City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
July 28, 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 Deborah Dean
- Councilor Nick Fleming
- Councilor Joe Gonzales
- Councilor Damien Ocampo
- Councilor Joel D. Partridge, Jr.
- Councilor Peter Romero
- Councilor Anton Salome

Council members absent at roll call:

- Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Mayor Bhasker led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. **Approval of July 28 2026, City Council Agenda**
b. **Consideration of Minutes**
    i. **June 16, 2026**
c. **Voucher Run**
    i. **June 30,2026**

The Voucher Run included vouchers 167364 to 167474 in the amount of $771,532,22 plus Payroll Transfers $325,496.16 for a total of $1,097,028.38.

    ii. **July 22, 2026**

The Voucher Run included vouchers 167475 to 167649 in the amount of $2,301,484.80 plus Payroll Transfers $329,769.30 for a total of $2,631,254.10.

d. **Budget Resolution No. 26 – EMS Recruitment Fund**
e. **Budget Resolution No. 27 – Revolving Loan Fund**
f. **Budget Resolution No. 28 – Special Utility Fund**
g. **Budget Resolution No. 29 - Lodgers Tax Fund**
h. **Budget Resolution No. 30 – Senior Center**
i. **Budget Resolution No. 31 – Economic Development**
j. **Budget Resolution No. 32 – State Grants**
k. **Budget Resolution No. 33 – Airport Construction**
l. **Budget Resolution No. 34 – Street Improvement Fund**
m. **Budget Resolution No. 35 – State Appropriation Fund**
n. **Budget Resolution No. 36 – Jt. Enterprise Fund**
o. **Budget Resolution No. 37 – Substance Abuse Grant Fund**
p. **Budget Resolution No. 38 – General Fund**
q. **Budget Resolution No. 39 – Ambulance Supplement Fund**
r. **In-House Budget Resolution No. 106**
s. **In-House Budget Resolution No. 107**

t. **In-House Budget Resolution No. 108**

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

PUBLIC FORUM

a. **Data Center Moratorium and License Plate Reading Camera Systems**

A large number of citizens addressed the Council in support of the City of Socorro adopting a moratorium on large scale solar and Data Centers. The group also opposed any type of license plate camera systems.
Citizen's speaking were:

- Mary Ruff
- John Hurtz
- Janet Goldstien
- Val Thomas
- Janice Happ
- Keri Powell
- Lily Holcomb
- Leslie Johnson
- James Boswell

Mayor Bhasker stated he is not in favor of a blanket moratorium. It needs to speak specifically about electricity, utility rates, water, the destruction of land, the value of the outdoors, and the value of VLA. The mayor will meet with Mr. Hurtz and Ms. Ruff on August 4, 2026, to discuss the moratorium.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. **Housing Need Study Presentation**

Karli Salisbury, representing the Thriving Communities Program, presented the findings and recommendations from the City of Socorro Housing Needs Assessment. The assessment was completed through a community-informed process involving local partners, stakeholder interviews, a resident survey with 324 responses, housing market and demographic analysis, affordability and needs assessments, and a land use and policy review.

Ms. Salisbury highlighted key findings, over 1,500 workers commute to Socorro, an aging housing stock, with 49% of homes built before 1980, limited housing availability despite a high vacancy rate, and housing affordability challenges, with 58% of renters considered cost burdened. The study also found that nearly 80% of survey respondents identified housing affordability as a priority, 42% of renters would like to become homeowners, and employers reported difficulty recruiting workers due to housing shortages.

The presentation noted that Socorro has several assets to support future housing development, including city-owned land with existing utilities, affordable utility costs, available electrical capacity, a significant number of workers commuting into the community, and strong partnerships with local institutions.

Ms. Salisbury concluded by outlining immediate priorities for the next two years, including recruiting housing developers through incentive programs, identifying and preparing developable

sites, expanding efforts to rehabilitate vacant housing, and establishing a Housing Taskforce to oversee implementation and monitor progress.

Councilor Ocampo stated that the presentation was "eye-opening" and described economic development as being like spokes on a wheel, emphasizing that progress requires participation from all stakeholders.

The presenters recommended the city hire a dedicated economic development person for the city to help keep stakeholders accountable.

b. ANNIE Presentation

Michael Olguin presented information on the ANNIE (Automated National Non-Invasive Insurance Enforcement System) program. He stated that New Mexico previously had the third-highest rate of uninsured motorists in the country but is now ranked number one. He explained that ANNIE is a law enforcement tool that integrates Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology with insurance verification to identify uninsured vehicles while minimizing traffic stops. The system is intended to improve public safety, reduce litigation risk, provide investigative intelligence through a CJIS-compliant database, and generate passive revenue to support law enforcement operations. Mr. Olguin also stated that the program can supplement existing ALPR systems by providing additional vehicle and registration information, as well as supporting maintenance and licensing for participating agencies.

Many members of the audience voiced their opposition to the use of Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) systems and directed questions to Mr. Olguin regarding the program. Councilors Partridge and Ocampo also expressed their opposition to the use of ALPR systems.

Mayor Bhasker stated that he wanted to bring the ANNIE program into the public discussion and that it was up to the Council to decide whether to place the matter on a future agenda for a vote.

c. MRGED/Bohann Houston Economic Development Plan Overview

Ciaran Lithgow of Bohannan Huston and Kirstin Keller of the Middle Rio Grande Economic Development Association (MRGEDA) presented the City of Socorro Economic Development Plan. The presentation included an overview of existing demographic, housing, and workforce conditions, noting population challenges, an aging housing stock, workforce commuting patterns, and the importance of expanding housing and employment opportunities to support economic growth. The presenters also reviewed the stakeholder engagement process, which included participation from the city, Socorro County, New Mexico Tech, Socorro Consolidated Schools, MRGEDA, Socorro General Hospital, America's Job Center, and other community partners.

The presenters outlined the plan's vision of establishing Socorro as a thriving hub along New Mexico's emerging I-25 economic corridor by leveraging research, agriculture, natural resources, and community partnerships to create jobs, attract investment, and improve quality of life. The overarching goal of the plan is to stabilize and grow the City's population through six strategic goals focused on workforce development, youth and childcare resources, housing and commercial investment, expanded retail opportunities, tourism development, and agricultural sustainability.

The presentation concluded with a summary of recommended implementation strategies, including workforce training and business incubation, attracting housing and commercial investment, downtown revitalization, expanding tourism assets, supporting local agriculture, and establishing initiatives to encourage long-term economic growth and investment throughout the community.

Councilor Salome added that Socorro needs to attract businesses that manufacture products that are sold outside our community. However, with industrial electricity rates that are 85% higher than the state average, we are at a competitive disadvantage. The incentive for people to start businesses is profit, and with higher input costs, such as electricity, it is difficult to remain competitive. Manufacturing businesses compete regionally, if not nationally and even globally.

d. Bid Award – RFP 070126 - Community Energy Efficiency Development Program
Councilor Salome made a motion to award the bid to E-Z-I Construction and LGE Construction Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution No. 001A (Final) – 2026-2027 Budget Adoption
Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, presented Resolution No. 001A (Final). She explained that, if approved, the resolution would adopt the City's final budget for Fiscal Year 2026–2027.

Councilor Dean made a motion to approve Resolution No. 001A (Final). Seconded by Councilor Ocampo, motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution No. 26-07-28a – 4th Quarter Report
Finance Director Lopez presented the 4th Quarter Report for approval.

Councilor Partridge made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-07-28a. Seconded by Councilor Salome, motion passed unanimously.

g. Resolution No. 26-07-28b – South Central Council of Governments FY26-27 Participation
Administrator Monette stated that Councilor Chavez-Lopez would serve as the delegate, with Councilor Dean serving as the alternate.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-07-28b. Seconded by Councilor Dean, motion passed unanimously.

h. Resolution No. 26-07-28c – Local Government Road Fund Cooperative Agreement
Administrator Monette stated that this is an agreement between the City of Socorro and the New Mexico Department of Transportation for the FY 2027 Local Government Road Fund for Park Street. The Department's share is $91,575, the City's share is $30,522, and the total project cost is $122,087.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-07-28c. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

i. Resolution No. 26-07-28d – Disposition of Vehicles
Councilor Partridge made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-07-28d. Seconded by

Sarah A. Stanley	08/15/2026	Fire	Resignation	

Seconded by Dean, motion passed unanimously.

c. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Cruz del Sur	Out of Town	Caballo, NM	Tracee Southern	Food Trailer
Rio Outdoors, LLC	Out of Town	La Joya, NM	Jericho Barela	Hunting Outfitter
On the Cusp Dental Studios LLC	C-1	200 Manzanares Ave.	Benjamin Waites	Dental Office
Advanced Environmental Solution, Inc.	Out of Town	Belen, NM	Robert Chavez	Environmental & Construction Services
Soley's Auto Sales	C-2	209 California	Marielena Lopez	Used Moter Vehicle Sales
Bubba's Bug Bust	Out of Town	Lemitar, NM	Kenneth Santillanes	Pest Control
Aramark Educational Services	NM Tech	801 Leroy Pl	Barbara Flanagan	Collegiate Hospitality Food & Beverage

Seconded by Councilor Dean, 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, August 18, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (111 School of Mines Rd.).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk