

From the Mayor's Desk
March 2021

Winter Weather Emergency

The biggest event since the last time I wrote with you was dealing with the recent winter weather emergency. I cannot adequately express my admiration for our Public Works folks, our Police Officers, and our Senior Management at the city. We literally had more than 20 of our employees working around the clock to keep our water and wastewater systems going and to keep up with public safety needs. They logged more than 3,500 work hours in less than one week to keep things going. Most of these workers literally lived at our City Hall campus for four or five days to keep these services going. When I heard and read about so many other cities not being able to keep these services up, I realized how truly blessed we were to have these folks on board.

The most difficult situation we encountered was water service from SAWS for residents in Front Gate, Elkhorn Ridge, and The Woods. All of these residents have been without water service for multiple days. The proximate cause of these delivery problems is the very long line that must move water uphill for SAWS to service these areas. SAWS lost electric power in the storm and it is not feasible to have a large enough backup generator to drive the size of pumps that are required to move the water through a major line.

SAWS has no Elevated Storage Tower (EST) anywhere near our service area. The closest one is at Loop 1604 and that elevation is lower than ours. This is a perfect example of how the ESTs add resiliency to a water system. A properly sized EST would have bought our neighborhood three or four days of service even with the loss of electric power.

As I am writing this, we are sponsoring two water dispensing events to help the residents impacted by the SAWS problems. We are providing potable water at City Hall and Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department is providing non-potable at the Van Raub Elementary School. These events were planned by City Councilwoman Laura Koerner working in conjunction with Bexar County Commissioner Trish DeBerry and Michael Blair, the District Director for Congressman Tony Gonzales. We were happy to be able to provide this service, not only for our residents, but for SAWS customers in the surrounding area. I had the pleasure of meeting Congressman Gonzales, Director Blair and Commissioner DeBerry and they had the pleasure of meeting part of our Public Works and Police Department crew that did the work for the community.

I also want to recognize the generosity of our Fair Oaks Ranch residents. Because the weather issue lasted much longer than anyone thought it would, we were literally running out of food for our workers who were staying here and working

around the clock. We were unable to get food from the grocery stores because they were either out of food or closed.

We sent out messages to the community and arranged for drop off points in several neighborhoods. Our house was the drop off point for Deer Meadow Estates. I was on the phone with our City Manager while this was going on and told him it was starting to remind me of the last scene in the movie "Field of Dreams" when all the cars were coming in to watch the baseball game! Build it and they will come!

Dedie, Karen Maxton (Councilman Greg Maxton's wife), Nicole White, Christina Martinez, Andrea Aiken, Sue Edwards, Allison Leonard, Shawna Allen, Laura Day, Hollie Sanchez, Kathy Bullard, Eileen Voight, and Jessica Hastings cooked up a large amount of spaghetti with meat sauce, a lot of green beans and some brownies and cookies for the hungry crew. This may have been the first good home cooked meal these folks got in several days and they appreciated it very much. As I remind everyone from time to time, this is how we do things on The Ranch. We take care of each other!

When Karen and I delivered the food and supplies, I got to see Tobin Maples, our City Manager, wearing his insulated overalls. I think Tobin really enjoyed getting to work as one of our field folks for a while!

We will be doing a post action review to talk about what went well and what could have been done better. This will be performed by the City Staff and I anticipate we will have a special Council workshop to review their findings and come up with some action steps for the next time an event like this happens. As well as our folks performed in this major weather event, we really were living on the ragged edge of success. When it takes the kind of extraordinary efforts our folks had to make to keep everything hanging together, you have an opportunity to invest in resources and processes to make it better and more resilient next time.

Weather Related Declaration of Local Disaster

On February 19th I issued a Declaration of Local State of Disaster due to the winter weather emergency. This declaration is proactively preparing for requesting assistance from FEMA for natural disaster related costs that have and will continue to affect our City and community because of this unprecedented winter weather event. Governor Abbott and the County Judges for Kendall, Comal, and Bexar County have each issued a similar Winter Weather Emergency Declaration of Local Disaster for their respective jurisdictions.

Water Rights Project

Subject to delays from the winter weather emergency, we have begun follow up on the remaining wells and easements that need to have curative documents signed. We are also making arrangements for a handful of surveys that still need to be done of access easements and sanitary control easements. We have received good cooperation on finalizing these arrangements.

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).

Boerne Ranch Estates, L.L.C. (The Reserve)

There is no additional activity to report on this item at this time.

Planning and Zoning Commission

We have had no additional activity since the last time I reported to you. The P&Z Commission will begin a diagnostic review of our Unified Development Code in the near future. This is standard procedure for P&Z Commissions and should be done every couple of years. P&Z will report back recommended changes to Council for final approval.

Dietz Elkhorn Road Corridor Study

I previously reported that, on September 17th, City Council authorized the City Manager to issue a work authorization for Legacy Engineering Group, our City's General Engineering Consultant to review traffic and safety concerns for Dietz-Elkhorn Road. Major concerns to be addressed include:

- High volume of citizen complaints with speeding, truck traffic, and lack of pedestrian facilities
- Impact of opening second elementary school along the corridor
- Need to develop short, mid, and long term solutions for known problem areas
- Need to better understand traffic pattern changes of IH-10 West project and FM 3351 expansion projects respectively on the west and east ends of the corridor

I am anticipating hearing a first report back on this project at a council meeting during March.

Branding Committee Meeting

We had additional work sessions on this project on January 26th, February 2nd, and February 11th. In addition to the consulting firm, participants included myself, Councilwomen Koerner and Patel, Carole Vanzant, our Assistant City Manager, Joanna Merrill our HR Director, Jennifer Hudson our HR/Communications Specialist, Melissa Castro, our Environmental Compliance Officer, and Chief Tim Moring. We have developed Mission and Vision statements for our city. The workgroup has had very congenial interaction and I am pleased with the progress being made. We will be turning our attention to more visual presentations in the next phase of the project.

Code of Conduct

We completed our call for volunteers to serve on a committee to write the Code of Conduct. We have interviewed nine well qualified applicants and will be selecting five of them at a special council meeting on February 25th. We had to defer the regular February 18th council meeting due inclement weather making it risky on internet connectivity.

On a parallel path, the Assistant City Manager and I are working with the City Attorney to develop the Code of Ethics and bring it to council. We had an additional work session last week with our City Attorney and are very close to having a product ready to bring to council for a first look.

Professional Services Agreement for a Water/Wastewater/Reuse Rate Update

At the January 21st council meeting, the council approved authorizing the City Manager to sign a Professional Services Agreement for a Water/Wastewater/Reuse Rate Update to the Fair Oaks Ranch Utility. There was some discussion from some council members about why we needed to bring in a consultant for this type of work.

For those of us who spent part of our careers in the utility industry, engaging consultants for this type of work is pretty much a “no brainer.” Rate design is a very specialized area of financial management. Even companies that are very sophisticated in rate design and have entire work groups devoted to this work engage consultants to help them with rate design. This is one more area where failure to engage the right type of expertise over the years has produced very dysfunctional results in not setting correct rates and in having one utility subsidizing the other which is not good rate design. The output of this work will include a model for financial planning for utilities that can be administered by our staff. I am glad to see that we are finally heading down the correct path on this issue.

Agreement with Waterman Construction, LLC to Serve as Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) in Civic Center and City Hall Renovation

Also in the January 21st council meeting, we voted to enter into an agreement to name a CMAR for the Civic Center and City Hall renovation project. I will remind everyone that the Civic Center is being funded by a grant from the Municipal Development District which is providing grant funding (\$600,000) that has already been collected over the years from sales tax carved out for the MDD. The City Hall renovation project has been reserved in our budget processes to allow us to create offices that will provide a safe working environment (post COVID) for our employees. I will also remind everyone that the Civic Center will be a pre-fabricated metal structure, faced with stone harvested from the existing old Police Building. The Center will be functional but it will not win a beauty contest against Boerne's City Hall!

Potential Amendments to the Weeds, High Grass, and Debris on Lots Ordinance

Also on the January 21st agenda, Amber Little, our Code Compliance Officer, presented potential changes on the referenced ordinance to council for consideration. As usually happens with this particular topic, it produced some very spirited conversation. We have such a diversity of real estate choices in our city, it is challenging to write an ordinance that addresses everything. One particularly thorny subject is at what size of lot do you recognize that requiring mowing the entire lot is no longer feasible? Other subjects included what types of fire breaks were reasonable to require. We will have additional discussion and input on this topic before making any decisions. I anticipate that Restriction Unit requirements will continue to be a major player in managing this issue.

Change in Council Meeting Times

At the February 4th council meeting, Councilwoman Laura Koerner presented a proposal to change the council meeting time for the first Thursday meeting from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Councilwoman Koerner recommended this change to make it more possible for people still engaged in careers to be able to serve on council. Mayor Pro Tem Roy Elizondo supported this change even though he was the original council member suggesting having a “B” meeting which was originally designed to be more for presenting new information than for voting on decisions. Our decision making workload on the council has escalated to the point where the morning meeting had really just become another Consideration and Discussion meeting. After some discussion, the majority of the council agreed with the recommendation and agreed to implement it immediately.

Declaration of Local Disaster

We have had no changes in the declarations since the last time we reported. We drafted the Emergency Ordinance to be continuing.

As most of you know, the Governor created a rule that outdoor gatherings of more than 10 persons within city limits requires the approval of the mayor.

If anyone is anticipating an outdoor gathering of more than 10 people, please call the city for guidance. We are requiring 10 business days’ notice and our staff has developed a very simple form to provide the information required for the mayor to make a decision. Procedurally, we pass this information through our Emergency Operations Center first and they make a recommendation to me.

I want to once again thank our residents and our businesses for their cooperation during these difficult times. I am sure all of you have seen the statistics on upticks of infection. **Please keep wearing your masks in public places where social distancing is impossible.**

All of the Emergency Operations Centers are experiencing the frustration of trying to determine when vaccines will be available. As a small city with little commercial activity, we lack the infrastructure to attempt to arrange vaccine distribution within

our city. We are developing information to place on our website to share what we believe to be the best information available about vaccine scheduling. We will coordinate our efforts with those of Boerne and Kendall County to attempt to deliver a uniform view of what we know. Stay tuned for this information.

Elections – Coming Up Again

City elections are coming up again in May. We have more places than usual up for grabs. Councilman Greg Maxton (Place 6) and Councilwoman Snehal Patel (Place 5) have both signed up to run for mayor. To accommodate these filings, council took action at the February 4th council meeting to call a special election to be held concurrently with the regular election on May 1st. The deadline for posting to run for one of these two City Council positions is March 1st. We are updating our website on the Elections page to provide the sign up information to become a candidate. The website path to get to the information is clicking on the “Our Government” tab and then on “City Elections.” For general information, you can contact our City Secretary, Christina Picioccio, at the city (210-698-0900). Our City Secretary does not provide legal advice to candidates.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

- Facebook fans can find us at City of Fair Oaks Ranch, TX. In the last month we reached almost 14,000 people with our posts. A little over 9,000 people reacted to the postings by liking, sharing, or posting them. We have had 129 new page likes and 151 new page followers in the past month.
- We now have more than 4,700 residents accessing us through Nextdoor and we had a little over 19,000 impressions on this tool during the month in which we had 41 posts.

Thanks to all of you for helping each other during the recent winter weather emergency. Special thanks to those of you who helped us feed and appreciate our incredible workers who kept the place running in very difficult times. Keep up the good work!

Best,

Garry Manitzas
Mayor
Fair Oaks Ranch