

Good morning everyone and thank you for being here today. On behalf of my council colleagues and city employees, I want to welcome everyone to my first State of the City address.

Thank you, President Junn, for hosting what I hope will be an annual event for every Turlock Mayor.

Turlock, like many rural communities across California and the nation, faces many challenges today.

Some we inherited, others we openly assume responsibility for and are committed to solving.

The single greatest task is addressing the challenges we face as a community honestly and openly.

Our job – my job – is to present the path forward.

As your Mayor, I will work with my colleagues on the city council to find ways to reach consensus on some of our most pressing issues.

Balancing the budget and restoring fiscal responsibility while regaining the trust of our residents remains my top priority as your Mayor.

Here, I take full responsibility for what needs to happen. I was elected to offer tough solutions to even more challenging problems.

The financial health and sustainability of our city is where everything begins.

Working with my colleagues, we stopped the previous practice of deficit spending by reducing our operating budget by over \$4 million.

We instructed our City Manager to work with all department heads to ensure we would operate with a balanced budget, free from deficit spending.

Beginning in July 2020, we are implementing changes to the public employee health plan.

It is important to thank our Interim City Manager, Michael Cooke, for his leadership and hard work towards meeting these goals, as well as our labor groups and employees for their efforts.

This incredible cooperation and understanding comes from the recognition by all that the city's financial situation is dire.

To that end, I want to let you know about just a few of the efforts underway to help solve our fiscal challenges through economic development opportunities.

I want to thank Maryn Pitt, who leads the City of Turlock's economic development efforts, for her hard work and leadership. Maryn has and continues to do an amazing job for us.

I have teamed up with the mayors of our eight other cities to begin a dialogue with our county government about a more reasonable share of property taxes between the county and the cities. Much of the property tax collected by your city does not stay in Turlock. This is unacceptable.

This is why I'm fighting for a more equitable solution that will not unduly burden county government but help our city government provide some of the essential services our residents expect and deserve.

In addition to our efforts with the county, Michael Cooke is working with a group of citizens to present recommendations to the city council on ways to address the short and long term fiscal challenges facing our community.

I am optimistic that this report will outline strategies for council to consider in addressing our current fiscal crisis.

## WATER

While running for Mayor, I promised Turlock residents that I would not support building a \$278 million Surface Water Treatment Plant unless we are able to find a way to keep our water rate increases reasonable.

The project was originally estimated to cost \$278 million with Turlock responsible for \$172 million. The average monthly cost for a typical residential rate payer was estimated to be \$79 in 2022; an increase from \$41 per month in 2018.

The average monthly bill for a typical single-family customer is now estimated to be \$68 per month instead of \$79 as originally projected in 2018. Remaining on a groundwater-only system would result in projected bills of \$59 per month.

While I am pleased that the cost of the plant has been reduced to \$233 million, I will continue to involve myself in all aspects of the proposed water plant. I will:

- Seek guidance from the Turlock and Modesto Irrigation Districts regarding how best to meet Turlock's water needs.
- Direct our water experts to develop more cost-effective alternatives to the water plant, such as rehabilitating our local wells or recruiting new water plant partners.
- Direct staff to look again at purchasing treated water from the MID surface water treatment plant, which is just ten miles from the proposed Turlock-Ceres plant.
- Meet with federal officials to identify possible funding opportunities to help mitigate some of the costs we are facing.

I promised the citizens of Turlock that I would do everything possible to limit their water rate increases as they relate to the SRWA project. While the cost has been lowered for this project, I am committed to do everything possible to provide Turlock residents, farmers and businesses with safe and affordable water.

## ROADS

Finding a way to fix our local roads despite a lack of funding is critical.

In February, the Council amended the specifications for how utilities and other agencies patch roads after digging holes to make repairs or modifications to their underground pipelines.

We are also shifting the focus to the repair of your neighborhood roads, rather than main corridors such as the recent Main Street project. Starting this summer, council voted to fix local roads within each district.

This is positive, but we must do more. In almost every neighborhood throughout Turlock, we have roads in terrible condition.

Our challenge is cost. How can we pay for all of the needed repairs?

As we explore both the short and long term financial strength of the city, we have to have an honest conversation about how the city can pay for this massive problem. Road repairs must be done.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As many of you know, I have a strong passion and commitment for economic development in Turlock. Generating new revenue for this city is a critical component to solving Turlock's financial challenges.

I am pleased to report the following achievements for our city:

- The unemployment rate for Turlock in 2018 was 7%. Today the unemployment rate for Turlock for this last quarter is 3.90%.
- New housing starts in Turlock include:
  - The Florsheim Development with 108 homes.
  - The East Tuolumne Master Plan residential project.
  - The construction phase of 60 new affordable housing units at the Avena Bella project.
- We have also added the following new retailers to our business community this year:
  - Farmer Boys
  - Pizza Rev
  - (2) Chevron gas stations
  - Ten Pin Fun Center
  - Ace Hardware
  - The expansion of several downtown businesses such as La Mo, Rustic Roots and D2

- We have several new retail/commercial projects in the pipeline that include:
  - Harbor Freight
  - Dutch Bros Coffee
  - Rehabilitation of Turlock Town Center that includes re-positioning Rite Aid in a bright, new space.
  - The addition of Smart and Final.
  - HOME2U, a Hilton platform hotel, is under construction at Lander Avenue.
  - The La Quinta Hotel on Golden State is now fully entitled and ready to break ground
  
- On the industrial side, we recently opened the new 260,000 sq ft expansion of US Cold Storage to accommodate the Blue Diamond almond growers.
  - Blue Diamond is moving their entire almond milk production to Turlock.
  - Blue Diamond is also expanding to accommodate this shift in production and is currently under construction.
  
- Super Store Industries also expanded earlier this year to add manufacturing space to accommodate new production lines.

## HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is an extremely complex problem facing Turlock as it is for all California cities. The homeless population often suffers from mental illness and addiction; having the resources available to help the homeless including housing, transportation,

addiction and mental health services is critical. Solutions are multi-faceted, complex and expensive.

We must and we will do better. We will continue to work with the Federal, State and County governments who have the resources to address homelessness, as well as with our faith leaders and non-profit organizations to help solve this problem. It will take all of us, working together, to take care of this vulnerable population. This is a priority for our city this year.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Today, Fire and Police are maintaining services for the City of Turlock. With the serious budget cuts they had to make, both departments continue to do an incredible job keeping Turlock safe.

However, we know this situation is not sustainable as we look at this year's budget.

Communities like Turlock, Ceres, Keyes, and others must explore strategies that will allow each community to leverage its financial resources as effectively as possible.

We will continue to seek opportunities to ensure that Turlock residents are safe and protected. We are now exploring SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response) grants for the Fire Department and COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) grants for the Police Department to secure new resources for both departments.



I am also pleased that within the next few months, Turlock Police Chief Amirfar is implementing a body camera program for all of our police officers to memorialize the interactions with the public.

## VOLUNTEERISM

Many of you have heard me talk about how important volunteerism is to me and that notion is shared across this country.

I am very excited to let you know that the City of Turlock now has such a relationship with the US Army.

Our local Army recruitment leaders have partnered with the City of Turlock to adopt Swanson Centennial Park. By adopting our local parks, volunteers work closely with staff to maintain each park efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner. Thank you to the US Army and the many other organizations that have stepped in to help keep our parks clean and safe.

I also appreciate that the Turlock Journal has launched their “20 in 2020” campaign. The Turlock Journal’s Editor Kristina Hacker announced at our retreat that she is leading a volunteer program asking for 20 hours in 2020. Thank you, Kristina, for urging your readers to commit to volunteerism in 2020!

## UPDATES FROM THE MAYOR:

On a more personal note, I have been given the honor and privilege of being appointed by Department of Justice on behalf

of the President of the United States to the Social Problems Working Group, Subcommittee of the US Attorney General's Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice based on my background in law enforcement and because I am the Mayor of Turlock.

We will be focused on the challenges of mental illness, homelessness, substance abuse and addiction, and other social factors that influence crime and strain criminal justice resources.

I am honored to be a member of this important subcommittee and represent the voice of law enforcement as well as our City and County.

## TO THE RESIDENTS OF TURLOCK

This year has been challenging, yes. But we have some incredible stories concerning the people of Turlock. We all saw the horrific video of a young man, Michael Valdez, who, while riding his bicycle, was stopped and assaulted. While asking his assailants to stop, they stole his bicycle and his Nike shoes. Michael's mom was devastated that her son was hurt and yet, in addition to supporting her son, she called for the community to get help for the boys that hurt her son. What an incredible woman. We are so proud of her and Michael.

This community came together and offered donations and words of encouragement to Michael, and last Saturday I attended a community bike ride, honoring Michael. This event sends the message that here in Turlock, we will not tolerate nor stand for bullying in our City. To witness so many children and families

riding around the park in support of this young man was inspiring. This story perfectly exemplifies the heart of Turlock.

With the inspiration of this story and so many throughout this year and based on our history of being known as “The Heart of the Valley,” I would like to announce my intent, with the support of Council, to create the “The Heart of Turlock” award. This award will be given annually to citizens of Turlock who perform exemplary acts of grace, justice and kindness, just like Michael and his mom did.

In closing, I chose CSU Stanislaus because this University brought me to Turlock where I found wonderful people and a great place to live for more than thirty years. I met my husband Milt at the University when he inducted me into the Stanislaus Athletic Hall of Fame as Director of Athletics; Turlock and CSU Stanislaus will always hold a very special place in my heart.

I have a rendition of what could be a new logo one day for our great city. The tagline is “Turlock – the best of the Earth and Each Other” which I would like to unveil at this time.

Here to share Turlock’s new song is our very own “Dancing with the Stars” Champion, US Army Staff Sergeant Jeremy Levens.

Events like this take a lot of preparation and cooperation by many people who I would like to thank including:

- President Ellen Junn and Monica Doll from CSU Stanislaus for hosting today's event.
- Pastor Dave Larson and Staff Sergeant Jeremy Levens for delivering our invocation and song.
- Sue Micheletti, Irene Holmes, Sharron Berry and the Turlock Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors for managing today's registration.
- Michael Nancett and Denise Racz from Raley's for supplying today's great doughnuts and pastries.
- Tara Murphy from Starbucks for providing Starbucks coffee.
- Danae Lawrence, one of our fine City employees, for designing our event invitations.
- George Petrulakis, Chris Ether and Andrea Coffman for getting our invitations out.
- Donna Pierce, Harder's Print Shop for creating the event invitations.
- George Younan for providing today's webcast.
- Michael Cooke, Allison Martin and Jennifer Land from the City of Turlock for managing today's event.
- My friend of thirty years Ron Noble, for serving as our master of ceremonies.

Finally, I want to thank each of you - our citizens, employees, elected officials, candidates seeking office, and Professor Blom's Police Ethics Study students, for taking the time to hear my vision for the future of our wonderful City.

Please join me outside for refreshments, and thank you again for attending!