

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
March 16, 2015

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order. Stephanie Saavedra 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, Councilor Toby Jaramillo, Councilor Donald Monette and Councilor Gordy Hicks.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 16, 2015 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. March 2, 2015

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

PUBLIC FORUM

John Needy stated that he is an Armed Forces veteran and strongly objects to the Republican Party plaque that is in Isidro Baca Veteran's Park. Mr. Needy stated that he believes a Veteran's Park is not a place for such a plaque and that he feels the plaque should be moved to the plaza.

Rosie Tripp stated that she was a County Commissioner when the decision was made to renovate Isidro Baca Veteran's Park. Ms. Tripp stated that a committee was formed to develop ideas about the renovations for the park. Ms. Tripp stated that public hearings regarding the renovations were held and a renovation plan was accepted. Ms. Tripp stated that the County did not have the funds to renovate the park and approached the City where a decision was made to work together in order to proceed with the renovations. Ms. Tripp stated that the County appealed to the community and asked for donations or contributions. Ms. Tripp stated that many people in the community offered assistance and members of the Republican Party contributed in an effort to remember veterans. Ms. Tripp stated that she feels the right of freedom of speech will be "trampled on" if the plaque is removed. Ms. Tripp stated that the plaque was never questioned during renovations of the park and reminded everyone that a member of the DAV was on the planning committee. Ms. Tripp stated that should the decision be made to move the plaque, she would like to see all of the plaques removed and the contributions returned to the people who purchased the plaques. Ms. Tripp stated that the finished park is a peaceful place and visited by many. Ms. Tripp asked the Council to really consider the change before making their decision.

Michael Schirra stated that the objections raised by the veterans would have been raised regardless of what political party the plaque belongs to. Mr. Schirra stated that he does not want a plaque referring to any political party or religious affiliation in the Veteran's Park. Mr. Schirra stated that the Veteran's Park should be a place of peace for veterans.

Mayor Bhasker stated that he feels that it would be a bad precedent to set to change things that are already in place. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Democratic Party also had the opportunity to place a plaque in the park.

Rosemary Rutta stated that the plaque was purchased to honor veterans and that she, as a member of the Republican Party, was honored to contribute to the plaque to show the Party's commitment to the Armed Forces. Ms. Rutta stated that she feels it should be looked at as patriotism, not political.

Tom Delehanty stated that the DAV representative who was on the committee did not see what would be written on the plaque prior to the plaque being placed in the park. Mr. Delehanty stated that politics and religion have no place in the park.

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Gayle Dorr stated that her name is displayed on the plaque and she feels that it represents her son, father and brothers as well as all of the veterans. Ms. Dorr stated that she feels the plaque is not wrong and would like to see the plaque remain where it is.

Councilor Romero thanked the veterans for speaking on their beliefs. Councilor Romero stated that he is also a veteran. Councilor Romero stated that many veterans have fought to defend the rights of citizens to do things in this country. Councilor Romero stated that he is sorry to see this issue be so divisive.

Socorro County District 2 Commissioner Martha Salas, who is also a veteran, stated that the Albuquerque Veteran's Park accepts donations for plaques and they do not care if it comes from a political party as they are just happy to receive any donations. Commissioner Salas stated that when a person goes to fight in a war, they go in to fight regardless of what party they are. Commissioner Salas stated that the Republican Party has sent donations to military personnel fighting the war and the donations are accepted regardless of who they come from.

Councilor Hicks pleaded with everyone to not allow this to divide the community and to try to come up with a solution that everyone is happy with.

Mayor Bhasker reiterated that he feels it would be a bad precedent to set to change things that are already in place. Mayor Bhasker stated that the plaque was placed in good faith by the Republican Party. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Council may discuss the matter at a future City Council meeting if they so choose.

Della Vega, Chairperson for the Republican Party, stated that the park was a dream for the Isidro Baca family. Ms. Vega stated that the Republican Party was asked for donations like any other organization. Ms. Vega stated that she comes from a large family of veterans. Ms. Vega stated that the plaque was never for the glory of the party but the donation was made to help with the renovations of the park. Ms. Vega stated that whenever needed, both parties work together to help the veterans.

Councilor Olguin stated that he can see both sides of the issue and asked if the two groups could come together to come up with a resolution. Councilor Monette stated that he sees the situation as a business decision meaning that when you purchase a business, you also buy the contracts in place. Councilor Monette stated that when the City took over the renovations of the park, the plaque was already in place.

Mr. Needy stated that he has invited members of the Republican Party to the next DAV meeting to discuss the issue. Mayor Bhasker stated that he was happy to hear the two sides would discuss the matter and stated that the things the Veteran's Park represent should overshadow all of the conflict.

Mike Alderete, from the City's Parks Department, thanked Isaac Burleigh for assisting the City with the development of the pump track at Clarke Field, the walking trail at Sedillo Park and acquiring exercise equipment. Mr. Burleigh stated that he has been working as the Healthy Kids Program Coordinator but that he will be going to Ghana for a research project and then pursuing his Master's Degree in Public Health at UNM in the fall. The Mayor and City Council thanked Mr. Burleigh for everything that he has done for the City of Socorro.

Deb Caldwell, Chamber of Commerce Director, stated that she has been working with City employee, Cindy Rivera, to create a series of job readiness classes for young adults which will include resume writing and dressing for success. Ms. Caldwell encouraged local businesses to attend the job fair at Finley Gym on April 14th. Ms. Caldwell stated that the Jump Start for Junior Program is still ongoing and the participants will start their job experiences in April. Ms. Caldwell stated that Steve Edmonson with 102.1 Mine Country is willing to spotlight City events at noon on Saturdays. Ms. Caldwell stated that the Economic Development Committee (five subcommittees) continues to meet and she will have a report from the committee soon. Ms. Caldwell stated that the website for the car rally will launch soon. Ms. Caldwell stated that the car rally will happen over Labor Day weekend and will be the only event of its kind in New Mexico. Ms. Caldwell stated that the Chamber is working on the Festival of the Cranes event and would like to bring back the fine arts event and the posole cook-off. Ms. Caldwell stated that the Chamber held the awards banquet recognizing people in our community.

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Terri Dunn, a resident of Evergreen Drive, asked if the City could put a bike path on Spring Street. Mayor Bhasker stated that Spring Street is a NMDOT right-of-way but the City may be able to work with them to install a bike path. Jay Santillanes, Division Director, stated that the City does have some signage that can be placed in the area. Councilor Pargas stated that maybe the person who replaces Mr. Burleigh can look into the bike path. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will look into what can be done in that area.

SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING & CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL

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. Mayor Bhasker stated that the proposed effective date of the ordinance April 1, 2015. Mayor Bhasker stated that similar to the lodger's tax fee, the revenue will be collected directly by the City. Mayor Bhasker stated that fee will generate approximately \$100,000-\$150,000 per year.

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

There were no comments from the public.

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

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 15-02-17a. Seconded by Councilor Romero, 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.

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

There were no comments from the public.

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

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 15-02-17b. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Socorro County Assessor's Office – Notice of Value Discussion

Julie Griego, from the Socorro County Assessor's office, stated that the notices of value would be sent out March 31st. Ms. Griego stated that it is important for residents to review their notice as there is only a 30-day protest period. Ms. Griego stated that if a resident feels their property taxes are too high, they should contact the Assessor's Office for a review. Ms. Griego stated that the Assessor's Office has been working on a mass reappraisal and are visiting every parcel. Ms. Griego stated that the notice will have the value for the prior year and a formula to figure out current taxes. Ms. Griego stated that there are numerous exemptions

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available including head of household and a veteran and disabled veteran exemption. Ms. Griego stated that there are also “freezes” for disabled residents and elderly residents over the age of 62. Ms. Griego stated that the Assessor’s Office cannot make changes after the 30-day protest period. Ms. Griego stated that the taxable amount is 33% of the total value of the property. Ms. Griego stated that if the resident files a protest and the County and the resident cannot agree, a hearing date will be set. Ms. Griego answered questions from the Mayor and City Council. Mayor Bhasker stated that the information will be placed in the City’s utility bills.

b. Hope Farms Wastewater System Expansion – Project Acceptance, Final Payment & Project Closeout

Steve Williams, from Dennis Engineering, explained that the Hope Farms Wastewater System Expansion Project has been completed. Mr. Williams stated that Dennis Engineering is recommending that the City Council accept the project as complete and issue the final payment to New Mexico Underground Contractors in the amount of \$60,875.22.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to accept the Hope Farms Wastewater System Expansion Project as complete and issue the final payment to New Mexico Underground Contractors in the amount of \$60,875.22. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

c. Budget Resolutions

1. No. 3 – Fire Protection Fund

Resources are Beginning Cash Balance Available – Requirements are Rep & Sys Maintenance, Capital Outlay – Amount is \$14,702.00 – The increase is needed to allow for budget carryover and adjust Fire Fund Allotment award.

2. No. 4 – Juvenile Justice Grant Fund

Resources are Juvenile Justice Grant – Requirements are Substance Abuse Awareness, Youth Center Program, School & Per Diem, Office Expense – Amount is \$28,159.00 – The increase is needed to allow for an amendment to the grant award.

3. No. 5 – General Fund – Library Department

Resources are State Grant in Aid, Library Bond – Requirements are State Grant in Aid, Library Bond Expense – Amount is \$23,262.00 – The increase is needed to allow for the grant awards.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Budget Resolutions 3, 4 and 5. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

d. Selection of Airport Engineering Firm

Mr. Santillanes stated that RFP’s were received on March 10, 2015 for airport engineering services. Mr. Santillanes stated that after the RFP’s were reviewed and rated, the City Administration is recommending that the contract be awarded to Molzen Corbin. Mr. Santillanes stated that a contract will have to be negotiated and brought back to the City Council for approval. Mr. Santillanes stated that the City has worked with Molzen Corbin in the past and they have responded well to the City.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to award the contract to Molzen Corbin. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Pargas provided a fiscal agent flow chart showing the City’s relationship with SCOPE, Socorro County Juvenile Justice Board, Healthy Kids Socorro County, Socorro County Prevention Coalition and the Mayor’s Drug Task Force. Councilor Pargas thanked the City for being the fiscal agent for, and supporting, all of the programs. Councilor Pargas stated that he would be having each of the groups attend future City Council meetings one at a time and do a 10-minute presentation describing their program.

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DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORTS

Mable Gonzales, City Treasurer, stated that she will begin meeting with the Budget Committee beginning in April.

Jay Santillanes, Division Director, stated that the reconstruction at the levy is ongoing and that the contractor has agreed to repair the roads being used by the trucks during the project. Mr. Santillanes stated that the contractor has safety personnel addressing any issues brought forth by the public regarding the trucks. Mr. Santillanes stated that the road crew continues to work at the rodeo arena. Mr. Santillanes stated that the Gas Department continues to do natural gas line replacement on College Avenue and inspections on the main line.

Lupe Tarango, Dispatch Director, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Dispatch Department stats from February 2015 (total calls were 1,929). Mr. Tarango stated that DPS requires 20 hours of training every 2 years for dispatchers but that he would like to see 20 hours of training done each year. Mr. Tarango stated that several dispatchers recently attended a "Rewind Class" which teaches how to "protect yourself from on the job pressures". Mr. Tarango stated the NMDPS pays for the classes attended by the dispatchers. Mr. Tarango stated that the dispatch office had an audit last week which resulted in a few minor issues that have already been corrected.

Mike Winders, Police Chief, provided a handout to the Mayor and Council of Police Department stats from February 2015 (65 arrests, 156 citations, 2 DWI arrests, 156 police reports filed, 15 traffic accidents, etc.). Chief Winders stated that the department continues to operate understaffed. Chief Winders stated that the department recently purchased 2 new police cars. Chief Winders stated that officers recently had a large "drug bust".

Mike Alderete, Parks Department Foreman, stated that opening day for the AYSO soccer season was very busy. Mr. Alderete stated that people will need to be informed that they can only enter the fields through Fairgrounds Road/State Road 1 and not through Highway 60. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City receives compliments on the work done by Mr. Alderete all the time.

Donald Padilla, Library Director, stated that the library is currently fully-staffed. Mr. Padilla stated that new shelving and blinds have been added at the library. Mr. Padilla stated that there is \$16,000 left from the 2012 bond and he has initiated contracts for the \$25,000 2014 bond. Mayor Bhasker complimented Mr. Padilla on being able to smoothly transition in as Library Director after the previous Director retired.

Michael Lucero, Sanitation/Landfill/Recycling Director, stated that operation at the Landfill, Sanitation and Recycling departments are normal. Mr. Lucero stated that crews continue to spread mulch in the closed section at the landfill and the City has until May to cover it completely. Mr. Lucero stated that he recently attended the landfill recertification class and that the landfill currently has 4 certified landfill operators.

Councilor Hicks left the meeting.

Joe Gonzales, Fire Chief, stated that all vehicles are running properly. Chief Gonzales stated that there is currently one vacancy in the department. Chief Gonzales stated that employee training is ongoing.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

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MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Resolution – Surplus Equipment

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 15-03-16 which, if approved, deems 16 autos as surplus equipment. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will attempt to sell the autos at an auction or as salvage.

Councilor Monette made a motion to approve Resolution No. 15-03-16. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

b. Personnel Changes

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

Natalie Armijo – 3-13-15 – Dispatch – Resignation
Humberto Lucero – 3-1-15 – Fire – EMT-I Certification – B-28 to B-31
Gabe Sosa – 2-15-15 – Fire – FF-I Certification – B-27 to B-28
Luis Espino – 2-15-15 – Fire – FF-I Certification – A-27 to A-28
Orlando Martinez – 2-15-15 – Fire – FF-I Certification – A-27 to A-28

Temporary New Hires: Loretta Tolliver, Angelica Rael
Temporary Renewals: Tony Montoya, Paul Marquez, Elias Jacquez, Tony Silva, Regina Valencia, Sergio Cuevas, Angelica Vega, Michael Padilla, Jeremy Chavez, Kevin Gonzales, Shaina Lopez, Felipe Romero, John Ferguson, William Maldonado, Billy Romero, Brad Winton, Cindy Saiz
Student Workers: Giovanna Rosas, Samantha Maldonado, Mariah Jaramillo, Jeremy Gallegos
Referees (10), Zumba (2)

Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

Armour Pavement Inc. – Out of Town – Albuquerque, NM – Corporation – Paving Contractor
Black's Smuggler Winery – Out of Town – Not Listed – Corporation – Winery
Head First LLC – R-1 (Approved by P&Z) – 112 Mustang Drive – Bradley Hofmann – Performance Coaching
NRH Writing Services LLC – R-1 (Approved by P&Z) – 112 Mustang Drive – Nancy Hofmann – Science Editing

Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

d. Voucher Run

Councilor Monette made a motion to approve vouchers 133015 to 133257 in the amount of \$699,528.79, plus Payroll Transfers (\$283,629.14), for a total of \$983,157.93. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:47 p.m., Councilor Monette motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

