

The FAIR OAKS Gazette

October 2017

Volume 7 Issue 10



NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS RANCH

From the Mayor's Desk...

OCTOBER 2017

Moving Forward on the Budget - Actions

Last month, I gave you an update on the new tools our Finance group had created to make our budget process more consistent and efficient. Since the last publication we conducted the first Public Hearing on the FY 2017-2018 Proposed Budget and Tax Rate on September 7, 2017. In that hearing we proposed a modest overall tax rate increase of \$.0062 cents per \$100 of assessed value for the upcoming budget year. This rate increase equates to \$28 per year on the average home appraised value of \$455,499 in Fair Oaks Ranch. The new overall tax rate is \$0.3295 per \$100 of assessed value.

When I tell people this, I also remind them that there are multiple taxing entities on all of our tax bills and an increase can also be driven by an increase in assessed value which the city does not control. I'm expecting our personal tax bill to go up by a lot more than \$28, but I recognize that the city of Fair Oaks Ranch only gets about 18% of the total property taxes that we pay on our home in Kendall County.

Just to remind you, our budget is composed of two parts. The General Fund, which pays for expenditures like Public Safety, roads, and administration, has a proposed budget of \$6,086,676 for 2017-2018. Funding from the General Fund is primarily from property taxes with small contributions from sales tax, franchise fees, and permits. The Enterprise Fund, which provides for water and wastewater services and is funded from revenues of our water and wastewater system, has a proposed budget of \$4,952,848 for 2017-2018.

The quickest way to get an update on the budget is to read the Executive Summary on our city website. The clicking path to get to it from the home page is:

- News and Announcements
- Proposed FY 2017/18 Budget Filed

- Read more

-Executive Summary

I would especially call your attention to Figure 4 which highlights that we have the second lowest property tax rate among the 14 suburban cities around San Antonio that we compare against and Exhibit 1 – Explanation of Estimated Property Taxes per the Proposed Budget. We also present the statutorily required "Truth in Taxation" disclosures in the Executive Summary.

With all due respect to my many friends in the legal profession, I find the statutory explanation format, which was probably drafted by a team of lawyers, challenging to follow. Since I am a retired CPA, I asked our Finance Department to prepare a simple five line explanation of "Revenue Increase by Category" for estimated property tax increases that normal people could understand. They did a good job of presenting that in Exhibit 1.

While the public hearings mandated by law (noted in the next section) are important, it is also important to remember that they are at the tail end of more than a dozen meetings that were the basis for understanding our citizens' priorities and constructing the budget. This information gathering and budget building process started last November with a Strategic Planning meeting and included four public budget workshops, a couple of Town Halls and one design session related to our Foundational Projects, and six Stakeholder meetings related to the Foundational Projects. What we learned in all of these sessions rolled into our budget preparation.

Those of you who are regular readers of this column already know that much of our incremental revenue is being used to fund engineering and consulting studies to update our Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Map, to plan for zoning, to develop Master

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FAIR OAKS RANCH

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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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Drainage, Water, Wastewater, and MS4 plans, to rewrite subdivision regulations (no impact on your codes, covenants, and restrictions), and to perform a water and wastewater rate study. These are all areas that should have been addressed years ago and we are working hard to catch up.

Additionally, we are adding staffing for Public Safety, Finance, Water and Wastewater technicians, an Environmental Compliance Officer, and an Administrative Customer Service Clerk to improve levels of service and to address regulatory requirements. We are also planning to invest in a Public Works Maintenance Worker mid-year to support bringing some contract services for street and right of way maintenance back in house to respond to resident complaints. We are also providing for hires of a Municipal Court Supervisor half way through the year and an Infrastructure Inspector half way through the year to provide "boots on the ground" to oversee quality of street, drainage, and other infrastructure development.

These staff additions have been needed for a while. Our City Manager held off on doing many additions last year to give him time to review our needs and look for efficiencies. Our city is growing and our environment, especially regulatory and development requirements, is getting much more complicated. We must have qualified people in place if our city is to function effectively

Public Hearings on Tax Rate and Budget

We will be holding the second public hearing on the tax rate and budget at 6:30 p.m. on September 21st as well as a special meeting to adopt the budget and tax rate on September 25th at 9:30 a.m. You are invited to attend these meetings at City Hall.

Early Tax Payment Discounts to Remain for This Year

A couple of months ago I reported to you that council had decided to eliminate the discounts for early payment of property taxes because the City realizes a programmed budget shortfall that cannot be recouped based on truth-in-taxation laws. It is not the correct way for the City to administer taxes. That logic is still correct, but we are going to change the timing of enacting this change to conform to the Property Tax Code requirements. Kendall County Appraisal District (KCAD), which provides our city with tax billing and collection services, raised the issue of when you had to rescind the ordinance granting the discount in order to discontinue it. Our City Attorney and the tax attorneys KCAD uses reviewed this issue and concluded that to be in compliance with the law, we needed to take council action to rescind the ordinance granting the discount this year, but we could not actually eliminate it until the following tax year. Therefore, early pay discounts will remain in effect for this fiscal year. We will cover the shortfall with an allocation from General Fund reserves to keep the budget whole. There is no impact on proposed tax rates or planned budget expenditures. Please don't hesitate to contact me or our City Manager, Tobin Maples with any questions.

Extra Territorial Jurisdiction and Annexation

Last month, I wrote about an August 17th council discussion regarding what strategy we should follow on potential annexations

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in the wake of the adoption of Senate Bill 6 in the Special Session of the Texas Legislature. I commented on the unintended consequences of the “one size fits all” approach the legislature took, which results in our city being treated like the very large cities even though our circumstances and reasons to annex properties in our Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) are very different.

I also commented that provisions regarding proximity (5 miles) to a military installation that has an active training mission may be helpful, but we do not know how those provisions will be interpreted. This uncertainty is a risk to our city in our desire to plan for responsible growth.

On September 7th, our City Manager and City Attorney led an annexation analysis discussion of different approaches that could be taken to accomplish annexation of areas in our ETJ. Council considered different options and passed a resolution instructing staff to proceed with planning a pro-active annexation under the rules currently in effect for a Home Rule Charter city. Council believes this approach is in the best interest of the residents of the city and the other property owners.

The basic plan will be to adopt properly structured annexation ordinances, notify property owners of the affected areas of the city’s intent to annex them, prepare service plans, hold meetings with the property owners, and hold public hearings regarding annexation as provided in the Local Government Code. Some property owners may choose to enter into a Development Agreement with the city rather than going through the annexation process. We will stage meetings with impacted property owners to discuss the choices they have related to implementing annexation.

Because the City Council recognizes annexation considerations are extremely important and that one strategy may not be applicable to every property in the ETJ, we anticipate that council members will be engaged throughout the process to help stage and lead the meetings with property owners. This is going to be a significant effort to complete within a compressed time frame, but it is the council’s belief that this is the best approach for our city given the actions the legislature has taken.

Foundational Studies Work and Stakeholder Involvement

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

- September 14: We held a marathon Stakeholder Meeting with Gap Strategies to discuss a variety of topics
- 1. Coordination with CDM Smith on drainage and Freese & Nichols on Water/Wastewater
- 2. Population and demographic projections
- 3. Status of the Uniform Development Code (UDC) which includes subdivision regulations, zoning code, sign regulations
- 4. Review proposed Transportation Plan and Map including specifics on proposed “complete streets” standards for road widths, sidewalk standards, bike/golf cart lanes, and regional expansion plans focusing on Context Sensitive Design

5. Review Proposed Future Park and Trails Connection Map
6. Land Use and Zoning, including Future Land Use Map. We have already seen concepts and a rough framework for zoning and form-based design standards. We are moving next to a more refined version split between residential issues and civic/commercial uses.
7. Discuss upcoming Town Hall meeting (October 5 at Cibolo Creek Community Church). This will be a “come and go” event. There will be a separate section for participants who did not attend the earlier Town Halls. We will have opportunities for participants to have direct interaction with the consulting team and the Stakeholder group.
8. Follow up Stakeholder meeting after Town Hall and before going to council with recommendations
 - The late Frank Manitzas, who was a local labor attorney, was one of my most entertaining relatives. Frank had a saying that ... “the mind can only absorb what the bottom can endure.” This marathon meeting was a testament to the veracity of Frank’s assertion. I applaud the efforts of Gap Strategies, our staff, and our committed team of citizen volunteers who stayed the course on this Stakeholder Meeting. I am looking forward to completing this part of our foundational work and presenting it to our citizens at the next Town Hall meeting. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us at the church on the evening of Thursday, October 5 for the Town Hall meeting.

Road and Bridge Construction and Water/Wastewater Improvements

- Information on our road reconstruction project can be found at:
 1. The project website FairOaksRanchRoads.org
 2. The city website FairOaksRanchTX.org
 3. The Fair Oaks Ranch Homeowners Association website FORHA.org
- The water line work on the Parkway is complete. Our special thanks to the crews who worked some pretty demanding hours to get the new water line cut in, while minimizing disruptions to our residents’ water service. This is challenging work and we appreciate their efforts and the patience of our residents.
- As I mentioned last month, we are now starting to see lots of work on Fair Oaks Parkway. As our Public Works Director, Ron Emmons, reminds me, we start our work at the bottom with redoing a lot of culverts. This is important work in addressing the drainage concerns that have been top of mind for a while on The Ranch. On the aesthetics side, the facing stone work on the culverts is a big visual improvement. The remaining work on the Parkway is going to be disruptive to traffic, so be prepared for some inconvenience. We are going into one of the last big pushes to complete our project.
- 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.

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Water Bills

I promised when I started writing this column that I would talk about the bad stuff as well as the good. We had some issues with water bills that went out in September. During the most recent cycle of entering process data, there was an error made that extended the billing period for four extra days. While all accounts were impacted, the largest impact fell on the 700+ accounts that had more than 25,000 gallons of use which triggered the surcharge.

We will correct the error by having a four day shorter billing period in September. The accounts that had a surcharge will also receive credits for the additional

surcharge resulting from the extra days of billing. A detailed explanation will be mailed to impacted account owners. We apologize for these errors and any concern that may have created.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

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

- Facebook page continues growing! We currently have 516 people following our Facebook page. We have had 1,316 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.

- Our staff completed training on the new website tool. We are anticipating showing the new tool to council in early October with the launch of the new website most likely to happen during October.
- Several residents have volunteered to help the Communications Committee and we will be blending them into the ongoing activities. We are at a pretty good size group for the communications committee at this point.
- Another significant communication event is that our Police Department now has an account on Next Door. This will allow them to monitor ongoing issues. Follow up will not be in an open forum and this social media tool is not a substitute for reporting needed Public Safety services through the emergency and non-emergency lines.
- Last month I told you that we had not had any sightings of feral hogs in the city limits yet. We have now had the first sighting in my neighborhood of Deer Meadow Estates complete with a photo. The house where the hog was sighted backs up to Cibolo Creek. We commenced a trapping operation on the east side of Ralph Fair Road in conjunction with Camp Bullis in September. Our trapper caught and removed 34 hogs in

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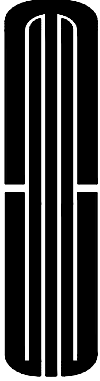
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the first run. Camp Bullis got rid of several hundred hogs in a massive trapping and hunting operation.

- On October 12th, we are hosting an invitation only meeting of other municipalities and government entities impacted by the feral hogs. We will have a full day session with well qualified speakers and a panel discussion. This is the follow up meeting to the presentation I did at Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) on August 10th to look for collaboration opportunities.

The pace of work around our city government was already busy and has been accelerating in the past couple of months. Working through the annexation process while completing the foundational studies is going to be very challenging and, in some respects, contentious. It is, however, important that we make the effort to put in place the tools we need to manage development and preserve quality of life. We will make every effort to respect the rights of all parties while addressing the issues our citizens have told us matter to them. That is what we have committed to do as staff and elected officials and we take those commitments very seriously.

Respectfully yours,

Garry Manitzas

Mayor – Fair Oaks Ranch

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