would like the Councilors let him know if they will be attending in order to advertise if there will be a quorum.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker stated that since the season is shorter the pavement of Fowler, McCutcheon, Manzanares streets will not take place until March 2024. The Mayor also complimented the Recreation Department, Tourism Department, and Parks Department for the Holiday decorations around town. The City received \$923,417.00 from the Regional Recreation Center Quality of Life Program Grant for gas heat and covers for all four sides of the City's Rodeo Arena.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez reported the Housing Authority received word from HUD that closing will occur on December 28, 2023, for the \$13,000,000.00 housing project.

Councilor Olguin recognized Councilor Hicks on his last meeting and that it has been an honor and privilege to serve with him on the Council. Councilor Hicks stated he appreciated working with the Mayor and all the Councilors. Councilor Hicks thanked all the employees for their excellent job. Mayor Bhasker would like to propose to the Council to keep Councilor Hicks as the RPO representative. Mayor Bhasker stated that at a future meeting the City will honor Councilor Hicks for his 33 years of service.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Job Description

i. Transport Program Manager

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the job description, Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

b. Personnel Changes

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

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
December 19, 2023**

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Leroy Ganadonegro	01/01/2024	Landfill	Completed Probation	A-35 to A-37
Abdenago Lucero	12/19/2023	Parks	Completed Probation	A-35
Manuel Magdaleno	12/19/2023	Wastewater	New Hire	A-35
Jorge Gallegos	12/19/2023	Production	New Hire	A-35
Jose Luis Martinez	12/19/2023	Parks	New Hire	A-35
Linda Mares	01/01/2024	Senior Center	Completed Probation	A-47 to A-49
Danny Hill	01/01/2024	Senior Center	Completed Probation	A-37 to A-39
Dick Pargas	01/01/2024	Senior Center	Completed Probation	A-37 to A-39
Pete Lopez	01/01/2024	Maintenance	Completed Probation	A-37 to A-39
Jose Leyva Rodriguez	01/01/2024	Maintenance	Completed Probation	A-37 to A-39
Dominic Montano	12/01/2023	Police	Completed Probation	A-59 to A-61
James Gomez	12/01/2023	Police	Completed Probation	A-58 to A-60
Jeanette Lukesh	12/15/2023	Administration	Retirement	
James Peralta	12/31/2023	Gas	Retirement	
Mario Amaro	12/30/2023	Fire	Retirement	
Simon Costello	12/27/2023	Fire	Resignation	

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Ernesto Olivas	Transient	203 Juniper St.	Ernesto Olivas	Selling Firewood

Seconded by Councilor Fleming, 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, January 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation



Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk