Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to start by thanking you, my colleagues on the Tulsa City Council, for working with me to make the City of Tulsa a model of fiscal responsibility for the nation. With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act earlier this year, we have seen news of cities around America requiring a federal bailout to address municipal budget deficits. Thanks to prudent annual budgeting and sacrifices on the part of our team at the City of Tulsa, we have no such deficit and no such need for a bailout.

In fact, starting in July and thanks to the citizens of Tulsa, we will be one of the first cities in America to receive funds into our Rainy Day Fund from a voter-approved dedicated funding source. We anticipate this will contribute approximately $4 million per year to the protection of city services from future economic fluctuations.

The budget being presented tonight also moves us closer to achieving our adopted financial goal of establishing a 10% emergency operating reserve following a year in which we saw earthquakes, tornadoes and a historic winter storm. We are only two years removed from a historic flooding of the Arkansas River. We know that in order to protect the citizens of Tulsa during such unpredictable natural disasters, we must have the financial resources to fund the necessary work that occurs during an emergency - and the proper funding of our emergency operating reserve will allow us to do that.

A year ago, we presented a budget in the early days of a global pandemic and a national recession. The City Council and I had to take swift action to adjust our revenue expectations and our expenses. We entered into a hiring freeze, halted employee travel, and those of us who are non-sworn employees supported by the General Fund began furloughs equal to 10% of our pay. Over the previous three years, the City Council and I had tripled the size of our Rainy Day Fund, and between these reductions and use of those reserves we were able to move through the current fiscal year without any diminishment in public safety protection for the citizens of Tulsa.

A decade earlier, the last time we saw this kind of impact on City revenues, 130 police officers were laid off. This year, there were no layoffs at all.

And during a year when our local economy was in need of funds, we issued the largest dollar amount of capital improvements contracts in Tulsa history - $320 million in construction starts and $140 million in planned starts between now and October, for a total of $460 million - fixing streets, repairing old facilities, building new attractions and creating jobs.

I cannot say enough about our team at the City of Tulsa, all of whom sacrificed to help one another continue serving the citizens of Tulsa in a year of cascading challenges.

And that sacrifice has us positioned to begin a rebound in the year ahead.

The proposed budget is $799.4 million, which includes all city funds - including operating funds and our capital improvements program. General Fund revenues, which fund most of our core services are projected to decline by approximately $29 million from the current budget year to $262.9 million. That overall decline in revenue can be explained by $30.9 million in one-time federal CARES Act funds our
General Fund received from the State of Oklahoma in the current fiscal year. If you take that out, we are projecting a very minor increase in recurring revenue for the coming fiscal year. I know I can speak for all ten of us when I say how much I appreciate the work our team at the City of Tulsa has done over the last year. They are the best group of public servants that you’ll find in any city anywhere. So, I want to say before we get to anything else that the budget before you includes funding for satisfactory performance increases for every qualifying City employee. These are, of course, subject to the collective bargaining process. But the funds to provide them are included.

This budget also allows us to end our hiring freeze and our employee travel ban.

When it comes to our greatest responsibility and expense, public safety, this budget maintains our existing manpower at current levels based on projected attrition.

The Council has made clear that expansion of the Community Response Team (CRT) is a high priority, and this budget will expand the CRT mobile mental health crisis response from three to five days per week. This budget also allows us to hire a civilian Clinical Services Coordinator to help the CRT team address the root causes of mental health crisis. This will improve our ability to effectively assist people suffering a mental health emergency and reduce their future reliance on 911 for services.

The Council has also been clear in its desire to see the evolution of service at our Municipal Court. This budget funds the establishment of a municipal court liaison. The Municipal Court Liaison will be the first person to greet visitors to Municipal Court and will stand ready to engage community members, help them navigate Municipal Court processes, and connect them with resources.

This budget also funds a text message alert system to remind people of upcoming court appearances. This is an approach that our Office of Performance Strategy and Innovation tested over the last few years, and it was found to improve the rate of court appearances - something that is important in our shared goal of reducing incarceration for non-violent offenses. This text alert system will be automated through our new records management system, which leads me to our next big initiative for the year ahead.

One of the most important advancements funded for the Tulsa Police Department in this budget is that our new records management system will finally go online. This is the first wholesale update of our records management system since the mid-1970s. It is a massive undertaking, which has required cross-departmental collaboration over the last four years to position us for it to finally go into service. This new system will dramatically improve the flow of information, from 911 to officers in the field to judges in our municipal court. I am very grateful for the long, hard work of the team that made this update possible.

And while it isn’t new in this budget, I think it is important to highlight several important behavioral health crisis system improvements launched by the City of Tulsa since we adopted the budget last year. We have made several strategic improvements in the way we address and respond to behavioral health crises in Tulsa. As a reminder from the September 2020 presentation to City Council with Healthy Minds, our overarching goal is to improve crisis system diversion and access. We believe the impact of these improvements is 1) better outcomes for Tulsans in crisis and 2) reduced reliance on first responders, jails, and emergency rooms to respond to behavioral health crisis.
In December of 2020, we launched the Police One-Stop expansion at the Crisis Care Center. This replicates the Tulsa Sobering Center model with a single-entry point for law enforcement to take individuals experiencing mental/behavioral health crises.

In that same month, we opened the Tulsa Methamphetamine Treatment Continuum in partnership with 12&12, increasing methamphetamine detox and treatment capacity.

In January of this year, TPD began utilizing non-sworn mental health transports, offering transportation from the Police One-Stop to the appropriate level of care as needed.

And in September of 2020 we began a 9-1-1 mental health collaborative in partnership with Family & Children’s Services, embedding trained COPES personnel at our 9-1-1 Center five days a week.

I am very thankful for the forward-thinking leaders in the Tulsa Police Department and our non-profit community who are making these reforms possible. And I also want to thank all of my colleagues on the City Council who participate in the First Responders Advisory Council, ensuring continuous improvement and coordination between the City’s Special Services Docket, Community Response Team, TFD CARES and Sobering Center.

This budget continues our street lighting program in neighborhoods across the city. So far, we have installed 112 new street lights, providing illumination in neighborhoods across the city. Our team expects to install at least that many in the coming year and is working right now to install additional lighting in areas with high auto-pedestrian accident levels along Admiral.

In a poll last year, our firefighters overwhelmingly voted apparatus replacement as the greatest improvement needed in the Tulsa Fire Department. This budget funds the replacement of 10 fire engines and 1 ladder truck - a significant step forward in modernizing our Fire Department vehicle fleet.

This budget also funds new bunker gear for our Tulsa firefighters, who have been forced to use old bunker gear for too long.

One of the key things we saw in the last year is the importance of communications to empower Tulsans to protect themselves and their families. Our Communications team has done an incredible job communicating vital information to all Tulsans throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This budget recognizes the value added by our CARES Act funded bilingual communications professional by making that a permanent position within the City government.

Another exciting change for the year ahead that is included in this budget involves our streets. For the last 12 years, we spent around a billion dollars reconstructing some of the worst streets that had decayed over decades. We want to keep plugging away at reconstruction but are finally in a position to shift to a heavier emphasis on rehabilitation as well. Rehabilitation projects require a fraction of the time that a reconstruction project takes, allowing us to cover more ground more quickly at less cost. This will be like getting a brand new street on every roadway where we do this work. I am excited for us finally, after years of hard work, to be moving the City into a responsible maintenance program that will keep our streets in better shape for decades to come.

But in this budget, it’s not all public safety and streets. We also make significant investments in economic development and quality of life that will benefit all Tulsans.
This budget reflects the establishment of the Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity - a merging of several city authorities into one new economic development authority with a unique mission: using economic development to create equality of opportunity throughout our city. The Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity is already garnering national attention because of this mission, and it hasn’t even fully launched yet. I am very thankful for the work of the City’s Chief of Economic Development, Kian Kamas, and citizen leaders on a number of boards who have worked for several years to get us to this point. The potential for this new Authority to be a long-term driver of positive change is incredibly exciting.

This budget also reflects the establishment of a new downtown entity, the Downtown Tulsa Partnership. For the last decade, the Downtown Coordinating Council has been an important leader as Downtown shifted from a sleepy office location into the region’s vibrant entertainment hub. The new Downtown Tulsa Partnership is positioned to take this progress to new heights with a broader array of services and stakeholders. This will be exciting for every Tulsan, as the continued growth and success of Downtown Tulsa is something that benefits our entire city.

This budget funds the reopening of pools and splash pads at City Parks across our community this summer, and it expands day camps at Central Park and the Jane Malone Recreation Center.

This budget includes the funding to expand and enhance our Animal Welfare Center and includes an increase in nuisance abatement funding to clean up neighborhoods. And it funds the recommended number of mowing cycles on rights of way and medians across the city.

This budget also contains funding for a historic redesign of the Greenwood Cultural Center, and construction costs for a parking garage at the new VA hospital that will dramatically enhance health care service for our veterans community and teaching opportunities for Oklahoma doctors.

This budget keeps our water and trash rates flat. Our financial plan projected 7% increases in rates for sewer and stormwater, but this budget keeps those down to 3%. I want to thank the citizen leaders who serve on the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority and the Tulsa Authority for the Recovery of Energy, whose fiscal stewardship over a span of years allows us to keep rates that cover the cost of service low.

I want to thank our departmental leadership, all of whom had to find efficiencies and cost reductions within their budgets to make everything I’ve talked about today possible. This year has provided ample managerial challenges for them, but they’ve handled them and this budgeting process like the great leaders they are.

I also want to thank our budget team, led by Finance Director James Wagner. They have worked diligently to make sure every taxpayer dollar is utilized responsibly and effectively. We are a fortunate city government to have this Budget team watching over our finances.

In closing, I want to thank you - my colleagues on the City Council - for working with my Administration to develop this budget. It has been important to me in my time as mayor that the budget represents our shared priorities. You have worked with me to maintain a year-round collaborative process, and because of that this presentation tonight is very much a shared work product. I am grateful for your partnership in the development of this proposed budget.