

CITY OF SCOTTSDALE

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

FIRESIDE CHAT TRANSCRIPT

Date: February 26, 2025

Location: Fairmount Scottsdale Princess Palomino Ballroom

7575 E. Princess Drive

Scottsdale, Arizona 85255

Event: State of the City Address

Host Organization: Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce

PARTICIPANTS

- **Mayor Lisa Borowsky**

Mayor, City of Scottsdale

- **Moderator:** Mark Stanton

President & Chief Executive Officer

Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce

Note: The 2025 State of City speech was conducted as a Question and Answer “fireside chat” between the Honorable Lisa Borowsky, Mayor of Scottsdale, Arizona and Mark Stanton, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mark Stanton:

Thank you for joining us, Mayor Borowsky. If you'd like to have a seat, we're going to do things a little different this year. The Mayor and I were talking with her team and looking at what might be a good way to introduce her first State of the City. So, we're going to have a fireside chat, if you will, but we don't need a fire because we've got this incredible weather. So, we are loving that. Mayor, thank you. Please have a seat.

Mayor Borowsky:

Thank you. Am I live?

Mark Stanton:

Yes you are.

Mayor Borowsky:

Yes, all right. Good morning.

Mark Stanton:

First, I want to tell you, I got my haircut for this. So I'm feeling like I kind of went above and beyond, but it was important. And also I want to say how great it is that you brought your family. And I see your mom and dad here. So big hand for Mayor Borowsky's folks. There they are.

Mayor Borowsky:

Take a bow.

Mark Stanton:

And then also, I want to thank you and your team for putting together that video. We appreciate that. I know your team really did a great job. Thank you for bringing that for us. And thank you for showcasing what is amazing about our city, what's amazing about the attributes that bring quality of life, and I think that video showed it. So, thank you for bringing that.

Mayor Borowsky:

Well, we could have used an hour or two to showcase everything that's amazing about Scottsdale and all the amazing people in this room and outside of this room. So, I'm glad it worked out.

Mark Stanton:

Thank you for being here and thank you to your team. You know, you've only been in the office for about a month and a half. So, it's been a whirlwind. A lot of activities. Can you give us kind of a snapshot of what sort of your biggest surprise or a-ha, and kind of where you are in your mind going forward as the Council and you begin to work together?

Mayor Borowsky:

Well, it's been 44 days, but who's counting? It's been a wild ride so far. It's been exciting. One big, huge surprise, I knew I was I loved being on City Council, but I love the job so much. I mean, it's been really fantastic getting together with so many residents, so many business leaders. It's

just such an amazing place to be and do business. And that's been a huge plus. It's been very, very busy. I would say one of the big surprises is I was hoping for a honeymoon! I want my honeymoon phase! But baptism by fire. We came out of the gate very, very, I would say strong. And we've got ourselves lots of headlines. So didn't expect that in the first month. You know, some good, some very controversial. And so hopefully we're going to move into a little cadence that looks forward and is all about collaboration and coming together as a community so that we can, you know, do our best work. Do great things. Thank you, Adam.

Mark Stanton:

Thank you, Adam. No kidding, you guys came out of the gate strong. You have got a lot of work in front of you. We appreciate the dedication. As you begin to look at the priorities, I know you have come through and had a lot of thoughts on the campaign. What are you working on, your priorities. What's in front of you right now? What are really the top elements that you are working for, you and the Council?

Mayor Borowsky:

So, there's been a lot of work done already and a lot of work to do. So, I handed out this four-by-four card during the campaign, and it was just a little square and it had the bullet points of what I wanted to accomplish on the back. And I still carry that around with me, because it is my guiding -- my Bible, if you will, for what I want to accomplish over the next four years, and potentially you know, ideally, the next 12 years, which includes the 20-year strategic plan, looking even further. And I'm very proud that we've already established, reestablished the Citizens Budget Commission. So that was a very big deal for me. When I served with Jim Lane, we spearheaded the Citizens Budget Commission at the time because we were both -- we were all on the council, mostly, focused on how we protect and save, really, taxpayer dollars and spend it the most wisely that we can. And the Citizens Budget Commission was very successful in doing that. I think we cut the budget at that time by about 15% which is amazing, right? And that was in their first year of work for the City. And so, bringing that back is I'm very, very proud of this. It was a big goal for me. I think it's a big accomplishment for us on the Council and for our citizens and business owners. So, I'm looking forward to their fine work. It's chaired by David Smith, who I'm sure is here, and very big fan of his work and him as a person, of course. And I'm challenging them to

get in there, dig in, and ideally, they'll come up with savings that represent at least 5%, David, if you're listening. So that's a big, big deal. Other big initiatives -- so wildfire. You know, the tragedy in L.A. reminds us that here in Scottsdale, we've got big exposure in North Scottsdale. And coming from, you know, the equestrian background that I do, we have horses. I have horses that live in North Scottsdale, and it really oddly -- well, not oddly -- keeps me awake. Because when you go up there and you see just the brush and the fuel that is all around the area, North Scottsdale, all around the preserve, our biggest asset in Scottsdale, besides our community, I worry about it. So, you know, I have developed this plan, and with the full support of the Fire Department, City management, and ideally the Council, we're going to move forward with establishing the Scottsdale Volunteer Fire Brigade. That's going to be patterned much like the Sheriff's Posse. And so all of you that always wanted to be a fireman or a firewoman, you're going to have the opportunity, and it's going to be I think it's going to be a big addition to protecting and really mitigating our fire danger. So that's a big issue for me. One of the bigger things that I talked about during the campaign is high-quality development, and already that's been a big focus for me. We're working on a downtown plan for a garage I'm sure you've all heard. I was not in favor of it, and, you know, with any luck, it will come out and turn out to be the best. It passed nonetheless, and it passed in the prior administration, I should add. But I'd love to see Old Town and downtown revitalized and improved, protecting and preserving our historic roots there, and making it so that we are one of the best downtowns in the entire nation. So, this is a big push for me, and I'm looking forward and very excited to getting started on that challenge.

Mark Stanton:

Outstanding. One of the big questions in this audience is the economy. You know, looking forward, seeing what we can do to build up the business community. And obviously, you've been very business-friendly and looking at encouraging business. What can you tell the audience a little bit about your vision of business and how business can be an asset, and how this community can help work with the City?

Mayor Borowsky:

So, I believe the best thing that City government can do for business is really get out of the way and make it easier and more friendly to do business in Scottsdale. And I will start with developers

that come into our community, whether it's a remodel or whether you are trying to build something, you know, on a preapproved lot. I have already really been involved with the assistant city manager, who is right here acting city manager -- excuse me now -- who has been really great about how do we really make some changes right out of the gate? So, I would say the Planning Department is a big area that we hear a lot about, that, you know, it's a little difficult to get through the process. So, we're already making headway in that regard. I think we keep our community clean, safe, and healthy. And that means low taxes. That means low property taxes, keeping sales taxes as low as possible, and just creating an environment that we support you as business leaders and business owners in the community. Also, we've been involved in looking at how does the City hone its skills in the Economic Development Department? Does that look like we established a little subsect of -- almost like a sales force to follow up on leads and get new business? And that's been discussed, and ideally the right recipe will be the one that's established and we will promote it. I am a big fan of tourism. That's not a secret in this room. I think tourism, as long as we keep our eye on the ball of what has made our City the tourism capital of the southwest, if not, you know, I want to see it as the capital of tourism in the country, and I think we are on the brink of doing that. We are so, so close to taking over the big cities that everyone talks about. And we're right there with them. So, I think as long as we focus on -- through a newcomers' eyes to our city, we keep it fresh, we keep it really nice to do business here, people want to live here, people want to move their headquarters here. So that really is the introduction to our City, and I think that cannot be overstated.

Mark Stanton:

Well, congratulations, because tourism is really moving forward, and I know that's a priority and Experience Scottsdale and Rachel Sacco's team are fully committed to working towards that vision, and I applaud that. Another point that I was going to ask you that kind of ties into the tourism factor, is on the video, you had a good showcase of cultural activities and the arts. Can you give us some thought about the cultural aspect of Scottsdale and the arts?

Mayor Borowsky:

I'm so glad you asked about that. Another big initiative, first off let me start by saying this, so the bed tax is split between Experience Scottsdale and the City. And I really feel like it's a big

opportunity to reevaluate how we're spending the tourism side of the City's tax fund and investing in big ideas. You know, how do we improve arts and culture and the experience in Scottsdale. And I think one great idea is looking at a performing arts center that accommodates 2,500 to 3,000 people, and it's been talked about for years. I talked about it over the last four years. I think that's a real opportunity for us because there isn't one. There are two, but they're downtown Phoenix and ASU, of course, Gammage. But I really think that ideas like that can move our City forward even more to become the world-class destination and experience, more importantly, for those of us that live here, whether it's Scottsdale or throughout the valley. But using the bed tax dollars wisely, from the City's perspective and carefully and looking ahead, I think is the key.

Mark Stanton:

Staying on the economy and growth and how we see the future of Scottsdale, a huge economic driver is the Scottsdale Airport and the Scottsdale Airpark, and I know you've got a lot of thought about how that can continue to grow and how we can be supportive of that. Can you give your thoughts about the airpark and the airport?

Mayor Borowsky:

Well, it's a huge asset for us, and I'm very proud of the airport. The tragedy that occurred just -- I guess it was two weeks ago now. One thing that I learned, and not many people know, is that we have a fire team, firefighter team and office on site, and it's not required by the FAA, but we do that. And they were on the scene within 60 seconds because they office right there. So that tragedy could have been much greater had they not been present and not been so on top of what is going on. And so, I really -- you know, I just cannot thank them enough for the good work that they do, along with our public safety. The Scottsdale Airport -- the airpark, the entire airpark area, is ripe for moving forward and redevelopment and getting, you know, a lot of business energy up there. I'm working on an initiative -- the mayor's ad hoc advisory or task force to undertake Scottsdale Road improvements. I think that's a big, big issue in the area. So that we have -- you know, a better path, really, to and from Scottsdale Airport and north and south on Scottsdale Road. So, keeping it vibrant and imaginative, and of course, protecting the Scottsdale Airport, not allowing residential to overtake it, that's a big issue, and comes up frequently. So, lots of support for that.

Mark Stanton:

So also, you got the airpark and the airport, but we also have a number of remarkable innovation centers throughout Scottsdale. One of them is SkySong, and the great work that is occurring at SkySong. What do you say to some of those innovators that would consider coming to Scottsdale to help build a business or to look at innovation centers?

Mayor Borowsky:

Our doors are open, and there's plenty of room for new, great businesses to come join us. SkySong is doing incredibly well. You know, that was a big issue back in 2008, when I first got elected. And they've really become very successful. And there's still room to develop and improve and grow in that area. And collaborating with ASU, I think we can't go wrong.

Mark Stanton:

Absolutely. You know, so I hear, being a mayor is a big responsibility. And it goes far beyond the borders of your municipality. Tell us about your engagement at the County level and with the State.

Mayor Borowsky:

Thanks for asking, because that's a big one that I would have probably neglected. So that's a great question. So, the State Legislature -- I know they're all in session so they are not listening. But they are trying to, through a series of legislative bills to take away the City's zoning oversight. And honestly, I have to say, I think that the two items of priority for your City government, for our City government and as elected officials, is protect our citizenry, protect our City, and oversee zoning. Those are the two biggest issues. And so, the State Legislature, trying to undercut our ability to manage the way that land use is handled in Scottsdale, I think is a slippery slope. And I think it's not good for our community. Our residents, you know, they are very selective when they come to Scottsdale and invest in residential here. And so, I have been down there, to answer your question, lobbying to make sure that they know how serious this is to us. We can't let this happen. And so, I would encourage all of you to get in touch with the bill sponsors who want to see, you know, five-acre lots subdivided into 1,500 square feet residential lots. So that, I think, is one of

our biggest concerns, where the state legislature is going right now, and doing all we can as a team to oppose that.

Mark Stanton:

Thank you. Kind of staying around that, State oversight and County oversight, a lot of folks are talking about water and water conservation. And I know we've some great stewards of water in the community, SRP and several partners that work with that. And I know that Scottsdale's been particularly thoughtful about how to manage water and to encourage the wise use. So, can you give us some thoughts on water use and water in Scottsdale?

Mayor Borowsky:

So, we're in the blessed position to have a cutting-edge water recharge facility, and we're way ahead of our time. We are in really good shape in Scottsdale, and we have avenues in, you know, if and when, I guess, arguably already in a drought. So, we're in good shape, and we have alternatives when it comes to the recharge use and water credits that we've invested in. So, we're good. We're good. But I think thoughtful growth from here forward, looking forward, this is a big part of our 20-year strategic plan. We need to make sure that our growth is measured, and we're not just approving big industrial that is taxing our infrastructure, especially when it's in the area of water. And that holds true with massive residential projects. So, looking forward, being thoughtful and very, very careful, and really, I do think it starts with a 20-year or further strategic plan. So, you are not just reacting. You're actually forecasting and knowing where you can go and where the boundaries are. So big issue.

Mark Stanton:

Moving on to -- you talked about the quality of life, but public safety. Obviously, you have a remarkable Police Department and Scottsdale firefighters do a tremendous job with the new ambulance service that they've got. And I know you've got some really wonderful professionals. I saw Casey Solem here and his team. Tell us a little bit about your view on public safety, and in particular, some of the initiatives that you may see coming through your office to help support that.

Mayor Borowsky:

So, we now have an Acting Assistant City Manager who is the Chief of Police, Chief Walther, and I think he brings a lot of value and expertise to the organization, especially during this transition period that we're in, in so many ways. Scottsdale is -- I should say, the City of Scottsdale, it's a huge transition point for us. Not to deviate from your question, but the city manager left just before I got elected -- before we got elected. We've got a city auditor position that's been vacant and that we're searching for. You know, there's assistant city manager transition, now that Greg Caton moved up. So, we are in a big transition period, and I'm so happy to report that from a staffing perspective, it's really going very, very smooth and very productive and effective. And so last week, I had the opportunity to attend the Police Department awards and promotion ceremony, and that was fantastic. Our officers are, I mean, killing it -- I don't want to say it, but -- they're crushing it. They're crushing it. I was so impressed that the dinnertime bandits or burglaries, that was a case that they worked on. There were so many great stories about the lives they saved and really the danger they put themselves in. A big conversation for us, especially during the campaign and as elected officials, is what are we doing with street camping, people that are, you know, on the streets and what are we doing about that? That's a very difficult issue to navigate. I will be working with Representative Matt Gress to identify solutions that very much benefit both the City, the residents, the business owners, and those in need. And so that's exciting. So public safety, like I said, number one. Fire and Police. Number one.

Mark Stanton:

I can definitely see that, and I applaud you. I saw Chief Walther is now Assistant City Manager. He doesn't have a uniform anymore on, so it's hard for me to recognize him in a crowd, but congratulations, Greg, in your effort. Congratulations, Chief. Once a chief, always the chief. I appreciate that. And you do strike a good point, and that is there is transition. There's transition in all of our businesses. There are transitions in our municipalities. It's just part of the process. And clearly, there's been -- you've got a great new economic development leader, with Teri Killgore. Thank you for your partnership with the chamber. When you look at that engagement with these newer folks and how your -- because I can tell when I see them at the council meetings, you are showing great energy and enthusiasm. How are you helping integrate the customer service aspect from your office to the community through your staff?

Mayor Borowsky:

Customer service is number one. So, I loved what Dennis said. As a public servant, it's not about the love of power; it's about the power of love. And, you know, he had so many other quotes there, that I was trying to track in my mind, but that really is the bottom line. It's not your government telling you what to do. It's about listening to residents and our citizens and voters in Scottsdale and business leaders. So resident inclusion, that's a big issue, along with business leaders and business owners. Big -- that's overarching, you know, that's the umbrella, under -- within which decision, my viewpoint of leadership is -- that's the lens through which I see it. And a couple of -- from a mechanics standpoint, getting citizens more involved in the process, I'm a big proponent, like we just did with the Budget Commission, and I told you how effective that was in 2008 to '12 of direct appointments because, to me, as your elected mayor, the people I select to be on a commission or, you know, a committee, it reflects on me. And literally, I had another councilmember voice concerns that it's better for the majority to pick the – the individual on a task force or a commission, because we're in the majority. Well, that ebbs and flows. And I think that's not sound logic. And really, what I think is then you know who to blame. If your Transportation Commission is not doing things that resonate with the residents, or if your Budget Commission, for example, is not effective, look to me to see who I appointed and see what the results are. It's about accountability and transparency, and really the relationship between an elected official and their appointee. I can't overstate how important I think that is. And its policy being carried through at all levels of the City government. And volunteers are the ones that serve on our commissions, and that's really hard work. They are doing a great job. And I think having that relationship again and alignment with the person that appoints you, I think it's such a great recipe for success. So, I hope my Councilmembers will join me in going down that path. And we're doing a trial run, obviously with the Budget Commission, which, again, I think is going to be very, very successful. More mechanically, looking at innovation, for example, we're discussing creating an app where there can be more of a direct line of communication, where you don't have to go on the website and, you know, submit your form or call the office and, you know, get through to somebody. That's a big advancement that I think we can take advantage of in due time. Again, I get back to streamlining the Planning Department and making that more user friendly, so that residents feel like their voice really matters and their concerns and their project, be it little or huge, really is important to the City, and we take that very seriously because that's money for

them, right? And so, all of that, and much more about including residents and really valuing our residents and our business owners and leaders.

Mark Stanton:

Well, clearly you and the Council have some great work ahead, but I know your hearts and you are putting a lot of great effort towards that. I have a question sort of tied to your background in that you've served on Council before, and then you were just elected as Mayor. What's are the biggest differences you are seeing from when you served your first Council to where you are now as our Mayor?

Mayor Borowsky:

So, I think being Mayor, there's a lot more visibility and interaction that is part of the job. And so that's a factual basis. But -- and I was just talking about this earlier today, this morning. One of the biggest differences is just the connection between what you are doing today and the story that comes out with an anonymous blogger at five, you know? And then, you know, there's a lot of great publications in our community and our State, but I get the impression a lot of those publications take their news from the anonymous blogs. So that's different. I don't recall that being the case. And that's an interesting dynamic. Just, you know, that the rapid real-time rapid dissemination of information, whether it be true or false, right, is a big, big issue. And we see that not only at the City level, but at the State, and of course, the Federal level. So, it's a big thing. I think it's both good and bad. Having that in real time, know what's going on. When I was on Council, not everyone, no one really, honestly, knew what was going on unless you were the 200 people that, you know, cycled or circled in at City Hall. So, it's both a great thing and, you know, you've got to be able to manage that and accept it, right?

Mark Stanton:

Well, I don't blog until about 5:30 or 6:00. So, it's not mine.

Mayor Borowsky:

You're way behind, Mark. You're way behind. Get on it.

Mark Stanton:

I got to work on that. A couple of things, and then we'll have to wrap up with respect for your time and everyone here. I got a couple of personality questions that folks have been curious about. One is, are you going to throw out a pitch at Spring Training?

Mayor Borowsky:

You missed it?

Mark Stanton:

I missed it.

Mayor Borowsky:

What?

Mark Stanton:

But I saw the recap.

Mayor Borowsky:

Okay.

Mark Stanton:

Tell us about the impact of Spring Training on the City from your point of view and the connection that we have between, obviously, the community and the Giants. How does that play into the economic picture for you?

Mayor Borowsky:

Huge. People come from around the country, and I talked to them all over, wherever I am, oh, I come to Scottsdale for spring training. So, getting people to Scottsdale Stadium is my focus, right? And as a proud member, long-time member, with you as of the Charros. You are a Charro; I'm on the foundation board. That's been a big part of my life for six years, and I'm thrilled about it. Investing -- and we talked about this just yesterday I think it was. Investing in what other

events we can do there. Brainstorming, attracting more energy to the stadium on the off-season time. But spring training, it's abuzz. And you missed my first pitch? I'm so glad. I made it all the way to home plate, and the catcher could barely catch it.

Mark Stanton:

Yeah, let's hear it for that. That's good.

Mayor Borowsky:

I'm really glad you missed it.

Mark Stanton:

So, a couple of other questions. You told us you have horses, that you like to ride horses. What are your horses' names?

Mayor Borowsky:

Oh, My Valentine because she has a heart on her butt and she was born on Valentine's Day. Yeah. True story. And unfortunately, one we lost not too long ago, and her name was Sexy Lexi. So, there you go. There's a theme. There's a theme. But on the note of horses, so the Arabian Horse Show was just a smashing success. Talk about economic development. I'm glad you brought up horses because I want to talk about other people's horses right now for just a minute. For the first time – the first -- the Arabian Horse Show, Scottsdale show, biggest horse show in the world, most well attended, just like the golf tournament. So, it's a big economic driver for us. They fly in horses from literally, around the world. But this year they launched -- or we were the first stop in the Americas of the -- let's see, GCAT, The Global Champions Arabians Tour. They call it GCAT. It's really hard to remember for me. And this is an international halter competition, where people came in. It was just a beautiful event. They had the kickoff at WestWorld. You know, just people from around the world there to compete, including many well-known breeders and competitors from Scottsdale. So, prior to that and prior to hearing about that, and thinking how important the Arabian -- just the equestrian community is to our city, I reached out to the sister cities organization. I said, what about Dubai or Qatar for our next sister city, right? And they were very receptive, but it was interesting, there were members of the royal family from Qatar in

attendance at this event. And just, you know, things like that, in the equestrian world, that is a huge draw. I mean, we've got so many of these amazing events and reasons to come to Scottsdale. So, continuing to grow and invest in those areas is really a big focus for me.

Mark Stanton:

Well, there's a huge international audience, like you stated, and the Arabian Horse Show is definitely a gem. Barrett-Jackson, the classic auction is another one. And congratulations. I did see -- I was watching some of the coverage, and I know you and Craig were up on the block and you were talking to an international audience that was broadcast, and I heard you give great shout outs to the business community in Scottsdale and welcoming people if they were interested in coming to Scottsdale. So, kudos to you being a spokesperson for that.

Mayor Borowsky:

Of course. I think I said, we're open for business. Come visit us. And, in fact, that's absolutely true.

Mark Stanton:

Well, I'm going to have to get us to the wind-up point because we've got a couple more minutes, but I'd love for you to share any additional thoughts you might have, in particular, for this audience, for the business community and these community leaders that are here, that you would like them to hear and know about and how they can help you.

Mayor Borowsky:

Well, it's more about how I can help you. And I welcome your input, anything that's going on or going good, going bad, going wrong, whatever the case might be. Let us know because we are here to serve you. You know, we've got a great -- albeit, interim, we've got a great, great team, and they are ready to serve. And, in fact, I've seen that firsthand, just how service-oriented the staff in Scottsdale is, and under this leadership, we'll even grow to become more so. And looking forward to advancements to make things easier, make the interaction easier at City Hall, and we want to work with you, and we are open for business, and I want to thank you all for being here. And especially Jack Miller, I didn't see him yet but thank you for the hospitality, Jack. As much

as I love all the resorts in Scottsdale, I think I've spent the most amount of time here, because it's been my daughter's personal favorite for, you know, since she was -- her first birthday probably. So, we're here to serve you. My door is always open. Please tell me what's on your mind, and I look forward to connecting with each and every one of you and thank you very much for having me today.

Mark Stanton:

Let's give a big hand to Mayor Lisa Borowsky from the City of Scottsdale.

Mayor Borowsky:

Thank you.

Mark Stanton:

So incredibly proud of you. For just a moment, and then we'll wrap up. I want to say thanks again for being here today, for this great turnout and your interest in our municipality and in this area for economic development. The Mayor has been very gracious. Thank you for accepting our invitation to be here. We appreciate the teamwork and with your entire team and the other members of council and the business community are looking forward to that. And I wouldn't be a chamber executive if I didn't give a plug for some upcoming events. So, before everybody scoots and scatters, I just want to let you know we have an Economic Outlook: Insights and Impact, and I think that's extremely topical with what we're seeing on the national and international front. And that will be on Wednesday the 19th with Bankers Trust. Also, we have our Women in Leadership Program coming up on May 8th, featuring, Karianna Munstedt, talking about image and personality, and she's a photographer by trade, but she's got great insights in presentations and how you can maximize your presenting skills. And also, I got to tell you, one of our signature events is our History Hall of Fame Event, and that's coming up and we've got a number of incredible honorees that will be recognized, and that's going to be on April 10th. And that's the 30th Annual History Hall of Fame event. And before we wrap, I need to say thanks to our great sponsors. Thank you again for all of your support. Thanks, most of all, for coming out and being part of this. And again, please give it up for Mayor Lisa Borowsky.