

## **March 15, 2017 - Bhasker vows to go after the electric cooperative - Chieftain.**

Scott Turner – El Defensor Chieftain Editor

[http://www.dchieftain.com/news/bhasker-vows-to-go-after-the-electric-cooperative/article\\_51750ae8-27a3-11e8-9f64-bf6ea499244b.html](http://www.dchieftain.com/news/bhasker-vows-to-go-after-the-electric-cooperative/article_51750ae8-27a3-11e8-9f64-bf6ea499244b.html)

While improving the City of Socorro's infrastructure tops the list of Ravi Bhasker's priorities as he begins his eighth term as mayor, buying out Socorro Electric Cooperative is also on his to-do list.

"I am going to go after the Co-op," Bhasker said. "I'm going to get our lawyers, Nann Winter, get our consultants. We're going to get those guys and go after the Co-op."

Bhasker said he has heard the Co-op's employees have unionized.

"I hear the manager's (General Manager Joseph Herrera) been using my name saying we're going to fire everybody if the city takes over," Bhasker said

He said that is not the case.

"If we take over the Co-op, we're going to need people to run that," Bhasker said. "We're going to job it out. We're going to get them to come over here. We're going to contract out to people who know what they're doing."

He said one of his main efforts will be to dissolve the Co-op in "in its entirety, that includes the rural areas."

The City would provide service to the rural areas.

"We're going to provide them with alternative and cheaper electricity," Bhasker said. "I understand PNM is in the process of closing down the coal plant up there in the northwest."

PNM is in the process of closing down the San Juan Generating Station near Farmington. Tri-State Generation and Transmission – which supplies the SEC – owned a share in one of the units at the plant, but that unit was scheduled to be shut down last December.

Bhasker concedes the issue could be decided in court.

He said City of Socorro Chief Procurement Officer/IT Director Polo Pineda is the City's "point man" in the effort.

Buying out the Co-op was one of the options Bhasker presented to the SEC Board of Trustees at its meeting last July.

If the Board rejects the buyout offer, Bhasker told The Chieftain at the time that the City was prepared to go ahead on its own and establish an electric utility on a limited basis. It would serve users in the industrial park area along Highway 60 and possibly New Mexico Tech.

He said substations will be put throughout the town. Bhasker said contracts would be offered to users.

Bhasker said the users would be assured of reliable service. They would be offered a price for electricity use.

Bhasker said the city's system would cost about \$5 million to build. He said it would be financed through revenue bonds.

If the City were to take over the SEC, Bhasker said at the time that the City Council would serve in the role Co-op's board of trustees serves.

Bhasker said the city could save as much as \$1 million in interest and administrative costs. He cited statistics that has Herrera making as much as \$235,000 per year, and the top two linemen making more than \$100,000 per year.