



Mayor Maxton's Message

April 2022

Effective Communications with Residents

I believe city governments and staff have a responsibility to communicate with their residents. I don't think anyone would argue this point. Communications is a means of exchanging information from one individual to another and is a two-way process.

For specific situations related to an individual citizen, this is normally not a problem. These are situations where a resident has information on an issue or a problem. They contact City Hall and are put in touch with the right individual to help them and the problem gets addressed. It is an established method for resolving a problem that most residents know and utilize.

The challenge for cities is communicating information back to their residents. The City of Fair Oaks Ranch is involved with many activities that impact current operations and the future of the city. This is information that should be and needs to be provided to the residents. The challenge is not in the city's desire to provide the information, the city has nothing to hide and wants to get this information out. The difficulty is finding the routine established methods that are easy for resident to access.

I believe it is important for residents to know and understand what is going on with their city government. First, it is their city, and they should know what is happening and what their city government is doing for them. Additionally, effective communications will reduce misinformation and rumors being spread which lead to instability and additional work.

I see that effective communication has two parts, the message and the method. The message is the easy part. The method of communications is the challenge, especially for a city wanting to routinely provide information to a city of over 10,000 residents.

The City of Fair Oaks Ranch utilizes multiple methods to communicate with its residents. We have a website, we use [NextDoor](#) and [Facebook](#), articles in the newspaper and we will start broadcasting our council meetings. All of these are good methods, but not the easiest ways for residents to receive information. My belief is that if a resident is required to search or use multiple steps to get to the information, many times they will not find it. The information needs to be presented in a manner that is

easily and readily available.

[Notify Me](#) and [CodeRED](#) are two other means of communications used by the city that does provide information to residents that is readily available. Both are services that a resident must sign up for to be included in the distribution.

Notify Me is used by the city to push out routine communications. When you sign up for the service, you can choose to receive the notifications by text message, email or both. When you receive the notification, there will be a link that will provide the update. These messages can be received through your phone or computer and are very simple to use.

Recent notifications through Notify Me include updates on oak wilt, the city's Popular Financial Report (an easy to read and understand version of the city's finances), Junior Police Academy, Red Flag Warnings and most recently updates on the Camp Bullis Fire. The city staff has also used Notify Me to send out messages on city meetings, activities across the city and non-emergency issues related to city infrastructure.

I encourage all residents to sign up for Notify Me. Sign up for this service is easy to complete. Go to the city's website (www.fairoaksranchtx.org) and on the main page that comes up, select the block for Notify Me on the right-hand side. Once selected, provide your email address and then choose if you want to be notified by text also. It honestly takes about 2-3 minutes to complete the process. I signed up for both text and email service, so when a message goes out from the city, I receive a text message and an email on the information.

CodeRED is a mass emergency notification system. In the event of an emergency impacting the city, CodeRED will be utilized to distribute information on the situation. Unique to CodeRED, the city can utilize this tool to send messages out to the entire city or to specific subdivisions. A good example is last year during the February freeze, three subdivisions were without water for several days. The city used CodeRED to communicate with these three subdivisions, letting them know that water was available for them at City Hall.

CodeRED is critical for all residents to sign up for and will make a significant impact in providing information on emergency events that affect our city. Sign up for CodeRED is also found on the city's website at the bottom of the main page. The process for signing up for CodeRED is more detailed than Notify Me, but still only takes about five minutes to complete.

The city is always looking for ways to better improve its communications to residents. If you have ideas of ways to make the system better, please call City Hall and let us know. Notify Me and CodeRED are

two methods that work well that I encourage all citizens to sign up for. Keeping residents informed is a priority for myself and the city, we will continue to make these processes better.