

State of the City Script

VIDEO 1 - Where's The Mayor with Rob Johnson

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the 2026 San Jacinto State of the City.

It is wonderful to see so many friends, residents, students, business owners, community leaders, City employees, and regional partners gathered here tonight. Thank you for joining us as we celebrate 138 years of community, progress and service in the City of San Jacinto.

This year marks the 10th State of the City since San Jacinto began producing this event for our community. We made that choice because we wanted residents to hear directly about the work happening across the City and to meet the people behind it. Every day, our staff works to serve this community, move projects forward, and make San Jacinto a better place to live, work, and grow. The State of the City gives us a chance to share that work with you and strengthen the connection between City Hall and the people we serve. For 138 years, generations of people have chosen to build their lives here, raise their families here, invest here, and serve this community. San Jacinto has changed tremendously since its incorporation in 1888, but the commitment to community has remained constant.

Tonight, we will talk about the projects, programs, investments, and opportunities moving San Jacinto forward. But we will also talk about the people behind that progress. Roads do not repair themselves. Water does not simply appear when we turn on the faucet. Parks, permits, public-safety programs, community events, and new businesses do not happen on their own. They happen because people show up every day and do the work.

That is especially meaningful in San Jacinto because fewer than 100 City employees serve a community of more than 60,000 residents. They work alongside our Sheriff and Fire personnel, consultants, contractors, volunteers, community organizations, and regional partners to keep the City running and moving forward.

This evening is about their service, reflected in the progress we see throughout San Jacinto.

Acknowledgments

Before we begin, I want to recognize the partners who help make both this event and our daily work possible.

First and foremost, thank you to the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians for welcoming us to the Soboba Events Center and their home and for your continued partnership with the City of San Jacinto and the entire San Jacinto Valley.

I'd like to recognize Chairman Isaiah Vivanco and Vice-Chairwoman Geneva Mojado, both joining us tonight.

Our partnership with Soboba extends far beyond tonight's event. The Tribe's investment, leadership, generosity, and commitment to this valley continue to create opportunities and improve lives throughout our community. And the City of San Jacinto is grateful for that partnership. Thank you.

Tonight's Gold Sponsors are WRCOG/I-REN, Shea Properties, Best Best & Krieger, and CivilTec Engineering.

Tonight's Silver Sponsors are CR&R, HCN Bank, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians, and Rich Development.

Our Bronze Sponsors are Pulte Homes, Interwest Consulting, Albert A Webb Associates, EMWD, Altura Credit Union, the Riverside County Office of Economic Development, and SoCal Edison.

And tonight's Small Business Sponsors are Tierra West Advisors, San Jacinto Unified School District, and Southwest Riverside County Association of Realtors.

Please join me in thanking all of tonight's sponsors for helping us share San Jacinto's story.

I would like to thank the federal, state, county, tribal, regional, educational, and local representatives for joining us this evening.

I am also proud to recognize my colleagues on the San Jacinto City Council. Each brings a different perspective and a shared commitment to serving this community.

- *Mayor Pro Tem Clarisa Sanchez*
- *Councilmember Phil Ayala*
- *Councilmember Alonso Ledezma*
- *Councilmember Valerie Vandever*

Finally, I want to thank the staff and partners who planned tonight's program, prepared this venue, developed the videos, coordinated our guests, and worked behind the scenes to make this evening possible. Please join me in showing them our appreciation.

Our history gives us a strong foundation, but service is what carries that history forward.

The faces have changed. The community has grown. The work has become more complex. But the commitment remains the same: serve San Jacinto and leave it stronger for the next generation.

That work begins with the infrastructure and essential services that make everyday life possible.

Chapter One - Infrastructure That Works

VIDEO 2 - The Work That Moves Us

Some of the City's most important work is also the work residents may never see. It happens underground, before sunrise, during storms, and in the middle of the night.

This past year, the City completed the State Street rehabilitation project between Ninth Street and Idyllwild Drive. This approximately \$4.3 million investment included pavement replacement, grind-and-overlay work, and traffic-signal improvements along one of our most traveled corridors.

We completed the Warren Road drainage project to address recurring flooding near Cottonwood Avenue and continued advancing major drainage projects needed to protect existing neighborhoods and support future growth.

Construction continued on the Esplanade Avenue widening project, which will expand roadway capacity, improve drainage and sidewalks, and add a new traffic signal. We also completed traffic-signal, striping, crosswalk, signage, curb, sidewalk, and pavement improvements throughout the community.

Our Streets Division repaired approximately 270 tons of pavement and pothole areas, replaced more than 200 faded or damaged signs, and completed work orders and service requests throughout San Jacinto. These are not glamorous projects, but they affect the safety and quality of nearly every trip taken in our city.

At the same time, our Stormwater team maintained more than 35 basins and dozens of pumps and electrical systems, completed video inspections of storm drains, expanded remote monitoring, and successfully passed a State Water Resources Control Board audit.

Water and Wastewater

Reliable water and wastewater service is fundamental to public health, fire protection, economic development, and the future of San Jacinto. That is why strengthening our water system remains one of the City's most important infrastructure priorities.

This year, the City completed the new Bath Treatment Plant, replacing a facility that had served the community for more than 30 years and had reached the end of its useful life. The new plant removes naturally occurring iron and manganese from the water and restores the City's ability to use both the Bath and Artesia wells. Together, those wells provide approximately 2,200 gallons per minute of local production capacity. This reduces the City's dependence on imported water, restores critical redundancy, and strengthens our ability to meet everyday demand and provide adequate water for fire protection.

At the same time, the City continued development of the Grand Well and Treatment Plant, which is designed to add up to another 2,500 gallons per minute of local production capacity. Together, these projects represent one of the most significant investments in San Jacinto's water system in decades. We also advanced an additional emergency water connection with Eastern Municipal Water District. This intertie will provide another source of water during emergencies, equipment failures, maintenance, or periods of high demand. It adds critical redundancy to the system, improves reliability, and gives the City greater access to regional water resources when local production is unavailable.

Separately, the City continued replacing its aging supervisory control and data acquisition system, known as SCADA. This technology allows our operators to monitor wells, treatment plants, reservoirs, and booster pumps in real time. The upgraded system will provide more reliable alerts, faster response times, stronger operational control, and improved protection of the critical infrastructure our community depends on. The City installed more than half of its new smart water meters, providing better leak detection, improved conservation tools, and online customer access to water-use information.

Our Water Division completed more than 3,000 work orders, repaired water mains and service lines, replaced fire hydrants, tested more than 500 backflow devices, and completed required water-quality and regulatory programs.

Our Wastewater Division reached another important milestone: 14 consecutive years without a sanitary sewer overflow. That record protects public health, private property, and the environment. This year alone, staff cleaned nearly 90 miles of sewer main and used specialized cameras to inspect more than 16 miles of pipe, identifying potential problems before they caused failures. The best infrastructure work often goes unnoticed because it prevents the disruption from happening in the first place. That quiet reliability is one of the clearest examples of public service.

But when an emergency does happen, San Jacinto must also be ready to respond.

Chapter Two – Safe, Reliable, and Ready

Public safety remains one of the City Council's highest priorities. As San Jacinto grows, we must continue investing in the people, equipment, facilities, and technology needed to serve a growing population.

The San Jacinto Fire Department responded to 7,182 incidents during 2025, averaging nearly 20 calls every day. Those calls included fires, medical emergencies, traffic collisions, rescues, and other situations where every minute matters. Even with that sustained demand, firefighters reduced the average response time to approximately four minutes and arrived within five minutes on more than 77 percent of calls.

The addition of Squad 25 placed another paramedic response team into service, expanding the department's ability to respond to medical emergencies and manage multiple calls occurring at the same time. This builds on the City's earlier investments in new fire apparatus and increased staffing at our two fire stations.

As San Jacinto continues to grow, the City is also planning for the next generation of fire protection. That includes evaluating future fire station locations, replacing lifesaving equipment, and determining when additional specialized resources, including a truck company, will be needed to serve new neighborhoods, commercial centers, and taller buildings.

Behind every one of those calls are firefighters and paramedics who report for duty around the clock, prepared to respond on what may be someone else's most difficult day. Their professionalism, training, and commitment are an essential part of keeping San Jacinto safe. That same commitment is demonstrated every day by the men and women of the San Jacinto Sheriff's Station. During the past year, the station responded to more than 32,000 incidents within the city, including nearly 8,000 priority emergency calls. That represents nearly 88 incidents every day, or approximately one call every 16 minutes.

To help deputies respond more safely and effectively, the City has invested in technology that places critical information in their hands sooner. San Jacinto's network of Flock cameras assisted in recovering 131 stolen vehicles valued at more than \$1.7 million and contributed to 130 arrests. The system has also provided leads in investigations involving violent crimes, robberies, burglaries, missing persons, and other serious offenses.

The City's early investment in the Riverside County Sheriff's Real-Time Information Center expanded that capability by giving deputies access to developing information while incidents are still unfolding. The center has processed more than 7,700 cases, generated nearly 1,700 investigative leads, identified hundreds of suspects, and directly contributed to more than 260 arrests.

San Jacinto was also one of the first communities in Riverside County to deploy the Drone as First Responder program. Since its launch, the drones have responded to more than 300 calls and assisted in 60 arrests within San Jacinto. In half of those deployments, the drone arrived before patrol deputies, giving responding personnel an early view of the scene and helping them make safer, better-informed decisions.

These technologies do not replace deputies. They allow our deputies, dispatchers, analysts, community service officers, and investigators to use their time and training more effectively. Technology provides the information, but experienced people still evaluate the situation, make the decisions, and take the actions necessary to protect our community.

Public safety also requires thoughtful responses to homelessness, mental illness, and behavioral-health crises. Through the Homeless At-Risk Population program, the City helped 139 people

experiencing homelessness, or at risk of becoming homeless, connect with housing, services, diversion, and other support. The City also continued developing its Community Behavioral Assessment Team and pursuing additional clinical support so that behavioral-health calls can receive a more appropriate and effective response.

Please join me in thanking every firefighter, paramedic, deputy, dispatcher, analyst, community service officer, volunteer, and support professional who works every day to keep San Jacinto safe.

The work of keeping San Jacinto safe makes everything else possible. It creates the foundation for families to gather, neighbors to connect, and residents to take part in the life of their community.

Chapter Three - Community in Action

Community does not happen by accident. It is created through shared experiences, partnerships, volunteerism, and the willingness to show up for one another.

Over the past year, the City brought residents together through the Independence Day Parade and Street Festival, the Kool August Nights Concert Series, the San Jacinto Sheriff's Station Trunk or Treat, Candy Cane Lane on Main, fitness challenges, community cleanups, and activities throughout our parks and public spaces.

We celebrated San Jacinto's first Arbor Day and continued building an urban-forestry program focused on healthy trees, responsible maintenance, and long-term sustainability.

Through SparkDay, the City partnered with Habitat for Humanity Inland Valley to assist 19 senior and disabled homeowners with basic yard maintenance. City employees, volunteers, and partners worked side by side to improve individual homes and entire neighborhoods.

We partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Inland Valley on the Main Street Monster Mile and a community cereal drive, and we continued working toward expanded youth programming and a future Boys & Girls Club presence in San Jacinto.

The City also supported blood drives, graduate recognition, community cleanups, youth activities, nonprofit organizations, schools, volunteers, veterans, and residents who make a difference.

These events may look effortless when the gates open, but they require months of planning and coordination. Public Works prepares the venue. Public safety develops an operations plan. Communications promotes the event. The Special Events Team coordinates contracts, insurance, vendors, sponsors, and schedules. Then, employees from across the organization work nights and weekends to welcome the community.

That is what community looks like: residents, employees, businesses, volunteers, and partner organizations working together.

But community also needs places where those connections can take root. It needs parks where children can play, public spaces where neighbors can gather, streets where businesses can thrive, and landmarks that connect us to our history. Creating those places is an important part of building a city where people want to live, work, invest, and raise their families.

Chapter Four - Building a Place People Choose

This year, the City replaced aging playgrounds at Tamarisk Park, Colonial Lewis Millett Park, and Stallions Crossings. These investments provide children and families with safer, more inviting places to play while improving accessibility within the surrounding neighborhoods.

The City also installed new poured-in-place safety surfacing at two additional playgrounds and replenished protective engineered wood fiber at parks throughout San Jacinto. These improvements help reduce injuries, extend the useful life of our playgrounds, and make play areas easier for children of different abilities to access.

This work is part of a broader effort to evaluate every City playground, plan for future replacements, and address accessibility, safety surfacing, and maintenance needs before equipment reaches the end of its useful life. At Sallee Park, we completed improvements to the fitness trail, basketball court, cornhole courts, and solar lighting. At Mistletoe Park, we completed a new ADA-accessible restroom and added shade at the National Fitness Court.

City staff maintained approximately 500 acres of landscaping, cared for thousands of trees, expanded smart irrigation, repaired facilities, removed graffiti, and prepared public spaces for events and daily use.

We also completed major rehabilitation work at the historic Estudillo Mansion and Museum, preserving one of San Jacinto's most important landmarks while continuing to use the grounds for concerts, weddings, educational activities, and community gatherings.

The Five Points public-art mural added another visible point of pride, while continued work on Main Street strengthened the City's long-term placemaking vision.

The City has acquired unsafe and blighted properties, added lighting and striping, advanced archway and streetscape concepts, and completed planning for the Virginia Lee property. We continue pursuing partnerships for a future civic center and other investments that can help reconnect Main Street with the broader community.

Economic and Development Progress

People also choose communities because of the opportunities available to them. Over the past year, San Jacinto continued attracting new businesses, housing, services, and private investment.

We celebrated the opening of Better Buzz Coffee, a new McDonald's location, Agave, a locally owned restaurant, and other new businesses. At the same time, the City completed entitlements for several commercial projects that will bring additional shopping, dining, services, and investment to different parts of the community.

At State Street and Ramona Expressway, the Magnet Shopping Center received its final approvals and will transform a property that has remained vacant for decades into a nearly 120,000-square-foot commercial center. The announced tenant lineup includes In-N-Out Burger, Ross, Five Below, AutoZone, Grocery Outlet, Quick Quack Car Wash, Chase Bank, Little Caesars, 7 Brew Coffee, Pacific Dental, Angry Chickz, and Circle K. Together, these businesses are expected to bring a major new mix of shopping, dining, grocery, financial, dental, and automotive services to northern San Jacinto.

Sanderson Crossroads is planned with a 20,000-square-foot grocery store, additional shops, and commercial pads. Located at Sanderson and Cottonwood Avenues, the center will join CVS, Poppy's, and AutoZone, expanding the area into a more complete shopping destination while creating opportunities for additional businesses to enter the San Jacinto market.

At Commonwealth Crossings, a 55,000-square-foot Vallarta Supermarket is planned to join Sonic and 7-Eleven, bringing another major grocery option to San Jacinto Avenue near Esplanade Avenue. Just south of Commonwealth Crossings, the planned San Jacinto Commons will add a new Chipotle, a second Dutch Bros Coffee, and a new car wash.

This steady buildout is also taking place at Estudillo Plaza. McDonald's and Quick Quack Car Wash have joined 7-Eleven at Sanderson Avenue and Seventh Street, with O'Reilly Auto Parts planned as the center's next addition.

Taken together, these projects represent a significant expansion of San Jacinto's commercial landscape. They will give residents more opportunities to shop, dine, and access services closer to home, create new jobs, keep more spending within our community, and generate revenue that supports public safety, parks, streets, and other essential services. Just as importantly, they demonstrate that businesses and investors increasingly recognize what we have long known: San Jacinto is a community with tremendous potential and a strong future.

Every ribbon cutting is the visible result of a partnership that develops over months, and often years. Developers bring private investment, market knowledge, and the expertise needed to design, finance, and construct a project. City staff brings local knowledge, technical expertise, coordination, and a clear understanding of what San Jacinto needs from that investment.

From the earliest conversations, staff works directly with the development team to understand the proposal, identify appropriate sites, communicate local conditions and community needs, connect projects with prospective tenants, and resolve challenges involving access, utilities, drainage, public safety, and infrastructure. Planning, Building and Safety, Engineering, Fire, Economic Development, and Public Works remain actively involved through environmental review, design, permitting, construction, and final inspection.

Through that collaboration, projects are refined to meet both market demands and the needs of the community. That partnership turns a proposal on paper into a business that creates jobs, generates revenue, expands services, and becomes part of San Jacinto.

The results of that collaboration can be seen across San Jacinto, well beyond the major commercial centers highlighted tonight. Over the past year, the City issued more than 3,100 permits covering everything from swimming pools, home additions, remodels, and accessory dwelling units to new homes, commercial buildings, and improvements for new and expanding businesses. Builders also completed 247 new homes during that same period bringing 247 new families to our community.

Altogether, permitted construction represented approximately \$73 million in private investment. Behind that number are families improving their homes, builders creating new housing, and businesses choosing to establish or expand their operations in San Jacinto. Each of those decisions represents confidence in our community and its future.

To build on that success, the City Council adopted San Jacinto's first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. It provides a long-term roadmap for attracting businesses, creating local jobs, investing in infrastructure, and strengthening the City's economic foundation. It also better positions San Jacinto to compete for state and federal funding and pursue partnerships that can bring additional investment into the community.

San Jacinto enters the coming year with real accomplishments, growing private investment, and a stronger development pipeline. The strategy gives us a coordinated path to carry that momentum forward and turn today's progress into lasting opportunity.

VIDEO 3 - The Future We Are Building

The same is true of our future. Progress requires a vision, but it also requires the people, planning, partnerships, and discipline to turn that vision into reality.

Chapter Five - The Next 138 Years

San Jacinto is now home to more than 60,000 residents and remains one of Riverside County's fastest-growing communities. That growth reflects the confidence people have in our city and the opportunities they see here. We are ready to build on that momentum, continue planning responsibly, and continue making the investments necessary to ensure San Jacinto remains a safe, strong, and welcoming place to call home.

That commitment is already visible in the infrastructure taking shape across our community. With the State Street rehabilitation completed and the Esplanade Avenue widening under construction, San Jacinto is prepared for the next phase of investment.

The City's Capital Improvement Program identifies nearly \$30 million in infrastructure needs and planned projects for the upcoming years, followed by nearly \$50 million in longer-range improvements. This work will be carefully sequenced based on project readiness, available funding, regional partnerships, and the needs of the community.

Upcoming projects include widening Warren Road, rehabilitating Cottonwood Avenue, improving pedestrian safety along Lyon Avenue and near Main Street, repairing the Sanderson Avenue culvert, and constructing the Line E-2 storm-drain system. The longer-range program includes additional improvements along State Street, Main Street, Esplanade Avenue, Ramona Boulevard, and Ramona Expressway, along with new traffic signals, street lighting, drainage channels, and flood-control improvements.

These investments are connected. Better roads improve safety, mobility, and emergency response. Drainage systems protect homes, businesses, and public facilities. Sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic signals provide safer access to schools, neighborhoods, and commercial centers. Together, they create the foundation needed to support new housing, attract private investment, and improve daily life throughout San Jacinto.

The City is taking the same long-term approach to water reliability. With the Bath Treatment Plant now operating, our next priorities include completing the Grand Well and Treatment Plant, completing the emergency connection with Eastern Municipal Water District, finishing the smart-meter conversion, and modernizing the systems used to monitor and control our water and wastewater infrastructure.

Growth must also be supported by safe neighborhoods, well-maintained parks, accessible public spaces, and public-safety resources that keep pace with the community. That means planning for future fire facilities, replacing aging playgrounds, improving accessibility, modernizing irrigation, caring for our urban forest, and investing in the places where residents gather and connect.

On Main Street, recent property acquisitions, rehabilitation work, public art, and planning efforts have created a foundation for continued revitalization. The City will build on that work by pursuing partnerships for a future civic center and implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to attract jobs, services, businesses, and additional private investment.

Delivering this vision also requires responsible financial planning. The City will pursue grants, leverage regional partnerships, secure appropriate contributions from new development, and carefully prioritize projects so that today's progress strengthens our long-term financial stability.

San Jacinto may have a small staff, but the responsibility they carry is significant. As the community grows and the work becomes more complex, we must continue investing in technology, training, equipment, and professional development that allow our employees to serve residents effectively.

Our vision is ambitious because San Jacinto's potential is extraordinary. The next 138 years will be shaped by the decisions we make today, the partnerships we strengthen, and the people who turn our plans into lasting progress.

Closing Recognition

Progress is not one project, one department, or one person. It is the result of people working together, day after day, in service to this community.

VIDEO 4 - The People Who Serve

If you are a City of San Jacinto employee, or if you serve San Jacinto through our Fire Department or Sheriff's Station, would you please stand and join me up at the front?

These are just some of the people who answer the phones, review the plans, repair the streets, maintain the parks, operate the water system, respond to emergencies, balance the budget, organize the events, support the Council, and solve problems every day.

They do not always work where the public can see them, but their work is reflected everywhere in San Jacinto. On behalf of the City Council and this community, thank you for your dedication, your professionalism, and your service.

San Jacinto's story began 138 years ago, but it is still being written. Together, we will continue building a city that honors its history, serves its residents, and prepares confidently for the future.

We would like to take this time to present several individuals in the community that have made a San Jacinto difference. Can I please have my council colleagues join me on stage, please?

Presentation of Awards:

Mayor Crystal Ruiz

The City of San Jacinto is honored to present Deputy Curtis Cox with the 2026 San Jacinto Excellence in Public Safety Award.

Deputy Cox began his Riverside County Sheriff's Office career in August 2002. His assignments have included Court Services and the Jurupa Valley, Ben Clark Training Center, Cabazon, and San Jacinto stations. He has served San Jacinto since 2010 and currently works as a Motor Officer in the Traffic Unit, promoting roadway safety through enforcement and education.

His service record includes 15,174 calls for service, 7,852 citations, 1,098 documented traffic collisions, 101 fatal collision investigations, and 340 DUI arrests.

Deputy Cox also serves as a Field Training Officer and Motor Instructor, is an expert in traffic collision reconstruction, and founded and leads the Riverside County Motor Association. He supports San Jacinto's Drone First Responder Program and manages monthly firearms training and qualifications for Hemet and San Jacinto personnel.

Known for his work ethic, sound judgment, and professionalism, Deputy Cox is committed to traffic safety, mentoring fellow deputies, and keeping personnel prepared to serve. His contributions reflect a deep dedication to the community and the principle of "Service Above Self." He is a

deserving recipient of this year's Excellence in Public Safety Award. Congratulations to Deputy Curtis Cox.

Councilmember Alonso Ledezma

Firefighter Paramedic Alexander Gonzalez began his fire service career in 2014 after graduating from Heartland Fire Training Academy, Class 27. He served with the San Diego Fire Authority and Rural Metro Ambulance, then joined CAL FIRE in 2019 in Mendocino County. After earning his paramedic license at EMSTA College and working for AMR in San Diego, he joined CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department in 2021. He is now beginning his fourth year serving San Jacinto at Fire Station 78.

Alexander serves as a Paramedic Preceptor and Field Training Officer, mentoring firefighters and paramedic students. He also teaches structural firefighting as part of the department's Live Burn Training Cadre and recently graduated from Truck Operations Class 22, earning qualifications to work on the department's 100-foot ladder trucks.

Alexander is recognized with San Jacinto's 2026 Excellence in Public Safety Award for his dedication, professionalism, and exceptional work ethic. He brings skill and a positive attitude to every shift, and is always ready to support his crew, station, and community. A steady and valued member of the department, he has lived in the San Jacinto Valley for six years with his wife and young son. We look forward to many more years of his service to our community. Congratulations Firefighter Paramedic Alexander Gonzalez.

Councilmember Phil Ayala

Dalayla Herrera is a senior at Mountain View High School whose resilience, determination, and compassion have distinguished her as an exceptional young leader. Recognized at the September Valley Student of the Month celebration, Dalayla has faced significant personal challenges and disruptions to her education, yet she has remained steadfast in her commitment to creating a brighter future.

Today, Dalayla maintains a 3.3 unweighted GPA and is just three classes away from earning her high school diploma. Her teachers describe her as kind, industrious, creative, and eager to learn and share with others. Through her environmental awareness and artistic talents, she has also helped make her school campus a more beautiful and welcoming place.

After graduation, Dalayla plans to attend Riverside City College to study cosmetology, with the goal of one day opening her own salon. She hopes to give back by offering free or reduced-cost services to foster youth, students experiencing housing instability, and those from low-income families.

Dalayla's journey is a powerful reminder of the message she shared in her own words: "Where you are now does not have to determine where you end up."

For her perseverance, academic achievement, creativity, and commitment to serving others, it is our honor to recognize Dalayla Herrera as the City of San Jacinto's Student of the Year.

Councilmember Valerie Vandever

Dr. Lowell C. Thomas is a dedicated leader, mentor, and pillar of the San Jacinto community, where he has served since 2009.

Dr. Thomas's journey of service began in the United States Army, where he proudly served for eight years at various duty stations and went on to represent the Army as a decorated member of the Honor Guard.

Following his military service, Dr. Thomas pursued his calling in ministry. He graduated from seminary in 1999 and served as an associate pastor in several communities before founding Lighthouse Christian Church in San Jacinto in 2010, providing a spiritual home for local residents.

Dr. Thomas's commitment to service also extends to the young people of our community. He began coaching at San Jacinto Valley Academy in 2012 and joined San Jacinto High School in 2014, where he continues to coach football and track. He believes that by shaping the next generation for the Lord, he is helping to shape the future of the world.

Through his military service, ministry, mentorship, and dedication to San Jacinto's youth, Dr. Thomas has made a lasting impact on countless lives. It is our honor to recognize Dr. Lowell C. Thomas as the City of San Jacinto's Veteran of the Year.

Mayor Pro Tem Clarisa Sanchez

Tonight, we are proud to recognize a family whose story has become part of San Jacinto's story.

On December 19, 1983, Emilio and Shirley Redín opened Emilio's Mexican Restaurant & Cantina with a simple goal: to give the community a place to gather over good food. More than four decades later, that welcome continues under the care of their children, JuanCarlos and Toni, who carry on the family tradition.

Emilio's has given generations of residents a place to celebrate, share a meal, and come together. The recipes that guests first enjoyed in 1983 are still prepared today, reflecting the care and consistency that have made the restaurant a familiar favorite. And behind each meal is a family that chose San Jacinto—not just as a place to do business, but as a community to serve and call home.

For their lasting commitment to San Jacinto and the many ways they have brought people together, it is my pleasure to present the Business of the Year Award to Emilio's Mexican Restaurant & Cantina.

Mayor Crystal Ruiz:

Thank you for believing in San Jacinto. Thank you for serving San Jacinto. And thank you for being part of our community.

Now, we have a little bit of a surprise for a very special person tonight.

Video 5 - Rob's Video

I want to honor someone who has helped shape where we stand today.

In February 2017, the City Council unanimously appointed Rob Johnson as our City Manager. Nearly a decade later, San Jacinto is a different city because of him.

Rob came to us with more than two decades of experience in local government, including Oceanside, Murrieta, Corona, and Menifee, where he also served as city manager. He has been a leader among his peers as well, serving as Past President of the City Managers' Group for the Riverside County Division of the League of California Cities. But what he brought to San Jacinto wasn't a résumé. It was vision.

Rob helped lead us to local control over something every household cares about, the cost of keeping the lights on. In 2018, we launched San Jacinto Power, giving our residents and businesses an alternative to Southern California Edison for the first time. Today that program has delivered more than a million dollars in savings to our community, and Rob's belief in it is why he will continue to guide its future.

Under his leadership, this city strengthened its financial reserves, improved its infrastructure, and expanded its services. Our voters showed their confidence in the city's direction when they approved Measure V with 68% support. Rob nurtured partnerships that matter, including our relationship with the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians. He championed economic development and brought energy to our community through the special events that put City Hall in the middle of our neighborhoods.

During his tenure, our team delivered work we are proud of: the award-winning Trails Master Plan, the Art in Public Places program, and Envision San Jacinto 2040. Great city managers don't do it alone. They build teams, trust them, and give them room to excel. Rob did exactly that.

I want to tell you about how it started.

When we were hiring a city manager, we took the time to interview Rob one on one. During that interview, I told him something that probably sounded a little bold: that the President of the United States was going to help us.

About three months after Rob officially became our City Manager, my phone rang. I saw a 202 area code, and I knew right away that it was important. I had just left Rob's office and was getting into my car when I answered. I was so caught up in the call that I jumped right back out of the car and walked straight into Rob's office, where he was working with Tara.

I tried to tell him, silently mouthing the words, that I was speaking with someone very important. Rob had no idea what I was saying. I was still on the phone, so I couldn't exactly explain! When I finally hung up, I turned to Tara and asked, "Do you remember when I said we were on the map?"

Well, San Jacinto, we are on the big map now.

That call was from the President's scheduler. They wanted me to come to Washington, D.C. to talk about SB 54. A small city in the San Jacinto Valley had been heard at the highest level, and the first person I wanted to tell was Rob.

We have been through some amazing times together. I will never forget Rob, our friendship, or all the things we accomplished side by side.

Rob also believes that "paying it forward" is a lifelong activity. He gives his time to speak to groups about leadership, emotional intelligence, and casting a vision, and everyone who has worked for him will tell you he led with those same values every day.

Rob, on behalf of the City Council, our staff, and every resident who has benefited from your work, thank you. You didn't just manage a city. You helped build one. Our community is stronger, more financially secure, and more connected because of you.

Please join me in a round of applause for Rob Johnson.

And one last thing... I would like to recognize my family...

Thank you to all for attending San Jacinto's 2026 State of the City.

Good night, and God bless the City of San Jacinto.

Video 6 - Bloopers