

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
January 16, 2024

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 Damien Ocampo
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.
- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of January 16, 2024, City Council Agenda
- b. Consideration of Minutes
 - i. January 2, 2024
- c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 160556 to 160672 in the amount of \$999,185.00 plus Payroll Transfers \$488,503.72 for a total of \$1,487,688.72.
- d. Budget Resolution No. 18 – Senior Center
- e. Budget Resolution No. 19 – Rodeo Complex
- f. Budget Resolution No. 20 – Rodeo Complex Grant
- g. In-House Budget Resolution No. 102

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

Mayor Bhasker informed the Council the Rodeo Complex Quality of Life Grant in the amount of \$923,000.00 will be used for solid side paneling, heating, and upgrading the sound system.

PUBLIC FORUM

John Walker addressed the Council on the subject of the empty Smith's Supermarket building. Mr. Walker's ideas about what the building could be used for are:

- Emergency Shelter
- EMS/First Responder training and equipment storage
- Juvenile Criminal housing
- Adult Criminal minimum to medium security risk level programs
- Sport activities

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Mayor Bhasker stated that the building is privately owned, and the city is unaware of any future plans. The mayor welcomed Mr. Walker to meet and have further discussions on his thoughts.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Socorro Electric Cooperative, Inc. – Franchise Agreement Discussion

Leroy Anaya, SEC Board President, Joseph Herrera, CEO, and Jerrid Williams, Director of Communications & Public Affairs, addressed the Council. President Anaya informed the Council he would like an update on the franchise agreement that was discussed at the City Council meeting July 5, 2023. Mr. Herrera stated terminating the franchise agreement would not be beneficial for its consumers and would like the franchise agreement extended. Mr. Herrera added if the city didn't renew its agreement or would start to build its own utility it would penalize the SEC and its members and would force a significant rate increase. Mayor Bhasker referred to SEC's Rule 1-068 NMRA Offer of Settlement where the City agreed with the SEC that the 1999 Franchise Agreement will terminate May 17, 2024. The mayor stated after May 17, 2024, the agreement can either be amended or terminated or can continue month to month. The determination will depend on the information from engineers and consultants of the cost of the Municipal Utility. Councilor Olguin wanted to clarify because SEC and the community doesn't know what the city has in mind in the event the franchise agreement terminates, and that service will not be shut off. Mayor Bhasker stated the city has a preliminary engineering plan for a substation and is waiting for cost figures. Mayor Bhasker pointed out that Mr. Williams' comparison of the mayor to a dog doesn't add anything to the conversation and showed Mr. Williams' Facebook post on the video screen. Councilor Olguin requested that our Municipal Electric attorney Nann Winter provide the Council with a copy of a franchise agreement that would meet the needs of the city. Mr. Herrera discussed the reasoning why SEC should have an extension to the franchise agreement. Donald Monette, City Administrator reminded the Council from the court hearings that SEC's main argument in their legal case was the franchise agreement was for a period of 25 years by state law, so the Council needs to be careful that any extension might be construed to be for 25 years. Councilor's Olguin, Salome, Ocampo, Fleming, and Partridge expressed their concerns with the franchise and SEC. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City would consider a franchise agreement but would check with legal counsel before presenting any type of agreement to the Council.

Forrie J. Smith, San Acacia, New Mexico, Nancy Bowlin, School of Mines Rd., and Ralph Boardman, Ranchos de Bernardo, New Mexico addressed the Council with concerns if the City were to provide electric service.

At SEC's January 31, 2024, scheduled board meeting Jeff Heit, Guzman Energy Principal Managing Director will present the benefits of Guzman Energy. Administrator Monette stated that knowing the Councilors are invited to attend to please let him know if a majority are attending so to advertise a quorum may exist and no business will be conducted.

b. Resolution No. 24-01-16 – CDBG Federal Requirements

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-01-16. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

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c. RFQ 121523 – Engineering Services – Sedillo Park Renovations Proposal Award

Councilor Ocampo made a motion to approve RFQ 121523 to Site Southwest. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion Passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Dean discussed an anonymous letter she received in the mail. Councilor Dean also stated she would like the Council to review the hiring policy when it comes to hiring relatives and the City's procurement procedures. Mayor Bhasker replied that the City does have a nepotism policy and Mr. Pineda stated the City follows the New Mexico State Procurement Policy.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Partridge contacted County Commissioners Joe Gonzales and John Aguilar to start conversations about a Juvenile Detention center.

Councilor Olguin questioned who will represent the city as lobbyist for this year's legislative session. Mayor Bhasker stated there are three: Jay and Matejka Santillanes, Justin Reese, and Sefie Anaya. Administrator Monette stated the City did not have to go out for bid since the contracts are under \$60,000.00. Councilor Chavez-Lopez asked what items the city is pursuing at this year's session. Mayor Bhasker replied:

1. Finley Gym
2. The movement of the monument and museum
3. Sound system for the Rodeo Complex
4. Landscaping the highway exits
5. Match for the new lights at Sedillo Park
6. Spec Building at Eagle Pitcher

Councilor Chavez-Lopez announced the groundbreaking for the housing project will take place after the legislative session so Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham can attend.

Councilor Partridge asked if there has been any progress on the Food Truck Ordinance. Mayor Bhasker stated there is currently an ordinance, but we need to decide whether to amend the existing ordinance or write a new one.

Mayor Bhasker stated he intends to extend the COVID leave policy.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Job Description

None

b. Personnel Changes

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

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NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Dustin Aldrich	01/16/2024	Fire	Promotion to Captain	M-64 to M-67
Jedi Angel	01/16/2024	Fire	Salary Adjustment	H-64 to H-65
Matthew Jojola	01/16/2024	Fire	Promotion to Lieutenant	F-63 to F-65
Humberto Lucero	01/16/2024	Fire	Salary Adjustment	K-66 to K-67
Daniel Pacheco	01/16/2024	Fire	Promotion to Sr. Captain	G-66 to G-69
Thomas Padilla	01/16/2024	Fire	EMT Basic Cert. & Completed Probation	A-52 to A-54
Gabe Sosa	01/16/2024	Fire	Salary Adjustment	K-64 to K-65
Randal Montoya	01/16/2024	Gas	New Hire	A-37
Fabian Silva	01/16/2024	Gas	New Hire	A-37
Simon Ramirez	12/14/2023	Police	Certification	B-61 to B-63

Seconded by Councilor Ocampo, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Forget Me Not Veterans Center	C-2	705D California	Roxann Scott	Veteran Services

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

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation



Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk