Tonight, I'd like to thank the City Council, City Attorney Mike Hamby, City Clerk / Treasurer Sharla Derry, special guest and citizens of this great city. Thank you all for the opportunity and privilege of serving you, as we continue to strive to make sure Greenwood is indeed a place that feels like home.

I would like to acknowledge my new Executive Assistant, Danielle Smith, who is also the city’s first Director of Human Resources. Ms. Smith has implemented a Health and Safety plan and handled the transition of all employees to a new insurance company.

I would also like to welcome Laura Shephard who is our city’s first receptionist.

A special thank you to my beautiful wife Pam and my family for their continued love and support.

As I have reported to you in the past, the state of our city continues to be strong, as we plan and prepare for our future growth.

Henry Ford said, “If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

I know that from department heads on down through the ranks, we are blessed with employees that take pride in their positions, and I believe it shows all across our city.

One major project that brought everyone together was the Greenwood Traffic Relief Bond issue. Well, we did it.

Beginning at Hwy 96 and 10, the bypass will traverse private and public properties, connecting directly onto Hwy 10 at Coker St. The new construction will consist of one mile of five lane highway and three bridges. The second phase of the project will widen highway 10 all the way up to Hwy 71.

The current estimated cost of the project is $32 million and Greenwood’s share is $5 million.

I have been working on this project since I was elected but this issue, as we all know, has been a concern of citizens for decades.

ARDOT Director Scott Bennett told us the three things we needed to do to make it happen: Money, Property, and willingness to take over Hwy 10 Spur.

The city agreed to convert 10 Spur back to Center Street. Dr. Burgess graciously offered the use of his property at a very reasonable rate. And the last piece of the puzzle was the funding.

I went to our Finance Director Tom Marsh, to develop a plan to raise $5 Million without increasing taxes. His solution was to pay off an existing bond and extend and repurpose it.

We put it up for a vote and our citizens overwhelmingly supported it, with a record setting voter turnout for a special election.

Lead by the Chamber of Commerce Director Bob Purvis, a group of citizens formed, The Greenwood Committee for Progress and Safety in order to promote the ballot measure.

The committee included Buddy Loyd, Sean Lin, Farrah Shoppach, Bob Purvis, Michael Lejong, Tammy Briley, Jeff Bryant, Cheryl Garner, Sonny Bell, Dr. Brandon Goldsmith, and Todd Basham. I thank you all and the many other volunteers who came together to help our city.

I appreciate Mr. Scott Bennett’s help with our traffic relief project and wish him a happy retirement. And also want to congratulate Ms. Lori Tudor for her appointment as the first ever female director of ARDOT.

We expect to see construction on the bypass within the next 3yrs. So now, we have work to do. We need to plan and plan well our infrastructure around this project.

Tonight, I would like to talk to you about how our various departments have helped put us on the road to growth.

**Police Department**

I'll begin with our police department. I can sum their success up with one sentence, Greenwood is currently the second safest city in Arkansas. Led by Chief Will Dawson our police department continues to be one of the best trained departments in the state.

The implementation of the church patrols and coordinating with the school district help to keep our children and citizens safe. They continue to indeed “serve and protect.”

This year the Ambassador Award, went to Kristin Faulkenberry; DWI Detection, Joe Casanova; Chief’s Award, Tim Gossett; Officer of the Year, Will Reid, and the Mayor’s Award, was presented to Eric Pippin.

I normally don’t get a chance to see officers in action, but I happened to be with the Fire Chief on a couple calls. Every time I see Eric he is extremely professional regardless of the situation. He has dedicated10 years of service to the City of Greenwood.

**Fire Department**

With over 720 incidents last year the fire department has certainly been busy. Along with the constant training our volunteer fire department is second to none in the state. Chief Stewart Bryan leads this impressive group in many ways with his professionalism and dedication to the city. In 2019, he completed the highest level of officer training in fire service.

Last year the department added new equipment and earned the Firewise designation for the 10th straight year.

These accomplishments along with other improvements have led to our city obtaining an ISO Public Protection Classification rating of 2, which puts Greenwood in the top 4% of communities in the entire United States.

Our new rating could provide individuals an additional 3-5 percent in insurance savings which adds up to around $300,000 citywide.

**Street Department**

Helping us pave the way to future growth our street department works hard maintaining approximately 71 miles of city streets, right of ways, and ditches. Director Dennis Goodwin and his team have led the charge on what I refer to as the war on drainage, cutting and removing debris and overgrowth from easements throughout the city, which will have a positive impact on any potential flooding issues in our neighborhoods.

The department acquired new equipment including a TIMCO 435 sweeper truck, snowplows, sanders and a roller. The department received a grant to do a million dollar overlay on Denver Street of which the city only had to pay 20% of the total cost.

We updated our city’s infrastructure technology with Streetscan, which will help us determine which roads are in need of repair in order to maximize our budget potential. The scan will also be used for mapping projects and city planning.

Our recycling center under direction of Valerie DiMaggio and our new hire Kenneth Kirkes saw an increase from 5,500 cars this year to over 12,000. Our recycling has become more effective because these employees are able to monitor the materials received for recyclability.

**Parks Department**

Tammy Briley stepped in as the Interim Parks Director and I was proud to see her move into that position permanently. I witnessed Tammy’s commitment for the city as she worked as my Executive Assistant for more than four years. Ms. Briley brings much enthusiasm to the parks department with lots of plans and projects.

Under her direction with the support of the parks commission, the department continues the tradition of city beautification making sure all parks and trails are well kept including the very important task of managing the placement of veterans’ steppingstones within Memorial Park. They upgraded our playgrounds with mulch and new playsets for all ages.

Phase two of the Bell Park Promenade has begun, which extends decorative walkways around the park’s northside providing a scenic overlook. The Parks Commission, led by Joel Goldstein, recently acquired 19 acres adjacent to Bell Park, which will allow the department to expand quality of life amenities.

**Planning Department**

The planning department with Sonny Bell at the helm is experiencing positive growth with $6.6 million in residential permits, along with $2 million in industrial and commercial building and remodels including Casey’s General Store, Dominoes, Roma, among others. With the commission’s newly designated R-5 zoning several duplex projects have been approved. This addresses the economic development issue of a lack of multi-family properties.

Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce Partnered with the Economic Development Committee to create a City Council approved part time staff position, which will coordinate their efforts to help Greenwood grow responsibly.

**Finance Department**

Because of the leadership of Finance Director Tom Marsh, we came in under budget last year with 17% growth in total city funds, a $1.7 million increase, and last year we saved approximately ½ million dollars though our effective bidding processes and project management. This would not have been possible without the diligence of our department heads and commissioners.

For 2020, we have a balanced budget of $11.9 million. The budget includes $3.5 million in capital improvements budgeted which include $2 million in carry-over for projects that are currently in process and $1.5 million in new capital projects.

The city is currently experiencing an uptick in tax revenue of about 4.5%. One factor is the collection of online tax receipts. In reviewing our budget, we are going to be more aggressive in our cash management, investing surpluses into treasury bonds to generate additional cash funds.

**Greenwood School District**

Superintendent John Ciesla has not only guided our schools to success, but he was named Greenwood Citizen of the Year for 2019. Mr. Ciesla has led our school system to being the #2 best district in the state. Greenwood is also ranked #1 in being the best place to teach in Arkansas and ranked #2 for having the best teachers in the state. I know this for a fact because I witness the extra hours, love and dedication of my wife and her colleagues who exemplify the devotion Greenwood teachers have for students across the district.

Greenwood Junior High, Greenwood Freshman Center, East Hills Middle School, East Pointe Elementary and Westwood Elementary received awards for Top 5 or Top 10 in growth or academic performance in the state.

East Pointe Elementary once again received the distinguished designation as a Leader in Me Lighthouse School.

Greenwood Freshman Center received the Computer Science Award from Governor Hutchinson, and Greenwood Public Schools were named Best of the Best in the River Valley for 2019.

In terms of athletics our teams won 5A State and Conference Championships in girls’ cross country, tennis, volleyball, basketball and wrestling. Coach John Kincaid was named 5A Wrestling Coach of the Year and Jim Andrews Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year.

Coach Rick Jones joined our Greenwood family in 2004. He won 8 State Championship titles in 16 years with a 186 win and 26 loss record. Jones was never one to take credit or make it about himself. He taught not only the students but our citizens how to come together as a team.

He was truly an inspiration to the kids and the city, as a we celebrated our teams’ victories and struggles. Thank you coach Jones for your leadership. Good luck and make us proud.

**Natural Disasters**

The true character of Greenwood comes out when we face challenges. This last year our city and region experienced a record 500-year flood and tornadoes.

What I saw the day of the tornado was similar to what I had witnessed as a young boy in 1968, of neighbors helping neighbor, and caring for each other. The weather was still somewhat severe it was raining and many residents got together to place tarps on people’s roofs and helped clear debris.

In 2019, the Arkansas River crested nearly 20 feet above flood levels. Our city was blessed not to have suffered any damages; however, we did serve as a route for those needing to reach Fort Smith from surrounding communities.

Our departments worked in coordination with the Sebastian County Emergency Operation Center making our resources available and on call. Our citizens volunteered helping people and families effected by the flooding. It is moments like these that make me Greenwood Proud.

**The Road to Growth**

As I mentioned earlier, our citizens approved the funding for our traffic relief project last year and based on ARDOT projections we anticipate Phase One to be completed within 3 years.

That is not far down the road and I have asked all departments to compile 3-5year plans. I cannot stress enough the importance of preparing for our future growth.

Our Planning Department recently passed a comprehensive 5 to 10-year plan and map, which will help expand our city through the annexation of commercial corridors along highway 71. We are creating designated zoning that will allow us to regulate our growth.

Because of increases in energy cost, we are looking into the possibility of using solar to power all municipal facilities. Additionally, in an effort to go paperless, the city clerk is purchasing tablets for city council and commission meetings.

As Horace Greeley once said, “Go West, Young Man, Go West.”

The Fire Department has proposed a third station to accommodate our western expansion. The Water and Wastewater departments led by Tim Posey and Greg Cross will be a crucial component to developing infrastructure to make our growth possible. We are also considering 30-year forecasts, which could require alternate water sources.

Our Parks Department collaborated with the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District to generate a first-class city bicycle and pedestrian plan that extends our trail system connecting the city’s west side to Greenwood Lake, which includes the revitalization of the Old Iron Bridge. The Street Department received grant approval from the State for Phase 1 of our sidewalk construction project.

I am extremely excited about this project. It will go along Hwy 10 Spur on the north side from Denver Street to Webster Street and on the south side will go from Denver Street down to the new Waffle House, which recently started construction.

In the process of making Greenwood more business friendly, our Economic Development Committee partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and is looking into forming a builders and developers council along with a business incubator program.

Bob Purvis is the chairman of our local Census Complete Count Committee. I encourage everyone to participate because every person who is not counted will cost our city budget as much as $10,000 over the next ten years. So please, stand up and be counted.

**Final Thoughts**

Last evening, I took a stroll down the City Hall walking trail that cuts behind the Historic District featuring the Coal Miners Memorial and follows Heartsill Creek. I passed the Senior Citizen Activity Center, a vital aspect of our community, it made me remember my dad and all the important people who built the city we have today.

Across the way, the Police Department stands on the hill, as a symbol of safety and service. I stopped at one of the many exercise stations below the Zachary Park pavilion, both Eagle Scout projects, and looked up at the Winford Park Caboose from the Missouri Pacific rail line that ran through our city.

Encountering a man walking his dog with two little boys and a girl, some female joggers, and a couple taking a sunset walk, I noticed a pile of limbs and trash made by a volunteer, people lovingly refer to her as the trail fairy.

A few steps around the next bend I happened upon Ms. Pat Bailey who was busy clearing a patch of briars. I visited with her as I have done on other occasions and commended her on the time and effort, she puts into cleaning up our trails picking up trash, dead limbs, and trimming evasive foliage.

People often ask me why I wanted to be mayor. I love opportunities such as these, when I get to discover unsung heroes, like Ms. Bailey, who love their city without seeking any recognition. It reminds me of the lessons my dad taught me about the importance of being a good servant within one’s community.

Now in my second term, I am as thankful today to serve as your mayor, as when I first came into office in 2014. I am striving to represent you, our citizens, in a manner that mirrors the dedication and love you have for our wonderful city. Greenwood’s road to growth will not be possible without each and every one of you. I am proud to join you on this journey.

May God Bless You

and the City of Greenwood