



State of the Town Address 2014

Dr. Satish I. Hiremath, Mayor

Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of my colleagues and the staff of the Town of Oro Valley, welcome to the 13th Annual State of the Town Address.

Let me begin by recognizing my fellow Councilmembers who are with us today: Vice Mayor Lou Waters, Councilmembers Brendan Burns, Joe Hornat and Mary Snider. Councilmembers Bill Garner and Mike Zinkin could not be here.

I would also like to thank the Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce board of directors, President/CEO Dave Perry, and each of the sponsors who made today's event possible. The Chamber raises the bar every year by organizing a spectacular event.

And a big thank you to the Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort, especially Lynn Ericksen and his team, who treat us like royalty every year.

Before we get into the speech, there's one more very important thank you: to Stacy, who is definitely my better half, and to my kids. Being a business owner and mayor is tough to balance with having a family. I am blessed to have a family that understands my passion for this community, and I could not serve as your mayor without their support.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to deliver my fifth State of the Town Address as your newly re-elected Mayor. It is clear that our residents want to continue on our current path of success, and that success is based on building relationships. This is the core message I would like to share with you today.

I am pleased to tell you that in 2014, our house is in order, and that is not by accident. It is by design.

When deciding what message I wanted to share with you today, I found myself drawn to some of the sentiments I expressed during my first State of the Town Address in 2010. In that address, I stated: "We cannot do things just because we have to do things. We must do things because they're the right things to do on behalf of the community as a whole."

Four years ago, when I gave that address, I challenged our Town Manager and department directors to raise their level of expectations, and meet those expectations, because the residents of Oro Valley deserve no less.

We have done just that, and more.

How—in such a short amount of time—does an organization develop a culture of purpose, respect and success?

It's simple. Through relationships.

It has been through the deliberate building of relationships with residents, businesses and employees that the Town of Oro Valley has been able to meet and exceed the community's expectations. But the Town doesn't get to take all the credit for this success, for the true nature of a relationship is that both parties contribute, and both parties benefit.

Let's take a look at how this has worked for Oro Valley.

In 2010, I made a very bold statement: "People have a right to question what government does, but they do not have a right to become a distraction, or worse yet, an obstacle for achieving success."

Your Town Council and management team want to hear your questions, concerns and ideas. If we don't understand what residents want, we're guessing. We will continue to make fiscally-responsible decisions, but in order to make decisions that are best for the whole community, we need to hear from you!

The best solutions come when the Town of Oro Valley and its residents work together.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a disconnect for some of us. Too many still see government as separate from the people, thinking citizens have no direct impact and no personal investment in what and how decisions are made.

But at the local level—and especially at our size—that is just not true. Municipal government is the level at which citizens have the greatest impact.

Currently, the Town is in the process of updating its General Plan, which will serve as a guide for Town decisions over the next 10 years. Community input is critical to this process. We developed a comprehensive Public Participation Plan to ensure our residents had dozens of opportunities to tell us what mattered most to them as we look toward the future. That Council-approved plan has been so successful, just last week, it garnered national recognition from the City-County Communications and Marketing Association as an example of best practices.

Speaking of communications, the Town is always looking for ways to improve citizen access to information, so this year, we launched two free mobile apps for your cell phones and other mobile devices. The OV App was developed entirely by in-house staff. It is your gateway to the most popular information on the Oro Valley website. And the MyPD mobile app was implemented as a means to provide notifications and information to citizens regarding events, crimes and wanted persons.

At the department level, the Town of Oro Valley is actively working to build relationships with the community and improve the flow of information as well.

For instance, our Parks and Recreation Department meets with the park's large user groups to build relationships and better understand their sporting and recreational needs.

The Water Utility offers free water conservation audits as well as adult and youth programs to educate residents of all ages and ensure they're getting the most out of their water usage.

The Youth Advisory Council, coordinated by the Town Manager's Department, fosters civic engagement and gives students a voice in the Town's planning and decision-making process.

And brand new this year is the Police Department's Coffee with a Cop, part of a national initiative to build relationships and break down barriers between the public and police officers.

These are just a few examples of the dozens of ways in which our Town's departments are engaging residents, building relationships and exceeding expectations.

Oro Valley understands citizen engagement, but engagement isn't solely about sharing ideas or getting to know each other. Engagement is giving your time and talent to the community in which you live. And we've seen some great examples of citizens doing just that.

About one year ago, Oro Valley resident and artist Neil Myers reached out to the Town. He noticed during Council meetings that there was a large, empty space on the wall behind the dais, and he wanted to change that by donating his time, talent and materials to create a work of art to fill that space. Thanks to Neil, there is now an extraordinary work of art hanging in Council Chambers. He saw a need and he took action.

Oro Valley residents Mel and Tracy Holsinger also took action when they saw a need. Tracy is a member of Tucson Area Marine Moms, which offers support to the mothers, grandmothers and sisters of those in the military. They also prepare and ship care packages to troops overseas. Tracy's husband Mel saw an opportunity to help raise funds for the care packages, and he assists by holding raffles and silent auctions at some of the events he holds as a business owner.

Another example of giving back to the community is the work being done by Hal and Sandy Jasper. When they learned there was a need for clean socks for homeless veterans at the Tucson VA Hospital, they took action. For the past seven years, they have organized sock drives in Sun City Oro Valley, with tremendous response from residents.

And then there is nine-year-old Emily Rudh, who teaches us that you don't have to be a grown-up to make a difference in the community. Emily has a passion for animals, so she came up with a plan to make toys and bracelets that she could sell and then donate the proceeds to the Humane Society and Pima Animal Care Center. She's even recruited some of her friends to help make the toys and bracelets, and this year, she was able to donate \$600. And it just so happens that today is Emily's birthday. Happy birthday Emily!

These residents are engaged. They take action when they see a need. Their individual contributions build relationships which make our Town and government stronger. I challenge each and every resident to find ways to personally engage with us and strengthen the relationship.

Another type of relationship we need for success is with our business community.

In my opinion, one of the reasons society fails is because one side usually has a significant advantage over the other. But it is through mutually-beneficial relationships that we find success.

People forget that business is established to make a profit. With profit and relationships, reinvestment in the community occurs.

This past year has brought us some outstanding relationships that are mutually beneficial, resulting in overall success for the community.

When the Town of Oro Valley began talks with the Children's Museum Tucson, our goal was to offer more educational and entertainment opportunities for our young residents, while also helping the Children's Museum to build its client base and expand its reach. I'm proud to announce that the Museum and the Town are working together to raise funds to open a Children's Museum Oro Valley in the first quarter of 2015.

In another example, Vestar, the owner of the Oro Valley Marketplace, has been a partner and champion for the Town since its development. Each year, the Town's relationship with Vestar grows stronger, as they continue to partner with us on large community events such as the annual Oro Valley Tree Lighting and the 2nd Thursday Concert Series, held in partnership with the Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance. They have also been strong supporters of the Shop OV holiday and summer campaigns by donating grand prizes.

When Vestar provides space for community events, they're supporting our efforts at little to no cost. This also draws customers to their doorstep, which results in sales tax for the Town. Mutually beneficial.

Another valued relationship the Town has is with BASIS Oro Valley, a top-ranked charter school which has helped strengthen Oro Valley's reputation for having some of the best schools in the state. When BASIS approached the Town with a very ambitious plan for expanding to a K-12 facility, Town officials worked hard to ensure those timelines were met and the facility was ready for the new school year. The success of our schools—and in this case, BASIS—means success for Oro Valley in offering quality educational choices for prospective residents and the employees of our major employers like Oro Valley Hospital, Sanofi, Securaplane and Ventana Medical Systems.

Those major employers are an economic driver for the Town. Additionally, their employees shop in our stores and dine in our restaurants, contributing to the sales tax that makes up about 50% of our General Fund. So when those businesses told us they needed more housing options for employees, we listened. We also listened when residents told us in last year's community survey that they wanted more services and businesses.

As a result, luxury apartment complexes such as Encantada at Steam Pump Village by HSL properties and San Dorado Apartments at First and Oracle are being built. The San Dorado development also has the benefit of a retail center with a CVS drug store and Panera Bread restaurant, among others. Scottsdale-based Mark-Taylor Capital and Kitchell Development are co-developers of the Villas at San Dorado.

The success of this project will result in economic success for the Town of Oro Valley, bringing fiscal strength and stability, because business contributes to the Town's two primary sources of revenue: sales tax and utility tax.

And how stable are we?

Over the past three fiscal years, as the Town continues to recover from the Great Recession, we have used annual budget surpluses to invest nearly \$5 million into our community assets. These include a new Aquatic Center, new multi-purpose fields and dog park at Naranja Park, and protection of our viewsheds by ensuring utility that lines are buried underground. We have done all of this while also growing our cash reserves above where they were three years ago, and stable cash reserves contribute to the Town's strong bond ratings.

In February of this year, Standard & Poor's Rating Services raised the Town's long-term rating on the Oro Valley Oracle Road Improvement District's special assessment revenue bonds two notches, from A- to A+. This investment grade rating will allow the Town to access future capital on the bond market at much lower interest rates, saving taxpayer dollars on the Town's debt payments. Additionally, the Town of Oro Valley earned four national awards in the areas of financial reporting, budgeting and procurement.

Since we're talking numbers here, let me throw a few at you and see if you can guess who I'm talking about. Which Oro Valley business operates on an annual budget of \$107.1 million, has a staff of 342 full-time equivalent employees with more than three thousand years' combined experience?

Have you figured it out yet?

The Town of Oro Valley.

Some of you may be surprised to hear me refer to municipal government as a business, but we are successful because we operate according to good business practices. And those practices include taking care of our employees.

This is actually my favorite part of every year's State of the Town Address—the part where I have the honor of recognizing the men and women who have dedicated themselves to public service. Our employees come to work each and every day to ensure that the residents of our Town have a clean, safe community, with the outstanding services they deserve.

This year, we have continued our commitment to fund step increases and employee merit raises for the current fiscal year. Council also implemented a market study to ensure employees were being fairly compensated for the work they were performing. Additionally, funding was approved for an on-site health clinic for employees and their dependents, making it even easier for employees to quickly address any health issues, which will reduce the overall costs of healthcare for the Town. This is yet another example of a mutually-beneficial relationship: Better services for employees and cost-savings for the Town.

Earlier in my speech I stated that we must do things because they're the right things to do on behalf of the community. Investing in our employees is one of those "right things" which benefits our entire community. Yes, Council sets policy and provides direction, but it is our employees who bring that vision to life every day through their dedication and professionalism.

If you are a Town of Oro Valley employee, please stand and be recognized.

I previously referred to the Town as a business, and in business terminology, while I may be the president of our organization and Council is the board of directors, Town Manager Greg Caton is our

CEO, successfully managing staff and ensuring that Council's vision and priorities are carried out. His leadership style and ability to build relationships has earned the respect of this Council as well as his employees and the community. Mr. Caton, would you please stand.

In case you hadn't heard, 2014 is a big year for the Town of Oro Valley. This is our 40th anniversary, and we couldn't be more proud of the community we've become. I can talk all day about the achievements and partnerships and fiscal responsibility, but our success comes down to mutually-beneficial relationships.

When we make it easier for businesses to open and thrive in Oro Valley, their success results in our success.

When we take care of our employees, they take care of our residents.

And when you—our residents, community leaders and business owners—engage with local government, you help us to make better decisions about what the Town of Oro Valley needs for long-term success.

In all honesty, for some of you, there may have been a time in the past when you tried to engage with the Town, but experienced frustration. I know this because, before I was elected Mayor, I was one of those people. I'm here to tell you that today, that is no longer the case.

I commit to you that we will meet you halfway, and ask that you meet us halfway, thereby creating a true partnership. This relationship will only be mutually-beneficial if the Town and the community are equally engaged.

As of this moment, whether you are a resident, community leader or business, we are intentionally calling on you to contribute your time, talent and resources to help better the community. Get involved!

Our goal in all of this, is that when people see the government of the Town of Oro Valley, I want them to see the residents of Oro Valley. And when people see our residents, I want them to see the government of the Town of Oro Valley.

We are a reflection of our community, and our community is a reflection of us. And for a Town of just 40 years, what an outstanding reputation we have built together!

I am excited, hopeful and confident that my next four years as your Mayor will build upon the relationships we've worked so hard to develop these past four years. And that those relationships will continue to move us down a path of success for the next forty years.

It is an honor to be your Mayor. Thank you.