

City of Socorro

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City Meters to be Converted

Over the next 2 to 3 years the City will convert all gas and water meters to “radio read” meters. A radio signal from the meter will send data to transceiver equipment placed in a vehicle. Conversion will cost \$178 per meter, with the City picking up the tab. The readings will be more accurate and will yield more information, such as pinpointing periods of high use. This information could assist in finding leaks earlier, saving the customer money in the long run.

Several years ago the City began converting water meters to “touch read”: an instrument that looks similar to a golf club is held next to the meter to collect the information. While two-thirds have been converted, all will be changed to radio-read.

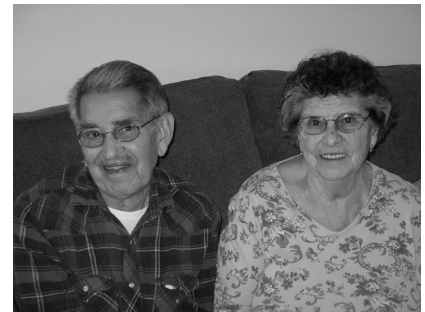
Even with touch-read meters, 3 readers spend 7 days each month collecting data. Converting to radio-read meters will mean those employees reading them will no longer walk through the neighborhood trying to get access to meters.

Meter Reading Has Seen Big Changes

Louie Peralta remembers when the job was very different. For 33 years he walked the entire route in all kinds of weather and read water meters on his hands and knees, striving to get accurate readings for his customers.

“Sometimes, when the weather was wet or cold, he’d come home and I’d have to defrost him,” remembers Louie’s wife Virginia.

When Louie started the job in 1966, Donald Chavez taught him the routine. “It would take the two of us 7 days to read all the meters in town, opening each one and reading it,” said Louie. “Socorro was smaller then.”



Louie and Virginia Peralta

Besides reading the meters, Louie had to fix and clean them. He remembers bailing water out of meter wells and occasionally finding them full of millipedes. Once he found a rattlesnake curled up asleep in the meter well. He killed it with a rock and stick—and then found it had escaped from a collector who lived nearby. He was able to detect gas leaks because the escaping gas would collect in the water meter well and he could smell it.

After Chavez left, Louie had to train the new meter readers. The toughest part was teaching them where all the meters were located. “Sometimes it was easier to tell them to drive and I’d walk and read the meters because I knew where they all were,” he admits.

Louie took care of customers who would call when something broke or froze. He turned water on for new customers and turned it off when someone was delinquent in paying the bill. “That was something I didn’t like. They might have kids. It was bad.”

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Now Socorro citizens will see the employee driving down the street to read meters. “I hope the radio read is as accurate as Louie was!” remarked City Clerk Pat Salome.

Tracking a Bill in New Mexico

Navigating the passage of a bill through the New Mexico legislative process is not a simple task. The 49th Legislature opened January 20th and will be in session until noon, March 21*. Hundreds of bills will be introduced in both houses, but only a few will be enacted into law.

When a bill is introduced on the floor of either the House or the Senate by a Representative or a Senator, it is given a number and referred to one or more committees. The recommendations of the committees usually determine the success or failure of a bill. If a bill makes it through the committee process, it is voted on by the house in which it originated. If it passes, it is sent to the other house. At any time it may be tabled, referred, or defeated. If it passes the second house, but has been amended, the original house must concur with the changes. If it does not, a conference committee representing both houses is appointed to determine the final wording of the bill. If both the House and the Senate can agree on a final form, the bill is sent to the Governor to be signed into law. Governor Richardson may choose to sign the bill, veto it, or veto only parts of it if it includes appropriations (called a line item veto). To override the veto, 2/3 of the House and 2/3 of the Senate must vote in favor of it. Otherwise the bill is dead.

Legislators are aided in this process by a 235-page *Legislative Drafting Manual* written to help legislative employees and others prepare bills, memorials, resolutions, amendments and other legislative documents in conformance with New Mexico legislative drafting style.

Don Tripp, Socorro’s representative, introduced 10 bills this session. They are slowly making

their way through the process. For example, Tripp introduced House Bill 456 (HB456) titled “Purchase Police Dog Protective Vests” on January 29. It amends the purpose of the Law Enforcement Protection Fund to include expenditures for the purchase of protective equipment for police dogs. The bill was sent to both the House Health and Government Affairs Committee (HHGAC) and the House Judiciary Committee (HJC). It passed both committees and was voted on in the House on February 19. From there it goes to the Senate Judiciary and Finance Committees before a final vote by the Senate.

To continue tracking the progress of this bill, go to www.nmlegis.gov/

*This is a 60-day session. Sessions alternate between 30 and 60 days.



Legislators representing the Socorro area (Sen. David Ulibarri, Sen. Howie Morales, Rep. Don Tripp) met with constituents in December to listen to their concerns.

Employee Anniversaries

Antonio Gonzales	25 years
Frank Marquez	10 years

City Council

Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez	Gordy Hicks
Toby Jaramillo	Donald Monette
Michael Olguin, Jr.	Ernest Pargas, Jr.
Peter D. Romero	Chuck Zimmerly
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor	
Pat Salome, City Clerk	