

City of Wildomar
State of the City Speech

Elks Lodge

April 12, 2011

Thank you for coming this morning. It's hard for me to believe but welcome to Wildomar's FOURTH State of the City address. It is my pleasure to be serving as the Mayor as we reflect on the State of our Great City. Before we get started let's honor our nation by saluting the flag. I'd like to ask our, honored guest, and Wildomar resident, Mr. Tom McGraham to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Thank you Mr. McGraham!

Tom is not only a resident of our City he is a retired Marine and an author of "The Road to Iwo Jima." The story of his life reads like a classic novel. However, in this case it's NOT fiction. Mr. McGraham's life is the stuff of Hollywood movies. The fact he survived that fateful day on an island in the South Pacific during World War II so many years ago, and is able to share his life story, is a true testament to what makes this nation great.

We thank you for your service to our nation and it is our pleasure to have you here today as our special guest.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize a number of dignitaries and officials who are here as well. If you could hold your applause until the end it would be appreciated:

(Paula to Provide List)

Wildomar City Council

Elected Officials or their Representatives

CEO's, Administrators, and City Managers from our Region

VIP's from Major Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and Service Organizations

Please join me in welcoming such a distinguished group of guests

Wildomar is a special place for me because it is where I've raised my family and where I have strong roots in a community that I've called home for 36 years. I'm so proud to see a combination of residents, business owners, neighboring cities, and elected officials, the School District, and generally friends of Wildomar here this morning. We are a community of residents who have a strong sense of identity and are proud to share who we are and what we represent. Like our City logo states we may have incorporated in 2008 but we have been a community since 1886. We've been around for a long time and with the promise of incorporation we intend to just keep getting better with age.

With that outlook, I'm happy to report that the State of the City is strong and full of optimism. I can honestly tell you that I am so proud to be on the City Council with individuals who love this City as much as I do. I'd like to share a story with you about what is RIGHT with Wildomar and why there is optimism in the air. This year when the court invalidated our parks assessment our City's youngest and newest activist sprung in to action and started selling Lemonade to help fund our parks. Her Mom will tell you that she came up with the idea herself and hasn't looked back since. To date she has raised over a \$1000.

And, oh, did I mention she is ONLY 7 years old?

Kailee Carroll can I get you to stand up and be recognized

All the money she raised is being used to help fund the ongoing maintenance of the City's parks. It's that kind of passion and good will that is keeping this City moving forward. While us adults were looking at technical legal arguments and complicated funding formats, Kailee went out and just started doing something about it. She didn't complain and criticize she just knew that parks are important to HER community so she started raising money.

Maybe we adults have something to learn from Kailee. When there is a problem facing us lets just stop the fussing and just fix it.

This economic down turn has hurt us at times but has NOT knocked us out. We are too strong as a community and too optimistic to let lawsuits and criticisms become our fate. History is on our side. We have come a long way since the 1800's to be able to chart our own destiny. What some

critics don't fully appreciate about incorporation is that it's not always about the money, although money is important and helps you get to your goals quicker, by itself it does not make a community.

We wanted to be able to make the kind of decisions about development that our neighboring cities had already been doing for decades.

We wanted to spur economic development for the betterment of the community.

We wanted to enhance our quality of life for our residents.

It's real easy to get frustrated during these tough economic times but then we think of Kailee giving up her weekends playing with her friends to sell lemonade. How can you not feel like we are doing the right thing by fighting every day to make this City a better place to live?

Granted we are having to invent new ways to do business but we are defying the odds. While the critics keep counting us out we keep reinventing the rule book. After all, isn't that what makes us a great nation. American ingenuity has saved us time and time again. We made a decision early on to exercise a different kind of model for government where we control how many employees we have by using a contract system. We buy as much service as we need, or can afford, so we NEVER over extend our budgets to an unsustainable level. This minor detail that gets lost in headlines about medical marijuana and parks lawsuits continues to serve us as we patiently ride out this slowly developing wave of economic recovery.

Our optimism continues to grow. We are starting to see a recover in our City revenues. While we are far from our original estimates at the time of incorporation we have seen a 9.5 percent growth in sales tax in our last four quarters alone. That is the first continuous quarter by quarter growth we have experienced since the time we incorporated. Prior to these recent gains the City was seeing numbers decline quarter after quarter. You can't help but be hopeful when you start paying close attention to these financial indicators.

We haven't quite seen the same gains in property taxes but we are seeing signs of housing price stabilization in Wildomar which at this stage is a positive sign. I don't think anyone could have predicted that we would be cheering for a day that our revenues were flat as opposed to declining. Yet that is the reality we are living with.

However, even with this news everywhere we turn in Wildomar we are seeing positive signs that we are going to be viable and a leading economic force in the very near future.

Brick by brick we are seeing the long awaited infrastructure a City needs to be able to have a positive view of the future for current residents and those who haven't even arrived yet.

Those young families seeking a quiet rural community will find one the best Nursery Schools and Kindergartens in this whole Valley at the Anne Sullivan School right her in the City of Wildomar. Approvals were granted and they already had their ground breaking to expand three existing buildings and build two new buildings for a total of 8,000 square feet. This will give them the space they need to continue to flourish in the City for years to come. This is truly a win-win for the school and the City. Ask anyone and they will tell you what a great reputation the school has for educating young children and that helps reflect positively on Wildomar as their home.

As we see growth and expansion in the City you don't have to go much further than across the Street without recognizing our newest addition to the City's landscape, the Southwest Cities Animal Shelter. After years of growing out of a facility in Lake Elsinore the expansion into Wildomar was welcomed. The much anticipated Animal Shelter run by Animal Friends of the

Valley opened in Wildomar with much fanfare in October of this past year. Even more, Wildomar became the latest member of the Animal Shelter's Board of Directors. Our newly formed relationship with our neighboring cities has proven to be fruitful as we work through our regional issues together. As a City we want to be able to continue building on the long standing cooperation each of the members cities have accomplished over the years.

The addition of this 32,000 square foot facility provides yet another example of how Wildomar is quickly becoming an important player in the regional landscape. This shelter will serve this region as it continues to grow and flourish. And all roads lead back to Wildomar when it comes to animal care. We are proud to host this important facility and partner with Animal Friends of the Valley. Kris and Willa thank you for your continued efforts to ensure that the animals in this valley are treated humanely and with care.

And of course I can't talk about new buildings in the City without pointing out that we are in a brand new building right here in the Elks Lodge. This building, along with the Animal Shelter, are two examples of how this corner of Mission Trail is being transformed one building at a time. We were excited about having the Elks Lodge host the State of the City Address this year so that we could show off this wonderful facility. As with many service organizations Elks play a key role in our City. They link residents who have a desire to do good works with an organization that is out performing those functions year round. For those who call yourselves ELKS the City of Wildomar thanks you.

One of the most important developments that happened in Wildomar this year was the hiring of a new CEO for Inland Valley Hospital. Mr. Ken Rivers had the very difficult task of getting both Inland Valley and Rancho Springs Medical Centers past regulatory hurdles put up by the State. I am pleased to announce in a short amount of time Inland Valley Hospital's \$24.7 million investment in Wildomar is finally coming in to full operation. The 30,000 square feet of new space will be a welcome addition to the City and the residents that it serves. Now that it is open we can move on to more important things such as continuing to build relations with a valued business in our community. We want to ensure that the best quality service is available to our residents and the region at large. If we succeed in these efforts everyone will benefit. We look forward to having Inland Valley Hospital and its leadership working closely with us as we plan for the future of the City.

Queue Animation Video

To help get patients to and from the hospital we are finally seeing light at the end of our transportation tunnel. Let me take a moment to visually share with you the soon to be constructed Clinton Keith Overpass Bridge.

The existing Clinton Keith Road/I-15 interchange was constructed in 1979 and is a vital component of the City's traffic circulation system. For many, it is considered the gateway to the City.

This Fall, we will undertake a \$25 million project to widen the bridge and expand the on and off ramps to the 15 freeway. Funded primarily with developer impact fees, the bridge will be

widened from two to six lanes, existing traffic signals will be upgraded, sidewalks will be constructed on BOTH sides of the widened bridge and additional lanes will be added on the on and off ramps.

In the first stage, work will begin on expanding the bridge abutments and the freeway on and off ramps.

Next, in Stage 2 new piers will be constructed for the bridge widening and the existing bridge will be strengthened to current seismic safety standards.

In Stage 3, final paving is done to ready the project for opening to traffic. The project is expected to take about 18 months to construct and once completed, will result in improved safety and significant improvements in the flow of traffic in the area. We are appreciative of our friends at the City of Murrieta and the County of Riverside for their help and assistance on this very important project.

This long awaited project is just months away from final plan design and the goal is to start construction this year. This important corridor links the 215 freeway to the east with the I-15 freeway to the west. Nothing can be more important for moving people and commerce through our City than this bridge. It is our lifeline for the southern part of our community. This has been a priority to this Council since incorporation and will continue to be so until we drive the first car across the newly constructed bridge. We believe this bridge has the ability to jumpstart development in the area as we are able to ease congestion for businesses and residents alike

The message I want everyone to hear today is that investments are being made in Wildomar. There is activity taking place. We are setting the stage for the next chapter in Wildomar's history. If we continue down this path the future will be bright. We just have to stay focused so we don't lose sight of the lifestyle many have grown accustomed to.

We are still a great investment and GLJ Partners is proof positive Wildomar is going to continue to grow in the right direction. As a company they are prepared to take the next step in the development of their Oak Springs Ranch Project on Clinton Keith. This phased project which includes multifamily dwelling units is going to complement the type of housing needed for a growing hospital facility right next door. The first phased high end apartments are loaded with amenities you might find in an upscale community. We are told hospital employees are target clients of this type of housing. But even more important than that is these are residents who will frequent our restaurants and stores which mean sales tax dollars.

This is what I mean when I say Wildomar is a great investment. Everywhere you turn even in a slow economy something is happening. Not a week or a month goes by that someone isn't inquiring about making investments in Wildomar. The economy is picking back up and we are poised to take advantage of it because we do have land and we have room to grow.

Building a City from the ground up is not an easy task. But it has been one of the most rewarding things I've done in service to this community. The fortunate thing is that as a Council we are not alone. As you can see investments are being made in our business and transportation infrastructure but we have made HUGE strides in what I would call our social infrastructure in just a few short years.

Normally I don't like to brag but...

I do want to boast a bit. At the City's strategic visioning workshop right at the time of incorporation in 2008 one of the goals was to start up a Rotary Club here in Wildomar. I don't think anyone knew whether it would be successful or not, I just think there were individuals who wanted to get involved and participate in new service club.

Fast forward two and half years and not only is Rotary flourishing it held its second annual East vs. West BBQ competition in March. In TWO short years Rotary has created a signature event that is drawing thousands of people to the City and some of the top BBQ teams in the nation from states including Texas, Illinois, Iowa, Arizona, and the list goes on. This year alone \$15,000 in prize money was awarded. The event raised thousands of dollars that will be spent in Wildomar for dozens of worthy causes. The success even surprised the leadership of Rotary. I guess that is what happens when you put a group of caring people in a room whose only interest is bettering their community. It's no wonder they were awarded service club of the year by the Chamber of Commerce.

But I have to admit it's a lot of hard work but it sure is a lot of FUN. On one day of the year Rotary is able to put on an event that celebrates family, good food, and community. I can't think of anything more hometown America than that.

I'm thinking that we should just trademark Wildomar as the BBQ Capital of California! We're already thinking about how to make it bigger and better for next year. So anyone out there that wants to see how you put on the best one day party in Southern California you need to join in on the fun and ask a Wildomar Rotarian how to get involved.

As you can see since incorporation nobody is resting on their laurels. We intend on making Wildomar reach its potential one way or another. We are going to keep pushing for positive change on every front. Our residents deserve to have a City Council that cares and community that matches their expectations.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize our city officials and staff that work hard every day for all of us.

Thank you for coming out today and allowing me to share with you all the good things going on in Wildomar. I'm proud to be your Mayor. God Bless You and God Bless America.