City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
June 16, 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 Joe Gonzales
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

Council members remotely present at roll call:

- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.

Council members absent at roll call:

- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Damien Ocampo

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. **Approval of June 16 2026, City Council Agenda**
b. **Consideration of Minutes**
    i. **May 19, 2026**
c. **Voucher Run**

The Voucher Run included vouchers 167138 to 167363 in the amount of $2,837,278.26 plus Payroll Transfers $615,996.43 for a total of $3,453,274.69.

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

PUBLIC FORUM

a. **Melissa Hurtgen**

Melissa Hurtgen addressed the Council and proposed an initiative that she believes would honor Socorro's history, strengthen the community's identity, and celebrate one of the most iconic figures associated with the region. Ms. Hurtgen requested that the Council establish June 14 as Elfego Baca Day, beginning next year.

Ms. Hurtgen stated that Elfego Baca is a legendary figure of the Southwest whose courage, resilience, and commitment to justice reflect the spirit of Socorro. She noted that his famous standoff in Frisco (now Reserve, New Mexico), his lifelong dedication to law and fairness, and his larger-than-life presence in New Mexico history exemplify the character and grit of the region. Ms. Hurtgen further stated that Socorro does not currently have an official day recognizing Elfego Baca and that June 14 would be an appropriate date to celebrate both his legacy and the City's history.

Ms. Hurtgen asked the Council to consider adopting June 14 as an official day of recognition so that future generations of Socorro may continue to learn from and be inspired by the courage and character of Elfego Baca.

Mayor Bhasker noted that there is a Disney movie about Elfego Baca and pointed out that the park adjacent to City Hall is named Elfego Baca Park. He also remarked that Elfego Baca served as a lawyer, sheriff, and Mayor of Socorro. Mayor Bhasker encouraged Ms. Hurtgen to work with the City on preparing a resolution to formally establish the recognition.

Ms. Hurtgen also acknowledged three young girls participating in the 4-H program who are learning about citizenship and stated that she believed this initiative would serve as a positive example for them.

Councilor Salome mentioned that there was once an annual Elfego Baca Shoot, during which golfers would tee off from the top of M Mountain and drive their golf balls down toward the golf course. Councilor Salome stated that the event gained national recognition, was featured in Sports Illustrated, and received coverage from ESPN. He further noted that the event was part of the Hilton Open Golf Tournament, which was named in honor of Conrad Hilton.

b. Mary Ruff

Mary Ruff addressed the Council and requested that the city adopt a moratorium on data centers and related infrastructure, similar to the moratorium previously approved by Socorro County. Ms. Ruff also requested that the moratorium be extended to include utility-scale solar developments whose primary purpose is to supply power to transmission projects, such as SunZia.

Ms. Ruff added that "No Data Center" signs are available at the Capitol Bar for anyone interested in obtaining one.

c. Vanetta Perry

Vanetta Perry addressed the Council and encouraged the city to adopt a moratorium on data centers. Ms. Perry also stated that she is opposed to the camera system (ANNIE proposed by Michael Olguin) that was presented at the previous City Council meeting. She expressed concerns that the cameras are closely connected to data center operations, may be vulnerable to hacking, and could result in private information associated with vehicle owners being transmitted to data centers. Ms. Perry stated that, for these reasons, she is strongly opposed to both the camera system and data centers.

d. Christy Smith

Christy Smith asked about the status of the Smith's Building and the jerky company. Mayor Bhasker responded that the city is working to secure state funding through the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to purchase the building. He stated that an appraisal and a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment have been completed.

Mayor Bhasker further explained that there is an estimated $4 million funding gap to fully rehabilitate the building, while approximately $1.3 million would be required to make it usable as a warehouse. He stated that, even if the current prospective tenant does not move forward, the city intends to acquire the building and put it to productive use. Ms. Smith also added that the

city needs entrepreneurial growth and to try to improve the business climate in Socorro.

e. Cari Powell

Cari Powell, Manager of the Bosque del Apache Festival of the Cranes, thanked the city for once again awarding a Lodgers' Tax grant to the event. She stated that the funding helps bring world-renowned speakers to the festival and assists with covering event costs.

Ms. Powell expressed her appreciation to Cheyenne Cortez, Tourism and Convention Center Director; Daryl Ross, Tourism; and Carlos Saavedra, Transportation Director, for their partnership and support of the Festival of the Cranes.

Mayor Bhasker added that the city budgeted $15,000 for the event.

Speaking as a private citizen, Ms. Powell stated that she is a candidate for the district 1 seat on the Socorro County Commission and appreciated the opportunity to address the Council. She also expressed support for the comments regarding a citywide moratorium on data centers. In addition, she stated her opposition to the ANNIE camera system, also referred to as Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs).

Mayor Bhasker asked Donald Monette, City Administrator, what the next steps would be for the ANNIE program. Administrator Monette responded that the city is waiting to receive sample ordinances from other municipalities to better understand what is being proposed. He confirmed that implementation would require an amendment to the Uniform Traffic Code through the adoption of an ordinance.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the city would not move forward without a public process. He explained that if the Council wished to proceed with the program, it would still be required to go through the ordinance adoption process, including a public hearing and approximately six weeks of public notice and advertising. Mayor Bhasker emphasized that all proceedings would be conducted openly and transparently in accordance with public meeting requirements and not behind closed doors.

PROCLAMATIONS & AWARDS

a. Kenneth Greenwood - Retirement

Mayor Bhasker presented Kenneth Greenwood a plaque as a token of appreciation for his 27 years of dedicated service with the City of Socorro Police Department. Angel Garcia, Police Chief stated that he and Kenneth started with the department about the same time and it has been a pleasure to have him as the Assistant Police Chief. Kenneth was surrounded by his family and fellow police officers.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Public Hearing – Beer Wholesaler Liquor License – Box Canyon Brewing Company

Councilor Romero made a motion to go into public hearing. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

Robert Rincones, owner of Box Canyon Brewing Company, and David Kinders, Brewmaster, addressed the Council and stated that they have completed an expansion that doubled the size of their brewery. They explained that several restaurants in town have

requested to carry Box Canyon beer, but the company cannot legally distribute to those establishments until it receives an additional Beer Wholesaler Liquor License.

Mr. Kinders added that he has been with Box Canyon since 2022 and has witnessed the business's continued growth. He noted that the brewery's top three beers are its pilsner, red ale, and stout.

Councilor Dean thanked Box Canyon Brewing Company for its continued support of the local music scene.

After hearing no public comment, Councilor Romero made a motion to go back into regular session. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

b. Council Action on Beer Wholesaler Liquor License

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to approve the Beer Wholesaler Liquor License for Box Canyon Brewing Company. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

c. Memorandum of Agreement – Socorro Regional Aquatic Center

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City of Socorro Swimming Pool is now known as the Socorro Regional Aquatic Center, following the City's lease of the facility to New Mexico Tech at a nominal lease rate. The Mayor discussed the fees associated with the use of the aquatic center and noted that the city will provide $110,000 to help subsidize the operation of the facility. He stated that the lease is for one year and includes termination clauses for both parties.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez asked whether children would be required to pay to swim. Mayor Bhasker responded that children will be admitted free of charge during the summer, as provided in the lease agreement.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the facility will operate year-round and added that, if New Mexico Tech is eventually able to enclose the pool, it would further enhance the quality of life in Socorro.

Councilor Salome stated that he has spoken with members of the community and that many feel the purpose of the swim center has changed. He said the pool has traditionally been a place where children and families could gather to swim, and that the new operational model includes somewhat higher user fees. He encouraged the public to be patient during the transition and to support the changes as the program moves forward.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement for the Socorro Regional Aquatic Center. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

d. Resolution No. 26-06-16a – Internet Installer Training Week

Kirsten Keller, Executive Director of the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association, and Andy Excel, representing the New Mexico State Office of Broadband Access and Expansion, presented Resolution No. 26-06-16a.

Mr. Excel stated that the State of New Mexico is making significant investments to close the digital divide and ensure that every community has access to reliable, high-speed internet. He

explained that the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion has received grant funding to provide free broadband workforce training to New Mexicans. He noted that New Mexico is receiving unprecedented state and federal funding for broadband infrastructure through the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion and the Department of Workforce Solutions; however, a shortage of trained broadband technicians could undermine those investments.

The presenters explained that the program, in partnership with BICSI, offers intensive four-and-one-half-day, hands-on training courses that lead to industry-recognized certifications in broadband, copper, and fiber installation. The program's three-year goal is to conduct at least 14 training classes, enroll 250 participants, and award 200 certifications statewide.

Ms. Keller stated that Socorro will host a training class August 3–7 at the America's Job Center, with space for 8 to 16 participants. She noted that local residents will be able to complete the training without leaving the community. The presenters stated that recruitment efforts are focused on dislocated workers, young adults, and residents of rural and tribal communities. They are also partnering with Socorro High School, the America's Job Center, and the City of Socorro to recruit participants for the training.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-16a. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution No. 26-06-16b – Adopting FY2028-2032 Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP)

Donald Monette, City Administrator, presented Resolution No. 26-06-16b. He stated that this is an annual process and that the resolution must be submitted electronically by July 1. A list of the proposed projects, along with their respective scores, was included in the Council packets.

Councilor Dean made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-16b. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution No. 26-06-16c – Adopting FY 2028-2032 Socorro Senior Center Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP)

Councilor Dean made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-16c. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

g. Resolution No. 26-06-16d – Adopting FY 2028-2032 Veguita Senior Center Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP)

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-16d. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

h. Resolution No. 26-06-16-16e – Delegating Signatory Responsibilities and Authority for Capital Outlay Agreements to Mayor Ravi Bhasker

Councilor Chavez-Lopez made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-16e. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

i. New Mexico Municipal League Voting Delegate and Alternate

Administrator Monette stated that the New Mexico Municipal League requires the City's

designated delegate and alternate to attend the Annual Conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico, August 25–28, with the business meeting scheduled for August 27.

Mayor Bhasker stated that Councilor Romero will serve as the City's delegate and Councilor Dean will serve as the alternate.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the New Mexico Municipal League Voting Delegate and Alternate. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Romero stated that several residents had asked about the swimming pool hours and which website they should use to obtain that information.

City Clerk Pineda responded that the City's website is linked to the New Mexico Tech website, which provides the aquatic center's hours of operation and other pool-related information.

Councilor Romero stated that people have been noticing the activity taking place at Hefner Pond.

Mayor Bhasker explained that the city has several projects currently underway. He stated that Hefner Pond (Newberry Pond) was originally a borrow pit used during the construction of Interstate 25 and is located at the corner of Lopezville Road and Newberry Road. He further explained that the Eagle Picher site is currently under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New Mexico Environment Department.

Mayor Bhasker stated that contaminated water from the flume at the Eagle Picher Superfund Site will be treated through a filtration and oxygenation process before being pumped into Hefner Pond (Newberry Pond). He explained that holding ponds are also being constructed to drain into the pond.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the city currently has no control over the Eagle Picher site. However, it is anticipated that the site will be turned back over to the city by next year, at which time the City hopes to clean up the Hefner Pond area (Newberry Pond) and develop it for public recreational use.

Mayor Bhasker also reported that the Finley project is nearing completion. He stated that the Airport will be receiving two new buildings, including a snow removal equipment building and a new hangar. He further stated that the Cuba Road project will be going out for bid soon.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the renovation of the Police Station at the former Zimmerly School has become complicated and very expensive, with the project estimated to cost approximately $6 million. He also reported that the EMRTC bridge project is in the process of revising its plans now that it is federally funded. Likewise, the $2 million CNG station expansion is experiencing similar issues because it is also a federally funded project.

Lloyd Martinez, General Services Director, reported that $220,000 is being invested in landscaping and the installation of two solar-powered signs at the north interstate entrance to the city. He also stated that $785,000 has been allocated for the sod project at Sedillo Park, which will include the Little League and girls' softball fields, with work expected to begin around August 3.

Mr. Martinez further reported that the city is still awaiting $1 million in funding for the artificial turf

installation at the hardball field. He stated that the monument at the El Camino Real Heritage Center will be relocated to the area near the Convention Center by December. He also reported that funding is available for improvements to the Rodeo Arena, including covering the north side, adding additional horse stalls and RV spaces, and chip sealing the parking lot and roads leading into the Sports Complex.

City Clerk Pineda reported that the city received a $610,000 grant for the design of a substation and battery backup system for the Socorro Electric Cooperative. The system would be used to support either geothermal or solar energy.

Mayor Bhasker informed the Council that the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC) will meet on June 18, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. One of the agenda items is the adjudication of the penalty assessed against the Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC). The city does not want the penalty passed on to the members of the cooperative, and City Clerk Pineda will attend the meeting to represent the City.

City Clerk Pineda stated that the interveners have already informed the NMPRC that the penalty should not be paid by the members of SEC. The NMPRC is considering assessing SEC a penalty equal to one-fifth of the $948,000 penalty. At the last meeting, one Commissioner proposed increasing the penalty to one-fourth of the $948,000, as well as requiring a refund of approximately $600,000 in overcharges collected during the period of noncompliance, with interest, to be returned to the members.

City Clerk Pineda further stated that another issue under consideration is whether any board member who served during the period of noncompliance would be prohibited from running for the board again. The current board president is the only remaining board member from that period, and under the proposed action, he would not be eligible to seek re-election when his current term expires. The Commission questioned whether such a restriction would be legally enforceable.

Mariah Jaramillo, Delinquency Clerk, informed the Council that the City of Socorro will begin accepting applications for the CEED Grant on June 17 at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers and every Tuesday and Thursday thereafter from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis for grants of up to $25,000, subject to financial eligibility requirements. Income limits are as follows: one-person household, under $30,000; two-person household, under $40,000; three-person household, under $50,000; with higher household sizes following the program guidelines. Applications will be accepted until all available funds have been exhausted.

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
Justin Pacheco	06/16/2026	Fire	EMT – Intermediate Certificate	C-66 to C-68

Jeremiah Garza	06/16/2026	Fire	Firefighter 1 & 2 Certificates	A-62 to A-66
Ashlyn Aguilar	06/16/2026	Fire	EMT Intermediate Certificate	C-66 to C-68
Thomas Padilla	06/16/2026	Fire	Inspector 1, 2, & 3	D-68 to D-70
Michael Padilla	06/16/2026	Recreation	Transfer to Fire	H-61 to H-70
Christopher Carrillo	06/16/2026	Code Enforcement	Transfer to Recreation Director	I-49 to I-55
Jorge Sedillo	06/16/2026	Landfill	Equipment Operator II	H-44 to H-46
Enrique Robles	06/16/2026	Landfill	Landfill Operator Certificate	E-414 to E-43
Placido Chavez	06/16/2026	Water	Promotion to Water Foreman	I-49 to I-52

Seconded by Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Nu Skin Haus	C-1	200 Neel Ave.	Marquisha Herron	Esthetics
Triangle Paving Company Inc.	Out of Town	Albuquerque, NM	Mark Maydew	Road Repair/Crack Filling/ Seal Coating
Desert Moon Therapy LLC	C-1	110 Bernard St.	Michelle Dugginns	Behavioral Health Agency/Mental Health Therapy
Morning Mead LLC	Transient Vendor	Magdalena, NM	Patrick & Jesee Montoya	Coffee & Beverages Trailer

Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, 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, July 28, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk