

# The FAIR OAKS Gazette

July 2020

Volume 10 Issue 7



NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF FAIR OAKS RANCH

## FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK | JULY 2020

### **Planning and Zoning Commission**

The P&Z and City Council met on June 11, 2020 to approve a Preliminary Plat establishing Setterfeld Estates Unit 3A. The plat sets aside approximately 21 acres for open space purposes. After further review from city staff, this submittal is being considered as a minor plat and staff has requested clarification from the applicant.

At the same meeting, the Commissioners considered a preliminary plat establishing The Arbors at Fair Oaks Ranch Unit 2. Unit 2 covers 43.56 acres and represents 47 residential lots. The Commissioners approved the preliminary plat.

### **Hail to the Chief!**

At our June 4th council meeting, the council voted unanimously to ratify the City Manager's appointment and promotion of Lieutenant Tim Moring to the position of Chief of Police. Lt. Moring had been in the position of Interim Chief of Police for several months.

Tim has been with our city for about 15 years and has filled essentially every position in the police department from Patrolman to, now, Chief of Police. During the recent Public Health Emergency, he has headed our Emergency Operations Center (EOC). I will tell you from personal experience that he has been the steady hand on the rudder during this very trying time. All of us are in his debt for his leadership during a very trying time.

Congratulations Chief Moring. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

### **Finance Team Honored Again**

I am pleased to report that our Finance Department, headed by Finance Director Sarah Buckelew, has once again been honored by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Our

2019-20 budget received their Certificate of Achievement for excellence in budget reporting. This is the first time the City of Fair Oaks Ranch has received this honor and it is a significant accomplishment.

This is the sixth year I have gone through a budget cycle with the city and the amount of progress we have made in that time is very exciting. The tools our Finance team has put together over the past several years have made the budget a more meaningful process and have enhanced the quality of decision making.

I will remind everyone that our Finance team has also been honored the past two years by GFOA for their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR). Congratulations to Sarah and her team. We are very proud of you.

### **Declaration of Local Disaster Extended Again**

Most of you are getting pretty familiar with the drill where the Governor updates his Executive Order, the Bexar County Judge updates his, and we update ours. On May 21st we extended the declaration to June 4th. On June 4th, we extended the declaration to June 18th. On June 18th we extended the declaration to July 2nd. In our June 18th meeting, we discussed the changes in Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff's Executive Order NW-10 which added a Health and Safety Policy for Commercial Entities. After consultation with our City Attorney, council determined that the existing format of our Declaration was adequate to reflect requirements. Judge Wolff's Executive Order supersedes any city orders and our commercial establishments that are impacted are all in Bexar County. Our Police Department will continue its work in coaching our businesses in Fair Oaks Ranch to keep them in compliance. We have been blessed with good cooperation from our business owners. These declarations are necessary to keep us in compliance and to make us eligible for possible funding of COVID-19 related expenses.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

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# FAIR OAKS RANCH

(Continued from Cover)

Stay tuned as our handling of the disaster continues unfolding.

The biggest change affecting our residents is the requirement to mask when entering a business establishment. We request that you follow the business owners' guidance on this since Judge Wolff's latest Executive Order places them at risk of a \$1,000 fine if they do not implement this requirement. For restaurants, which is our most common business, the normal routine is wearing the mask entering and leaving and removing the mask at the table after seating.

## Water Rights Project

Although the case is currently set for trial in July (COVID-19 notwithstanding), the City has recently filed a motion for summary judgment asking the Court to rule, as a matter of law, that the City owns the well and sanitary control easements. Our attorneys tell us that they are cautiously optimistic about the City's chances of prevailing on this summary judgment motion. If that should happen, no trial to establish the city's right to access and use the well would be necessary. While the Caldarolas could appeal such a ruling, it will be difficult for them to overturn same.

Several of our staffers and elected officials will be deposed by the Caldarola's attorneys next week. Our attorneys have also conducted depositions of the Caldarolas.

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).

## Ordinance Related to Public Health Emergency

As of the time I am writing to you, we have five confirmed cases in Fair Oaks Ranch (2 in Comal, 1 in Bexar, and 2 in Kendall). Only 1 of those cases is still active and four cases, thankfully, are in "recovered" status.

We are planning a "soft" reopening of City Hall in late June. We are monitoring infection levels and will work to stay in compliance with the directives of the Governor and the Bexar County Judge. We will establish protocols to provide for the safety of both our residents and our city employees. Our employees, our residents, and our businesses have continued to show the small town "good neighbor" approach of which we are so very proud. My job in helping manage the emergency has been much easier than many of the mayors in other cities.

## Essential Services

We are now at the point where basically all businesses in Fair Oaks Ranch have been allowed to open at some level of service. Please follow the guidance of the business owners in order to keep them in compliance with the new rules mentioned above.

(Continued on Page 4)

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

### EMERGENCIES NUMBERS

EMERGENCY .....	911
Fire.....	911
Ambulance.....	911
Fair Oaks Ranch Police Department.....	210-698-0990
Animal Control.....	210-698-0990

### SCHOOLS

Boerne ISD .....	www.boerne-isd.net
Fair Oaks Ranch Elementary .....	210-698-1616

### UTILITIES

Allied Waste Services - Garbage & Recycling.....	210-648-5222
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

### OTHER

United States Post Office	
607 E. Blanco. Rd. - Boerne, TX.....	830-249-2414
.....	(delivery info, stops, fwds, ect.) 830-249-9303
5837 De Zavala Rd - San Antonio, TX.....	210-641-0248

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# FAIR OAKS RANCH

(Continued from Page 3)

## Economic/Taxation Issues Related to Coronavirus Pandemic

This is a continuation of comments I made last month. I got letters from a couple of state level elected officials suggesting that cities should cut their budgets and/or their tax rates. These letters show a fundamental lack of understanding of the basic economic principle that there are no free lunches. In particular, for a city like us that funds only the most basic services (water, wastewater, public safety, roads), asking us to cut our budgets is asking our residents to tolerate a decrease in their quality of life.

The City Manager, the Finance Director, and I took a look at the most recent posting of city ad valorem property tax rates on the State Comptroller's website a couple of weeks ago. There are 1,222 cities listed on the report. 921 of those cities have a higher tax rate than Fair Oaks Ranch. Saying that an easier way, about 75% of the cities in Texas have a higher property tax rate than we do. This is especially significant because more than 70% of our Operating and Maintenance Revenue comes from property taxes.

We do not have a broad based portfolio of revenue because we are, and we desire to remain, primarily a bedroom community. That is usually a challenge, but during economic uncertainty it has proven to be a blessing.

We offer only basic services and do not rely on Hotel Occupancy Taxes and other ancillary revenue sources. The demand for our services has actually increased during the current challenges, so we do not have the need to shed positions dependent on these sources of revenue like some of the larger cities have needed to do.

Based on our first budget workshop that was held on June 12th, I anticipate that we will not be changing our tax rate. The "draft" Operations budget for FY 20-21 is \$7.631 million which is a decrease of 6.8% from the current operations budget. City Council will continue to conduct budget workshops in the coming months.

## You Count!!!

You only count if you complete your CENSUS!! If you have not done your census, please get on line and make it happen. It took Dedie and me about 10 minutes.

On one of my videos, I challenged all of you to catch up with Shavano Park in terms of level of census completion. As of the last census update I just got, we have almost caught them. We are at 81.1% complete and Shavano Park is at 82.7% complete. Among the suburban cities, Shavano Park and FOR are in the number 1 and number 2 positions respectively in terms of percentage of completion.

## Backflow Prevention Program Updates

Thanks to all of you who have complied thus far. **Please remember that the deadline for initial testing is September 30, 2020.** If you have any questions regarding your backflow

prevention assembly, please contact the City's Environmental Compliance Manager, Melissa Castro, at 210-698-0900.

## Fourth of July

We are finalizing preparations for our Independence Day fireworks display. It will be held on the **evening of July 3rd** like we did last year. **The location will be different than last year.** The Country Club venue was too small for social distancing.

We will have the fireworks display near the River Rock Event Center off of Saratoga Lane. Parking will be at the Cibolo Creek Community Church on Ralph Fair Road. We will have social distancing guides posted in the field. We will have the "nice" restrooms like we did at the 30th anniversary celebration and there will be simple grab and go refreshments available like ice cream and snow cones. Hand sanitizing stations will also be available.

We will have portable lighting for safety and the Fair Oaks Ranch police department will be providing security and safety for all of us.

Magic In The Sky will do the honors with fireworks and patriotic music just like they did last year. I hope to see you there. I will be wearing my University of Texas Longhorn face covering and some red, white, and blue clothing. I'm sure our City Manager will be wearing his Texas A&M bandanna.

We want to thank property owners Janis and Ralph Fair, Jr. and Martin and Abigail Epple for extending the courtesy of the use of their property. Let's return that courtesy by taking good care of their land. Put trash in proper containers and leave only your footprints behind. We also want to thank our friends at Cibolo Creek Community Church who have once again helped us out by volunteering the use of their parking lot and providing some volunteers.

*We will be collecting donations for Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries at the fireworks show. Please bring peanut butter, healthy snack foods, canned tuna, and diapers in sizes 4, 5, & 6. We are going to try to fill the back of the Police Department truck at the event. This is a good organization and their needs are great at this time.*

## Community Gatherings/Vigils

Like many other communities in our country, residents in Fair Oaks Ranch came together during this past month to talk about issues ranging from social justice to patriotism. The difference in our community, like many other smaller communities, is that we are able to do this in a civil and polite manner.

There were three gatherings in our city and Dedie and I attended all of them. The first one was an early Saturday morning prayer service at Cibolo Creek Community Church led by Senior Pastor Paul Wilson. Amy Moore and Muriel Logan put the event together. The gathering was to pray for healing in our country. Community Life Pastor Matt Snellings also spoke. Matt shared a quote from Nelson Mandela's autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, that I thought was especially appropriate.

(Continued on Page 5)

# FAIR OAKS RANCH

(Continued from Page 4)

*“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”*

The next gathering was Sunday evening at the flagpole on our city campus. This gathering was organized by Pratap Khanwilkar, one of our residents from the FrontGate subdivision. Pratap provided an opportunity for residents from our city and the surrounding areas to share their perspectives on diversity. Pratap and I were both happy to see that such a wide spectrum of people attended and were willing to share their experiences. I was especially proud to see my neighbors' son, Drew James, speak very eloquently of the role he saw his generation playing in their lifetimes to put racism to bed. Drew is a very accomplished young man who is heading to Yale in the fall. We look forward to great things from him.

Our third gathering was a patriotic sing along on Flag Day, which was organized by Phyllis Monical and Sharon Brimhall. This was also held near the flagpole area on the city campus. Special guests at the event were R. W. and Fran Pratt. R. W. is a World War II and Korean War veteran. Flag Day was R. W.'s 98th birthday so we also did a rendering of “Happy Birthday.”

All of these events were supported by our police department in a very polite and friendly manner. At each event, the participants took time to express their appreciation to the officers for the role they play in our community. That's how this is supposed to work!

## **Calling the Hogs**

We are nearing the end of our hog trapping operation with Ortiz Game Management Services. The owner, Bubba Ortiz, has reported that we are getting close to 40 hogs trapped during the three month project, including some really large boars. Bubba had to make a couple of runs at some of the boars because they were clever and strong enough to figure out how to get out of the traps. Our feral hogs on The Ranch are very athletic! We will continue to monitor the hog presence. Our anticipation is that we are going to have to spend some money each year to keep them under control.

## **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 5,000 people with our posts. More than 2,000 people reacted to the postings by liking, sharing, or posting them. We have had 28 new page likes and 34 new page followers in the past month.

- We now have more than 4,200 members on Nextdoor and had almost 13,000 impressions on this tool during the month.

- New this month, we added a YouTube channel to our website. If you have not seen the graduation video that Jennifer Hudson put together, I encourage you to go to our website and see this great video honoring our graduates.

- The police department also helped celebrate birthdays for a number of residents, both young and old, during the month.

Dedie and I participated in a birthday drive by for Shannon Sietz's 51st birthday. Shannon, who is a real Spurs fan, was on hand with his parents Ron and De Laine to receive a long line of cars who went through the winding driveway on the parents' house. We made a lot of noise and had a good time! Happy Birthday Shannon!

Let's keep working as “good neighbors” and caring for each other.

**Happy Independence Day from Dedie and me,**

***Garry Manitzas***

*Mayor*

*Fair Oaks Ranch*



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# FAIR OAKS RANCH

## GRACKLES

*They'll eat anything*

*By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center*



We've all been in parking lots where we feel we're being stalked by big black birds just waiting for us to drop a morsel of food. What are they? Ravens, Crows, Grackles? If you said Grackles, you'd be correct.

So how do you tell the difference? Ravens are very large and have a long wedge-shaped tail. They have a thick bill. Their throat looks a little shaggy if you're ever able to get close to one. Their call is deep. Crows are about the size of a chicken. They have smaller beaks and shorter tails that are squared off at the ends. They have a higher-pitched call than Ravens. Grackles are about the size of Robins. They are easily identifiable by their iridescent feathers mostly seen on their heads. They have golden eyes and their call has been compared to the sound of a rusty gate.

There are actually three types of Grackles—Great-tailed Grackle, Common Grackle and the Boat-tailed Grackle. The Common Grackle is found throughout North America, the Boat-tailed Grackle can be found in the southeastern states and the Great-tailed bird is found along the Texas border and into Mexico. What you are seeing in parking lots are mainly Common Grackles.

Grackles are not picky eaters. They'll eat bugs, berries, seeds and just about anything else they can find. They'll wade in water in search of small fish and will even eat leeches off of the legs of turtles. They steal worms from robins, raid the nests of other birds and will even kill and eat other birds. Of course, we all know that they love French fries, cookies and anything else that is dropped in a parking lot or in a trash bin.

Grackles practice a strange behavior known as anting. This involves rubbing ants on their bodies. No one knows exactly why they do this but some scientists believe the ants secrete an acid that kills feather mites. Others believe it has something to do with shedding feathers or molting.

Just like their eating habits, grackles are not very particular when it comes to where they build their nests. Some live and nest in colonies as large as 200 breeding pairs. A female can lay from 4 to 7 eggs in a single season.

Right now, we're in baby bird season. Some birds that are brought to us for care should have been left where they were. If you find a baby bird, please give us a call and let us help you determine if the bird needs help or not. Our website also has some great information on a number of topics. [www.twrcwildlifecenter.org](http://www.twrcwildlifecenter.org) 713.468.8972

## Mealybugs

Mealybugs are pests of landscape plants and houseplants. Outdoors, they are often active during times of warm, dry weather, but can be a problem indoors at any time of year. Infestations usually start at the base of stems and then spread from there as populations increase.

Mealybugs are a type of unarmored scale insect. They are sexually dimorphic, with males and females looking different. Males have wings and can fly while females remain wingless throughout their life. Immature (nymphs) and female mealybugs are oval, soft-bodied and covered with a white waxy powder.

These insects have piercing-sucking mouthparts which is used to penetrate plant tissue to suck out juices. Feeding by mealybugs can lead to yellowing or wilting of the plant and distortion of the leaves. With larger infestations, the insects may cause stunted growth, premature leaf drop or plant death. Mealybugs excrete honeydew, which is a sweet, sticky substance on which a fungus called sooty mold can grow. Sooty mold can indirectly harm plants by blocking sunlight from reaching plant surfaces and reducing photosynthesis.

### Tips for mealybug management:

- Conserve beneficial insects; there are many insects that feed on or parasitize mealybugs
  - To help conserve beneficial insects, use other methods to manage pests before choosing a pesticide.
    - \*\*Use high pressure water sprays to dislodge the insects from the plant
    - \*\*Insecticidal soap
    - \*\*Horticultural oils
    - \*\*Other insecticides labeled for mealybug control (look for active ingredients such as azadirachtin, pyrethrum, pyrethrins). Read and follow all label instructions.
  - For severely infested plants, it may be best to throw the plant away and buy a new one
  - \*\*If treating houseplants, move plants outside during treatment then move back inside once treatment has dried.

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](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

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