

The FAIR OAKS Gazette

August 2017

Volume 7 Issue 8

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS RANCH



From the Mayor's Desk...

AUGUST 2017

Follow Up Actions on Home Rule Charter

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Greg Maxton to serve as Council Member Place 6. As I reported last month, this is fulfilling a requirement in our Home Rule Charter to have a sixth council member. Greg will serve a one year term. At the end of that term the position will be up for election and Greg or other citizens can sign up to run.

Greg recently retired as a Colonel in the U. S. Army where he served as Deputy Commander for Operations for Army South stationed at Ft. Sam Houston. Greg is currently employed as Chief Operations Officer for JDK Associates, a construction contractor that builds retaining walls throughout the state of Texas. Greg served on the Home Rule Charter Commission for our city and made numerous presentations about the charter in the city during the time the charter was being considered for adoption.

I would also like to recognize Michelle Bliss, Rusty Kirk, Rich Nichols, Dr. Sam Sedki, Beki Webster, and Jonathan Lisenby who also offered their services to fill the sixth council member place. We were truly blessed to have such a fine field of applicants from which to choose.

Honoring Zander Lozano

This month we are honoring Zander Lozano, a 21-year-old resident of The Ranch, who won the 108th Texas Amateur Golf Tournament at the historic Lakewood Country Club. Having his name etched on the H. L. Edwards Memorial Trophy puts him in the company of golf legends like Ben Crenshaw, Charles Coody, Scott Verplank and Mark Brooks. I had the privilege of honoring Zander with a proclamation at our July 20th council meeting and at a special ceremony on July 21st at our country club. Zander is a good example of the kind of outstanding young people we have at The Ranch and we look forward to his future accomplishments.

Foundational Studies Work and Stakeholder Involvement

We are continuing the foundational studies work with consultants, engineers, the Stakeholder group and other residents.

- July 6: We conducted another Stakeholder meeting to consider Water/Wastewater improvements. Freese and Nichols led this discussion to give our Stakeholder group an orientation to major topics and terminology for Water and Wastewater issues. The Stakeholder group asked good questions and we have a good foundation for beginning the work.

- July 27: We will hold another Stakeholder group meeting with GAP Strategies regarding the Comprehensive Plan Update.

- Work also continues on the Master Drainage Plan with significant progress on the mapping of storm water flows throughout the City.

Road and Bridge Construction and Water/Wastewater Improvements

- 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

- In June, Intrepid, Rock Oak Circle, and Silver Spur Trail were paved. Our engineering staff will be doing a walk through and work up a punch list for the contractor as a next step on this work.

- I'm sure all of you have noticed construction work starting on the Parkway and a lot of culvert work being finished up. Much of the work you are seeing is replacing the water pipeline on the Frost Bank side of the road. This work is adding a parallel line to increase capacity and reliability

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FAIR OAKS RANCH

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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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From the Mayor's Desk (Continued from Cover)

- In addition, this work will enable a future interconnection to SAWS that will give us additional options for water supply. Most of the work in August is going to be around this waterline area.

- As always, we appreciate everyone's patience and caution in driving through the construction zones to keep our employees and our contractor's employees safe.

Budget Work and Taxation Strategies

Our third budget workshop is tentatively scheduled for July 27th. We are now beginning to refine the numbers we will need to put together to make our budget balance for the year.

When I began writing this column, I promised to be very straight forward in discussing issues and keeping you informed. To honor that commitment, I am going to discuss a change, which our council will be considering this year to determine the property tax revenue we need to operate the City.

For many years, we have granted early payment discounts on paying property taxes. Like most of you, Dedie and I have taken advantage of this discount since we moved to The Ranch.

It is very unusual for municipalities to grant these early pay discounts. Only about 74 of the approximately 1,200 cities in Texas grant early pay discounts. There is a practical reason why so few cities grant these early payment discounts.

Our state tax laws do not allow recovery of these discounts. When we grant these discounts, we create an automatic budget shortfall. Last year, Council authorized the transfer of funds from the General Fund reserve last year to make up this shortfall. This created no cash flow issue, but it is not really the correct way to fund budgeted expenditures.

This incorrect way of administering taxes never raised questions in the past because we have historically underspent our General Fund Operating and Maintenance (O&M) budget and there was no General Fund debt requiring payment. The shortfall was automatically covered by an underspent budget.

The problem with that process became obvious when we began making payments on the \$7,000,000 street reconstruction bonds. We had not previously issued General Fund debt, only Enterprise (Utility) fund debt, which is covered by the utility revenues, rather than property taxes.

Bond obligations of the General Fund are paid from the interest and sinking fund (I&S) that must be funded from property tax collections for the exact amount of interest and principal to be paid in the fiscal year. It became obvious during the first year of paying General Fund debt that allowing the early pay discounts was resulting in underfunding the I&S fund. We corrected this problem with a transfer from the General Fund. Again, this created no cash flow issue, but it is not the correct way to administer the tax funding.

Since our council members have committed to running our city in a correct and business-like manner, we will discuss eliminating the early pay discounts in the upcoming fiscal year's budget. If enacted,

the impact of this change on a typical homestead in Fair Oaks Ranch which has been taking the discount is estimated to be an increase of \$39 for the year. I know this is a lengthy explanation, but I wanted all of you to know the change we are considering and why.

Golf Carts and Speed Limits

Since we are talking about long standing procedural issues, I want to bring to your attention another topic that we discussed in a recent council meeting. Traveling by golf carts is a long-standing tradition in our city and it is, in my opinion, part of our charm as a city. In our foundational work, we have pointed out to our consultants that we desire to plan for golf carts as part of our city mobility.

The issue we are discussing is compliance with state laws regarding driving golf carts on public streets. The issue has two primary components: speed limits and safety considerations.

In general, state law prohibits golf cart use on streets with a speed limit greater than 35 m.p.h. The most obvious places we would have to change speed limits to comply would be on parts of Fair Oaks Parkway and Dietz-Elkhorn.

The state law also requires golf carts to have basic safety equipment before allowing them on public streets. Our Public Safety staff has recommended that we consider doing a one-time inspection for golf carts and issue a sticker to be placed on the golf cart.

We will have more discussions on this before making any changes. These changes will require codification through an ordinance which will be presented in public hearings if we move forward with the changes. If you have opinions or suggestions, please contact council members or city staff to share your views.

Water Rates

At the time I am writing this, Council is scheduled to review a proposed increase in water rates at the July 20th meeting. We are planning a comprehensive review of our water rates as part of ongoing studies, but will not have done that by the time we adopt a budget. The proposed increase is an interim measure based on first passes through the Enterprise Fund budget.

Legislative Activity

Many of you are aware of the Special Legislative Session that has been called by the governor. There are several pieces of legislation involving rights of cities to do annexations and limitations on taxation that could have harmful impacts on cities like ours. City Manager Tobin Maples, Councilwoman Laura Koerner, and I have had several meetings with Representatives Larson and Biedermann, Senator Campbell, and their staffs to express our concerns and seek modifications to some of the proposed legislation. These are very unsettled topics as of the time of this writing and I have nothing specific to report to you. I just wanted you to be aware of these ongoing activities.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

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

(Continued on Page 4)

FAIR OAKS RANCH

(Continued from Page 3)

• **Facebook page continues growing!** We currently have 376 people following our Facebook page. We have had 922 visitors as of this writing. 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.

• The work on our new website is ongoing. Design is now complete and the vendor is creating content on the new website. Stay tuned for more progress reports. We appreciate the contributions of our Communications Committee volunteers to this effort.

• The Wildlife Education Committee (WEC) has been one of the most active committees this past year. In the past year this group has:

- o Provided wildlife presentations to various HOA groups
- o Posted wildlife resources on the city's webpage
- o Held two evening educational events
- o Developed and distributed two tri-fold pamphlets
- o Placed signage to update residents on wildlife life cycle events
- o Published articles in multiple publications
- o Supported wildlife education at Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary school
- o Developed one page wildlife flyers to go in utility bills
- o Supported building a pollinator garden on the city campus
- o Engaged Camp Bullis and Camp Stanley regarding feral hog control

Call for Volunteers

Both the Wildlife Education Committee and the Communications Committee could use another volunteer or two. If either of these activities interest you, please contact Carole Vanzant at CVanzant@fairoaksranchtx.org for WEC or Kim Stahr at kstahr@fairoaksranchtx.org for Communications to let them know of your interest. You can also call them at 210-698-0900 or drop by City Hall to let them know of your interest.

The summer is running away from us in a hurry. I wish all of you the best for the rest of the summer and hope you find some time to enjoy it with your families.

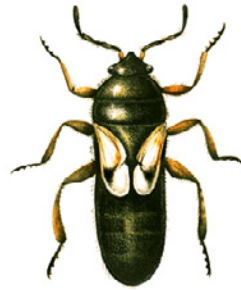
Respectfully yours,

Garry Manitzas
Mayor – Fair Oaks Ranch

CHINCH BUGS NO EASY FIX

Author: Nathan Riggs

The heat and high temps of July and August aren't the only culprits that take a toll on your landscape and lawn. If your St. Augustine grass is looking sad and jaundiced, it may be under attack.



Summertime means a lot of different things to people — grillin', fun in the sun, barefoot walks in the lawn and other outdoor activities.

Unfortunately, the hot temperatures in July and August also have a daunting impact on local lawns and landscapes by creating water stress. When St. Augustine lawns in full sun become water stressed in July and August,

they fall victim to attack by the Southern Chinch Bug (*Blissus insularis*).

Chinch bugs suck the sap from the grass at the point where the blade emerges from the runner, or rhizome. As they feed on the sap, chinch bugs release saliva into the wound, causing the grass to turn yellow and die.

This yellowing usually begins at a central point and radiates in a circular pattern outward as the chinch bugs expand their feeding area. St. Augustine grass is a chinch bug's favorite meal, but Bermuda and Zoysia grasses may be attacked as well.

Here are a couple of ways to test for chinch bugs in the affected area.

- **Drench method:** flood an area on the edge of the sick grass with a soapy solution (2 tablespoons of liquid soap to 1 gallon water). If chinch bugs are present, they will emerge from the grass to get away from the soapy water.

- **Flotation method:** take a metal can with both ends removed and push one end into the ground at the border of the sick grass. Slowly fill with water and see if chinch bugs float up. Repeat for several different areas.

Once you've determined chinch bugs are present, you must target the infestation. To reduce chinch bug populations, treat a 15-foot radius around the damaged area with a liquid insecticide approved for turf grasses. It is NOT NECESSARY to treat the entire yard because a) non-target beneficial insects will be adversely impacted by the treatment, and b) chinch bugs won't be present in the entire yard.

After treatment, you must PATIENTLY rehab the affected turf areas. Do not overwater your grass in an effort to get it back to health because the root system is still recovering from the chinch bug onslaught. Instead, water thoroughly, but infrequently to encourage a deeper, more drought-tolerant root system.



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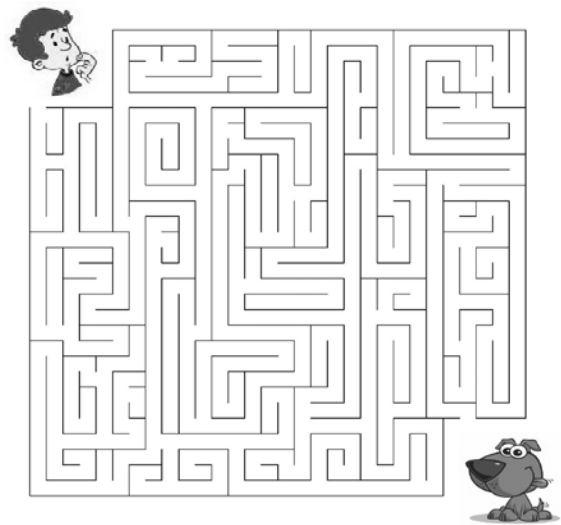
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