

City of Socorro
Regular City Council Meeting
January 6, 2014

Mayor Ravi Bhasker called the meeting to order. Pat Salome, City Clerk, took roll call. Members present at roll call were: Mayor Ravi Bhasker, Councilor Toby Jaramillo, Councilor Nick Fleming, Councilor Ernest Pargas, Councilor Michael Olguin, Councilor Donald Monette, Councilor Peter Romero and Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez. Councilor Gordy Hicks was absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Kiana Jones led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 6, 2014 CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

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

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

a. December 16, 2013

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

PUBLIC FORUM

Judith Gorman thanked the Mayor and City Council for making Socorro a nice place to live. Ms. Gorman stated that the City of Socorro has provided numerous things to the citizens of Socorro including a bus route to Los Lunas, a bus stop at Sedillo Park, new equipment at Finley Gym, a variety of recreational programs and new gas lines. Mayor Bhasker thanked Ms. Gorman for her comments.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

a. Resolution No. 14-01-06a – Open Meetings Resolution

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 14-01-06a. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Open Meetings Resolution is passed several times a year including the beginning of each calendar year and after an election. Mayor Bhasker stated that the resolution follows requirements made by New Mexico State Statute for open meetings.

Councilor Monette made a motion to approve Resolution No. 14-01-06a. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

b. Resolution No. 14-01-06b – Governing Body Rules of Procedure Resolution

Mayor Bhasker presented Resolution No. 14-01-06b which, if approved, reaffirms the Governing Body Rules of Procedure adopted August 15, 2005 and recognizes those rules as the method by which the Socorro City Council meetings are conducted. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Governing Body Rules of Procedure are re-adopted at the beginning of each calendar year and right after an election.

Councilor Romero made a motion to approve resolution No. 14-01-06b. Seconded by Councilor Chavez-Lopez, motion passed unanimously.

c. State of the City of Socorro

Mayor Bhasker stated that he would like to take the opportunity to let the public know what projects have been accomplished in 2013 by the City of Socorro and provide an overall State of the City address. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City Councilors would each have the opportunity to speak to provide their individual thoughts about the State of the City and then he would provide his State of the City address.

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1. City Councilors

Councilor Fleming stated that before being elected to the Council, he video-taped the City Council meetings for 16 years and has now been a City Councilor for four years and is amazed by what he has learned about City operations. Councilor Fleming listed several projects/programs provided by the City including: After School Program, Summer Youth Employment Program, STARS Program, AAU Tournament, flag football, Little League basketball, swim program, expanded sewer, gas and water infrastructure and upgrade of the medians. Councilor Fleming stated that he would like to see New Mexico Tech and CNM partner up to provide CDL license training and testing. Councilor Fleming stated that the City Council and Administration have worked well together to accomplish these goals over the past several years.

Councilor Monette thanked the Budget and Utility Committees for keeping the City's budget balanced. Councilor Monette stated that there has been growth at the City's Industrial Park including the rodeo arena/soccer field complex. Councilor Monette stated that the City is involved in a highway widening project for Highway 60 for access to the rodeo arena/soccer field complex. Councilor Monette thanked the employees for their hard work.

Councilor Romero stated that the many goals accomplished by the City could not have been possible without such a good team. Councilor Romero stated that the upgrade of Isidro Baca Park is almost complete. Councilor Romero stated that the City is in the process of acquiring 12 new plaques for the park. Councilor Romero stated that there will soon be a New Mexico Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall at the park. Councilor Romero stated that City staff has always been helpful to the New Mexico Veteran's service officers by providing a meeting room for them to meet with clients. Councilor Romero stated that the City is in the final stages of acquiring the National Guard Armory to be used as a conference center. Councilor Romero stated that the City has always helped volunteer organizations. Councilor Romero thanked everyone for their hard work.

Councilor Hicks thanked City staff for their hard work. Councilor Hicks thanked Mayor Bhasker and the City Council for their work as well. Councilor Hicks stated that the City is part of several organizations including the New Mexico Municipal League and the Regional Planning Organization. Councilor Hicks stated that the RPO has ranked the widening project for Highway 60 number one. Councilor Hicks stated that the City's airport sold \$40,000 in fuel this year. Councilor Hicks stated that the City's airport has 25 hangars with a new hangar built just this year. Councilor Hicks stated that the City Clerk was instrumental in creating the employee personnel policy. Councilor Hicks stated that it takes a team to accomplish all of these projects.

Councilor Chavez-Lopez thanked City staff, the Administration, the City Council and Mayor Bhasker for their hard work. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the City has created a Police Oversight Commission. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the City continues to have the Summer Youth Employment Program for Socorro teens. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that the landfill has greatly improved. Councilor Chavez-Lopez stated that there have been numerous sewer line extension projects and drainage projects.

Councilor Pargas stated that he has been on the City Council since 2002. Councilor Pargas stated that one of the functions of the City Council is to set policy and approve a budget. Councilor Pargas stated that due to this City Council and Administration, there have been no tax increases to residents during his tenure. Councilor Pargas stated that it is widely known that he has a special interest in social services and has participated in social service projects which have been accomplished without putting a strain on the City budget. Councilor Pargas stated that the City Council and Administration have helped turn his ideas into reality. Councilor Pargas stated that the City just received a \$400,000 Substance Abuse Grant. Councilor Pargas stated that he has done his best to build partnerships as the health of the community is important. Councilor Pargas stated that some of the projects that have gotten underway with the help of the City Council and Administration are: Socorro Juvenile Justice

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Board (already received \$135,000 with \$20,000 on the way), creation of a Teen Court, a partnership with Socorro Schools regarding truancy issues, the Maze of Life Project and SCOPE (he has been the President of SCOPE since 2003 and has acquired much funding in the last 5 years). Councilor Pargas stated that seeing people with drug problems is hurtful to him and with the help of the Mayor, City Council and Administration, he was able to create the Mayor's Drug Task Force to help tackle substance abuse issues. Councilor Pargas stated that he will continue to do things in the community that will give children hope.

Councilor Jaramillo stated that he is grateful for the existing City Council and employees. Councilor Jaramillo stated that the customer service provided by City staff is great. Councilor Jaramillo stated that he has lived in Socorro over 40 years. Councilor Jaramillo stated that he does an annual food drive and thanked the City for their help in providing food to families. Councilor Jaramillo stated that the food drive helped over 272 parents this year. Councilor Jaramillo stated that it takes a team to grow together.

Councilor Olguin stated that while the City has accomplished many goals, he would not be using the State of the City to address his views on the status of the City. Councilor Olguin stated that he will do so in the next couple of months leading up to the election and that he will also be speaking with the community and City staff.

2. Mayor

Mayor Bhasker stated that he has tried to keep the public apprised of the status of the City on a regular basis. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has level gross receipts tax revenues even in the face of the worst recession in decades. Mayor Bhasker provided a handout showing unemployment rates in Socorro and other communities, decreased gross receipts tax revenues in other cities and the current gross receipts tax rates around New Mexico. Mayor Bhasker stated that through tough economic times, the City Council and City Administration has continued to move the City forward. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has provided opportunities for local business to expand. Mayor Bhasker stated that even though some businesses have closed, they have done so due to franchise mandates and not a failure in the local economy (two of the business locations will re-open soon as different franchises). Mayor Bhasker stated that the City continues to provide a Summer Youth Employment Program each year. Mayor Bhasker listed several completed projects and also listed several projects currently underway. Mayor Bhasker stated that through all of the projects, no new taxes were imposed on residents. Mayor Bhasker listed several businesses that have added new infrastructure or recently remodeled their current facilities. Mayor Bhasker stated that these businesses would not have built/remodeled if Socorro did not have a strong economy and stable government. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has a low unemployment rate. Mayor Bhasker stated that medical insurance rate increases to employees are low, the Recreation Department has over 300 kids in a multitude of sports, the after school program and swim team are successful programs and transportation services have expanded. Mayor Bhasker stated that the City has been able to work on projects with other agencies including Socorro Schools, Socorro County, New Mexico Tech, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and the business community. Mayor Bhasker thanked the City Council and City staff for making Socorro a better place to live and raise families. The list of projects addressed by the Mayor included:

- Sewer line extensions on Harold Drive, Chaparral Drive and the Fire Academy at a cost of \$5.2 million.
- Construction of two arsenic treatment plants at a cost of \$4.7 million.
- The City's landfill received final certification at a cost of \$3.2 million.
- Multiple City streets have been upgraded at a cost of \$400,000.
- Flood control detention ponds project in the City at a cost of \$1.5 million.
- Municipal airport rehabilitation, including the housing of a medical helicopter unit, at a cost of \$450,000.

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There are numerous projects currently underway which include:

- Water line extension to New Mexico Tech at a cost of \$900,000.
- Sewer line extension on Hope Farms Road at a cost of \$1.2 million.
- Continuation of the CDBG drainage project on Texas Street and the surrounding areas at a cost of \$450,000.
- A joint project, which is in the works, with the New Mexico Department of Transportation to widen Highway 60 at a cost of \$6 million.
- Working with the County of Socorro to place a new jail facility in the City's Industrial Park.
- The construction of a rodeo arena/soccer field facility, which is in the middle of completion, at a cost of \$2.5 million.
- The acquisition of the National Guard Armory for use as a civic center.
- Landscaping projects on the north and south entrances to Socorro as well as the medians.
- Developing Isidro Baca Park which will include a Veteran's Park Memorial.
- Levee project on the Rio Grande River at a cost of \$14 million which has been finalized with federal, state, Conservancy and local funds.

d. Bid Award – Rodeo Arena Cover

Jay Santillanes, Division Director, stated that bids for the rodeo arena cover were opened on December 20, 2013. Mr. Santillanes stated that the low bidder was Richardson and Richardson, out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a bid of \$957,700.46 (including GRT). Mr. Santillanes stated that Richardson and Richardson also placed a bid for Additive Alternate 1 and Additive Alternate 2. Mr. Santillanes stated that he recommends the City award the contract to Richardson and Richardson for the base bid amount of \$957,700.46. Mr. Santillanes stated that the project should be completed mid-summer.

Councilor Hicks made a motion to award the contract to Richardson and Richardson for the base bid amount of \$957,700.46. Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Hicks stated that he received a request for a speed bump on College Avenue between Franklin Street and California Street. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Administration would look into the matter.

Mayor Bhasker stated that City medical and dental insurance rates, like all employers providing healthcare to their employees, was affected by the Affordable Care Act.

Mayor Bhasker stated that the IT Director has the City's new webpage online, has also set up wifi in City Hall and is working on web-casting the City Council meetings.

Mr. Salome stated that January 7th was filing day for the March 4, 2014 election.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilor Pargas stated that the contracts for the Substance Abuse Grant were still being negotiated. Mr. Salome stated that if necessary, a special meeting will be requested as there are certain deadlines that have to be met regarding the grant.

Councilor Pargas asked when sewer and water infrastructure would be upgraded near the Fire Academy. Mayor Bhasker stated that one of the problems in that area is that the elevation of the land is the same as the water tank making water pressure very low. Mayor Bhasker stated that pressure tanks would help alleviate the problem. Mayor Bhasker stated that the Administration could look into a possible project in the area. Mayor Bhasker stated that since USDA flipped the grant/loan funding process, funding is harder to come by for these types of projects.

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Councilor Hicks asked about the status of the trailers owned by Dave Willis up by the Fire Academy. Mike Czosnek, Building Inspector, stated that he has not spoken to Mr. Willis recently but would make contact regarding the status of the trailers.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

MAYOR'S REPORT

a. Reporting on Personnel Changes

None.

b. Business Registrations

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

Bradbury Stamm Construction Inc. – Out of Town – Albuquerque, NM (NM Tech) – Corporation – Construction

Foothill Construction – Out of Town – Albuquerque, NM – Parham Turner – Remodeling Homes

Seconded by Councilor Jaramillo, motion passed unanimously.

c. Next City Council Meeting Announcement

Mayor Bhasker stated that the next City Council meeting would be held on Tuesday, January 21, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers (due to the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday).

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:08 p.m., Councilor Hicks motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Olguin, motion passed unanimously.

THE CITY OF SOCORRO – a municipal corporation

/s/ _____
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ _____
Pat Salome, City Clerk