

**City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting**  
**City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801**  
**April 4, 2016**

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Stephanie Saavedra, Deputy Clerk, took roll call. Members present at roll call were: Mayor Ravi Bhasker, Councilor Michael Olguin, Councilor Ernest Pargas, Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Peter Romero, Councilor Toby Jaramillo and Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez. Councilor Nick Fleming was absent.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF APRIL 4, 2016 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

**a. March 21, 2016**

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Councilor Olguin, motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

**a. Susan Wiley – Crosswalks around Plaza & Pedestrian Rights-of-Way**

Susan Wiley, a local resident, thanked the City for creating the walking path at Sedillo Park. Ms. Wiley stated that she uses the path regularly. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Parks Department did a very good job constructing the walking path. Ms. Wiley stated that the reason she came to the meeting was her concern over the lack of crosswalks and signage regarding pedestrian right-of-way at the City's Plaza. Ms. Wiley stated that she feels the area is dangerous and that she is worried there may be an accident involving a pedestrian. Mayor Bhasker stated that City crews will be painting crosswalks in the area and placing a stop sign on the west side of the Plaza. Ms. Wiley stated that she was also concerned over a panel that was missing near the new culvert on El Camino Real (Middle Road). Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will look into the missing panel but that the property is owned by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and they may have to address the matter.

Mayor Bhasker thanked Bill Stone, the liaison from NM Tech who was in attendance, for listening to the City's concerns regarding parking around NM Tech and for having NM Tech staff paint the curbs in an effort to alleviate the problem. Mr. Stone stated that NM Tech is also looking into chip sealing their overflow parking lot. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to set up and invite Dr. and Mrs. Wells to a community gathering.

**DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

**a. Herb Anderson – “Stop Homelessness Forever” Presentation**

Herb Anderson, a local resident, stated that he has written a book called “Stop Homelessness Forever” which addresses homeless populations and provides suggestions on guiding homeless people back into the community. Mr. Anderson stated that he would like to see the City create a “think tank” to perform a census of Socorro's homeless population and come up with strategies to help them become self-sufficient. Mr. Anderson stated that he feels this is necessary because feeding and housing the homeless population overnight is just a bandage and not a solution. Mr. Anderson stated that people need to embrace the idea that homeless people have lost their way. Mr. Anderson stated that there is not an overnight shelter in Socorro and he feels an overnight shelter is needed in order to provide the homeless population a safe place to sleep. Chief Winders stated that

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police officers do interact with homeless people but that most of them are transient and move on. Councilor Romero stated that the DAV helps transients with shelter and food. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the El Camino Real Housing Authority works with local agencies on referrals for the Continuum of Care and Shelter Plus Care programs which provide housing vouchers and social services to help homeless people get back into the community. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to get the City Councilors a copy of Mr. Anderson's book. Benjamin Bean suggested that data be collected from a sociologist as those are the kinds of topics they study. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness may also have data. Mayor Bhasker stated that it would be helpful to get information regarding the local homeless population and then see what services can be provided that are not currently being provided so as not to duplicate services. Mayor Bhasker thanked Mr. Anderson for his presentation.

**b. State of the City - 2016**

Mayor Bhasker gave his 2016 State of the City address:

**City of Socorro**

**State of the City**

**April 2016**

The City of Socorro entered 2016 in a very stable and financially sound position. The new year also brought exciting changes to the City. With the retirement of City Clerk Pat Salome, the City welcomed former City Councilor Donald Monette as the City Administrator. Mr. Monette will be the all-around supervisor of each department as well as the point of contact for the Socorro City Council, the media and the general public. Mr. Monette's knowledge of City matters from his time on the City Council and background in budgets and finance will be a great addition to the City Administration.

We have purchased several new City vehicles which you may have seen in and around the City. The rodeo arena now has a ticket booth, a practice arena, livestock enclosures and a completed RV park. The City of Socorro Summer Youth Employment Program will soon be underway. Below is an update on the wonderful and hard-working City staff and the projects they are working on:

**Administration**

The Mayor's Office continues to have an open door policy. As before, the City Council agenda, minutes and videos from the meeting are available on the City's website ([www.socorronm.gov](http://www.socorronm.gov)). We have continued to install GPS units on City vehicles. The City Council continues to be active in multiple projects including the Rio Grande Levy Reconstruction Project, the rodeo and soccer complex, economic development, police oversight and infrastructure improvements.

**Finance Department**

The Finance Department continues to work with the public on utility billing, ambulance billing, purchasing, grants administration and accounts payable. The Finance Department continues to offer Budget Billing for utility customers. Collections and cash flow for the City continues to be steady.

**Socorro Public Library**

The Socorro Public Library has seen new renovations including new carpet and fresh paint. The library continues to serve the public by offering exciting children and adult programs, providing tax forms and offering computer training classes.

**Animal Shelter**

Our new director of one year has brought a new energy to our Animal Shelter. There have been multiple improvements at the animal shelter both inside and outside of the buildings. City staff will be attending certification training for our animal control officers. Animal control calls are being tracked in order to recognize problem areas and proper enforcement action is being

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taken. The City has been able to work with the City of Truth or Consequences to provide animal services while they are in the process of acquiring a new shelter.

**Police Department**

The Police Department continues to serve our community efficiently and professionally. We continue to provide a school resource officer at the high school. The Police Department will soon have three new graduates of the Police Academy serving Socorro.

**Dispatch Department**

The City of Socorro Dispatch Department has been upgraded with all new 911 equipment. The department has been able to map call types such as traffic accidents, animal control calls and criminal activity in order to identify problem areas. The Department then works with the Police Department on prevention in these areas. The Dispatch Department recently added to its staff including a certified dispatcher and a new graduate from the Police Academy.

**Recreation, Youth Center & Tourism Departments**

The City of Socorro Recreation Department continues to offer athletic programs to our youth and adults including basketball, volleyball, flag football, swimming, etc. Many local events/programs are housed in Finley Gym including the Community Arts Party, job fairs, the annual haunted house and the teen center. The Youth Center offers programs for children all day in the summer and after school during the school year. The Tourism Department continues to promote our City and provide information and gift bags to tourists. The Department is currently developing a strategic plan and branding strategy to help promote the City and increase tourism spending. These three departments work hard every year to produce events including Socorrofest, Cinco de Mayo and parades.

**Fire Department**

The Fire and Ambulance Department continues to deliver ambulance and fire service efficiently to Socorro residents. PHI medical helicopter services is still housed at the City's municipal airport. City of Socorro firefighters and EMTs continue to further their education with training classes in order to better serve Socorro.

**Landfill/Sanitation/Recycling Departments**

Sanitation and recycling staff continue to pick up on a daily basis and during the holidays. The new cell at the landfill is in use and work on a second new cell will start soon. Many of the landfill staff have received their certifications. City staff in these departments also work very hard on cleaning up litter in order to keep the City clean.

**Gas Department**

The Gas Department will soon be undertaking a valve replacement project which will increase the amount of natural gas the City can deliver to Socorro residents during the winter season. Another project being developed is the addition of a parallel gas line that will allow for future system expansion. Gas Department crews have been replacing natural gas lines throughout Socorro. The Gas Department yard is also home to a compressed natural gas (CNG) fuel station where City staff can fuel their CNG vehicles. This area will see two new tanks that will expand the capacity of the station.

**Auto Maintenance**

The Auto Maintenance Department has been consolidated into one location. The City hired a Fleet Manager who has helped inventory our fleet and place each department and their vehicles on a maintenance schedule, ensuring the City receives the longest lives possible from its vehicles. A new software system helps keep track of vehicle logs and maintenance records.

**Street/Road Departments**

Street Department crews continue to work on customer work orders and street maintenance. Road Department crews are working on special projects including the rodeo arena. The City of Socorro will be planning a Spring Cleanup wherein City crews

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will pick up appliances, weeds and other items. Soon, please look for flyers to know when your area of the City is scheduled for pickup.

**Airport**

As stated above, the City airport continues to house the PHI medical helicopter. The airport will soon be getting a new fuel farm. The annual fly-in event brings in visitors from all around the state. The Socorro Civil Air Patrol unit has assisted the City with keeping the airport clean and attractive for pilots.

**Water/Production Department**

The City of Socorro Water Department continues to operate the arsenic treatment plants and replace water lines throughout Socorro. Production Department staff regularly clean the lift stations and have already started getting the swimming pool ready for the summer.

**Wastewater Department/Wastewater Treatment Plant**

The Wastewater Treatment Plant has received several upgrades in the past few months with more upgrades to come.

**Parks Department**

Parks Department crews are very busy keeping our local parks, street medians and Plaza area beautiful. The Parks Department created a walking path and exercise area at Sedillo Park.

**Transportation Department**

The Transportation Department continues to serve our community both with local and out of town routes. The City hopes to soon add a fixed-route in the City of Socorro.

Mayor Bhasker listed current projects and stated that the City's cash flow continues to be steady despite a decrease in gross receipts revenues (decrease of \$50,000) and the Small Cities Distribution (decrease of \$600,000). Mayor Bhasker stated that in regards to a recent request for a financial account of each City event, he feels the Chamber of Commerce may be able to assist the City with getting that information. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Fire Department is in need of a new ladder truck which will cost approximately \$850,000. Mayor Bhasker stated that the new cell at the landfill will require a liner which will cost \$400,000. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Utility Committee will need to meet to discuss solid waste rates. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to "reinvigorate" code enforcement. Mayor Bhasker stated that he recently attended a meeting regarding broadband in Socorro and may look into the possibility of the City offering broadband as a utility.

**c. City of Socorro Committee Assignments**

Mayor Bhasker provided a list of active committee which includes:

Ad Hoc Committees

Airport Committee: Gordy Hicks, Jerry Griego, Dennis Hunter

Municipal League: Gordy Hicks

WIA-CEO Board: Ravi Bhasker

South Central Council of Governments: Gordy Hicks

Budget Committee: Nick Fleming (Chair), Toby Jaramillo, Ernest Pargas

Utility Committee: Toby Jaramillo (Chair), Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Peter Romero

Senior Center: Toby Jaramillo

Economic Development/Job Creation/Industrial Park Committee: Michael Olguin, Peter Romero

Safety Committee: Toby Jaramillo, Stephanie Saavedra, Mike Winders, Roy Baca, Mike Czosnek

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WIA Appointments: Anton Salome, Alonzo Gonzales, Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez, Gordy Hicks

City Council Vacancy Committee: Ernest Pargas, Nick Fleming, Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez

SCOPE: Ernest Pargas

Mayor's Drug Task Force: Information Pending

Juvenile Justice Board: Ernest Pargas (Chair), Don Tripp (Co-Chair), Lee Deschamps, John Gordon, Clint Wellborn, Chuck Zimmerly, Rita Cragun, Anton Salome, Jason Green, Jason Jones, Savannah Morris, Paul Silva, Delilah Walsh, Kirsten Kellar (Coordinator)

**Committees Established by Ordinance**

Lodger's Tax Committee: Eileen Comstock, Joe Ruiz, Emmy Stanzione, Brian Hurtgen

Planning and Zoning Commission: Alonzo Gonzales (Chairman), Christa Hockensmith (Vice-Chairman), Marcos Gonzales Jr., Jean Fraissinet, Sefie Anaya, Jeanene Hall, Cathy Martin

Library Board: Patrick Sylvester (President), William Stone (Vice-President), Gilbert Apps (Treasurer), Barbara DuBois (Secretary), Barbara Oravec, Kay Krehbiel, Penny Lommen, Jamie Fassett, Rita Steinnerd

Personnel Board: Bobbi Gonzales (Employee Representative), Mike Czosnek (Superintendent Representative), Rumaldo Chavez, Mark Nolan

Police Oversight Commission: Chuck Zimmerly (Chairman), Gilbert Apps (Vice-Chairman), Betty Saavedra, Max Torres, Joe Daniel Saavedra

Councilor Olguin made a motion to approve the Mayor's appointments /re-appointments. Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Form/Checklist for Vacating City-Owned Land**

Mayor Bhasker stated that in regards to a recent vacation of City property, the utility easements on that property were not taken into consideration prior to signing the transfer of ownership. Mayor Bhasker stated that it was a mistake not to address the utility easement and to avoid the problem in the future, the City Administration will be creating a form/checklist of all of the items that must be adhered to prior to signing over ownership of vacated City property. Mayor Bhasker stated that the costs associated with having to move utilities on vacated City property will lie with the person who receives the land. Mayor Bhasker stated that Councilor Olguin had previously suggested a form/checklist and he thinks it is a good idea. Councilor Olguin stated that if the property is vacated for economic development purposes, that topic should also be addressed on the form. Mayor Bhasker stated that he agrees that economic development should be addressed. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Administration will draft a form and present it to the City Council for review at a future City Council meeting.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilor Romero stated that the Utility Committee met to discuss options for increasing the supply of natural gas and is recommending the valve replacement project (\$675,000). Councilor Romero stated that the committee will continue to meet to discuss utility rates.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the City Council Vacancy Committee will meet April 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. to review the questionnaires from parties interested in filling the vacant City Council seat.

Mable Gonzales, Clerk/Treasurer, stated that the Budget Committee will meet on April 6<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. and lodger's tax requests will be heard during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Councilor Olguin stated that he wanted to clarify the RFP that was posted for the City regarding a proposed electric utility. Councilor Olguin stated that the RFP asks for information for three areas: Industrial Park, Industrial Park plus NM Tech and Industrial Park, NM Tech and the remainder of the City. Mayor Bhasker stated that it was an RFI (Request for Information) and that information for those three areas was requested. Mayor Bhasker stated that the feasibility study did not include what the cost of electricity would be to the City and that is the information the RFI is seeking. Mayor Bhasker stated that the idea has to be financially feasible or the City will not pursue being an electric utility at this time.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

**b. Reporting on Personnel Changes**

Councilor Romero motioned to approve the personnel changes as read by Mayor Bhasker:

Loretta Tolliver – 3-22-16 – Transportation – Termination

Joseph Reichenbach – 3-24-16 – Police - Resignation

Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

**c. Business Registrations**

Councilor Hicks motioned to approve the business registrations as read by Mayor Bhasker:

J & R Grill and BBQ – Out of Town – Los Lunas, NM – Johnny Baldonado – Food

New Mexico Delta Mechanical Inc. – Out of Town – Mesa, AZ – Corporation – HVAC, Water

Heather & Repipe Installation

Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**d. Next City Council Meeting Announcement**

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting would be held on Monday, April 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:05 p.m., Councilor Hicks motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

**THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
/s/  
**Ravi Bhasker, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

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/s/  
**Stephanie Saavedra, Deputy Clerk**

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