

From the Mayor's Desk
July 2020

Planning and Zoning Commission

The P&Z and City Council met on June 11, 2020 to approve a Preliminary Plat establishing Setterfeld Estates Unit 3A. The plat sets aside approximately 21 acres for open space purposes. This submittal is being considered as a preliminary plat submission as it appears that there may be some public improvements required. Staff has requested clarification from the applicant.

At the same meeting, the Commissioners considered a preliminary plat establishing The Arbors at Fair Oaks Ranch Unit 2. Unit 2 covers 43.56 acres and represents 47 residential lots. The Commissioners approved the preliminary plat.

Hail to the Chief!

At our June 4th council meeting, the council voted unanimously to ratify the City Manager's appointment and promotion of Lieutenant Tim Moring to the position of Chief of Police. Lt. Moring had been in the position of Interim Chief of Police for several months.

Tim has been with our city for about 15 years and has filled essentially every position in the police department from Patrolman to, now, Chief of Police. During the recent Public Health Emergency, he has headed our Emergency Operations Center (EOC). I will tell you from personal experience that he has been the steady hand on the rudder during this very trying time. All of us are in his debt for his leadership during a very trying time.

Congratulations Chief Moring. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Finance Team Honored Again

I am pleased to report that our Finance Department, headed by Finance Director Sarah Buckelew, has once again been honored by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Our 2019-20 budget received their Certificate of Achievement for excellence in budget reporting. This is the first time the City of Fair Oaks Ranch has received this honor and it is a significant accomplishment.

This is the sixth year I have gone through a budget cycle with the city and the amount of progress we have made in that time is very exciting. The tools our Finance team has put together over the past several years have made the budget a more meaningful process and have enhanced the quality of decision making.

I will remind everyone that our Finance team has also been honored the past two years by GFOA for their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR). Congratulations to Sarah and her team. We are very proud of you.

Declaration of Local Disaster Extended Again

Most of you are getting pretty familiar with the drill where the Governor updates his Executive Order, the Bexar County Judge updates his, and we update ours. On May 21st we extended the declaration to June 4th. On June 4th, we extended the declaration to June 18st. On June 18th we extended the declaration to July 2nd. In our June 18th meeting, we discussed the changes in Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff's Executive Order NW-10 which added a Health and Safety Policy for Commercial Entities. After consultation with our City Attorney, council determined that the existing format of our Declaration was adequate to reflect requirements. Judge Wolff's Executive Order supersedes any city orders and our commercial establishments that are impacted as all in Bexar County. Our Police Department will continue its work in coaching our businesses in Fair Oaks Ranch to keep them in compliance. We have been blessed with good cooperation from our business owners. These declarations are necessary to keep us in compliance and to make us eligible for possible funding of COVID-19 related expenses. Stay tuned as our handling of the disaster continues unfolding.

The biggest change affecting our residents is the requirement to mask when entering a business establishment. We request that you follow the business owners' guidance on this since Judge Wolff's latest Executive Order places them at risk of a \$1,000 fine if they do not implement this requirement. For restaurants, which is our most common business, the normal routine is wearing the mask entering and leaving and removing the mask at the table after seating.

Water Rights Project

Although the case is currently set for trial in July (COVID-19 notwithstanding), the City has recently filed a motion for summary judgment asking the Court to rule, as a matter of law, that the City owns the well and sanitary control easements. Our attorneys tell us that they are cautiously optimistic about the City's chances of prevailing on this summary judgment motion. If that should happen, no trial to establish the city's right to access and use the well would be necessary. While the Caldarolas could appeal such a ruling, it will be difficult for them to overturn same.

Several of our staffers and elected officials will be deposed by the plaintiff's attorneys next week. Our attorneys have also conducted depositions of the plaintiffs.

Tobin Maples, our City Manager, asks anyone needing to discuss specific issues with him to please call him at City Hall at 210-698-0900 or email him at tmaples@fairoaksranchtx.org. Additionally, our Special Legal Counsel is available to answer questions (Rhonda Jolley at 210-598-5406 or Joe Davis at 210-598-5414).

Ordinance Related to Public Health Emergency

As of the time I am writing to you, we have five confirmed cases in Fair Oaks Ranch (2 in Comal, 1 in Bexar, and 2 in Kendall). Only 1 of those cases is still active and four cases, thankfully, are in "recovered" status.

We are planning a “soft” reopening of City Hall in late June. We are monitoring infection levels and will work to stay in compliance with the directives of the Governor and the Bexar County Judge. We will establish protocols to provide for the safety of both our residents and our city employees. Our employees, our residents, and our businesses have continued to show the small town “good neighbor” approach of which we are so very proud. My job in helping manage the emergency has been much easier than many of the mayors in other cities.

Essential Services

We are now at the point where basically all businesses in Fair Oaks Ranch have been allowed to open at some level of service. Please follow the guidance of the business owners in order to keep them in compliance with the new rules mentioned above.

Economic/Taxation Issues Related to Coronavirus Pandemic

This is a continuation of comments I made last month. I got letters from a couple of state level elected officials suggesting that cities should cut their budgets and/or their tax rates. These letters show a fundamental lack of understanding of the basic economic principle that there are no free lunches. In particular, for a city like us that funds only the most basic services (water, wastewater, public safety, roads), asking us to cut our budgets is asking our residents to tolerate a decrease in their quality of life.

The City Manager, the Finance Director, and I took a look at the most recent posting of city ad valorem property tax rates on the State Comptroller’s website a couple of weeks ago. There are 1,222 cities listed on the report. 921 of those cities have a higher tax rate than Fair Oaks Ranch. Saying that an easier way, about 75% of the cities in Texas have a higher property tax rate than we do. This is especially significant because more than 70% of our Operating and Maintenance Revenue comes from property taxes.

We do not have a broad based portfolio of revenue because we are, and we desire to remain, primarily a bedroom community. That is usually a challenge, but during economic uncertainty it has proven to be a blessing.

We offer only basic services and do not rely on Hotel Occupancy Taxes and other ancillary revenue sources. The demand for our services has actually increased during the current challenges, so we do not have the need to shed positions dependent on these sources of revenue like some of the larger cities have needed to do.

Based on our first budget workshop that was held on June 12th, I anticipate that we will not be changing our tax rate. The “draft” Operations budget for FY 20-21 is \$7.631 million which is a decrease of 6.8% from the current operations budget.

You Count!!!

You only count if you complete your CENSUS!! If you have not done your census, please get on line and make it happen. It took Dedie and me about 10 minutes.

On one of my videos, I challenged all of you to catch up with Shavano Park in terms of level of census completion. As of the last census update I just got, we have almost caught them. We are at 81.1% complete and Shavano Park is at 82.7% complete. Among the suburban cities, Shavano Park and FOR are in the number 1 and number 2 positions respectively in terms of percentage of completion.

Backflow Prevention Program Updates

Thanks to all of you who have complied thus far. **Please remember that the deadline for initial testing is September 30, 2020.** If you have any questions regarding your backflow prevention assembly, please contact the City's Environmental Compliance Manager, Melissa Castro, at 210-698-0900.

Fourth of July

We are finalizing preparations for our Independence Day fireworks display. It will be held on the **evening of July 3rd** like we did last year. **The location will be different than last year.** The Country Club venue was too small for social distancing.

We will have the fireworks display near the River Rock Event Center off of Saratoga Lane. Parking will be at the Cibolo Creek Community Church on Ralph Fair Road. We will have social distancing guides posted in the field. We will have the "nice" restrooms like we did at the 30th anniversary celebration and there will be simple grab and go refreshments available like ice cream and snow cones. Hand sanitizing stations will also be available.

We will have portable lighting for safety and the Fair Oaks Ranch police department will be providing security and safety for all of us.

Magic In The Sky will do the honors with fireworks and patriotic music just like they did last year. I hope to see you there. I will be wearing my University of Texas Longhorn face covering and some red, white, and blue clothing. I'm sure our City Manager will be wearing his Texas A&M bandanna.

We want to thank property owners Janis and Ralph Fair, Jr. and Martin and Abigail Epple for extending the courtesy of the use of their property. Let's return that courtesy by taking good care of their land. Put trash in proper containers and leave only your footprints behind. We also want to thank our friends at Cibolo Creek Community Church who have once again helped us out by volunteering the use of their parking lot and providing some volunteers.

We will be collecting donations for Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries at the fireworks show. Please bring peanut butter, healthy snack foods, canned tuna, and diapers in

sizes 4, 5, & 6. We are going to try to fill the back of the Police Department truck at the event. This is a good organization and their needs are great at this time.

Calling the Hogs

We are nearing the end of our hog trapping operation with Ortiz Game Management Services. The owner, Bubba Ortiz, has reported that we are getting close to 40 hogs trapped during the three month project, including some really large boars. Bubba had to make a couple of runs at some of the boars because they were clever and strong enough to figure out how to get out of the traps. Our feral hogs on The Ranch are very athletic! We will continue to monitor the hog presence. Our anticipation is that we are going to have to spend some money each year to keep them under control.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

- Facebook fans can find us at City of Fair Oaks Ranch, TX. Our page is used for sharing information about the city, but it is not a public forum. The page is monitored and objectionable or off topic material will be removed. In the last month we reached almost 5,000 people with our posts. More than 2,000 people reacted to the postings by liking, sharing, or posting them. We have had 28 new page likes and 34 new page followers in the past month.
- We now have more than 4,200 members on Nextdoor and had almost 13,000 impressions on this tool during the month.
- New this month, we added a YouTube channel to our website. If you have not seen the graduation video that Jennifer Hudson put together, I encourage you to go to our website and see this great video honoring our graduates.
- The police department also helped celebrate birthdays for a number of residents, both young and old, during the month. Dedie and I participated in a birthday drive by for Shannon Seitz's 51st birthday. Shannon, who is a real Spurs fan, was on hand with his parents Ron and DeLaine to receive a long line of cars who went through the winding driveway on the parents' house. We made a lot of noise and had a good time! Happy Birthday Shannon!

Let's keep working as "good neighbors" to get through this terrible pandemic and reclaim our very good lives. I have seen many signs of people caring for each other and that is what makes us special as a city.

All the best to all of you from Dedie and me.

Garry Manitzas
Mayor
Fair Oaks Ranch