

**From the Mayor's Desk
September 2019**

Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z)

P&Z Commission had no active business to consider in August. Therefore the regular meeting was cancelled.

Council and P&Z conducted a joint interview session on August 14th to interview three residents who came forward to offer to fill the vacancy created by Conrad Fothergill's resignation. We interviewed Art Waterman, Charles Pool, and Linda Tom.

Any one of these applicants could have filled this role very capably. That's how blessed we are with the talent pool in our community. We picked Linda Tom and asked the other two candidates to please let us keep their resumes in the active pile for future consideration. They graciously agreed to do that.

Linda has been a resident of our city for more than 36 years. She was there at the founding of our city when two cities had to be created and then merged to make Fair Oaks Ranch. Linda served as the Mayor Pro Tem of Fair Oaks Ranch North when we began the incorporation of our city. We look forward to working with Linda in this new role she has undertaken.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

ZBOA met on July 24th to develop their procedural rules and elect officers. They elected Richard Morris as their Chairman and John Wall as their Vice Chairman. Other Board members are Rich Nichols, Warren Needels, and Shane Stolarczyk. The Board worked with City Attorney Habib Erkan to create their Rules of Procedure inclusive of the Appeal and Variance Application documents.

Staff and Council Continue Work on Annual Budget

Since the last time I wrote to you, our professional staff and Council have continued work on the budget proposal for the 2019-20 fiscal year. The budget is driven by our Strategic Planning process. The five pillars of the strategic plan that we are addressing include:

- Financial Integrity
- Responsible Growth Management
- Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure
- Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
- Operational Excellence

On August 8th, Council and staff conducted a budget workshop to consider the entire budget, both Operating and Maintenance and Utility Fund. We continued our discussion of initiatives identified in the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and of various

financing mechanisms that can be used to advance the different initiatives we need to accomplish as a city.

Council had instructed the staff to initially produce a Maintenance and Operating (M&O) budget that could be accomplished without exceeding the combined M&O and I&S tax rate from last year. Council also asked staff to bring forward additional strategic projects that they had deferred to stay within this limitation, but which they believed may be worth doing in the upcoming fiscal year. The staff brought forward two additional strategic projects totaling \$107,000 which equated to an increase of \$.0067 per \$100 of assessed value.

The ending point on the discussion was a proposed combined tax rate of \$.3735 per \$100 of assessed value compared to the current combined tax rate of \$.3668. The average appraised value of a home in Fair Oaks Ranch increased from \$484,049 last year to \$504,453 this year. At this proposed tax rate and appraised value, the average tax bill for a home in Fair Oaks Ranch will increase from \$1,740 to \$1,846 or \$106. Of this increase, about \$73 is due to the increase in value and about \$33 is due to the increase in the tax rate.

The Interest and Sinking Fund (I&S) component of the rate decreased by \$.0022 per \$100 of value due to a basically fixed cost of debt being spread over a larger taxable base. (-\$11 per year for an average home) The M&O component, including the two additional strategic projects, increased by \$.0089 per \$100 of assessed value. (+\$45 per year for an average home). The increase in value noted above is the remainder of the change for the average home.

We also reviewed the Utility Fund budget in the council meeting. Our current budget assumes there will not be a Water or Wastewater Rate increase in Fiscal Year 2020-21 although there is a rate study being funded. Our current projections for fiscal year 2019-20 show an income of about \$666,000 for the Water Utility Fund and a loss of about \$762,000 in the Wastewater Utility Fund. We will need to do substantial work to develop a more rational approach to rate making for the two Utility Funds.

For those of you interested in the details of the budget, I would encourage you to go to the city website and review the proposed budget for 2019-20 which has been posted.

Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2018-19

At the August 15th council meeting we discussed and took action approving an Ordinance regarding Fiscal Year 2018-19 Budget amendments. You probably recall that we had to defer planned renovations to City Hall because the bids for doing the work came in much higher than anticipated. This resulted in deferring the filling of 12 new positions at various points throughout the year.

This deferral plus larger than expected sales tax and franchise fee collections and interest earnings have resulted in a projected surplus of about \$690,000 in this year's budget. Staff recommended using about \$175,000 of the surplus to fund road maintenance, road construction, and IT architecture upgrades. The remaining surplus of about \$515,000 will be closed out to the 6-month operating reserve account at the end of the year. We are currently sitting at around 4.5 months' operating reserve and our bond counsel has suggested that we move toward the six month reserve target to strengthen our financials.

The City Hall renovation project has begun again with a different approach involving tackling the renovations in two pieces. The smaller piece, the renovation of the old Police Building, will be addressed first and will likely be paid out of cash reserves. We had 17 potential contractors do a walk through last week as a first step in possibly preparing bid proposals for renovating that building.

The renovation of City Hall will most likely be funded with a debt issue as I discussed in last month's article. Our preliminary view of this is that we would go with a term of probably not more than five years. "First blush" numbers on this project suggest that the impact on an average home would be around \$35 per year as I reported last month. Much more review to be done on this one before proceeding with firm plans.

Development of the Pfeiffer Tract/The Reserve

A standing room only crowd participated in a discussion with the developer on this proposed development. Attorney Rob Killen represented the developer. Craig Glendenning, the developer, also addressed questions. The proposal generated a number of questions from council members and several residents spoke about their concerns about the density of the proposed project. The council and developer agreed that there will be more discussions. We plan to stage the next discussion more like a Town Hall and will look for a larger venue.

Elevated Storage Tank

We anticipate the next meeting will be held around September 10th. By this point, the engineers will have done much more work and will be presenting recommendations regarding siting and design. We are expecting council to approve a final site in November of this year. Engineering design is expected to be completed by August 2020 with construction to begin around November 2020. Construction time for a project of this magnitude is about a year, so that would indicate completed construction around November 2021.

We have been getting quite a bit of correspondence regarding location on this project, most of it from our friends in Stone Creek Ranch. I just wanted to let you know that we have received your "Not In My Back Yard" comments. I have no doubt this will be an interesting discussion as we move forward.

Boerne-Fair Oaks Ranch-Kendall County Transportation Planning Committee

At our August 1st council meeting we took action to formally name Dan Banks and Marcus Garcia to this Planning Committee. Both of these gentlemen are engineers with substantial experience planning and delivering road construction projects. I was especially pleased to see Dan step forward since he worked on a similar citizen project in 2007 and was highly regarded for his work on that project.

I was similarly pleased to see Marcus come forward. Marcus is a younger licensed Professional Engineer who also has a substantial amount of experience in doing this type of work. In addition to bringing in representation from our younger community, Marcus resides in Elkhorn Ridge which is one of our newer communities. Marcus is the first person from Elkhorn Ridge I have had the privilege of appointing to a working committee.

Also offering their services were Ernie Pyles, Chad Christman (also an Elkhorn Ridge resident), and Mike Lyle. I appreciate all of them for being willing to serve. I will, of course, keep all of their resumes handy for future reference!

Ordinance creating Article for violations of the City Charter

At the August 15th council meeting, council approved the first reading of an ordinance amending the City of Fair Oaks Ranch Code of Ordinances Chapter 8 "Offenses and Nuisance" by creating an Article for violations of the City Charter. The creation of this Article is required by the City Charter. To meet this provision of the City Charter, in May 2019, the City council appointed a citizen advisory committee to review the matter relative to the U.S. and Texas Constitutions, Federal and State statutes, and provisions of the City Charter. The citizen committee work with our City Attorney to accomplish this and presented its recommendations to council on August 1st. Council will hold a second reading on September 5th and the Ordinance will be effective upon publication in the *Boerne Star*.

New Solid Waste Fees

Our contract with Republic Services allows them to annually adjust their pricing in line with the Consumer Price Index. The following rate changes will happen, effective October 1:

- Standard Residential goes from \$20.65 per month to \$21.27 per month
- 1 Extra Cart goes from \$12.36 per month to \$12.73 per month
- 2 Extra Carts goes from \$24.72 per month to \$25.46 per month

Deer Census

The Wildlife Education Committee, working under the guidance of Jessica Alderson, Urban Biologist from Texas Parks and Wildlife, will be conducting a census of deer in September and October. The census takers will be traveling pre-defined routes in City of Fair Oaks Ranch vehicles late in the evening. Each team will have a driver from WEC with two observers spotting and recording the deer. We are recruiting some older Boy Scouts for the role of observers. The data gathered will be entered

into a TP&W software package and evaluated by professionals from that organization.

We will be identifying bucks, does, and fawns. This time, we will also be differentiating between native whitetail and Axis deer. After the data has been analyzed, WEC will do a report out to the community.

National Night Out

On October 1st, the Fair Oaks Ranch Police Department will be supporting National Night Out. This program is designed to heighten crime awareness, strengthen neighborhood spirits and police-community partnerships. If your neighborhood organization or Homeowners Association would like to participate, please contact this year's coordinator Sgt. John Ojeda at (210) 698-0990 ext. 311 or joheda@fairoaksranchtx.org for more details.

Resident Volunteers/City Staffers at Work

- Our city Facebook page is continuing to attract readers. We currently have 1,706 people following our page. We have had 1,510 likes and reached 3,776 members during the past 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.
- We welcome Jake Hurlock and Amanda Pina to our police force. Both Jake and Amanda are coming to us straight from the police academy where they just graduated.
- We also welcome Jarrett Lee – Maintenance Worker in the Public Works Department. Jarrett comes to us with over 5 years of construction and maintenance experience along with a history of experience in facility/grounds care.
- Congratulations to Police Officers Allen Paz and Riley Gobeil. These two gentlemen responded to an emergency call in Setterfeld on July 20th. They found the victim in serious medical distress and immediately began providing lifesaving actions. The victim was successfully revived and recovered. We recognized both of these officers with the Fair Oaks Ranch Police Department Life Saving Award at the August 15th council meeting.
- The Rotary Club of Fair Oaks Ranch, in conjunction with our police department, Acadian Ambulance Service, and Leon Springs Fire Department, is sponsoring the Save-A-Life project to benefit all FOR residents and those living outside our city limits but serviced by the above agencies. Save-A-Life packets, which may be picked up at FORHA, the police department, the fire station or from any Fair Oaks Ranch Rotarian contain two sheets of paper and a red magnet in a plastic bag. The red magnet goes on the outside of your refrigerator to alert First Responders that you have a packet inside the refrigerator. The paper inside the plastic bag which goes inside the refrigerator contains your critical medical information.

Transparency on The Ranch

We noticed a recent news article in which one of the residents quoted commented about “...an apparent unwillingness of our elected officials to provide open and honest information flow to those they serve.” A few individuals have apparently proclaimed themselves Directors of a new group dedicated to keeping City business...”out in the open.” According to the article, this group does most of its work on the private social media site *Next Door*.

City Mayor Pro Tem Roy Elizondo was quoted in the article and correctly pointed out that the City operates under state laws that require business be conducted out in the open. We have consistently followed these laws. Social media sites do not have this burden of transparency and, in my opinion, have the lowest journalistic standards of any news media. They frequently serve as nothing more than a place for keyboard cowboys to shout unsubstantiated nonsense through their fingertips.

I would like to remind everyone that our city council has dedicated itself to achieving and maintaining transparency in our governance. Councilman Steve Hartpence and I made transparency and citizen communication a key campaign issue when we both ran for council four years ago. Upon our election, we teamed with Councilwoman Havard to change our council operating rules to create opportunities for more citizen input and transparency by:

- Providing more opportunity and longer speaking times for citizens to offer their opinions and concerns during council meetings
- Scheduling Town Hall meetings to increase transparency and citizen participation

I also revised this news column to make it more informative and to address significant issues in our community. I have received more favorable comments about how I have changed this column than anything else I have done as mayor.

We have continued this dedication to transparency through our tenure on council. Many of you know that the state legislature enacted some new rules this past session to give citizens more rights to make input. This required no changes in our procedures because we have had these provisions in place for more than four years.

Our first mayor, Boots Gaubatz, had a good saying about where to get your information. “Don’t spread rumors. Call me and I’ll tell you the truth.” That was good advice more than 10 years ago and it still is. Many of you have taken me up on my offer to answer your questions and I am happy to do that. If you have questions about our city governance, please feel free to write to me at mayor@fairoaksranchtx.org or to our City Manager, Tobin Maples, at tmaples@fairoaksranchtx.org.

Best wishes for the rest of the summer,

Garry Manitzas
Mayor - Fair Oaks Ranch