

City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
September 3, 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 Deborah Dean
- Councilor Damien Ocampo
- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

Councilor members absent at roll call:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez
- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Michael Olguin Jr.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of September 3, 2024 City Council Agenda
- b. Consideration of Minutes
 - i. August 20, 2024

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

PUBLIC FORUM

- a. **Bruce Burnett**

Mr. Burnett inquired about the Evergreen Wastewater Expansion Project. Mr. Pineda stated that a pre-bid meeting was held earlier in the day with four prospective contractors in attendance. The bid opening will be September 24, 2024. Mayor Bhasker stated once a contractor is selected the city will know the timeline for construction.

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES – APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION ONLY

- a. **Ordinance No. 24-10-15 – Amending the Rate Schedule for Solid Waste Refuse Collection, Water, Sewer, Gas, Gas Meter and Other Utility Related Charges**

Councilor Salome, Utility Committee member presented Ordinance No. 24-10-15 for publication approval. Councilor Salome stated the committee consisting of Councilor Chavez-Lopez, Councilor Romero and himself reviewed the ordinance that was postponed from the August 20, 2024, council meeting. The utility rate increase that will take place over a five-year period, as recommended by the city's auditors, is to keep up with the increased costs that are coming towards our city. The committee has added additional wording that says this ordinance will be reviewed on a year-to-year basis to explore if there may be an additional increase or decrease in rates. Councilor Salome added that the committee learned

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and noted that administration looks at adopting fair and equitable rates for our citizens.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 24-10-15 for publication. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. No Minor Sale

Andrea McNeely, along with Diego Romero, presented the No Minor Sale campaign. Mr. Romero stated that No Minor Sale is an educational campaign working to reduce illegal tobacco sales to minors. This initiative is implemented by concerned citizens and parents across New Mexico and by Evolvment, New Mexico's largest statewide youth-led movement. No Minor Sale is supported by the New Mexico Department of Health's Nicotine Use Prevention and Control (NUPAC) program with Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Funds.

Although youth are prohibited by law from buying tobacco, roughly 15% of tobacco retail stores illegally sold tobacco to minors from 2017–2018. If youth perceive that it is easy to access tobacco, they are more likely to use it.

Research overwhelmingly shows that restricting youth access to tobacco decreases use and reduces their likelihood of becoming established tobacco users. Nearly 9 in 10 tobacco users start before age 18, making youth tobacco prevention one of the single most powerful strategies to reduce tobacco use and improve health in New Mexico. The 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey found, of the more than 2.1 million youth who currently use e-cigarettes, almost 9 out of 10 use flavored e-cigarettes and over 375 local governments throughout the United States have addressed this issue by restricting flavored nicotine products to protect youth from predatory marketing tactics. The study also found 60% of youth aged 12-17 years old who currently smoke use menthol cigarettes.

Mayor Bhasker stated the Council will adopt a resolution supporting the campaign at an upcoming meeting.

Councilor Olguin arrived at 6:12 p.m.

b. 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Airport

Mayor Bhasker stated the city met with the airport engineers and put together a five-year improvement plan. Donald Monette, City Administrator reported on the projects that appear on the CIP.

- 2025 – Maintenance Items, New Hangar Construction SRE Building Construction
- 2026 – Runway 15-33 Replacement Design
- 2027 – Maintenance Items, Runway 15-33 MIRL Replacement Construction
- 2028 – Runway 6-24 MIRL Replacement Design, North Taxi Lane – Phase I Design, South Taxi Lane and Access Road – Phase 1 Design
- 2029 – Runway 6-24 Pavement Maintenance Design and Construct, Runway 6-24 MIRL Replacement Construction, Maintenance Items

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c. Consideration Changing Council Meetings to Once a Month

The Councilors voiced their opinion that two meetings a month will keep them informed and current with issues within the city. Councilor Salome asked if participating by phone is still allowed. Administrator Monette replied that the Open Meetings Act has not changed since COVID which allowed remote access to meetings. Mayor Bhasker stated that remote access should be infrequent and not abused. Council meetings will remain on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Ocampo stated he was questioned by a local contractor about the city's permitting process. The contractor would like to build seven homes in the city. Mayor Bhasker responded that permits are issued through CID and the city has done three things so far to attract builders: Administration has met with Builders, Developers, and Realtors, have offered them help with utilities, and to update/upgrade some roads. The city will be attending a webinar to get information about a state grant for middle-income housing. Councilor Partridge stated the biggest hurdle for builders is getting houses to appraise for the cost of building to be able to make any profit. A discussion followed on the obstacles a builder has in building homes at a profit. Mayor Bhasker mentioned VLA's billion-dollar project that will attract 200 families over the next ten years to the area and they are concerned about housing and schools. The mayor added, 20% of New Mexico Tech's population commutes daily from the Los Lunas area, and 40 to 50% of teachers at Socorro Schools also commute daily. Concluding that housing is a big problem in the city.

Mayor Bhasker has received complaints about loose dogs in the city and urged the public to please control their pets. Councilor Olguin asked what the process is for filing a complaint. Mayor Bhasker explained the process and the city will start taking a more aggressive approach.

Councilor Partridge has had a request from the public to consider changing the horseshoe pits to cornhole courts at Sedillo Park. Mayor Bhasker replied that he would get with Lloyd Martinez, General Service Director, and get the pits cleaned up and make them ready for cornhole.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported the Socorro County Fair had a good event last weekend and Socorrofest is coming up on September 13th and 14th.

Mayor Bhasker stated if the Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC) would allow the city to build a solar facility and sell the electricity to SEC, a mutual compromise could be met. This alternative is from the Notice of Claim under the New Mexico Civil Rights Act SEC sent to the city claiming the city is taking from the members of SEC and the city has taken nothing. The city would get an appraisal and offer to buy the city's portion of SEC's system if that was the city's intention. The mayor stated he would present the solar plant idea to the Council in a future meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

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MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Job Descriptions

- i. Fire – Captain**
- ii. Fire – Chief**
- iii. Fire – FF Recruit**
- iv. Fire – Firefighter/EMT**
- v. Fire – Lieutenant**

Councilor Salome motion to approve the Job Descriptions. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Lawrence Bace	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	BZ-81 to BZ-84
Daniel Pacheco	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	R-69 to R-74
Dustin Aldrich	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	M-67 to M-72
Humberto Lucero	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	L-67 to L-72
Jedi Angel	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	H-65 to H-70
Steven Jojola	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	G-65 to G-70
Gabe Sosa	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	L-65 to L-70
Christian Tierney	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-62 to A-68
Leo Petersen	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	E-61 to E-66
Thomas Padilla	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	B-60 to B-66
Ashlyn Aguilar	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-52 to A-56
Mykel Aragon	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-52 to A-56
Kyle Juilan	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-52 to A-56
Dustin Moreland	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-52 to A-56
Justin Pacheco	09/03/2024	Fire	Competitive Pay	A-52 to A-56
Randy Montoya	08/20/2024	Gas	Completion of OQ Training	A-44 to A-46
Fabian Otero	09/04/2024	Gas	New Hire	A-37
Rene Perez	08/20/2024	Gas	Completion of OQ Training	N-55 to N-57
Aldo Ruiz Torrez	09/04/2024	Gas	New Hire	A-37
Brittany McDaniel	08/20/2024	Municipal Court	Additional Job Duties	K-49 to K-53
Jose Luis Martinez	09/03/2024	Parks	Completed Probation	A-39
Jeremy Debartolomeo	09/04/2024	Police	New Hire	A-59
Manuel Magdaleno	09/03/2024	Wastewater	Completed Probation	A-39
Raul Contreras	09/03/2024	Rodeo	Promotion to Operator	A-42 to A-44
Raul Contreras, Jr.	09/03/2024	Rodeo	Temp to Permanent	A-39

Seconded by Councilor Partridge, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Zilla Cannabis, LLC	R-R	539 Harold Drive	Tre Castillo	Micro Grow

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Heat & Pressure Medicine Company LLC d/b/a From Ash	R-R	539 Harold Drive	Dillon Owings	Cannabis Cultivation & Manufacturing
Casas de Piedra	R-R	400 Chaparral Dr.	William Tafoya	Agricultural Farming & Hay Sales
Car Buying Consultants LLC	NM Tech	319 Altamirano Hall	Prince Atsise	Helping People Buy Cars

Matt Kennicot owner of High Maintenance at 539 Harold Drive introduced Tre Castillo, Zilla Cannabis, LLC and Dillon Owings, Heat & Pressure Medicine Company LLC, d/b/a/ From Ash will have their own businesses at the farm. Mr. Kennicot informed the Council of the regulations of farming cannabis and offered tours of the cannabis farm to the Council.

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, September 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation



Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk