

City of Socorro Regular City Council Meeting
City Hall, 111 School of Mines Road, Socorro, NM 87801
June 5, 2017

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 Peter Romero, Councilor Gordy Hicks, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Toby Jaramillo and Councilor Michael Olguin. Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez and Councilor Anton Salome were absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bhasker led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilor Olguin asked what was going to be discussed in Executive Session. Mayor Bhasker stated that Executive Session would be regarding a legal matter concerning the municipal electric utility feasibility study. Councilor Olguin asked if the City had received a legal opinion stating that the Council could discuss the matter during Executive Session. Mayor Bhasker stated that a legal opinion was not needed to discuss a legal matter during Executive Session. Donald Monette, City Administrator, stated that topics that can be discussed during Executive Session are legal matters and personnel matters. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City's attorney currently possesses the feasibility study and since the Council and public have been asking for the study, the Council should discuss whether or not the study should be released. Mayor Bhasker stated that Councilor Olguin could vote no if he did not want to approve the motion to go into Executive Session.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 5, 2017 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. May 22, 2017

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

PROCLAMATIONS AND AWARDS

a. Proclamation – Immigrant Heritage Month

Mayor Bhasker read a proclamation recognizing immigrants and the important role they play in communities across the United States. In the proclamation, Mayor Bhasker proclaimed June 2017 as Immigrant Heritage Month in Socorro.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilor Hicks made a motion to go into executive session. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to go back into regular session. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Monette reported out of executive session the discussion of one legal matter. No action was taken.

PUBLIC FORUM

Dennis Grubb, president of Solaro Energy, stated that he has been in the manufacturing business for over 40 years. Mr. Grubb stated that one of the most important factors in operating a manufacturing business is electricity. Mr. Grubb stated that for the past several years, he has had nothing but difficulties with Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC). Mr. Grubb stated that Solaro expanded a year ago and the new building

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contains multiple pieces of specialized equipment. Mr. Grubb stated that the SEC is not capable of delivering pure, consistent power. Mr. Grubb stated that the equipment is designed to withstand small “brownouts” but the high fluctuations of power have caused damage to the equipment. Mr. Grubb stated that the issue has been going on for months and the SEC has not been able to address the issue. Mr. Grubb stated that he is losing revenue as he cannot operate his business. Mr. Grubb stated that he received a letter from Joseph Herrera, the SEC Manager, demanding payment for a transformer that does not work properly. Mr. Grubb stated that he has been trying to contact Mr. Herrera but has been unable to do so. Mr. Grubb stated that he has plans to expand Solaro but if the SEC cannot address the current problems, he will look into expanding into Los Lunas. Mr. Grubb stated that the SEC is damaging the economy in Socorro and had he known of the problems ahead of time, he may not have placed Solaro Energy in Socorro. Mr. Grubb stated that he thinks the City should take over the electric utility as he feels the SEC is incompetent. Mr. Grubb stated that he wants to stay in Socorro and be able to provide jobs to local residents. Mayor Bhasker stated that TDS has been unable to install a fiber line due to complications with the SEC and these issues affect economic development in Socorro. Mr. Grubb stated that his business has the potential to keep growing and eventually provide over 100 jobs in Socorro. Mr. Grubb stated that the SEC also has convoluted pricing for their electricity. Mr. Grubb encouraged everyone to support Mayor Bhasker’s endeavor in trying to find a solution as it relates to a municipal electric utility.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Distribution of Municipal Electric Utility Feasibility Study

Mayor Bhasker stated that the municipal electric feasibility study will be available to the public on the City’s website. Mayor Bhasker stated that in addition to problems communicating with the SEC, there is also a problem with their cost of electricity. Mayor Bhasker stated that the SEC’s rate is 8 cents per kilowatt and the City may be able to provide electricity at the rate of 6.3 cents per kilowatt. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to get on the SEC’s agenda for their June 28th board meeting to present a letter containing options for moving forward. Mayor Bhasker stated that he will present the letter to the Council at the next Council meeting.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to prepare a letter to the SEC and present the letter at the SEC’s June 28th board meeting. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

b. Letters from Cottonwood Valley Charter School Students

Mayor Bhasker stated that the City received several letters from Cottonwood Valley Charter School students with a variety of requests. Mayor Bhasker stated that some of the requests include the addition of a zoo, water park, bowling alley and pedestrian lights and a decrease in the amount of male mulberry trees in the City. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City will present a certificate to the students in recognition of their “participation in government”.

c. Socorro County Juvenile Justice Board FY 18 Contract Approval

Kirsten Kellar, from the Socorro County Juvenile Justice Board, presented the contract between the City of Socorro and the NM Children, Youth and Families Department for FY 2017-2018. Ms. Kellar stated that the Socorro County Juvenile Justice Board (SCJJB) recently reviewed their strategic plan and by-laws. Ms. Kellar stated that she plans to attend a future City Council meeting to give an update on the SCJJB’s goals and get approval of FY 18 membership.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve the NM Children, Youth and Families (Socorro County Juvenile Justice Board) contract for FY 18. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

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d. Resolution No. 17-06-05a – NMDOT Co-Op Acceptance

Jay Santillanes, Division Director, presented Resolution No. 17-06-05a which, if approved, allows the City to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the New Mexico Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of sections of Western Place, Neel Avenue, Hilton Place and Brown Court. Mr. Santillanes stated that the total project cost is \$43,615 with the NMDOT funding 75% and the City funding 25%. Mr. Santillanes stated that the funds may not be enough to reconstruct all of the areas and any unfinished areas will be part of the next application cycle.

Councilor Fleming made a motion to approve Resolution No. 17-06-05a. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution No. 17-06-05b – Utility Billing Write-Offs

Mable Gonzales, Clerk/Treasurer, presented Resolution No. 17-06-05b which, if approved, removes uncollectible utility billing accounts from 2012, in the amount of \$40,536.76, from the City's list of accounts. Ms. Gonzales stated that the Finance Department still attempts to collect these funds through a credit agency. Ms. Gonzales stated that the total billed amount for 2012 was \$6,380,000 and the uncollected amount is less than one percent of the amount billed.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to approve Resolution No. 17-06-05b. Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

f. Budget Resolution No. 16 – General Fund – Administration Department

Resources are Water Conservation Grant – Requirements are Legal/Other Professional Services – Amount is \$34,677.00 – The increase is needed to allow for the grant award and expenditures.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve Budget Resolution No. 16. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

g. In-House Budget Resolutions 101 and 102

Ms. Gonzales explained that In-House Budget Resolutions 101 and 102 are adjustments within a department which are needed to allow for expenditures through the end of the fiscal year. The adjustments move funds from one line item to another within the same department. Budget Resolutions 101 and 102 include adjustments in the General Fund (Administration Department, Police Department, Dispatch Department and Animal Control Department).

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve In-House Budget Resolutions 101 and 102. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Olguin stated that in regards to the Recreation Department, there is still confusion regarding days and times for swimming lessons as well as the youth baseball schedule. Councilor Olguin stated that there is also confusion about whether or not the baseball players will receive uniforms and hats. Councilor Olguin asked if the updates for recreation programs can be posted on Facebook. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would speak to the Recreation Director regarding those issues.

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OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Gonzales stated that she included the preliminary budget in DFA format in the Council packets. Ms. Gonzales stated that preliminary budget has been submitted.

Mr. Santillanes stated that Sites Southwest will have a meeting on June 6th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at City Hall for public input on the bicycle plan.

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Personnel Board Appointment

Mayor Bhasker stated that he did not have an appointment for the Personnel Board at this time.

b. Explanation of Hiring Retirees

Mayor Bhasker stated that there is a question as to why the City has rehired employees who have retired. Mayor Bhasker stated that one of the reasons retirees have been rehired is because they hold certifications that a City department requires to operate. Mayor Bhasker stated that retirees also have a lot of knowledge regarding their department. Mayor Bhasker stated that the employees have not been rehired at their old rate of pay and not all of them work full-time. Ms. Gonzales stated that the City also saves as the retirees are not receiving fringe benefits. Councilor Olguin asked if rehiring retirees prevents younger employees from moving up in their department. Mayor Bhasker stated that as the retirees do not return to their original position, the younger employees do have the opportunity to receive certifications and get promoted.

c. Business Registrations for Transient Vendors

Mayor Bhasker stated that every week, he sees multiple vendors at the flea market. Mayor Bhasker stated that his concern is that these vendors do not have business registrations (as per City ordinance) and are not paying gross receipts tax under the City's tax identification number. Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to ask City police to visit the flea market at least once a month and ensure that each vendor has a business registration.

d. Request to Submit Municipal Electric Utility Feasibility Study to SEC Board

See Item 8a above.

e. Reporting on Personnel Changes

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

Koshmen Alvarado-Carson – 6-1-17 – Sanitation – New Hire (Driver) – A-30

Alan Roane – 5-18-17 – Police – Certification – B-37 to B-40

Dominic Montano – 5-18-17 – Police – Certification – C-30 to C-40

Seconded by Councilor Hicks, motion passed unanimously.

f. Business Registrations

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

Insurance Links LLC – C-2 – 508 ½ California Street – Angela Lopez-Carrillo & Andrew Carrillo – Independent Insurance Agency

Gilbert's Mobile Auto – Out of Town – San Antonio, NM – Gilbert Murillo – Mobile Auto Repair

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Seconded by Councilor Romero, motion passed unanimously.

d. Next City Council Meeting Announcement

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting will be held on Monday, June 19, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:39 p.m., Councilor Hicks motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Fleming, motion passed unanimously.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/
Stephanie Saavedra, Deputy Clerk