

2020 State of the City
Presented at the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce Banquet
January 30, 2020

Good Evening. I am pleased and honored to be with you tonight, as we have some time to fellowship with one another and enjoy community reflection of the past year. Additionally, this evening is an opportunity to talk about where we go in the future for our city and the entire community.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped put this evening together. From Chamber President Terry McCullar and the Chamber Board to the city staff – I appreciate all your efforts on this event.

And, I'd like to thank my lovely wife Christi - who told me years back when I was first elected to the council: "Now don't be expecting me to go to a bunch of shindigs all the time, I'll do one or two a year."

Well, despite tough talk - over the years - she is often at my side. She is there with me. Whether it's helping us clean up trash in neighborhoods or attending community events, mentoring young women, showing compassion for children or just standing by my side on the tougher days. Frankly, my wife... is a saint... and I'm a very fortunate and blessed man! Of course, I'll probably get yelled at later for putting her on the spot - love you babe! We'll go look at that new furniture soon.

Now, it is my honor to present to you the 2020 State of the City Address. Our theme tonight is: "Mesquite: A new decade of direction, determination, decisiveness" - and action, action, action!

I'd like to take a second and recognize your new city council. Council, please stand and remain standing as a group - as I call your name.

District 1, Sherry Wisdom
District 2, Kenny Green
District 3, Robert Miklos
District 4, Tandy Boroughs
District 5, B.W. Smith, and
District 6, Dan Aleman

Please join me in showing some love for these public servants who give so much of their time to build a better tomorrow for Mesquite!

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention our city manager, Mr. Cliff Keheley.

Cliff and I first met about 24 years ago when I was a Planning and Zoning Commissioner and he was a liaison from the City Manager's Office. I believe to the commission.

When I was first elected to the council, our then City Manager Ted Barron must have been punishing Cliff, as he assigned Cliff to be my day to day contact. Poor Cliff then became the recipient of my daily e-mails of tasks I'd pass on from my neighborhood visits or the many citizen requests I'd receive. And bless his heart - I think all those e-mails have quadrupled since then.

But seriously, as city manager, Cliff has presided over major accomplishments and events. From many organizational changes to the restoration efforts of downtown, to large commercial and massive residential developments and a historic charter election that provided for a new electoral system and more.

He puts in many hours at night and on the weekends and is invested personally to serving the city - and our community. Please help me thank you Cliff and his team.

Before we look towards the new decade, let's take a moment to glance back briefly at 2019. Our community was recognized by so many others from around the state of Texas.

The Mesquite Library System was honored as one of the best systems in the state. Mesquite was again identified as a Scenic City. Downtown Mesquite and its volunteers were applauded for their efforts and our Mesquite Convention and Visitors Bureau staff continued to place Mesquite on the map as destination choice by many a variety of travelers. Including a great article on Mesquite in Texas Monthly.

All of you already know – the City of Mesquite is a compassionate organization. The work our city employees do with charities like the Mesquite Police Department's Santa Cop, the Mesquite Fire Department's Fill The Boot and many charitable causes and programs throughout the year is so inspiring!

Our city employees both raise money for many charities and personally give themselves. And, we could not do it alone – the community and business partners are there with us each step of the way. I am grateful to be associated with such fine people. I believe God honors such mercy and kindness.

Speaking of being grateful, I am so appreciative of all that is happening in Downtown Mesquite. Our Front Street Groundbreaking this past year was a historic occasion. This year we kicked off our "Hometown Holidays" program with a series of wonderful Christmas events. Throughout the year we had events that complimented the economic, historic, and arts of our Downtown Mesquite.

Another inspiring program in 2019 was the progress of our new Mesquite Veterans Memorial. I thank God for all the donors – large and small - to that important mission to honor our veterans and their families.

And, a big acknowledgement to Randy Lawson and his team of volunteers as well as city staff for keeping that dream alive! We had a groundbreaking in November, and we have plans to cut the ribbon this November in honor of Veterans Day. As a matter of fact - if there are military veterans in this room - please stand so that we may honor you tonight.

As we build projects like Downtown Mesquite and the Mesquite Veterans Memorial, we continue to build a stronger economy in Mesquite.

The City of Mesquite's partnership with MISD, Workforce Solutions, the Chamber and Eastfield College, on the Business Retention and Expansion program has been phenomenal. I am excited about the future of the BRE with all these partners - particularly with Eastfield College.

I was a student senator at Eastfield, wrote for the college paper there - and I am a strong believer that Eastfield is a true asset for Mesquite full of limitless possibilities.

Thanks to the BRE, the Chamber of Commerce and others - Mesquite had numerous ground breakings... and many, many ribbon cuttings....

According to our Economic Development Department, the total building permits for commercial and residential activity combined was \$291 million in 2019 - compared to \$161 million in 2018. And guess what – we are just getting started!

We've also seen tremendous growth in our Mesquite Metro Airport. Today, the Airport is home to more than 200 aircraft – of all kinds.

It is a soaring economic engine for Mesquite and nearby communities, responsible for an estimated \$22.7 million in total economic output and more than 280 jobs.

Speaking of economic development, that the city has recognized the importance of good, reliable customer service. So, your city council and management are working to build a top-notch customer service in all operations.

Our planning and economic development staff are working diligently towards executing permits more efficiently... with less bureaucratic red tape and no last-minute surprises. Essentially, our goal is that any business or developer will one day be able to work with only one city staffer who will help navigate them through every stage of the process. In the end, we can all see more ground

breakings and celebrate more ribbon cuttings. And, jobs, jobs, jobs for our people!

The city's Parks and Recreation Department continues to provide quality programming for all ages – host fun events that are inviting for all families. And, we just recently opened our new Kids Quest Playground. It's a beautiful facility to continue the excellence of the previous playground many volunteers in this community helped to build more than 25 years ago.

At all times, public safety was a constant focus. Now, we have a new fire station underway over on the west side of Mesquite. And, we set funds aside to provide more bunker gear to protect our firefighters from the health challenges that come with that public safety profession.

And, we have continued to hire and train new police officers at every opportunity. Our internal training program is a huge asset to our goal of getting more and more officers out on the streets.

Staying on the topic of public safety, the City Council, met this week to receive a new and more aggressive crime fighting plan from our Mesquite Police Department. One part of that plan is making sure that anyone who works a late-night shift at any 24-hour operation - are not just left to the terror of being robbed at gunpoint.

WE CANNOT SAY MESQUITE IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS IF OUR CITIZENS WHO ARE JUST TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING -HAVE TO WORK IN A STATE OF FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES! I say "No!" - we are going to do better!

So, to build a Mesquite that will one day be the safest city in America - we will have our police department, our business community, and our citizens all working in collaboration together!

And if you were at or watching the council meeting Tuesday night--didn't our police department do an incredible job of presenting their new and aggressive crime fighting plan? Chief Cato and his team did a fantastic job! The entire City Council and I are incredibly proud of the men and women of the Mesquite Fire Department, the Mesquite Police Department and our Mesquite 911 Dispatchers. All of them keep us safe in our community.

Speaking of community, I was so proud to celebrate our 15th year of Addressing Mesquite Day! For a decade and half that program has helped so many families, senior citizens and more in Mesquite.

It is one of the most sustaining volunteer programs in North Texas of its kind – and we could not do it without the support of the business community.

Staying on the theme of community, I'd like to ask Councilmember Sherry Wisdom to come up and recognize some special community leaders.

As she makes her way up here, this year I wanted to honor a few folks in the community. These "Ladies of Leadership" have done such a tremendous job to make Mesquite a stronger community. To speak briefly about these individuals is our lady of leadership on the City Council, Ms. Wisdom.

Sherry Wisdom, District 1

Thank you Mayor. It is my honor and pleasure to recognize each of these women, who are true trailblazers in Mesquite.

Barbara Dunn: Barbara is a longtime community volunteer who has served many years in several capacities for the city and others. She did tremendous work as President of our Mesquite Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association.

Debbie Anderson: Debbie is also a longtime volunteer in our community. She currently serves as the Vice President of the Mesquite Heart Board to help build a healthier city. And she is the New President of the Mesquite Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association to help build a safer city. Also, she is helping to lead our citizens committee on the Census 2020 efforts to make sure everyone in Mesquite is counted.

Teresa Jackson: As the CEO of Sharing Life, Teresa and her team help thousands of people in need each year every year. And she is taking a on an additional leadership role to help our community partner with churches and volunteers to address our homeless issue.

Melissa Davis: Social media has played a major role in our community, and Melissa has been a part of that. As the founder of The Real Mesquite Facebook Page, she has helped the community with sharing information and keeping people engaged on issues.

Joyce Coologhan: She is our dear departed founder of South Mesquite D6 Facebook Page was so important in our community. She helped keep the lines of communication and conversation open on so many local issues.

Each of these women have contributed greatly to our community and we appreciate them very much! Please help us thank them.

Mayor Bruce Archer

Thank you, Councilmember Wisdom. I'd like to have the rest of the City Council join us ON the stage please. As they make their way up, I'd like to ask Sydney Paige, Shawn Hanley, and David Ivie to also join us NEAR the stage.

These are some fantastic City employees - indeed real difference makers! To aid me in the presentation, I'll call upon a few of the Council to introduce our Employees of the Year honorees.

Councilmember Kenny Green, a former general government employee - will present our General Government Employee of the Year Award.

Kenny Green, District 2

This employee is responsible for providing care for all types of animals in our community – regardless of their condition. This dedicated employee has aided the Mesquite Animal Shelter in improving its operations.

In August, the shelter achieved a milestone of a 90% live outcome rate for 24 consecutive months. This employee played a major role helping nearly 6,000 dogs, cats and other types of animals find their forever home. She is a true team player and provides superior service to the community.

It is my honor to present the 2019 General Government Employee of the Year Award to Animal Services Officer, Sydney Paige.

Mayor Bruce Archer

Thank you Councilmember Green. Councilmember B.W. Smith - a former 40-plus-year retired police officer will now present the Police Officer of the year award.

B.W. Smith, District 5

This police officer has been employed by the Mesquite Police Department since 1993. He is a Major Crimes Investigator assigned to Criminal Investigations.

He pursues excellence and is an ambassador for Mesquite, no matter what his work assignment. This is reflected from his early years as a Detention Officer – to his promotion to a Patrol Officer working Mesquite streets - and his 19 years as a member of the Mesquite Tactical Team.

He is married with two children, is an Elder at LaPrada Drive Church of Christ - and is always eager to volunteer his time to Special Olympics.

It is my honor to present the 2019 Police Officer of the Year Award to Investigator Shawn Hanley.

Mayor Bruce Archer

Thank you, Councilmember Smith. Councilmember Tandy Boroughs, a 30-plus-year Mesquite Firefighter will now present our Firefighter of the Year award.

Tandy Boroughs, District 4

This firefighter demonstrates a commitment in a leadership position and serves as a positive role model both on and off duty. He started his career with the city in 2000, has earned several promotions and has received four Life Saving Awards during his career.

Recently, he spearheaded the department's self-contained breathing apparatus replacement project of 80 S-C-B-As and more than 200 air cylinders. He has raised the level of confidence of our firefighters in the breathing equipment they use when going out on fire calls.

It is my honor to present the 2019 Fire Officer of the Year Award to Lt. David Ivie.

Mayor Bruce Archer

Thank you, Council, for assisting me with that part of the program. As the City Council and our employee honorees return to their seats, lets give them one more round of applause.

THE NEW DECADE – Here is What to Look for in 2020 and Beyond

We will continue to forge ahead on issues like stronger and healthier neighborhoods. In fact, wouldn't it be something one day - if all our older first neighborhoods had a big sign that said:

“Welcome to Casa View.”

“Welcome To Mesquite Park.”

“Welcome To Rollingwood Hills.”

“Welcome To Northridge Estates.”

You see, in Mesquite, every neighborhood matters and we will leave no one behind! We must continue to build in each neighborhood, no matter how old the housing stock, a sense of place and a place that children can identify as their home.

However, the community is growing, and we are getting ready. Thousands of new homes including executive housing are being built in our city. We are working steadily to create a future economically viable I20 Corridor – known as “Trinity Pointe Mesquite.”

Not only will these new homes bring in more tax revenue than their cost of services - but they will help increase our average median income. That will help us continue to bring in the kind of retail and restaurants our citizens want.

We will continue to work to recruit and build our volunteer base. We know that government cannot and should not solve every problem - it requires engaged and involved citizens who care deeply and who will keep the ship sailing!

We will continue to make sure citizens have more and more involvement and say in how we do things - because the people are always the boss - period!

Let me wind down with these thoughts about the future. This decade of new determination, direction, and decisiveness will focus on Mesquite becoming the safest city in America. Which, by the way, we made a good start this week at our special City Council meeting on fighting crime.

We will also focus on Mesquite becoming the cleanest city in America. More and more residents are getting active in cleaning up their neighborhood and other parts of our city. And in the coming weeks, you'll be hearing more about "The Mayor's Task Force On The Cleanest City in America Initiative"

And, we will also focus on Mesquite becoming the most employed city in America.

While we are so blessed to live during this great economy - we still do not want to be comfortable. We must do everything and more to make sure that every person in Mesquite who is willing to work - has a job! When a person has a job - when he or she does something useful with their day - it can change their whole life and those around them. God honors hard work!

Additionally, we will also focus on Mesquite becoming the kindest city in America. When we as a community and a nation - can get better and better at how we treat one another. And practice kindness and civility in all we do - all the other challenges we face - will simply seem to be less daunting.

Mesquite must become a beacon of light to the rest of the world when it comes to being a kinder - and gentler community.

So tonight, we celebrate our business community - our entrepreneurs - those who invest in our community and who create a wealth of opportunity!

I spoke earlier of Mesquite being open for business and some of the things we as a city government are doing to help on our end. This includes customer service and raising the bar of excellence in everything we do.

For our city to really strive and grow our local economy to heights never before seen - means that we must be a business community that also works to constantly raise the bar of excellence.

We need to not just be restaurants, retail businesses, doctors' offices, real estate offices, auto mechanic shops and the list goes on. All our wonderful businesses must not just be places where there is "service" or even "good service." We must strive every day to provide what we called during my CiCi's years - "EXTREME AND WOW CUSTOMER SERVICE!"

Any non-Mesquite resident who comes into any of our businesses - should experience the friendliest staff who are focused on being a 100% at everything they do.

For those who would say, "Well, that's just not realistic in these times." I say, "We can, and we must absolutely create such an environment of extreme and wow service. And we can, if we provide the leadership, if we are willing to work hard, and if we are willing to be great!"

We must reverse what we too often see out there - of just doing what has to be done to get by - and go above and beyond in everything we do!

My childhood hero, Roger Staubach once said, "There are no traffic jams along the extra mile."

Mesquite - let all of us.... go that extra mile together into the next decade!

More than ever ladies and gentlemen - I BELIEVE IN MESQUITE! The state of our city - is strong and getting stronger! We have opportunities to take advantage of and challenges to overcome. We will do the hard work. We will have higher expectations.

We will forge ahead on a new and bold path - that will one day allow our grandchildren to be proud of what we did here. We will do whatever it takes to build that shining city on a hill of which we all dream and believe. Indeed, a city of possibility!

Thank you all for allowing me to share with you tonight the State of OUR City. At this time, I'd like to ask Councilmember and Pastor Dan Aleman to come on stage offer our benediction.