City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
April 7, 2026

Mayor Ravi 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 Joe Gonzales
- Councilor Damien Ocampo
- 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 April 7, 2026 City Council Agenda**
b. **Consideration of Minutes**
   i. **March 17, 2026**
   ii. **March 30, 2026**

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

PUBLIC FORUM

a. **Science Olympiad Team**

Azza Ezzat Socorro High School Science Olympiad Team Coach informed the Council that the team placed 1st at the State Science Olympiad competition. Ms. Azzat was named Coach of the Year. The team is now qualified for the finals to be held in California. Ms. Ezzat introduced team members that were present. The team will be traveling by train to California for the finals and asked if the city could help with financial support. Mayor Bhasker stated the city could help with $3,000.00 and the city will provide promotional items to help advertise the City of Socorro.

b. **Track Team**

Beth Cadol, Track Coach for Socorro Schools, presented the Mayor and Council with Socorro Track Team T-shirts that proudly displayed the City of Socorro logo across the back of each shirt.

Ms. Cadol highlighted the Track & Field season by the numbers:

- 50 High School and 20 Middle School athletes on the roster
- State Qualifying marks set by 6 athletes in 7 different events as of this meeting

- Hosted 3 teams for the "M" Mountain Relays (Middle School) on 3/11/3026
- Hosted 9 teams for the Socorro Middle School Meet on 3/25/2026
- Hosted 11 teams at the Zimmerly Relays on 3/27/2026
- Scheduled for City Clean-up on 4/10/2026, Sponsored by City of Socorro
- Hosting 2nd annual Socorro Community Track Meet fundraiser on 4/18/2026
- Hosting Coach Zimmerly's Hall of Fame Reception on 5/3/2026
- NMAA 3A State Meet will be held at UNM on 5/8 and 5/9/2026

Each member of the Track & Field team introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their events.

Ms. Cadol also invited all community members to participate in the Socorro Community Track Meet, which will be held on April 18, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

Councilor Ocampo announced that the Hall of Fame Celebration honoring Coach Zimmerly's 54 years of service to Socorro Warrior Athletics will be held on Sunday, May 3, 2026, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the City of Socorro Convention Center.

ORDINANCES

a. **Ordinance No. 26-04-07 – Approving a Community Energy Efficiency Development (CEED) Block Grant**

Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, presented Ordinance No. 26-04-07 for the Community Energy Efficiency Development (CEED) Block Grant from the New Mexico State Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, which would formally approve the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

Ms. Lopez stated that the grant will help improve energy efficiency in qualifying homes by funding windows, doors, appliances, HVAC systems, heating, and weather stripping. Once the ordinance is approved, the application process will begin and the project will go out to bid for a contractor.

Mariah Jaramillo, Delinquency Clerk, will administer the three-year program, working two days per week for a total of three hours until the grant is fully utilized.

Councilor Ocampo made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 26-04-07. Seconded by Councilor Dean.

Councilor Partridge stated that he rewatched the previous meeting and wanted clarification on whether selecting a contractor would require going out for bid. Ms. Lopez replied that the City will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a contractor.

Councilor Partridge asked if a general contractor would be selected and if the work would then be subcontracted. Ms. Lopez stated that she needs the ordinance approved before she can provide more information about the RFP.

Mayor Bhasker asked whether the work would be handled per account or if one contractor would manage the entire $1,000,000.00 project. Ms. Lopez explained that Ms. Jaramillo will manage the application process, and a city employee will assess each home to determine its needs. The contractor will then evaluate the cost.

Mayor Bhasker asked if the same contractor would be used for all projects. Ms. Lopez confirmed that one contractor would be selected, but that contractor would use subcontractors.

Mayor Bhasker then asked whether, for example, 30 jobs at $30,000 each would be individually bid or handled under a single contract. Ms. Lopez reiterated that it would be one contractor covering the entire program.

Mayor Bhasker asked how that contractor would be selected. Mr. Pineda stated that the grant agreement needs to be reviewed to determine whether it includes procurement requirements to guide the process.

Mayor Bhasker noted that Councilor Partridge's concern is that one contractor would control the entire $1,000,000.00. Ms. Lopez again confirmed that it would be one contractor. Mayor Bhasker added that once the ordinance is approved, the plan will be returned to Council outlining how the program will be implemented.

Councilor Gonzales stated that, for purposes of the grant, a general contractor will likely be required to manage and oversee the project, and that details on contractor payment will be clarified upon review of the grant agreement.

Mayor Bhasker reiterated his concern about the selection process for the contractor and stated that a committee would be formed to review proposals. Donald Monette added that all RFPs include scoring criteria for the selection process, and the final selection will require Council approval.

Mr. Pineda took a roll call vote, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Levee Status Update

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City was expected to benefit from the $50 million project completed approximately seven years ago, but it has not yet been able to remove the City from the floodplain.

Jay Santillanes, Floodplain Manager, stated that he has been working on this issue for many years. The first step was constructing the levee, followed by certification by FEMA. This has been a lengthy process, requiring information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Bohannan Huston is working for the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) to complete the recertification process, and at this point, the city is primarily observing the process.

The MRGCD will own and maintain the levee and worked with Bohannan Huston to submit

the certification package to FEMA on October 20, 2025. FEMA completed a cursory review on November 18, 2025, and provided comments. There were six comments, none of which were favorable. The levee does not meet minimum freeboard requirements based on base flood elevations.

Mr. Santillanes explained that several items still need to be addressed. A Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) will be required, which can be completed relatively easily; however, the Conservancy has had difficulty contacting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Additional requirements include a regional settlement comprehensive interior drainage flood analysis, submission of an adopted O&M plan, identification of responsible MRGCD personnel, and formal adoption of an emergency preparedness plan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' geotechnical report must also be certified and submitted, and a current levee inspection is required.

He further explained that the interior drainage study will evaluate the area between the levee and the channel that directs water around the city. FEMA is concerned that flooding could become trapped by the levee. While this is not believed to be the case, no study currently confirms that, so an extensive floodplain analysis is required.

Mayor Bhasker asked whether Mr. Santillanes could schedule a meeting with U.S. Representative Vasquez or one of the Senators to help advance the study. Mr. Santillanes confirmed that he would arrange those meetings.

Mr. Santillanes added that once the project is certified, the city can proceed with a Letter of Map Revision to update the floodplain designation citywide, which should lower flood plain insurance for numerous residents.

Councilor Fleming noted that residents have questions about flood insurance rates, as many expected them to decrease, and asked how long the process might take. Mr. Santillanes replied that once the levee is certified, it would take at least eight months to complete the Letter of Map Revision. However, due to the current delays, the drainage study alone could take a minimum of one year, plus an additional eight months for the LOMR, for a total of approximately two years.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Santillanes and Matejka Santillanes for their assistance during the legislative session and their work on behalf of the city. Mr. Santillanes then provided an update on the legislative session.

b. <u>Bid Award – IFB 031926 - Police Station Upgrade</u>

Mr. Pineda presented Bid Award IFB 031926 – Police Station Upgrade-and stated that there were two parts to the bid: Electrical and Mechanical. Mr. Pineda recommended that both bids be awarded to Romero's Heating & Cooling as the low bidder.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to award the bids to Romero's Heating & Cooling. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

c. **Municipal Court Progress**

Mayor Bhasker reported that, following the resignation of both the Municipal Judge and Court Clerk, the City had to start from scratch. Lena Chavez, Assistant City Administrator, has begun learning the process during the transition period with newly appointed Municipal Judge Jason Jones.

Ms. Chavez is currently working to bring citations in arrears up to date and has been receiving assistance from the Municipal Court in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Judge Jones is receiving training on Zoom and is expected to begin holding court soon.

Councilor Dean stated that it was unfortunate, as it was the beginning of Judge Gutierrez's term when he resigned. Councilor Partridge asked about the timeline. Ms. Chavez replied that a Municipal Judge from Los Alamos will serve as Judge Jones's mentor, and, depending on his training progress, they hope to be operational within two weeks. She added that they are currently accepting payments and learning the system to enter citations and maintain daily operations.

Councilor Dean asked whether a Court Clerk would be hired. Mayor Bhasker responded that a clerk will be hired to work three days per week rather than five.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported that Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham will be in Socorro on Saturday, April 18, 2026, for the Clean Up New Mexico program, "Breaking Bad Habits." Mayor Bhasker asked if Mayor Pro Tem Chavez-Lopez would represent the city.

Councilor Ocampo reported that on April 8, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at the Socorro High School library, there will be a presentation on early college, a program that allows students to earn an associate's degree while attending high school.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported that the clubhouse at the Rodeo Complex is now open, where people at the RV park can take showers, wash clothes, watch television, and relax.

Councilor Ocampo asked Recreation Director Michael Padilla if he had received any complaints about the City's Easter Egg Hunt, as there were two competing events around town. Mr. Padilla noted that there was also a fishing derby taking place. Councilor Ocampo suggested that future events be coordinated so people can attend all of them. Mr. Padilla stated that the event included 5,000 eggs.

Mayor Bhasker reported that he would like to receive an update from the New Mexico Department of Transportation regarding the Highway 60 project. He added that fiber installation on California Street will begin from the north end to Spring Street, and the city is working to secure approximately $80,000.00 to stripe California Street.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez asked if there are plans for the $790,000 state appropriation at the Rodeo Complex. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to install a jumbotron at the Rodeo Arena and hopes to allocate some funds to the Convention Center, including enhancements to the El Camino Real Heritage Center, as well as a covered gathering area. He welcomed additional suggestions.

Mr. Santillanes stated that he works with Rural Telephone Broadband and that Western New Mexico Communications is completing a 72-mile fiber project from San Acacia to San Antonio in areas not currently served by TDS.

Mayor Bhasker reported that the City met with TDS regarding construction complaints, and that the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission will meet this Thursday on the Socorro Electric Cooperative rate case. He also reported that a green energy company is interested in developing a data center west of the mountain, and another company plans to install test wells on the south side of the Rodeo Complex for geothermal exploration. Mr. Pineda added that the City has been tentatively approved for a grant for battery backup and substation design, which could complement geothermal or solar energy projects. Additionally, the EPA is discussing installing a pump system to begin groundwater cleanup at the Eagle Picher Carefree Battery Superfund Site.

Mayor Bhasker reported that the City is in the process of obtaining a survey and appraisal for the 50,000-square-foot Smith's building for potential purchase. The City is also meeting with Pearson Ranch and Jay Armijo from the Council of Governments to explore potential federal economic development grants. Mr. Pearson plans to lease the building and expects to create approximately 30 jobs.

Mayor Bhasker stated that he attended a school board meeting and provided an update on the baseball fields.

Mayor Bhasker also reported that, through mediation, the city settled a case against the Police Department for $25,000.00 for each of the two claims.

EXECUTIVE SESSION
None

MAYOR'S REPOR

a. Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Daniel Sanchez	04/07/2026	Landfill	Temp to Permanent	A-37
Roy Baca	04/07/2026	Landfill	Recycling Facility Operator Certification	P-64 to P-66
David Gutierrez, Jr.	04/07/2026	Police	New Hire	A-61
Alfredo Alvarado	03/25/2026	Water	Resignation	
Brittany McDaniel	03/27/2026	Municipal Court	Resignation	

Seconded by Councilor Ocampo, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Cypress Natural Resources,LLC	R-1	1213 Hilton Pl	Jolante Van Wijk	Online Training & Consulting
Cine Con Voyage LLC	C-2	203 Manzanares Ave E	Myriah Burleson	Travel Agency
Desert Power LLC	C-2	302 Otero Ave E	Joseph Padilla	Electrical Contractor
Bluedasher Pilot Car Services	Out of Town	Magdalena, NM	Tonya Mosier	Pilot Car

Seconded by Councilor Dean, 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, April 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk