

**City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**May 28, 2024**

Mayor Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Donald Monette, City Administrator, took roll call.

Council members present at roll call:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Deborah Dean
- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Michael Olguin, Jr.
- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

Council members absent at roll call:

- Councilor Damien Ocampo

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Approval of May 28, 2024, City Council Agenda
- b. Consideration of Minutes
  - i. May 14, 2024
- c. Voucher Run

The Voucher Run included vouchers 161408 to 161644 in the amount of \$1,122,060.59 plus Payroll Transfers \$484,154.63 for a total of \$2,808,112.70.

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

**PUBLIC FORUM**

- a. Amy Kimball

Amy Kimball inquired about the hours of the City of Socorro Swimming Pool. Lloyd Martinez discussed the reasons the pool is closed on Sunday and Mondays are to clean the pool and treat the water. Michael Padilla, Recreation Director, stated the pool will be open on Monday through Friday for lap swim from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. and open swim from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Saturday lap swim from 12:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and open swim 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. Ms. Kimball stated the website needs to be updated. Mayor Bhasker mentioned that the program is still in need of lifeguards.

**DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

- a. Ed Reyes – Enchantment Energy Consulting

Mr. Reyes presented the council with an updated feasibility study. The last feasibility study was completed in 2017 by Forsgren and Associates and considered two service options: an overhead construction or purchase of Socorro Electric Cooperative facilities or a new

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underground system construction. Initial capital costs were \$5.5 million for the overhead construction and \$7.5 million for underground construction. Bond financing for 20 years was estimated at 3.526 percent.

A lot has changed since then, according to Reyes. First, there was the 2020 pandemic followed by supply chain constraints. In addition, the New Mexico Energy Transition Act legislation act was passed which allows for the accelerated development of solar and battery storage projects. Plus, interest rates and federal fund rates increased.

In June 2017, interest rates were 1.16 percent. In May of 2023, those same rates soared to 5.33 percent.

Seven years after the initial study, there have been modifications made to the city starting an electric utility.

Those modifications include: the completion of a preliminary substation and system design; the target load data would include New Mexico Tech, Socorro schools and the rest of the industrial corridor; an operational and functional budget was developed; as well as whole power costs updated including adding city-owned solar facility to the project.

Financing option also were updated and included three options: municipal bonds at federal funds rate; private/bank financing then convert to public financing with the New Mexico Finance Authority; and finally, private/bank financing then converting to public financing with the New Mexico Finance Authority along with only partial grant funding for a solar facility.

Reyes presented the council with three scenarios for consideration as well as presented the financial breakdown of each project.

**Scenario 1**

- The city would receive bonds financed at the federal funds rate
- Installation of the 7MW solar facility funded through federal and state grants
- Service would be to city facilities, New Mexico Tech, the Industrial Corridor as well as 200+ service accounts at nearly 8MW peak demand
- Produces an annual enterprise surplus of averaging \$500K for the first five years.

**Scenario 2**

- The city would look at private/bank financing converted to public financing with a New Mexico Finance Authority loans
- Installation of the 7MW solar facility funded through federal and state grants
- Service would be to city facilities, New Mexico Tech, the Industrial Corridor as well as 200+ service accounts at nearly 8MW peak demand
- Produces annual enterprise surplus of averaging \$32K for the first two years then annual average of \$500K after conversion of financing to New Mexico Financing Authority.

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Scenario 3

- The city would look at private/bank financing converted to public financing with a New Mexico Finance Authority loans
- Installation of the 7MW solar facility with partial funding (50 percent) through federal and state grants
- Service would be to city facilities, New Mexico Tech, the Industrial Corridor as well as 200+ service accounts at nearly 8MW peak demand
- Produces nearly balanced annual enterprise fund over the first 5 years of operations with no rate changes

In attendance for the presentation were Lee A. Boughey, Vice President of Communication Tri-State G & T, Vince Martinez, Sr., Government Relations Advisor Tri-State G & T, Jerrid Williams, Director of Communications & Public Affairs Socorro Electric Cooperative, and Jimmy Capps, Accountant for the Socorro Electric Cooperative.

**b. ICIP Public Hearing #2**

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

Mayor Bhasker asked if there are any additions to be made to the ICIP.

Councilor Romero stated the Veterans Park needs to be updated since the history stops at the Vietnam conflict.

Councilor Dean stated the lighting at the Community Kitchen at Finley Complex needs to be updated. Mayor Bhasker added that the Community Kitchen is not a city project, the space is rented at \$100.00 per month and would like to have a quarterly report from the manager.

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

**c. Resolution No. 001A – Preliminary Budget 2024-2025**

Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, presented the Preliminary Budget for 2024-2025 for the Council's consideration. Mayor Bhasker stated the budget would include a 5% across the board raise, moving operators to the \$18 to \$20 range and increasing the Fire Department salaries.

Councilor Fleming thanked Ms. Lopez for her hard work on the budget.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 001A. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Resolution No. 01C-001 – Ambulance Write Off FY 2023-2024**

Mayor Bhasker discussed a program, that if the City of Socorro is willing put up \$211,000.00 payable to the State of New Mexico, that would, in February or March, reimburse the city and additional \$500,000.00. Th reason for the additional funding is because Medicaid has not been reimbursing the rural areas for correct amounts. A resolution

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will be presented to the Council at the next meeting. Sandoval County, Artesia, Las Cruces, and Carlsbad have already moved forward with the program.

Councilor Salome inquired about Madalena's ambulance program. Mayor Bhasker replied Magdalena received a new ambulance, but they do not have the personnel to operate it. The mayor continued that Magdalena was approached to trade their new ambulance for a used one and Socorro General Hospital was asked to supply a transfer ambulance, and both were denied. Administrator Monette stated he spoke with Magdalena's Mayor Rumpf and the mayor said he is looking for ways to show gratification for the city services but hasn't found it in his budget.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 01C-001. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**e. Resolution No. 24-05-28a – Utility Billing Charge Off FY 24**

Ms. Lopez presented Resolution No. 24-05-28a and if approved would write off uncollected closed and inactive utility accounts. Mayor Bhasker asked what the percentage of charge offs to Utility Billing is. Ms. Lopez replied less than 1%.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-05-28a. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**f. Resolution No. 24-05-28b – Senior Center 2026-2030 ICIP**

Administrator Monette presented Resolution No. 24-05-28b and if approved would allow the Senior Center to have its own ICIP for capital outlay funds.

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-05-28b. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Councilor Dean stated that she attended her first Transportation Planning meeting in Williamsburg, New Mexico and gave Administrator praise for his great presentation on the city's two projects. Councilor Dean asked for more signage at the recycling pickup at the old Sands Motel. Mayor Bhasker stated that funds are available to make that more visible.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Lloyd Martinez, General Services Director gave a report on the projects around town.

Mayor Bhasker reported that the city did not receive the supplemental funds to finish Cuba Road CDBG project. Administrator Monette stated the city is meeting with DFA to discuss options on how to proceed with the project.

Councilor Partridge inquired what the process would be to get a Children at Play sign installed at Mary Place. Mayor Bhasker stated that the city will get it done.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

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**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**a. Job Descriptions**

- i. Library – Reference Services**
- ii. Library – Youth Services Manager**
- iii. Senior Center – Office Assistant**

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve the Job Descriptions as read by Mayor Bhasker. Seconded by Councilor Olguin, motion passed unanimously.

**b. Personnel Changes**

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Christian Tierney	05/28/2024	Fire	EMT-I Certification	A-56 to A-58
Robin Romero	06/01/2024	Library	Completed Probation	C-42 to C-44
Jose Ruiz, Jr.	06/01/2024	Library	Promoted to Reference Services	B-39 to B-41
Maribel Tarango	06/01/2024	Library	Promoted to Youth Services Manager	J-39 to J-41
Carol Hale	06/01/2024	Library	Additional Job Duties	Q-42 to Q-44
Chelsea Jones	06/01/2024	Library	Additional Job Duties	J-66 to J-68
James P. Gomez	05/16/2024	Police	Completed Law Enforcement Academy	A-62 to A-63
Joseph Silva	05/16/2024	Police	Completed Law Enforcement Academy	B-62 to B-63
Ashley Lower	06/01/2024	Senior Center	Completed Probation	A-39 to A-41
Desiree Smith	06/01/2024	Senior Center	Completed Probation	A-39 to A-41
Christopher Gonzales	05/28/2024	Transportation	Class A CDL Certification	H-41 to H-43
Timothy Gonzales	05/28/2024	Transportation	Class B CDL Certification	D-39 to D-41
Kathy Spring	06/01/2024	Library	Retirement	

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
Griego's Propane and Service	C-2	615 Spring St.	William Griego	Propane Delivery, Refill, and Service
Coronado Electrical, LLC	Out of Town	Bernalillo, NM	Vicente Gutierrez	Commercial & Residential Electrical

Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Announcement – Next City Council Meeting Dates and Times**

Mayor Bhasker asked the Council about the summer meeting schedule. Administrator Monette asked the Council to cancel the June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Council approved having one meeting per month on the third Tuesday with the exception of July 23<sup>rd</sup> requested by Ms. Lopez. The regular scheduled meetings will resume in September.

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Mayor Bhasker stated that the next regular City Council meeting will be held Tuesday, June 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).


**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

**THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ravi Bhasker, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

  
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**Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk**