City of Socorro Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
September 15, 2026

Mayor Ravi 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 Nick Fleming
- 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
- Councilor Deborah Dean
- Councilor Joe Gonzales

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

a. **Approval of September 15, 2026, City Council Agenda**
b. **Consideration of Minutes**
   i. **August 18, 2026**
c. **Voucher Run**

The Voucher Run included vouchers 167808 to 168009 in the amount of $2,111,740.37 plus Payroll Transfers $325,120.83 for a total of $2,436,861.20.

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

PUBLIC FORUM

a. **Cody Johnston, Socorro Stingray Coach**

Coach Johnston stated that he was unable to get on the agenda earlier because he had been out of town and was unable to organize the swimmers and coaches to attend the meeting. He expressed his gratitude to the City for its continued support of the swim team, including providing transportation and insurance. He stated that without the City's support, participation costs could increase to approximately $200 per swimmer, which could make the program unaffordable for many participants.

Mr. Johnston reported that this was his fourth year as head coach and that the team had 65 swimmers this year, compared to 79 the previous year. He attributed the decrease in participation, in part, to the late start of the season. He noted that the program had more new swimmers this year than in recent years and anticipated participation increasing to approximately 80 to 85 swimmers in the future.

Mr. Johnston stated that the team normally begins training in May through a high school clinic; however, this year's season was reduced from approximately 10 weeks to four weeks because the team was able to get into the water later than usual. He stated that New Mexico Tech had done a good job operating the facility and providing lifeguards and staff.

Mr. Johnston explained that, depending on the availability of the pool, he hopes the regular swim season will begin again in May. He added that he and Coach Dow are currently conducting informal, independently insured, out-of-season activities because the league does not allow the team to swim outside its regular season.

Councilor Partridge thanked Mr. Johnston and the coaches for their work with the City's youth and recognized the program for providing a positive and competitive environment while promoting swimming as a lifelong activity that supports health and fitness.

b. **Mary Ruff**

Ms. Ruff addressed the Mayor and City Council regarding proposed industrial development, specifically industrial-scale data centers. She stated that citizens deserve to be informed about proposed developments within the community and expressed concern that development could proceed before all potential impacts are examined and before the public has an opportunity to voice concerns.

Ms. Ruff stated that a moratorium would temporarily pause industrial-scale data center development until reasonable safeguards could be established. She asked how the city would ensure that Socorro residents are immediately notified if the city is approached by a data center developer.

During the discussion, it was noted that the city had previously indicated it would wait for recommendations from the County's Blue-Ribbon Committee. Ms. Ruff clarified that she was not requesting that the City immediately establish specific ordinances regulating data centers. Rather, she requested a temporary pause on industrial-scale data center development, distinguishing such facilities from smaller, business-owned data centers, to allow the Blue-Ribbon Committee time to complete its work and develop recommendations for potential ordinances.

Mayor Bhasker stated that, from an administrative standpoint, he was not in favor of implementing a general moratorium on data centers before the city had specific information regarding the types of developments that may be proposed. He stated that he believed a blanket moratorium would be too broad and that the city should consider the recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Committee before taking action.

Mayor Bhasker emphasized that the city conducts its business openly and stated that if a data center developer approached the city or requested information, the matter would be made public. He further stated that the city does not sign nondisclosure agreements regarding such matters.

Mayor Bhasker stated that he was not opposed to data centers in general but had concerns regarding their potential use of the City's water and electricity and any resulting impact on

residents' utility costs. He stated that proposals involving alternative technologies that reduce water and electricity demands could be considered and discussed publicly.

Mayor Bhasker also discussed the City's water resources, stating that the City currently uses approximately 1.6 million gallons of water per day and has additional capacity available from its three producing wells. He stated that any proposed data center would need to be evaluated based on its specific resource requirements.

Mayor Bhasker stated that he did not believe the city should broadly prohibit potential development opportunities, particularly given the needs of a small community. He reiterated that proposed developments should be evaluated individually and stated that the city would continue looking to the Blue-Ribbon Committee for recommendations and guidance regarding data centers and the community's available resources.

c. Janet Goldstein

Ms. Goldstein stated that she supported Mary Ruff's comments. She said there was no reason to postpone action or not to have a moratorium until after the Blue-Ribbon Committee releases its report, at least a one-year moratorium would be preferable. She suggested looking to the county for guidance towards a resolution and stated that allowing these developments to proceed and extract resources was not worth the risk to the environment.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Lea Graham, Fiber Arts Guild – Quilts of Valor

Lea Graham, representing the Fiber Arts Guild of Socorro County and the Quilts of Valor Foundation, gave a presentation recognizing Councilor Peter Romero for his military and community service. Graham provided a brief history of both organizations and explained the mission of Quilts of Valor to honor and comfort veterans and service members through handmade quilts.

Graham highlighted Councilor Romero's service in the United States Marine Corps from 1971 to 1977, including his service in Okinawa and with the Marine Security Guard program, which took him to numerous locations around the world. She also recognized his continued service to the Socorro community following his military career. Councilor Romero was presented with a Quilt of Valor in appreciation of his dedicated service to the country and community.

b. Bid Award – IFB 090526 – Cuba Road Street & Drainage Improvements – Phase II

Administrator Monette presented Bid Award IFB 090526. Following reviews by Dennis Engineering and Leopoldo Pineda, City Clerk/CPO, they recommended awarding the bid to GM Emulsion in the amount of $747,704.58.

Councilor Romero made a motion to award the bid to GM Emulsion. Seconded by Councilor Partridge, motion passed unanimously.

c. Special Use Permit – Economy Inn

Kristy Padilla, Planning and Zoning Manager presented a Special Use Permit request for the property located at 400 California Street to allow the periodic use of the property by food trucks/transient vendors. Histsh Patel, the property owner, was unable to attend the meeting.

Staff reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and approved the request to allow transient vendors at the location.
Councilor Partridge made a motion to approve the Special Use Permit for Economy Inn. Seconded by Councilor Ocampo, motion passed unanimously.

d. Special Use Permit – Tami Steddum

Ms. Padilla presented a Special Use Permit request for 5/9 Design. The request is to allow the installation of an 864-square-foot, unmanned, prefabricated fiber-optic building at the corner of Spring Street and Lita Ortega Street. The proposed facility will include a backup generator and security fencing.

Rex Atkinson with Five Nine Design Group explained that the company consists of architects and engineers who design prefabricated fiber-optic utility buildings for fiber-optic companies throughout the country. He stated that the proposed facility would house equipment used to regenerate fiber-optic light signals and support the existing fiber-optic utility network adjacent to the property.

Mr. Atkinson explained that the proposed facility would be unmanned and enclosed by a chain-link security fence. The building would house the necessary fiber-optic equipment and would be equipped with a 500-kW backup diesel generator and air-conditioning units. Because the facility would be unmanned, no water service would be required.

Ms. Padilla stated that the property is zoned R-4 residential and reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission had previously considered the request and recommended denial based on the residential zoning designation. She explained that the Commission also expressed concerns regarding the proposed use and its compatibility with the surrounding area. Ms. Padilla further noted that the Commission requested consideration of a more solid screening wall in place of chain-link fencing.

Councilor Partridge asked whether other properties had been considered that would not require a Special Use Permit. It was explained that other locations had been explored; however, property owners were not interested in selling. Mayor Bhasker stressed that if the location was at the Industrial Park no special use permit would be required and with fiber running in that area would have been an ideal location.

Councilor Partridge asked whether, if the Special Use Permit were denied for the proposed location, the applicant would be permitted to return with a request for a different location. It was recommended that the applicant consult with City Administration to identify a more suitable location before proceeding with a new request.

Councilor Salome made a motion to follow the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission and deny the Special Use Permit. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

e. Special Use Permit – Heinrick Bornhorst – R & D Consulting and Robotics

Mayor Bhasker stated that the matter had been forwarded to the City's attorney for review and that a copy of the attorney's letter had been provided to Mr. Bornhorst. He explained that the

recommendation was to refer the matter back to the Planning and Zoning Commission so that the questions raised during the meetings could be addressed. Mayor Bhasker requested Council action to return the matter to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further consideration.

Councilor Partridge made a motion to send the Special Use Permit for Heinrick Bornhorst back to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Seconded by Councilor Fleming.

Mayor Bhasker noted that concerns arose after reviewing the information provided on the building permit, which identified the structure as a warehouse. Additional concerns were expressed that certain information regarding the project had not been fully disclosed during the initial review process and should have been presented for consideration.

Joy Ann Miler urged the Council to vote against the request, noting that the property is located in a residential area. She expressed concern about protecting her home and the surrounding neighborhood and stated that she did not believe the proposed use was appropriate for the area. She also clarified that the existing metal building referenced during the discussion is a residential garage and is not used for commercial purposes.

Mayor Bhasker emphasized the importance of following due process, as recommended by the City's attorney. He stated that the request could ultimately be denied by the Planning and Zoning Commission; however, the applicant must first be provided with an opportunity to present his case through the proper process. Councilor Partridge also agreed to follow due process.

Joel Domschott, a property owner in the area, expressed concerns regarding the safety of allowing the proposed use within the residential subdivision. He stated that he is a retired Fire Service Division Chief and trained hazardous materials technician. Mr. Domschott discussed potential hazards associated with materials at the facility and referenced the Emergency Response Guide used by first responders. He expressed particular concern regarding evacuation requirements, emergency access and egress, and the potential impact an emergency could have on nearby residences.

Councilor Salome stated that the issue extended beyond the Special Use Permit and discussed the broader need for economic growth within the community. He noted the loss of businesses, declining school enrollment, and a reduction in utility accounts. He emphasized the importance of encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting opportunities that contribute to the growth and enhancement of the community.

Councilor Partridge expressed concern that individuals seeking to conduct business in the city may be receiving inaccurate or unclear information regarding where certain uses are permitted. He referenced Mr. Bornhorst's comments that he had received information indicating that he could build at the proposed location. Councilor Partridge also discussed the need for updated zoning maps that would clearly identify allowable uses within the various zoning districts and provide more accurate information to property owners and prospective businesses.

Delphine Burnett stated that she previously worked at White Sands Missile Range and had experience working with aluminum powder. Based on her experience, she expressed concerns regarding the potential hazards associated with the material and stated that she did not believe it

was safe for the proposed area.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the concerns expressed by neighboring residents during the current and previous meetings had made a significant impression on him. He acknowledged that he had not previously been fully aware of the scope of the proposed activities and referenced discussions with New Mexico Tech representatives regarding the matter. He expressed concern that the proposed activities had not been fully communicated and emphasized that, as elected officials, the Council must consider and respond to the concerns raised by residents.

Joy Ann Miler expressed concern that the project had progressed without following the appropriate process and stated that the plans should have been presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission from the beginning. She also questioned whether the project constituted meaningful economic development, stating that economic development should improve the community and residents' quality of life. She noted that the proposed project would provide limited employment opportunities and suggested that the Industrial Park would be a more appropriate location for the proposed use.

Motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution No. 26-09-15a – Supporting the 2026 General Obligation (GO) Bond for Higher Education

Delilah Walsh, Vice President for Administration and Finance at New Mexico Tech, requested the City's support for General Obligation Bond 3. She explained that the bond is issued by the State of New Mexico and stated that its passage would not result in new taxes because existing debt would be retired and replaced with new debt. Ms. Walsh reported that approximately $48 million would be allocated to New Mexico Tech for two projects: $40 million for the renovation of the MSEC building and $8 million for a core building for the Bureau of Geology. She further noted that Socorro County would be among the largest recipients of funding under the bond.

Ms. Walsh introduced Katie Esmail, Marketing and Communications Director at New Mexico Tech, and noted that informational materials regarding General Obligation Bond 3 had been provided to the City Council. She also thanked Mayor Bhasker for offering the use of a city billboard to provide information regarding the bond during the campaign.

Mayor Bhasker expressed strong support for General Obligation Bond 3, noting that New Mexico Tech is a major economic driver for the community and that continued investment in its facilities is important. He stated that the bond would provide significant funding for projects in Socorro County that would be difficult to obtain through the regular legislative process.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-06-15a. Seconded by Councilor Partridge, motion passed unanimously.

g. Resolution No. 26-09-15b – FY28 Funding of a Public Transportation System

Administrator Monette presented Resolution No. 26-09-15b and stated that, if approved, the resolution would authorize participation in the New Mexico Department of Transportation Section 5311 Transportation Program, which provides funding for the City's public transportation services, including its buses and vans.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-09-15b. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

h. Resolution No. 26-09-15c – Execution and Delivery of a Local Solar Access Fund Grant

Ruby Lopez, Finance Director, presented Resolution No. 26-09-15c and explained that, if approved, the resolution would authorize a $50,000 solar grant for the design of a solar panel system at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. She stated that the facility has high electrical usage and that the proposed solar project is intended to help offset those costs. The grant is for design services only, with construction to be considered separately upon completion of the design.

Councilor Partridge made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-09-15c. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

i. Resolution No. 26-09-15d – Authorizing and Approving Submission of a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area Plan & Application

Kirstin Keller with MRGEDA presented information regarding a proposed Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) and requested authorization to submit an application for the economic development initiative. She explained that an MRA could provide the City with additional tools to address underutilized and deteriorated properties and encourage economic development.

Ms. Keller stated that potential areas for designation include California Street, the Plaza, and certain residential areas in need of redevelopment. She explained that the program could provide tools to assist with property redevelopment and create incentives to attract businesses to Socorro.

Councilor Salome made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-09-15d. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

j. Resolution No. 26-09-15e – Authorizing and Approving Submission of a Completed Application NMFA

Administrator Monette presented Resolution No. 29-09-15e and explained that, if approved, it would allow the city to proceed with an interior drainage study related to stormwater management as part of the levee recertification process. He stated that additional requirements must be completed before an application for levee recertification can be accepted.

Administrator Monette reported that the City is working with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) and that existing contract authority with Bohannan Huston could be utilized to complete the study. The project was estimated to cost between $555,000 and $800,000 and take approximately 52 weeks to complete. He further stated that, upon approval, the City planned to submit a request for $850,000 in funding.

Councilor Partridge asked whether completion of the levee recertification process would assist residents with issues related to flood insurance. Administrator Monette explained that FEMA requires three items to be completed before an application for levee recertification can be submitted. He stated that MRGCD is working on two of the required items, while the City is responsible for completing the third, which includes the interior drainage study discussed under the resolution.

Councilor Partridge made a motion to approve Resolution No. 26-08-18. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported that the city had recently closed on the Smith's building and discussed the status of funding needed to complete the acquisition. He stated that the building would become City property once the process was completed.

Mayor Bhasker also discussed the former Valero property, which is currently listed for sale for approximately $150,000. He stated that he had requested that the property be donated to the City and that the City would continue discussions with the property owner regarding a possible donation. He further noted that the underground tanks had already been removed and the area had been covered with concrete.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Bhasker reported on several recent community activities and recognized City staff for their participation and assistance. He commended Deputy Chief Pacheco and others involved in a recent 9/11 event, noting that equipment was displayed and that the event was well received.

Mayor Bhasker also reported that rodeo activities were going well and discussed upcoming events, including a high school rodeo. He noted the recent County Fair and stated that funding is available for improvements to the rodeo facilities and that the city has been working to complete needed improvements.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Personnel Changes

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

NAME	EFFECTIVE	DEPARTMENT	REASON	SALARY
Valeria Acosta	09/15/2026	Animal Control	Temp to Perm	A-42
Adadrian Jackson	09/15/2026	Recreation	Temp to Perm	A-40
Christopher Carrillo	09/15/2026	Recreation	Certificate and Degree	I-57 to I-61
Deanna Aragon	09/15/2026	Gas	NM Class A/B Operator AST/UST Fuel Tanks	O-54 to O-56
Daniel Sanchez	09/15/2026	Landfill	CDL	A-39 to A-41

Seconded by Romero, motion passed unanimously.

b. Business Registrations

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

NAME	ZONING	ADDRESS	OWNER	TYPE
Black Gap Utilities LLC	Out of Town	Las Cruces, NM	Victor Horn	Utility Construction
Crossfire Aggregate Services LLC	Out of Town	Oxford, CO	Jesse Swanymr	Construction
NM Dental Group LLC	C-1	210 Neel Ave	Dr. George Hanna	Dental Clinic

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

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

Donald Monette, City Administrator