

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
April 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 Nick Fleming
- Councilor Damien Ocampo
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.
- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.
- Councilor Anton Salome

Council members absent at roll call:

- Councilor Deborah Dean
- Councilor Peter Romero

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of April 16, 2024, City Council Agenda
- b. Consideration of Minutes
 - i. April 2, 2024

- c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 161205 to 161377 in the amount of \$1,764,357.74 plus Payroll Transfers \$504,179.95 for a total of \$2,268,537.69.

- d. Budget Resolution No. 28 – Rodeo
- e. Budget Resolution No. 29 – Senior Center
- f. Budget Resolution No. 30 – Juvenile Justice Grant
- g. Budget Resolution No. 31 – American Rescue Plan
- h. Budget Resolution No. 32 – Special Utility Replacement
- i. Budget Resolution No. 33 – State Appropriation Fund
- j. In-House Budget Resolution No. 103

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

PUBLIC FORUM

- a. Connor Johnston

Connor Johnston thanked the Mayor and Councilor for the sponsorship and use of the Plaza for his event, Connor's Cause 5k. Connor reported that there were approximately 200 participants and raised approximately \$4,000.00 on Saturday April 13, 2024. Connor stated this is the 8th year for the event that helps raise money to find a cure for Cystic Fibrosis.

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

b. Ken Hines

Ken Hines inquired if there is any asbestos related issues with the demolition of Finley because of the dust in the air. Mayor Bhasker replied the asbestos is required to be removed before the demolition and there is no toxic or hazardous materials in the dust. Mr. Hines reported an issue with the Socorro Police Department that took place seven months ago. Four months ago, he asked the Police Department for information about the incident and has never received a reply. Mayor Bhasker stated he would have an answer by tomorrow morning.

Councilor Romero arrived at 6:12 p.m.

c. Jerrid Williams

Jerrid Williams, Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC) Director of Communications and Public Affairs, invited all Socorro Electric members to the SEC's annual meeting to be held Saturday April 20, 2024. Registration is from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at Macey Center.

Mr. Williams requested that after trying several times to have the franchise agreement placed on the agenda for a vote and since has received an explanation from Mr. Pineda of the ordinance process and stated he would like that process to start. Mayor Bhasker replied he has seen Mr. Williams' request along with Mr. Pineda's response and is still waiting for complete answers to the questions asked of SEC and will not recommend to the Council to move forward with an ordinance at this time. The mayor would like answers to how much money of SEC's debt is spent in the City of Socorro and how much city property is used for SEC poles. SEC replied that they would not be able to answer how much city property is used but the mayor would at least like to know how many poles are erected on city property. Mr. Bhasker stated that the city has received the cost to develop the City Municipal Electric, a proforma, and is in the process of looking for financing for approximately \$15,000,000.00. The mayor stated SEC will get a month-to-month extension to the franchise but in the form of a resolution. The administration is not willing to look at another ordinance. Councilor Olguin asked if the Council will see all the numbers before any contracts are signed. The mayor stated that Ed Reyes, Enchantment Energy, will give a presentation to the Council. Councilor Partridge inquired if the questions that were asked of SEC were clarified. Mayor Bhasker replied to the answers that were received were small and very little to digest and mainly wanted to know, of the millions of dollars SEC is in debt, where was the money spent. Mr. Williams stated it is disseminated across SEC's whole service areas and would be very complicated to get the answers for just the City of Socorro. The mayor stated that when city borrows money from USDA an engineering report accompanies the application, and we know exactly where that money is spent and would just like to know what benefit the City of Socorro is getting from SEC as far as upgrading the system with the loans SEC has on its books. The franchise agreement expires May 17, 2024, and the mayor will suggest to the Council to pass a resolution for a month-to-month agreement and not an ordinance. Mr. Williams stated he is addressing the Council to help SEC's membership. Councilor Chavez-Lopez, speaking as the Director of the El Camino Real Housing Authority, stated that they need a 5-year plan to get loans or grants and has to be earmarked and can't believe that SEC cannot give the city an answer. Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Williams for attending the meeting and having an open discussion for the public to hear. Mr. Williams stated that SEC has invited all the Councilors to sit down and discuss the SEC and Tri-State and no one

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

shows up. Councilor Ocampo stated he did have a face-to-face meeting and had a good talk with questions back and forth and felt that things he asked didn't get answered and felt confused that the SEC Trustees that represent a certain area would know what upgrades are done to that area. Councilor Fleming thanked Mr. Williams for the discussion.

d. Amy Kimble

Ms. Kimble stated she comes to meetings to figure out how the City Council works and how decisions are made for Socorro and questioned if information is available to the public for the items that are on the consent agenda. Mr. Pineda stated that once the items are approved, they are uploaded to the documents tab of the Council Meeting stored on the website. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated there will be two meetings in May and two in June for the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) with a vote by resolution in July. Mayor Bhasker added that the public is allowed to come up and bring ideas of projects to put on the ICIP at those meetings. Mr. Monette stated the ICIP meetings will be advertised, and a notice will be in the utility bills. Councilor Salome stated there is also an opportunity for public request at the Budget Committee for community projects.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Federal Dollars for Outside Warming Stations – James Gallegos

Mr. Gallegos cancelled his presentation until further notice.

b. Resolution No. 24-04-16a Transportation Project Fund – Manzanares Avenue

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-04-16a. Seconded by Councilor Salome.

Administrator Monette presented Resolution No. 23-04-16a. If approved, it would authorize the city to submit an application to the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) for the Fiscal Year 2025 Transportation Project Fund (TPF) in the amount of \$1,124,000.00 with a required match of 5% (\$56,200.00) for Manzanares Avenue improvements project.

Motion passed unanimously.

c. Resolution No. 24-04-16b – Transportation Project Fund – Courthouse Roads

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-04-16a. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez.

Administrator Monette presented Resolution No. 23-04-16b. If approved, it would authorize the city to submit an application to the NMDOT for the Fiscal Year 2025 TPF in the amount of \$700,000.00 with a required match of 5% (\$35,000.00) for the Courthouse Roads improvements project.

Motion passed unanimously.

d. ICAST (International Center for Appropriate and Sustainable Technology) Letter of Agreement

Mayor Bhasker presented ICAST Letter of Agreement which, if approved, authorizes

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

ICAST to jointly develop, install and commission a 5 MW solar PV and 10 MWh Battery Energy Storage project. The mayor stated there is no money associated with the agreement. ICAST will apply for grants to pay for the project and any payment to ICAST will come from the grants as set forth in the Letter of Agreement. Councilor Olguin inquired about the contract and if it is not executed the city would be liable up to \$250,000.00 for expenses paid by ICAST. Administrator Monette stated it is a contingency B agreement set up. If they ICAST finds the City grants, they get paid. However, if ICAST puts in two years of work and the city ends the project, at that point the city would be liable for up to \$250,000.00. Councilor Olguin asked for clarification in the Letter of Agreement it states contract and asked what is the contract. Administrator Monette replied that the Letter of Agreement is the contract and when it is signed would be if they received grant money to start the development of the project. Councilor Olguin stated the agreement also reads they will submit a final invoice within 30 days from termination or from the date that Socorro decides not to execute a final contract, what would that final contract be? Councilor Partridge inquired if we are just concerned about the \$250,000.00. Administrator Monette stated that ICAST is saying if they find the funding they would expect us to sign a contract with a contractor to develop the solar project and would need to execute it within the 30 days. Councilor Ocampo asked if the city is not awarded any grant money, then the city would not be on the hook for any money. The mayor made clarification that if ICAST does not find any grant money then the city will not go forward with the solar project, but if they do find grant money the city will move forward and after the project is started and the city withdraws at that point is when the city will be subject to pay ICAST back for their work. Councilor Partridge asked if this is time sensitive. Administrator Monette stated the reason it is time sensitive is because if the city does not start applying for these grants within the next few months, the city would have to wait a year to be able to apply and also informed the Council of the grant application process. Councilor Partridge asked if the Industrial Corridor Electric Utility does not pass what will happen with the solar project? Will the City be out of the \$250,000.00? Mayor Bhasker responded that the city will not be out of the \$250,000.00 but only for the time ICAST has spent on the project. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Council has asked to go ahead and move forward with this project and the city is trying to find a way to pay for it. Councilor Olguin asked if the City Municipal Electric never comes to fruition would the city be able to use the solar power from the solar project. Mayor Bhasker stated the city would be the owner of the solar project and would be able to sell it to a third party. Councilor Olguin asked if the Council can be in the loop with discussions with ICAST. Mayor Bhasker replied the Council will get updates on the grant applications. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated, as the Director of the Region 7 Housing Authority, they have worked with ICAST and they are very professional and they give you what you pay for. Mayor Bhasker made a committee consisting of Councilor Olguin and Councilor Partridge to be part of the discussion with ICAST. Councilor Partridge stated he would not be comfortable in voting on the resolution until he receives more information to make a decision. Councilor Ocampo asked if the resolution and Letter of Agreement only pertains to solar and not the infrastructure of the power grid. Mayor Bhasker replied that ICAST will also look for grants for the power grid and that's why the agreement is important.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve ICAST Letter of Agreement. Seconded by Councilor Romero. Mayor Bhasker requested a roll call vote.

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

Mr. Pineda took a roll call vote.

Councilors voting in the affirmative:

- Councilor Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Fleming
- Councilor Ocampo
- Councilor Romero
- Councilor Salome

Councilors voting in opposition:

- Councilor Olguin
- Councilor Partridge

Motion passes.

e. Resolution No. 24-04-16c – To Develop, Install and Commission a Solar and Battery Energy Storage Project with ICAST

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-04-16c. Seconded by Councilor Romero.

Councilors voting in the affirmative:

- Councilor Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Fleming
- Councilor Ocampo
- Councilor Romero
- Councilor Salome

Councilors voting in opposition:

- Councilor Olguin
- Councilor Partridge

Motion Passes.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported on the following projects:

- Finley Complex – Demolition has started and once finished remodeling will take place.
- Scale at the Landfill – The Landfill has been closed until the scale has been repaired.
- Site Southwest – Mr. Pineda stated he will get in contact with Site Southwest and get an update on the Sedillo Park Renovation plans.
- CDBG Project – The city has applied for the shortfall of \$400,000.00 on the project. Administrator Monette stated the application was submitted March 24th and because it is a federal program it is a slow process and should hear something by the end of May.
- Tech Streets – Improvements on Leroy Place, Walkway, Cassity Place, and Mary Place has completed and been accepted by the city.
- Fowler Street – Paving on Fowler is under construction.
- McCutcheon Avenue – Paving on McCutcheon is complete.
- Manzanares Avenue – Ran short of funds to do Manzanares Avenue. Administrator Monette stated Resolution No. 24-04-16b addresses the funding issue.

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

- Region 7 Housing Project – The city is moving rock from the project to the Rodeo area and trying to get a crusher to get gravel or base course.
- Rodeo Arena Skins & Sound System – The city received the funds to cover the sides of the Rodeo Arena and Councilor Fleming is working on installing a new sound system once the skin is installed.
- July 3rd Concert – Neil McCoy will perform at the Rodeo Arena on July 3rd.
- Convention Center – Socorro High School Prom and Region 7 Housing Conferences were held.
- Highway 60 – The city finally received permission from the New Mexico Department of Transportation to have an entry way into the RV Park from Highway 60.
- Capital Outlay – Administrator Monette reported the additional funding for Finley Complex, the Exit Landscaping, the Sound System, Matching funds for the Lights at Sedillo Park, and the Commercial Building at Eagle Pitcher were funded. Questionnaires will need to be filled out for each project and due back on April 25th. All five of the projects will be from general funds and will be awarded in July.
- Rocky Mountain National Wrestling Tournament – Councilor Partridge informed the Council the event will take place May 25th at the Rodeo Complex.
- Recreation – Councilor Ocampo gave Mike Padilla, Recreation Director, praise for a great job with flag football.
- State Golf Tournament – Councilor Salome informed the Council that the New Mexico Tech Golf Course will host the A-AAA High School State Golf Tournament in May.

OLD BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Personnel Changes

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

| NAME | EFFECTIVE | DEPARTMENT | REASON | SALARY |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Christian Tierney | 04/16/2024 | Fire | Completed Probation | A-54 to A-56 |
| Thomas Padilla | 04/16/2024 | Fire | Completion of FF1 & FF2 | B-56 to B-60 |

Seconded by Councilor Olguin.

Motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

| NAME | ZONING | ADDRESS | OWNER | TYPE |
|------|--------|---------|-------|------|
|------|--------|---------|-------|------|

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

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Heartfelt Horizons Social Care | Out of Town | Escondida, NM | Celeste Griego | Social Work |
| MX Enterprises LLC | C-2 | 100 Spring St. | Hanna Cooper | Mechanic Shop |
| Northstar Communication, Inc. | Out of Town | Tempe, AZ | Cody Nelson | Construction |
| R.J. Corman Railroad Services, LLC | Out of Town | Nicholasville, KY | John Langston | Railroad Services |
| Spanish Rustic Furniture | Transient Vendor | Santa Fe, NM | Pedro J. Sanchez | Furniture |

Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

c. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT


The meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation



Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk