

The FAIR OAKS Gazette

April 2019

Volume 9 Issue 4

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS RANCH



FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK...

APRIL 2019

Unified Development Code (UDC) Planned for Council Discussion March 21st

As you are aware, we have been working toward completing a Unified Development Code this spring. The UDC pulls together all the Master Plans we have been working toward to give us the firm base we need to have a rational and organized development process.

I reported to you last month that the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council were holding a Joint Public Hearing to receive public commentary on the Unified Development Code (UDC) on March 7th at 6:30 p.m. That meeting was held. No citizens presented any commentary on the UDC. The P&Z subsequently met on March 14th to conduct the initial review for recommending approval to City Council. The P&Z conducted this meeting and recommended approving the UDC and presenting it to City Council for a first reading for approval at the March 21st meeting.

I am personally not surprised that we received no public commentary. We have been working toward this point for about a year and a half and have had more than a dozen public meetings relative to the Comprehensive Plan update and the Unified Development Code that supports the Comprehensive Plan. The community has made lots of input already which has been factored into our UDC development work and that is a very good thing.

At the time I am writing this report, we have the UDC on the agenda for discussion at the March 21st regular council meeting at 6:30 p.m. While I feel sure we will have a discussion of this topic, it is possible we may table taking action at this meeting. We have two council members who will be out of town at this meeting. While we can legally take action with a quorum, the UDC is one of the most significant pieces of work we have done as a city in recent memory. We may decide to table this significant first reading until we have the full council present.

This short delay will also allow us to incorporate some minor changes regarding our tree ordinances suggested by the P&Z before conducting the first reading. I will report back to you next month on the follow up actions taken.

Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)

The P&Z serves as a recommending body to the City Council. I have begun reporting on their activities in this newsletter as part of the regular city activities.

- At the March 14th regular Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, the Commission took the following actions:

- Conducted a Public Hearing on the Fair Oaks Ranch Montessori School Final Replat. Discussed and recommended approval which will be forwarded to City Council.

- Discussed and recommended approval of a preliminary plat that establishes Front Gate 2B

- Discussed and recommended approval of the City's Unified Development Code

Zoning Board of Adjustment

As of the time I am writing this newsletter, we are recruiting for seven folks to serve on a Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBOA). Since many of us are still learning the terminology, the primary responsibilities of the ZBOA are:

- Hear and decide appeals when error is alleged in any order, requirements, decision or determination made by an administrative official of the City in the enforcement of any zoning related decisions.
- Authorize, in specific cases, a variance from zoning regulations...

There are specific guidelines that the ZBOA must follow in reaching its decisions. This body is considered to be a quasi-judicial group because their decisions are final at the city level. There is no appellate

(Continued on Page 2)

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route or final decision making at the City Council level on matters brought before the ZBOA. If a party bringing an issue to the ZBOA is not satisfied with their ruling, the appellate route is through the District Courts.

This is a significant body which we anticipate will meet irregularly and infrequently. The Council will conduct interviews of applicants and I will follow up with comments on the members of the first ZBOA in a future article. We have more information on this body on the home page of the city's website if you wish to do more reading.

Election Update

Last month I reported that, in the absence of anyone filing to run in opposition to the incumbent council members Steve Hartpence, Laura Koerner, and Snehal Patel, the City Secretary would prepare a Certificate of Unopposed Candidates and a Resolution Declaring Unopposed Candidates in the May 4, 2019 General Election elected to office. The same Resolution cancels the General Election. These actions were presented and adopted at the March 7, 2019 Council meeting. These actions will save the city the approximate \$6,000 cost of holding an election.

Household Hazardous Waste Event

We conducted our second annual Household Hazardous Waste event on March 16th. The weather was a little bit chilly with a brisk wind, but the event was a terrific success. We had 168 cars come through the line and deposit a significant amount of household waste. Thanks to Republic Services, Stericycle Environmental Solutions, our city staff members who helped with the event, and a dozen Fair Oaks Ranch Rotary Club volunteers who also helped stage the event. As a reminder, the HHW event is a new service the city added to our contract with Republic Services. The HHW event will take place once annually.

Caution: The Texas Legislature is in Session

As your mayor, it is my duty to advise you that some actions being taken by the Texas Legislature may have adverse consequences on our ability to provide the city services you desire if they are enacted. Some of the recently introduced legislation is designed to reduce franchise fees currently being paid by service providers in our city.

Franchise fees are a way of yielding a return to you on the public property (rights of way) which you pay to maintain for the use of utility companies. They provide almost 8% of our total operating and maintenance funds (\$566,500) in our current budget. With just a quick "back of the envelope" calculation, these fees equate to about 3.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value. For an average homeowner (\$484,049 home) this is approximately \$160 per year.

Many of you are also aware that the legislature is introducing bills that would cap the increase in property tax rates at 2.5% on a year to year basis. It is my understanding that we are currently exempted from these rules because our revenues are too small. I still have concerns because those types of limits can be changed with the stroke of a pen.

This is the kind of legislation that is seductive to voters because it sounds great on the surface. The problem is that it translates into reducing or eliminating city services that the state is not going to provide for you while providing no reduction in your tax bill.

At a minimum, the bills legislate that an election must be held to

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Animal Control.....	210-698-0990

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Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary	210-698-1616

UTILITIES

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AT&T - Telephone.....	800-464-7928
CPSEnergy.....	(new service) 210-353-2222
.....	(service trouble or repairs) 210-353-4357
Fair Oaks Ranch Utilities - Water	210-698-7685
GVTC - Cable & Telephone	800-367-4882
Pedernales Electric Co-op.....	888-554-4732
Time Warner - Cable.....	210-244-0500

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.....	(delivery info, stops, fids, ect.) 830-249-9303
5837 De Zavala Rd - San Antonio, TX.....	210-641-0248

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approve the tax rate if it is above whatever cap is set. This costs money and moves decision making about holding a tax limitation election from you to the state. Under current rules, you can petition for a tax rollback election if you think the increase is more than justified and is above an 8% rollback cap.

Representative Kyle Biedermann's District Director, who is a very nice fellow, told me recently that the Representative supported this new legislation. He suggested that we could just "take it to the voters" if we wanted to go above the capped rate. I was surprised that he did not seem to understand that, at the city level, we already "take it to the voters" every year when we talk about tax rates.

There is little value in the state creating an arbitrary, low, "one size fits all" rate cap that does not reflect our city's revenue needs. Similarly, there is no value in the state forcing an election to be held that is costly in money and in wasted effort by the council and staff that could have been directed to productive work to improve the city. The current system empowers the residents to petition for an election if they believe proposed tax increases are not justified.

These proposed rules are especially burdensome to a small city like Fair Oaks Ranch that kept essentially a flat tax rate for 27 years and, because we have chosen to be a bedroom community, has very little other income like sales taxes. I have consistently shared my opinion with you that our city's prior tax decisions were short sighted and did

not provide sufficient tax revenue to fund the maintenance portion of our operating and maintenance budget. We now are faced with paying for the replacement of aging infrastructure that our previous tax policies did not address.

My belief, which I have stated openly through three contested elections, is that a tax rate represents an agreement between the governing body and those being governed about what is necessary to provide services that the residents desire and are willing to fund. I know that our residents are smart enough to understand a reasonable argument about the need to raise property taxes. The other good thing about taxation in a small city is that your elected officials get "nailed" with the same tax increases you do, so we get to "feel your pain" in a very personal way!

I encourage all of you to follow this regulation during the legislative session. If you think, as I do, that some of this is bad public policy, take the time to contact your legislators and let them know your thoughts.

Superior Public Water System Recognition

We are proud to announce that Fair Oaks Ranch Utilities has maintained its recognition as a "Superior Public Water System," as designated by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. To achieve this recognition, the system must be inspected and evaluated by state personnel while exceeding the Commission's acceptable standards in the following areas: water quality, water capacity, and system operation. Fair Oaks Ranch Utilities is dedicated in continuing this achievement and making our water customers a top priority.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

- Our city Facebook page is continuing to attract readers. We currently have 1,492 people following our page. We have had 1,319 likes and have reached as many as 1,468 members in a single post during the month. For those of you who are Facebook fans you 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.

Introducing our New Employees

We are pleased to announce two new employees replacing vacancies in existing positions.

- Joanna Merrill is our new Director of Human Resources and Communications. Joanna comes to us from the private sector where she successfully worked in Human Resources as a Corporate HR Generalist, and has over 7 years of experience. She has represented and worked in Human Resources in several major industries including wholesale distribution, commercial roofing, and healthcare. Joanna has a strong background and experience in every aspect of HR including employee relations, strategic planning, compensation, project management, benefits, compliance, and employment law.

- Elizabeth Grahmann is the newest addition to our team and will be working as an Administrative Clerk in City Hall's front office. Elizabeth comes to us with previous experience in dealing with public entities, including office protocols and clerical transactions. She also has a strong background in customer service excellence and administrative support skills.

Best regards,

Garry Manitzas

Mayor – Fair Oaks Ranch

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Acrobat Ants

Acrobat ants usually nest outdoors under stones or in dead wood such as firewood, tree stumps, dead tree branches, or hollow tree cavities. Because they are found in similar habitats, acrobat ants are sometimes confused with carpenter ants. Indoors they can nest in foam insulating board or water damaged wood. Acrobat ants get their name from the act of raising their abdomen over their thorax when in defensive posture which makes the ants look similar to circus acrobats.

Acrobat ants have a reddish-brown head and thorax with a dark blue-black abdomen. The abdomen is a distinctive heart-shape. Acrobat ants primarily feed on honeydew produced by aphids and can often be seen tending honeydew producers on plants. They will sometimes use overhanging tree branches or power lines to enter homes in search of food.

Outdoors, acrobat ants are usually not a problem directly. They can be seen as a problem in that they protect honeydew producers from predators and parasites. You can use this to your advantage by using acrobat ants as a monitoring tool to watch if you have honeydew producers on your plants.

To avoid a home invasion by acrobats follow these tips:

- Remove tree stumps & dead limbs from trees
- Trim back branches overhanging or touching the roof
- Fill tree cavities with sand

- Do not store firewood in or near the home
- Keep weather stripping around doors & windows in good repair
- Seal around pipe penetrations with caulk or expanding foam
- Fix any water leaks
- Replace water damaged wood on the structure
- Spray around the foundation of the home- select a product labeled for ants

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

This work is supported by Crops Protection and Pest Management Competitive Grants Program [grant no. 2017-70006-27188 /project accession no. 1013905] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



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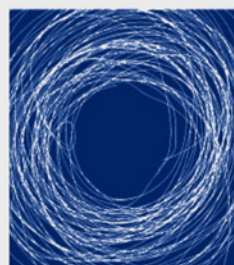


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NatureWatch: Plant Natives

Spring is the ideal time to think about planting, and how you manage your garden or landscape can have an effect on the overall health of the soil, air, water and habitat for native wildlife as well as our human community. Help conserve and improve the quality of these resources by using sustainable gardening practices such as mulching and composting, reducing or eliminating lawn areas, xeriscaping (planting native, drought-tolerant plants), installing rain barrels, and removing non-native invasive plants and restoring native ones.

The U.S. government defines an invasive plant species as one “that is not native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” These species grow outside desired boundaries, out-competing native species, and spread by seeds, berries, spores, runners, rhizomes, and stems. Some can be easily transported long distances, and every year millions of our tax dollars and thousands of volunteer hours are spent trying to eradicate them.

Many of these plants have already invaded our preserves and greenbelts in Austin, originating in our landscapes, escaping cultivation and spreading into the wild. Invasive species may grow faster, taller, or wider and shade out native species. Many stay green

later into the season or leaf out earlier, giving them an advantage over natives. They can change the vertical and horizontal structure of ecosystems, alter hydrology, and disrupt nutrient cycles, all of which can have devastating effects on native plants and animals.

Although invasive exotics may offer birds fruit, squirrels nuts, and hummingbirds and butterflies nectar, they do not provide the entire range of seasonal habitat benefits that an appropriate locally native species will provide. If we want not only to satisfy our desires to attract wildlife, but also to restore the critical, often unseen, small pieces in our ecosystems, we need to bring back our locally native plants. These plants are not only attractive to humans, they also meet the food and cover needs of all wildlife species: bees, wasps, butterflies, grasshoppers, bugs, beetles, spiders, and thousands of others that sustain and support food webs which songbirds, salamanders, bats, toads, and box turtles more visibly demonstrate.

Aside from attracting a diversity of wildlife, the use of native plants minimizes the impact our landscapes have on the natural environment around us. They reduce water consumption, eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and limit the competition from invasive exotics. This results in a much

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healthier habitat—water, soil, and air—for humans and animals alike, and is less costly, too. Invite wildlife to put on a show in your backyard by replacing the invasives in your landscape, and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

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 books, Nature Watch Austin, Nature Watch Big Bend, and Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies (published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.

Non-Native/Invasive Plant(s)	Some Native & Adapted Alternative(s)
Bamboo	Wax Myrtle (<i>Morella cerifera</i>) Yaupon Holly (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>) Bamboo Muhly (<i>Muhlenbergia dumosa</i>)
Chinaberry	Chinquapin Oak (<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>) Texas Red Oak (<i>Quercus buckleyi</i>)
Chinese Tallow Tree	Bigtooth Maple (<i>Acer grandidentatum</i>) Lacey Oak (<i>Quercus laceyi</i>)
Elephant Ear	Arrowhead (<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>) Crinum Lily (<i>Crinum americanum</i>) Pigeonberry (<i>Rivina humilis</i>) Frogfruit (<i>Phyla nodiflora</i>) Horseherb (<i>Calyptocarpus vialis</i>)
Giant Cane	Roughleaf Dogwood (<i>Cornus drummondii</i>) Yaupon Holly (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>)
Japanese Honeysuckle	Coral Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>) Passion Vine (<i>Passiflora foetida</i> or <i>incarnate</i> or <i>lutea</i> or <i>tenuiloba</i>) Rock Rose (<i>Pavonia lasiopetala</i>)
Holly Fern	River Fern (<i>Thelypteris kunthii</i>)
Kudzu, English Ivy, Vinca	Virginia Creeper (<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>) Trumpet Vine (<i>Campsis radicans</i>) Coral Vine (<i>Antigonon leptopus</i>)
Ligustrum (all species) or Common Privet	Evergreen Sumac (<i>Rhus virens</i>) Barbados Cherry (<i>Malpighia glabra</i>) Yaupon Holly (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>) Possumhaw Holly (<i>Ilex decidua</i>) Texas Sage (<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i>) Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>)
Mimosa	Desert Willow (<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>) Texas Redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i> var. <i>texensis</i>) Elbowbush (<i>Forestiera pubescens</i>)
Nandina or Heavenly Bamboo	Texas Lantana (<i>Lantana urticoides</i>) Bush Germander (<i>Teucrium fruticans</i>) Texas Sage (<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i>)
Paper or White Mulberry	Red Mulberry (<i>Morus rubra</i>) Texas Persimmon (<i>Diospyros texana</i>) Possumhaw Holly (<i>Ilex decidua</i>) Cherry Laurel (<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>)
Pyracantha	Yaupon Holly (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>) Possumhaw Holly (<i>Ilex decidua</i>) Evergreen Sumac (<i>Rhus virens</i>)
Red-tipped or Chinese Photinia	Evergreen Sumac (<i>Rhus virens</i>) Carolina Buckthorn (<i>Frangula caroliniana</i>) Yaupon Holly (<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>)
Russian Olive	Texas Persimmon (<i>Diospyros texana</i>)
St. Augustine Grass	Buffalo Grass (<i>Bouteloua dactyloides</i>)
Tamarisk or Salt Cedar	Bald Cypress (<i>Taxodium distichum</i>) Arizona Cypress (<i>Cupressus arizonica</i>)
Tree of Heaven	Chinquapin Oak (<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>) Lacey Oak (<i>Quercus laceyi</i>)
Vitex or Chastetree	Texas Pistachio (<i>Pistacia mexicana</i>) Mexican Buckeye (<i>Ungnadia speciosa</i>)
Wisteria	Passion Vine (<i>Passiflora foetida</i> or <i>incarnata</i> or <i>lutea</i> or <i>tenuiloba</i>) Trumpet Vine (<i>Campsis radicans</i>)

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Your body's core muscles are challenged with every exercise that you perform in suspension training, and it is the core that improves your body stability, balance and flexibility. Everything physically that we do in life connects through the core, and having a strong and flexible core prevents low back injury as well as improves any rotational movement. Because life takes us into all planes of movement, rather than simply forwards and backwards as in most exercise modalities, the TRX training system mimics real life and prepares us to be strong in all planes of movement while improving balance and co-ordination. The emphasis in this type of training is rotational and asymmetrical movement which is critical in any sport such as tennis or golf, baseball or hockey. It also has notable effects for rehabilitation and for those who want a streamlined, time efficient and effective total body workout.

The Rip Trainer and the TRX Trainer are used by professional athletes in the NBA, MLB, NFL, MMA and NLL to achieve more power, drive, a competitive edge and a leaner more efficient physique.

The Fitness Center at Fair Oaks Ranch has TRX Trainer and Rip Trainer classes with Dr. Jane for you to take your game to the next level. Find out why the pros use these modalities to take their competitive edge over the top. Call the Fitness Center at Fair Oaks for details or call Dr. Jane at 808-212-8119.



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