

TOWN OF SAHUARITA

State of the Town Address (Transcript) Tom Murphy, Mayor – September 20, 2019

Thank you Dan. Please can we have another hand for the amazing combined choir of Walden Grove Red Harmony A Capella, and Walden Grove Chamber Choir led by Ben Lebovitz, and the Sahuarita High School Advanced Vocal Ensemble led by Dr. Connie Nokes, the Sahuarita Naval Junior ROTC for posting the colors, Hailey Egbert for leading us in the National Anthem and Father Jorge for the Invocation. With young people such as these, our future is bright!

Good afternoon my friends and colleagues!

Happy Birthday Sahuarita! Today is a Good Day! On behalf of the Town Council and the Town of Sahuarita staff, I wish you a warm welcome to our 2019 State of the Town Address, celebrating 25 years of incorporation. As much as this event is a celebration of our beautiful town, in my heart, it is also a tribute to the life and vision of Bob Sharpe. As many in this room know, Bob was the Founder of Rancho Sahuarita. He was also one of the driving forces for the incorporation of Sahuarita as a town, but most of all, he was my friend.

I am saddened by his recent passing, but I am blessed to have had the privilege of knowing and working with such a visionary man. On behalf of all of us, my deepest condolences to the Rancho Sahuarita team and the Sharpe family. We really cannot speak about the past 25 years of the town without recognizing the profound impact Bob had on the development and success of this Town; he was one of our biggest champions, always advocating for the town to have the best of everything. Whether he was knee-deep in developing his project, proactively supporting our schools, or living his last years helping to defeat brain cancer—he was always, “all in” and he lived fully until the end, greeting each new sunrise truly feeling that “today is a good day.” My wish for each one of us here today is that we can all to do the same!

Right now my heart is full of gratitude and appreciation. I am honored to stand in front of you for the 3rd time, as the Mayor of Sahuarita, where truly, “life comes together!” When my family and I moved to Sahuarita 16 years

ago, we thought this may just be another place we would be passing through as we had done so many times before, serving in the United States Air Force. I would never have imagined being here today as we celebrate our town's silver jubilee with all of you who helped make this possible.

Mother Teresa once said, "none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things with great love, and together, we can do something wonderful."

None of what I do could be accomplished without the loving support of my family. I am blessed to have my beautiful wife Lynn and my daughters Kiara and Kaelyn with me today. Thank you for everything you do to make this world a better place in your own right!

Success doesn't happen in a vacuum. It takes great business partners and community members willing to invest, in order to make things happen.

Thank you to my colleagues who serve with me on the town council: Vice Mayor, Kara Egbert; Council Member, Melissa Hicks; Council Member, Gil Lusk; Council Member, Bill Bracco; and our two newest council members, Eric Dahl and Simon Davis. Thank you for your service, but we all know that you do it for that monster paycheck we receive! Thank you also to the various mayors and elected officials who are here with me today including my friends from Magdalena, our Sister City, one of the designated "Magical Cities" in Mexico. All wonderful Public Servants!

I know that nothing can be accomplished without a great team surrounding me, and I believe I have one of the best. Could I have Kelly Udall, our town manager and all of the town staff, including those on town Commissions here today, please stand and be recognized?

A special thanks to Quail Creek for the wonderful venue and great lunch, and can you believe that over 300 of us chose the same meal today? Amazing. Also, please thank your servers when you see them! To Teri, Mark, and Robert thank you for all of your help and a special thanks to Yisel Suarez, not only does she have the herculean task of keeping the town manager and mayor and council on task and out of trouble, no easy feat, but she also took the lead role coordinating this event. She will be distributing wedding planner business cards after the event today. Just kidding! She is too valuable to the team to let go!

Today, we have the fortunate opportunity to observe our anniversary on the very day of our incorporation, 25 years ago today. It was September 20, 1994 when the Town of Sahuarita became an incorporated town. On your way into the ballroom this morning, you may have noticed the photos of the town that were taken over the past two and a half decades. Although I have the privilege of being the town's current mayor, there were 8 individuals before me who have held this honor since the town was founded and some of them are here with us today: Charles Oldham, Lynne Skelton, and Duane Blumberg. Thank you to all of those who served before me!

Although we were incorporated in '94, there is a little more to the story than just the past 25 years. And if we go back further and look to the Native Americans who founded their own communities here as early as 200 A.D., There is an honorable past that continues with their descendants, our neighbors just north and west of us on the Tohono O'Odham and Pascua Yaqui Nations.

Our name, originally Sahuarit-O, comes from the Sahuarito Ranch that operated here from 1879-1886. The territorial founding of Sahuarita was firmly planted in four of the five C's of Arizona: cotton, copper, cattle and climate. Driving into town today, you may have seen some of the beautiful FICO Pecan Groves, those occupy space formerly held by the cotton fields of Continental Farm. And the present-day industrial operations of ASARCO and Freeport McMoRan to the West are preceded by the traditions of colonial mining explorers in the region.

The early years of incorporated Sahuarita were all about turning a fledgling resident-enterprise with Sahuarita Village, LaCanada Norte and Rancho Buena Vista to name a few, into an organized community, and forming the relationships to build a future that would serve our needs and connect clusters of the population—both rural and suburban—within the original town boundaries. It was about exploring the possibilities of providing long-term, sustainable and reliable services and jobs to benefit our residents into the future.

There have been many milestones since then. The First house built in Rancho in 2002, our first Fiesta Sahuarita Birthday Party was held in 2004 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of incorporation. We had the formation of the Sahuarita Teen Advisory Council in 2007, and they are still going strong

today. I am grateful for their contributions to youth and our community as a whole. In 2007 we also saw the town business move out of a modular building and into the beautiful town hall complex we have today. Mayor Lynne Skelton conducted the first State of the Town Address on October 3, 2008. I could go on and on but I won't.

Each sector of our town has their own 25th Anniversary story and the book is still being written.

In celebration of this year's anniversary, we kicked off a year of special events and community activities with our first ever Town Hall Open House in mid-January. Residents were welcome to come explore town hall—literally—and see what our staff does there day in and day out. Attendees roamed freely around the campus and got an inside glimpse at our departments. We wanted residents to feel what is true about town hall—the fact that it's theirs—they are at the helm of the ship, and we work for them.

Our Parks and Rec Department has been working over-time this year. In addition to all of our signature events taking on a special significance celebrating 25 years, they introduced some new opportunities for residents to mingle with each other in the spirit of community at events like Tunes at Town Hall where we hosted live acoustic music and food trucks in the evenings on a quarterly basis.

We celebrated Arbor Day with a ceremony and planting of new trees at Anamax, our largest town park, and committed to planting 25 new trees in our parks throughout the year. A new partnership with the Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance has opened doors to new arts and cultural experiences for residents through events like Sabrosita Sahuarita, a culture and culinary event featuring tequila tasting, live music and other entertainment. I will let you guess what my favorite part of that event was. SAACA and Parks & Rec will be partnering on more events for the rest of the year. Please check out the calendar on the town's website to learn about upcoming events. If all the new events weren't enough, Parks and Rec also opened our newest lighted park and sports field in collaboration with the Sahuarita Unified School District at Wrightson Ridge K-8 school. One of many collaborations we have enjoyed with SUSD over the years.

Celebrating 25 years of Sahuarita means celebrating continual improvement as an organization and community. Nothing is more indicative

of that than the major builds we see happening now or coming soon. Northwest Healthcare broke ground on the Sahuarita Medical Center earlier this year. The multi-level facility will total 70,000 square feet of vital medical services. When it is completed next year the development is expected to bring 150 full-time jobs and \$37 million dollars in capital investment. Thank you Northwest!

This celebratory year also brings with it some monumental economic development milestones. One is the construction of Sahuarita Advanced Manufacturing and Technology Center (SAMTEC).

As some of you may know, SAMTEC was jumpstarted with a grant of \$3 million dollars from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Other key financial partners who assisted on this project were the Arizona Commerce Authority, and our friends at Freeport McMoRan. This will provide 32,000 square feet, allowing for the expansion of existing manufacturing businesses and attracting new ones to town.

One example of such a business is our very own Hydronalix Company. Hydronalix was founded by Sahuarita resident and U of A graduate, Tony Mulligan in 2009. Tony had a vision of building a water rescue device in the Desert. Hydronalix is a recognized leader and international symbol in robotics innovation for beach and flood rescue, with their patented Emergency Integrated Lifesaving Lanyard (EMILY) product line. Their latest success was accomplished just days ago and thousands of miles away. With the devastation from Hurricane Dorian, the Sonar version of EMILY, was dispatched to the Bahamas to assist with clearing the Abaco shipping lanes to bring ashore vital supplies and rescue ships, to aide the residents. The task previously would have taken days to complete, using divers and traditional methods. Sonar Emily completed the task in a matter of hours, not days, and it's safe to say, saved many lives. Mission accomplished!

Additionally, over the past few months many new businesses have opened: Starbucks, Dutch Bros, Culvers and two weeks ago Pima Federal Credit Union cut their Grand Opening Ribbon. Welcome to our community Pima Federal Credit Union. There will be more to follow with Chipotle, Kebabeque Indian Grill, and Chueys Chicken Broiler all under construction and opening soon. The groundbreaking will be taking place soon for a new state-of-the-art Pima County Library in the heart of the community. It will

bring much needed expansion of library Resources and services to our residents.

And you may have heard of our plans to create a Sahuarita downtown—a gathering place, and an expansion of opportunities for residents to shop, dine and take in arts and entertainment. The concept was born of our branding, communications and marketing endeavors in 2016. This year, the town started a district overlay visioning process that will provide the framework for that future downtown. The district boundaries will extend from Sahuarita Road south to Duval Mine Road, bordered by the Santa Cruz River to the east and La Villita Road to the west. The district, known as Sahuarita Square, a name chosen by our residents, will establish a planned area in which policy, infrastructure, and programming will be directed to encourage mixed uses.

To date, this visioning process has included public outreach and identifying strategies to guide the District's development. The Town will be reaching out to the community over the coming months to see how best to fund Phase I infrastructure and site acquisition. To view exhibits, community questionnaire results, and the Visioning Executive Summary visit www.sahuaritasquare.com.

We welcomed La Posada residents this past year when they were annexed. La Posada is a multi-faceted retirement community, with that, our population pushed over 30,000 residents and a boost to our state shared revenue is coming. We warmly welcome our newest residents into the town boundaries and the Sahuarita community. This partnership is one of mutual benefit and appreciation. As promised, the installation of a new traffic signal at the gateway to La Posada is under way and should be completed by years' end.

Residential Growth: The housing market in Town is booming. The developments of Rancho Sahuarita, Quail Creek, Stone House, Madera Highlands and Santa Cruz Meadows are all selling briskly. We appreciate all of the homebuilder's investment in our community and we thank the Southern Arizona Homebuilders Association (SAHBA) for their advocacy and collaboration as well as the other regional partner organizations, PAG, Sun Corridor, Inc., Metropolitan Pima Alliance (MPA), Southern Arizona

Leadership Council (SALC), the Green Valley/Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce, Green Valley Council and so many others.

Improving the quality life for our residents is at the center of all the decisions we make. In 2019, the town maintained a vigilant watch over roadways in need of maintenance through our Pavement Preservation Program. This kind of attention will continue in 2020 with a \$1.5 million investment towards maintaining our roadways. Additionally, our streets division has developed a program for routine repair and maintenance of traffic signals. The quality of our roadways does equate to a higher quality of life for our businesses and residents.

All of these efforts would be moot if we didn't have a safe community to call home. Once again we are proud of having been rated one of the safest communities to live in Arizona by various rating agencies...as have my friends in Oro Valley, Marana and Nogales. Our success is due, in large part, to the hard work of Chief Noland and all of the officers in the department. Thank you for your dedication to the community and as Officer Al "Big Al" Guest always States, "We Have your Back" We know that, and we love and respect you for it. Thank you, Sahuarita PD. Please stand and be recognized

In just 25, short years, this town has gone quite literally, from being a "one-stop" town to being the thriving community it is today. There have been so many community members, business leaders, and elected officials that have come and gone, who've made incredible contributions to making Sahuarita what it is. Each of their contributions have been priceless.

We are greater than the sum of our parts when we face challenges with a spirit of community and collaboration; whether it be advocating for a successful "complete" count in the approaching Census, or ensuring that we tend to regional infrastructure's needs for expansion and maintenance, or looking to the east and our General Plan for long-term growth—we want our residents to know that their voice matters and that they can and should be counted.

The past 25 years have been an opportunity seized for Sahuarita. Our successes are evident in the healthful growth we've seen, and the obvious potential ahead. We pledge as an organization and as elected officials to continue to work for our residents at keeping Sahuarita a place "Where Life

Comes together!” This afternoon from 4 to 6 p.m., I invite you all to join us for our Birthday Bash at Town Hall, where we will honor our many successes since incorporation. No Tequila, but we will have cupcakes!

A special thanks to our emcee today, my friend Dan Cavanaugh! Thank you. God bless you. May you all have a wonderful afternoon!