



## Former manager of co-op gets probation

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A former Socorro Electric Cooperative manager, who was arrested for aggravated DWI (0.16 BAC or higher) twice in four months last year, received 364 days of supervised probation for his actions, according to court documents.

Along with probation, Richard Lopez, the former manager and two-term city council member, is required to install a breathalyzer for his car, which he will have to use for two years. Lopez was also sentenced to attend an intensive outpatient treatment program for his alcohol dependency, which he did voluntarily in January 2012. Magistrate Jim Naranjo handed down the sentence on May 16.

The state brought six charges against Lopez that related to vehicle infractions, such as failing to maintain a lane, having no insurance and one charge of resisting arrest. The prosecutor chose to dismiss six of the seven charges, with only the charge of Lopez's second DWI still held against him.

Lopez received the first DWI in September 2011 when Officer J.P. Gallegos pulled him over on California Street for not wearing a seat belt. Gallegos smelled alcohol in the vehicle and put Lopez through sobriety tests, which he subsequently failed. His blood alcohol content that night was about .20, more than twice the legal limit.

Lopez received the second DWI in December 2011 when the same officer saw him almost hit a median on California Street. Again, he failed the sobriety tests. Lopez's BAC was almost .20.

In January, Lopez entered himself into a detox clinic, where he reportedly attended all meetings and classes. The clinic suggested he use supportive services such as a 12-step program or religious functions to continue with his recovery.

In a letter dated April 9, Socorro City Clerk Pat Salome wrote that Lopez has been volunteering at the City Tourism

Department since February. Lopez is “an asset to the department,” according to the letter.

Lopez, who was employed by Socorro Electric Cooperative for 28 years, was fired from his job as engineering and operations manager in July 2011 for allegedly breaking co-op policy. Age discrimination and retaliation complaints against the co-op with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were filed, and are still pending.

Lopez served as the co-op’s interim general manager for five months, beginning in August 2010.

That same year, he worked to restore electrical power in Haiti after the earthquake there. He recieved commendation for volunteer service from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Lopez served two terms on the Socorro City Council from 1986-90 and 1994-98.