

# **Mayor Amy Bublak's State of the City Address**

## **City of Turlock**

**May 6, 2021**

Good morning everyone. On behalf of my council colleagues and our hard working, dedicated, city employees, I want to welcome everyone to my second State of the City address.

I am very excited that our Congressman Josh Harder, has sent us a message about Turlock. He had planned to be here in person today but appropriations committee meetings have kept him in Washington.

Josh and I both believe working together is the BEST way to meet the challenges facing Turlock today.

Whether I needed assistance getting a visa to allow a Sikh relative to visit a family member at a time of crisis or when we needed additional funding for our Surface Water Treatment plant, Congressmen Harder has always been there to help his constituents.

His SAVE Water Resources Act will add 2 million acre-feet of water storage to grow and secure the Central Valley's water supply.

As a member of the prestigious House Appropriations Committee Congressmen Harder will make it a priority to bring federal funds to the Valley to help us improve our quality of life.

I am happy to have the opportunity to work with Josh as we meet all the challenges facing Turlock.

I am now pleased to share the video message Congressman Harder has prepared for today's Turlock State of the City address.

Thank you Congressman Harder

While I would have preferred to have this event in person before a large audience as we did last year, COVID-19 protocols have forced us to conduct this State of the City address from City Hall Council Chambers before a very small audience. I am glad local cable and U tube are televising this message live, and, that a replay of it will be available on the City website, so all may hear my vision for our City. I welcome your comments about our City any time.

Today our country faces ENORMOUS CHALLENGES BUT also INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITIES.

We are struggling with the ever present Covid-19 economic and educational disruptions.

It is essential for local communities to work harder to secure the best possible outcomes from Federal, State, and County efforts to address the impacts of the epidemic.

Turlock has new leadership with a new Acting City Manager and Interim City Attorney.

Our Council, with two new members, will discuss and enact policies that address Turlock's recovery and movement forward.

The success, or failure of our efforts will be apparent for all to see.

This is what the public will use to judge our performance.

Finger pointing, blame shifting and excuses do not move Turlock forward.

Thoughtful and concrete actions will.

My job – is to present the path forward.

To recap the last two years we have:

1. Operated with a balanced budget increasing our reserve fund.
2. Continued to see the benefits of good long-range planning with the addition of new businesses and employers to our Turlock Regional Industrial Park we will add more than 1,000 jobs in this next year and have an economic impact of millions of dollars to our local economy.
3. Opened 265 new businesses.
4. Maintained and repaired approximately 72 of the City's 500 lane miles through a combination of road treatments including maintenance, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and a stronger requirement of utility companies trenching.
5. Fully implemented a comprehensive body camera program within our police department.
6. Continued to explore opportunities to lower the costs associated with our Surface Water program.
7. Accepted a Department of Justice COP's grant to provide federal funding to add four new officers to our police force.

As most of you know Economic Development is a passion of mine, so I was happy to accept the Vice Chairmanship of the Stanislaus Economic Development Action Committee which I hope will result in even more new businesses opening in Turlock.

Local businesses are one of the most important parts of our community. Today, purchasing goods and services through the internet has become a favorite choice of consumers everywhere.

To help local businesses maximize their product sales on-line, we will work with entrepreneurs to develop strategies and tools designed for online commerce. Local businesses will have the opportunity to attend seminars at no charge that will provide in-depth instruction on online-marketing and how-to setup websites for online sales.

We made good progress last year but the future of our city rests, in part, by ensuring that our employees are treated and paid fairly.

As elected officials, our job – my job, is to begin to ensure that we implement more equitable solutions such as an employee's health insurance contribution be based on the level of compensation.

Today, everyone pays the same amount – a maintenance worker and the City Manager – are all charged the same amount. It is not fair, and it is not equitable.

If we are going to work to protect Turlock families truly, we need to start with Turlock employees and recognize that the more you earn, the greater your share of fiscal responsibility.

As your Mayor, the safety of our community is where our future rests.

Safe streets free of crime and violence:

And a community where we respect our differences in gender, race, ethnicity and religion.

To achieve this we must have a strong public safety team. Police officers sufficient in number - today, we are woefully short.

We must offer competitive pay to all our employees so they don't need or want to leave Turlock City government.

In this fiscal year, 2021, we will focus our efforts as a City Council on these initiatives:

First, our Acting City Manager has begun a reorganizational plan that will include separating Financial Services from Administrative Services through the recruitment of separate Finance and Administrative Services Directors. This action was recommended in all of the last three City wide audit reports.

By creating and separating these two Departments we will insure Turlock delivers all City Services in the finest, most economical manner, with the checks and balances necessary to insure financial integrity and accountability.

Too much transition in all Departments has shown the need to bring in an outside auditing firm to review all City revenue and expenditures.

Every Turlock tax / rate payer should know:

1. What is our true financial outlook.
2. How and why we allocate our financial resources to deliver the highest quality City Services in the most economical manner.

To ensure complete fiscal transparency, I will seek the consent of my council colleagues to appoint a citizen's oversight committee made up of five people, chaired by Vice Mayor Pam Franco, and Turlock residents to work with an outside audit firm and City staff to ensure we are spending your tax dollars wisely.

As I mentioned earlier, I am pleased to report because of prudent fiscal management we have increased our City reserve fund.

Last November, Turlock residents approved a new sales tax, Measure A, to improve all City Services:

Specifically, they voted for Measure A:

1. To enhance public safety.
2. To repair local roads.
3. To retain local businesses and jobs.
4. Keep public areas safe and clean.
5. To protect Turlock's long-term financial stability.
6. To address homelessness and vagrancy.

To improve City services, while at the same time following the will of the people in using new Measure A Sales Tax Revenue, pursuant to City of Turlock Ordinance, City Council has established a Citizens' Oversight Committee. The Committee will be responsible for reviewing the annual Measure A

accountability performance report, and for reporting its findings on Measure A spending to City Council and all Turlock residents.

Through sound fiscal management and with passage of Measure A, the City of Turlock is on a path to fiscal stability.

Like most Cities in California, Turlock faces a huge challenge in dealing with our Unsheltered population.

The current conditions under which our Unsheltered population have been subjected to are unacceptable. No human being should be denied a place to sleep, shower, and relieve themselves.

This issue must be dealt with compassionately, while at the same time protecting the Unsheltered population from living in unsanitary conditions.

Our plan will identify the resources and agencies available to provide assistance to those lacking permanent shelter.

We will insure, consistent with Federal, State and City laws, that adequate beds, showers, and bathroom facilities are available to the Unsheltered population.

At the direction of the Mayor and City Council, Acting City Manager Gary Hampton, Interim City Attorney George Petrulakis, and Interim Police Chief Steve Williams, have enacted policies that prevent illegal unsheltered homeless encampments from dominating the Turlock landscape while improving the living conditions for all unsheltered individuals.

Our next initiative will be to create a program to fix the 500 miles of Turlock roads identified by City Engineers in need of repair.

Although we have repaired over 72 miles of roads in the last two years, we have a long way to go to fix all Turlock roads in need of repair.

Every day I hear from our citizens concerned about the condition of our local roads. Ironically, last month I hit a pot hole on Geer road after a Council meeting and destroyed two of my tires.

Turlock has not allocated a single general fund dollar on road repair since 1985!! No wonder the current condition of roads in Turlock is totally unacceptable. This will change this year. We will spend general funds on road repair this year.

Soon I will present a plan to you, the public, and my council colleagues:

1. To retain a firm to develop a plan to fix all Turlock roads in need of repair in a timely manner.
2. Work with City Staff to secure road contractors, compliant with State and Local regulations, to complete repair of all deficient Turlock roads.
3. Complete the traffic study necessary to fix all roads with the lowest daily impact on all Turlock residents.
4. Identify the multimillion dollar low interest City Bond funding necessary to repair the remaining 428 miles of Turlock roads within approximately 5 years.
5. Secure Council and Public approval on when and which roads will be repaired as part of the overall road repair strategy. Turlock residents...I hear you loud and clear... Fix our ROADS!

Our final initiative will be to establish a private partnership that ensures all streets are properly lighted in Turlock especially those on our West side. This initiative will generate new revenues for Turlock while at the same time reducing the street light operating expense in our City.

Our plan for improving street lighting may also reduce the cost of WiFi service in Turlock and pave the way for securing 5G service for all residents.

The last benefit of our street light plan will be to enhance Turlock businesses safety with a publicly approved enhanced camera surveillance program.

We will accomplish all these objectives by embracing transparency and working collaboratively with all Turlock stakeholders.

With the election of a new City Council, and changes in our Senior leadership team, I have no doubt the 2021-22 fiscal year will be better and we will continue to improve the quality of life for all Turlock residents.

Events like this take a lot of planning and preparation and would not be possible without the help of our dedicated City staff, residents, and local businesses.

I would like to thank the following people for making today's event possible:

1. Congressman Josh Harder and his staff.
2. Senior Pastor Ron Eivaz of Harvest Church, for delivering our opening prayer.
3. Joe Sousa, Carlo Grossman, and George Younan of our IT Department for providing today's broadcasts.
4. Michael Nancett and Denice Racz, from Raley's for supplying today's great coffee, doughnuts and pastries.
5. Sargon Eddy, Sunrise Bakery for supplying great baked goods.
6. Senior Staff Services Technician Danae Lawrence, for designing our event invitations.
7. Turlock Acting City Manager Gary Hampton, Interim City Attorney George Petrulakis, City Clerk Jennifer Land, Interim Executive Administrative Assistant City Manager's Office / Deputy City Clerk, Allison Martin, and Office Assistant Ashley Saaty, for planning today's State of the City address.

A very special thank you to retired Associate Vice President and Dean of Students from Cal State Stanislaus, Ron Noble, my friend of over 30 years, for once again serving as today's Master of Ceremony

I also want to thank you, the citizens of Turlock, for allowing me the privilege of being your Mayor, and to all of our wonderful City Employees for working hard every day to make Turlock the best City in California.

Finally, to celebrate the City I love, I am pleased to share a new rendition of the Turlock City song written by US Army Staff Sargent Jeremy Levins, produced by Michael Everett, Owner, the Creation Lab Studios, performed by students at Pitman, Turlock and Turlock Christian High Schools directed by Yonan Parton, Janna Fisher, and Zachary Stillman

Together we will keep Turlock the best City in California.

We do this because We are Turlock Strong.

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