

# From the Mayor's Desk

**VOTING TIME COMING UP!** As reported last month, we will have a Special Election on Election Day (May 6) to vote on the proposal to adopt a Home Rule Charter. By the time most of you read this, the election will have already been held. We will canvass the votes on May 12th and determine the outcome of the election.

If the Home Rule Charter passes, the council will appoint a sixth Alderman in accordance with the structure established in the Home Rule Charter. This will be done as soon as practical after the election results are canvassed.

#### Home Rule Charter Town Hall Meeting

The Home Rule Charter Town Hall Meeting was held Wednesday, April 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary School. The residents who wrote the charter did a presentation and answered questions from their fellow residents. City Attorney Charlie Zech assisted with legal related questions. There were about 30 citizens in attendance and the primary questions revolved around procedural issues related to Home Rule.

#### Stakeholder Involvement

The Stakeholder group for the foundational engineering and consulting projects has had additional meetings with Gap Strategies to review the results of the first Town Hall meeting and preliminary summaries of the surveys citizens have taken. We have received more than 500 surveys which is a good response from our citizens. The primary findings of the survey were maintaining our quality of life, keeping open spaces, parks and trails vibrant, and keeping taxes to a reasonable level.

Stakeholders also participated in the Design Charrette sessions which were conducted by Gateway Planning and Gap Strategies on April 11th and 12th. "Charrette" is a fancy French word that means taking a verbal description of what you want your community to look like and function and converting it into a series of drawings reflecting possible choices for land use. These sessions were open to the public and a number of citizens came by the Open House held in the evening on April 12th and offered up their thoughts on the first designs put together by the urban planning team. There is much more work to do on this process but there were many favorable comments offered as well as some suggestions for additional study.

#### Foundational Studies Work

Our consultants and engineers are continuing their work with the Stakeholder group and other residents.

• March 16th: The Director of Public Works and Engineering Services presented Council with a proposed scope of engagement for our Master Water and Wastewater work with the engineering firm, Freese and Nichols, which had been previously selected as the most qualified proposer for these two major foundational studies. Council approved the scope and instructed staff to move forward with finalizing a contract with Freese and Nichols.

• March 28th: Gap Strategies delivered its first Town Hall Meeting on the Comprehensive Plan at the FOR Country Club. Our consultants had told us they needed about 75 participants for reliable results from information gathering. They also told us that a community our size usually generated about 100 to 125 participants on the first meeting. Our citizens blew away all normal expectations. About 250 people showed up to participate. As I told the consultants: "Welcome to Fair Oaks Ranch!" We received very positive responses to the meeting and the citizens were highly engaged. Special thanks to Paul Bimmler who arranged pro bono use of the club facilities.

• May 4th: CDM Smith Engineering, the firm with whom we

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## **ARTICLE INFO**

The Fair Oaks Gazette is mailed monthly to all Fair Oaks Ranch area residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the Fair Oaks Gazette, please email it to *fairoaksranch@peelinc.com*. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

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Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary	210-698-1616
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AT&T - Telephone	
CPSEnergy(new service	<i>ce)</i> 210-353-2222
(service trouble or repair	rs) 210-353-4357
Fair Oaks Ranch Utilities - Water	
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#### From the Mayor's Desk (Continued from Cover)

have contracted to develop a Master Drainage Plan, will meet with the Stakeholder group to update us on their work. This is a topic of high interest in our community and will be posted as a public meeting.

• May 15th: Gap Strategies, the primary contractor for developing our Comprehensive Plan and updated Subdivision Regulations, will meet with Stakeholders to update on their work. This will also be posted as a public meeting.

• June 6th: We are anticipating a second Town Hall Meeting with Gap Strategies from 7 to 9 pm. This will be a continuation of telling the story of what we have learned from feedback and continuing to gather input from citizens. Let's work as a community to blow away all expectations of participation and engagement once again!

Road and Bridge Construction and Water/Wastewater Improvements

• The low water crossing dip on Meadow Creek Trail by the firehouse that we have lovingly referred to as our "Country Speed Bump" for years has gone away. Dedie and I have been driving some of the construction areas on a pretty regular basis and enjoyed driving on the new road which sits on top of a large concrete box culvert.

• Following a bit of a rain delay, the contractor has begun doing reclamation work on Meadow Creek Trail, Sky Blue, Sunland, and Wembley. As I mentioned last month, on sections where we are doing Full Depth Reclamation, we are going to have to use cement in the slurry mix to produce sufficient compressive road strength. This is a fairly tedious process where we will be asking residents to stay off the street as much as possible for 24 hours and avoid deliveries by heavy trucks for 72 hours to allow the road to "cure". We are actively notifying residents in advance of this work. Traffic will be one way only while is work is ongoing. This is messy work so we ask your patience while we get this new infrastructure in place.

• Outside the scope of the bond work, staff is recommending some drainage improvements in the 31100 block of Meadow Creek Trail. The plan is to install a couple of new culverts and make some grading adjustments to minimize water topping the new road surface being built. We anticipate this will help prevent water topping the new road in low intensity rain events and help drain the road faster in high intensity rain events. Council previously authorized engineering design of the work and will consider the proposed construction work at the April 20th meeting.

• Harper Brothers has been working on installing the new water line down Intrepid Drive and is near the Silver Spur intersection.

• City staff has been working on fire hydrant inspections using a new computer application that was set up with the help of our GIS department. With the new application, crews can update maintenance records from the field via SmartPhones. We are beginning to utilize more computerized tools in planning and recording our work.

• TxDOT is continuing work on the new bridge at I10.

From the Mayor's Desk (Continued on page 4)

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From the Mayor's Desk (Continued from Page 2)

Please be careful as you go through this very busy construction zone. Information on this construction project can be found at http:txdotsanantonio.blogspot.com/.

• Information on our road reconstruction project can be found at:

- o The project website FairOaksRanchRoads.org
- o The city website FairOaksRanchTX.org

o The Fair Oaks Ranch Homeowners Association website FORHA.org

• We appreciate everyone's patience and caution in driving through the construction zones to keep our employees and our contractor's employees safe.

• One of the less glamorous, but very important, topics in managing a city is handling wastewater. There are several significant projects ongoing related to installing better computerized controls on lift stations and other control points to improve reliability. We also have a significant manhole rehab project which is nearing completion. This work is important to prevent large scale incursion of storm water into our sewer systems which results in operating challenges at the wastewater plant.

• We anticipate starting waterline work on Fair Oaks Parkway early in May. The work will begin on the I10 end of the Parkway.

#### Budget Work

We have conducted our first budget workshop for council members and city staff to express their priorities for the upcoming budget year. Our second budget workshop is scheduled for June 1st following our regular city council meeting. Our Finance Officer, Sarah Buckelew, gave the council a preview of the new electronic reporting tool she has developed to streamline the process and more easily provide updates, analysis, and record keeping.

#### Resident Volunteers at Work

Here are some updates on the work being done by a combination of city staffers and volunteers:

• Facebook page is growing! We currently have 203 people following our Facebook page. If you are a Facebook user you can find us at City of Fair Oaks Ranch, TX. Our page is 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. Thanks to Kim Stahr for her continuing work on managing the page.

• The work on our new website is ongoing and will take several months to complete. We are currently in the design phase with Civic Plus, the service provider. The design phase is where we decide on the look and feel of the home page.

• The Wildlife Education Committee staged a public education event on April 6th from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at City Hall. Jessica Alderson from Texas Parks and Wildlife did a great presentation on antlers. Bubba Ortiz from Ortiz Game Management did a presentation with great photos dealing with feral hogs. The best surprise of the evening was our own Mike Davis, Maintenance Supervisor, educating us on pollinators like butterflies. Mike has been helping with constructing a butterfly/milkweed garden on our city campus which is part of a nation - wide campaign. Mike's presentation skills are like having "Larry the Cable Guy" do a stand up skit. We appreciate the work of Dr. Bruce Nicholson, Chair, members Chris Cook and Teal Harris, council liaison MaryAnne Havard, and educational consultant Dedie Manitzas.

#### **Congratulating Chief Scott Rubin**

On Thursday, April 13th, at the Texas Police Chiefs Association Conference held in The Woodlands, Chief Rubin was elected to the Executive Board of the Association as Sergeant at Arms. Chief Rubin will be sworn into that office at this year's annual Texas Municipal League Conference. He has been an active member of the Association since 2000 and has served as Regional Director and Best Practices Committee Chairman. We congratulate Chief Rubin on this well - deserved recognition and support his continuing involvement with the association which has over 1,200 members.

Lots of good stuff happening on The Ranch these days! Thanks to all of you for participating and especially to those of you who are volunteering your time.

My very best to you and your families, Garry Manitzas Mayor – Fair Oaks Ranch



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# AGRILIFE EXTENSION HOSQUITO REPELLENTS

As mosquito season is ramping up, everyone is (hopefully) aware of possible disease transmission by mosquitoes. It is important that you protect yourself when spending time outside.

Activity times for mosquitoes can vary. Most people are familiar with the four D's- DRAIN (standing water), DEET (wear some repellent), DUSK & DAWN (stay indoors during dusk and dawn to avoid peak populations) and DRESS (wear long sleeves and long pants). While this is still good advice, it may be a good idea to spread the dress and repellent advice for anytime you spend time outdoors.

When outside, wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt in light colors to reduce the number of mosquitoes that can reach your skin. Repellent should only be applied to clothing and exposed skin. Do not apply repellent underneath clothing! If you want to apply repellent to your face, spray your hands with repellent and rub it onto your face. Do not spray repellent directly into your face or near eyes or mouth. Make sure to apply repellent outdoors. Do not allow children to handle repellents. Wash hands before eating, smoking or using the restroom.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends using a product registered with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) containing one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535 and some of the products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus.

DEET, also known N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide or N,Ndiemethylbenzamide, was developed by the U.S. Army in 1946 to protect soldiers in insect-infested areas. Pesticides containing DEET have been used by the general public since 1957. Products containing DEET should not be used on children younger than 2 months of age (read the label and check with your pediatrician if you have questions). DEET has a slight odor and may have a greasy feel to some people. It may damage plastic, rubber, vinyl or synthetic fabrics. DEET may be irritating to the eyes and skin for some people. DEET comes in a wide variety of concentrations, so choose the one that will work best for your situation.

Picaridin was first made in the 1980's and resembles a natural compound called piperine (which is found in plants used to produce black pepper). Picardin has been used in Europe and Australia for many years, but has only been in the U.S. since 2005. Picaridin is non-greasy and is odorless.

IR-3535, or 3-[N-Butyl-N- acetyl]-aminopropionic acid, ethyl ester, was developed in the mid- 1970's and became registered for use in the U.S. in 1999. It is registered as a biopesticide by the EPA because it is functionally identical to a naturally occurring substance (an amino-acid). It may dissolve or damage plastics and may be irritating to the eyes.

Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or PMD (para-menthane-3,8-diol)

are essentially the same thing; PMD is the synthesized (lab created) version of oil of lemon eucalyptus. "Pure" or "essential" oil of lemon eucalyptus is not labeled as a repellent and has not undergone testing and should not be used as a repellent product. OLE/PMD has been on the market in the U.S. since 2002. OLE/PMD should not be used on children younger than 3 years of age. The natural product (OLE) has known allergens within it while the synthetic version (PMD) has less of a risk to allergens. This product is classified as a biopesticide. OLE/PMD has a varying range of residual, some offering about 20 minutes of protection while other products may last up to two hours.

Many factors play into how long a repellent will last for a person.

#### Some of these are:

- The concentration (or percent of active ingredient) of the product. You can find the percentage on the product label.
- Person's attractiveness. Some people are more attractive to mosquitoes than others (and no scientific research has proven that it is because of eating garlic, taking vitamin B, using tobacco products, etc.). A person's genetic code plays a large part on what makes a person so attractive to mosquitoes.
- Frequency and uniformity of application. In other words, how often is the repellent applied and how good of coverage did you get?
- Activity level of the person. The more active the person is, the more sweat they produce which can cause the repellent to wash off the surface of the skin.

As a word of caution, there are products that combine sunscreen and insect repellent. The CDC recommends that if you need sunscreen and repellent, that you choose two separate products. Sunscreen should be applied more often than repellents.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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## Cibolo Creek Community Church Does Service Day at Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center

The folks at Cibolo Creek Community Church put the love of Christ into action as they did yard work, cleaning and beautifying at the Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center this past month. With the Center's recent expansion of its facility at 439 Fabra St. in Boerne, there were many projects needing to be undertaken. Counseling rooms needed to be "finished", planting beds needed to be reorganized, and colorful planters "needed" to be added to let families know that this is a welcoming place. Many thanks go to the servants of Cibolo Creek Community Church.

The Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center provides over 3,000 services each year at its Boerne facility, with more families being helped at its new Bulverde/Spring Branch office and its location in Comfort. Individuals and families receive totally free services: pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, vitamins, prenatal and childbirth classes, and parenting classes. Also provided are STD testing and treatment and educational classes in local schools seen by over 3,500 student each year. For themany families coming to the Boerne facility - this "facelift" by the church is greatly appreciated.



The goal is to fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9. Each digit may appear only once in each row, each column, and each 3x3 box.



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# **THE ZEN OF WRENS** by Jim and Lynne Weber

Wrens are small to medium-sized birds, generally drab in color, typically grayish-brown with barring in the wings and tail. But oh, when they sing, they have loud, melodious, and often complex songs! Active and vocal, they frequently carry their tails in an upright position, and have adapted well to the presence of humans. Some of the species of wrens that can be found in our area include Carolina Wren (Thryothorus ludovicianus), Bewick's Wren (Thryomanes bewickii), and Canyon Wren (Catherpes mexicanus).

Deep cinnamon brown above and warm buff below, with a white throat and prominent white stripe above the eye, the Carolina Wren is a vivacious bird common in moist woodlands and wooded suburbs. Males sing year round and are known to have a repertoire of about 32 songs, the most common being 'cheery cheery cheery!' and 'teakettle-teakettle!' This bird is routinely seen around yards, garages, porches, and woodpiles, often nesting in those same places. Pairs stay bonded year around, and often raise multiple broods a year.

A subdued brown and gray bird with a white eye stripe, graywhite underparts, and a long tail barred with black and tipped with white spots describes the Bewick's Wren. It typically flicks its tail from side to side or fans it as it skulks through tangles of branches and leaves, searching for food. Nimble and acrobatic, it often hangs upside down from tree branches and leaves. While it favors dry, brushy areas, it is often found inhabiting gardens, residential areas, and parks. The male has a repertoire of up to 22 songs, usually beginning with two or more high, quick notes, dropping into a lower, buzzy phrase, and ending on a high trill. Courting birds normally form monogamous pairs.

The Canyon Wren has a white throat and breast, chestnut belly, brown back flecked in black, and a bright rufous, barred tail. It prefers areas with rocky cliffs, canyons, outcrops, and boulder piles but it will often build its nest in stone buildings or chimneys. This wren has a slightly flattened skull and a vertebral column attached higher on the skull, and these adaptations allow it to thrust its bill forward into tight cracks without bumping its head. While its repertoire consists of only 3 songs, its most common is an exquisitely beautiful descending cascade of liquid notes.

Wrens are mainly insectivores and are often found hopping about, climbing short walls and tree trunks, or making brief flights to search out and glean insects from crevices and cracks. In fact, their family name Troglodytidae is derived from troglodyte, meaning 'cave-dweller', generally referring to the places in which they forage. Their fairly long and slender, straight to slightly decurved bills assist them in exploring every nook and cranny for insects and spiders. This spring, take the time to listen to the highly variable, sweet sounding, rollicking songs of these little birds. Get in tune with amusing antics, and discover for yourself the zen of wrens!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin. rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our two books, Nature Watch Austin & Nature Watch Big Bend, both published by Texas A&M University Press, and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.





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