Annotations prepared by Hannibal Johnson

1. June 2, 1921

President Alva J. Niles blamed the victims (“Under bad advice and led by a group of Negroes exhibiting a spirit of lawlessness…”) and sympathized with the perpetrators (“A bad psychological condition, occasioned by a spirit of unrest, and some unemployment, dove-tailed….”)

He made empty promises, including one vowing to “formulate a plan of reparation in order that homes may be rebuilt and families as nearly as possible rehabilitated”; the City “can be depended upon to make proper restitution…”

_The white supremacist dynamic at play in these remarks was emblematic of the national scene in 1921. Indeed, sociologists and historians refer to this period in our history as “the nadir of race relations in America.” This was the era of a proliferation of “race riots” – more than 25 in 1919 alone – and lynchings – domestic terrorism – perpetrated primarily against African Americans._

2. June 3, 1921

Resolution affirming the selection of an Executive Welfare Committee and congratulating it on its work.

_This sort of self-congratulatory resolution flew in the face of the horror on the ground in Tulsa in the wake of the Riot/Massacre. Scores of African Americans had been killed and injured, placed in internment camps, and rendered homeless, helpless, and hopeless. Many spent weeks in tent cities operated by the American Red Cross. This was a disaster of epic proportions._

3. June 15, 1921

Executive Committee of the Board of Public Welfare resigned, apparently over a power struggle with the City of Tulsa. The City appointed its own body to oversee Greenwood District reconstruction and rehabilitation.

_This transition may have facilitated, or perhaps just expedited, white-led efforts to seize the Greenwood District for corporate and commercial purposes, including initiatives to extend the fire code, which would have made rebuilding cost-prohibitive for many, and re-zone the Greenwood District. These efforts, challenged in court by Tulsa lawyer B.C. Franklin and others, failed._
4. June 17, 1921

Chamber directors were advised of a propaganda effort, launched in *The Tulsa Spirit*, which would be used in “giving proper information to the newspapers of the North and East which have adversely commented on the situation in Tulsa, without the facts at hand.”

*Tulsa leadership wanted to use everything at its disposal to prevent the 1921 tragedy from interfering with the upward trajectory of the City. Tulsa was well on her way to becoming the “Oil Capital of the World,” and the Riot/Massacre needed to be prettified, if mentioned at all, to help facilitate this ascendency.*

5. July 1, 1921

A Chamber resolution endorsed the taking of the Greenwood District for corporate/commercial purposes:

> WHEREAS, the recent fire in the northeast portion of the City has made available a thoroughly feasible and practicable site for the Union Stations and joint terminal,

> NOW THEREFORE, Be it Resolved, that it is the unanimous sentiment of the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Allied Interest of Tulsa, Oklahoma, that the railroads and interurbans of the City of Tulsa immediately take steps looking toward the erection of a Union Station and railroad and interurban terminal…

*This naked power grab was both unconscionable and inexcusable, adding insult (“we know best what to do with your land”) to injury (the obliteration of a teeming entrepreneurial and residential community by a racist mob).*

*We understand the power of community engagement and the imperative of diversity and inclusion. Decisions need to be made by communities, not for communities.*

*We either learn from the past or accept the fate of being doomed to repeat it.*