

City Communications and Townhall Meetings

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I believe one of the most important requirements of a city government is to establish effective ways to communicate with its residents. Providing information from the city is essential to keep residents informed, but communication is a two-way procedure, and feedback from residents to the city is also key to this process.

The term “effective” in a communications plan is the most important aspect. To be effective, the message needs to reach the recipient, provide an easy means to access the information and then convey the message.

The city government and staff of Fair Oaks Ranch want to keep our residents informed and are continually searching for the best methods. We also want to hear from residents.

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

In reaching out to residents, one of the first considerations is keeping residents informed on what is happening in the city. The second area of focus is informing the community during emergency situations that will impact the daily lives of individuals. In both circumstances, the city has information that needs to be relayed.

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 community wanting to routinely provide information to a city of over 10,500 citizens.

The City of Fair Oaks Ranch utilizes multiple methods to communicate with the community. We have a website, we use NextDoor and Facebook, articles in the newspaper, message boards, signs, mailings, and we are broadcasting our council meetings. All of these are good methods, but they have not shown that they are effective in communicating information to all residents.

“Notify Me” and “Regroup” are two message services that the City of Fair Oaks Ranch uses to communicate with its residents. These services are the primary methods that the city utilizes to get information delivered. Both are services that a resident must sign up for to be included in the distribution. Sign up for both services is available from the city’s main webpage at <https://www.fairoaksranchtx.org/>.

“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, it is only the header and there will be a link that will provide the complete update. It is very simple to use.

“Regroup” is our new mass emergency notification system. In the event of an emergency impacting the city, “Regroup” will be utilized to distribute information on the situation. Unique to “Regroup”, the city can utilize this tool to send messages out to the entire city or to specific subdivisions. This is an essential message service for all residents to sign up for.

The communication services described above provide a means for publishing information from the city to residents, but do not provide a way for residents to provide feedback. The city is now setting up quarterly townhall meetings, where we will discuss a specific topic at each meeting. The goal is to get citizen feedback related to each topic. This will help guide City Council and City Staff on the development of future plans for the progress of our city.

The first townhall meeting will be in December 2022 and will cover the topic of transportation in our community. We are currently scheduling a location and once an available date is determined, we will begin publicizing the event.

Overall, the City Staff has done a great job maintaining our city’s road infrastructure. The townhall meeting will briefly address the accomplishments but concentrate more on future requirements in our growing community.

The townhall meeting will lead off with a look through our city’s comprehensive plan and then a quick review of the roadway capital projects for our city. The Kendall County Citizen’s Transportation Group just completed their recommendations of projects for the county. We will highlight those county projects that impact our city and focus on how our city’s thoroughfare plan integrates with the county.

Ultimately, the goal is to layout the scheduled transportation projects for our city. For two years now, the City Council has allocated significant funds as part of the budget to do routine resurfacing to maintain the conditions of our roadways. As part of the townhall, we will describe the pavement condition analysis (PCI) and how we use this index to determine future resurfacing requirements. As part of the townhall, we will also cover the needed improvements to Ammann Road and Dietz-Elkhorn Road.

After the short presentations, the City Council wants to hear from residents on their concerns or desires related to transportation. City Council and City Staff will be available to answer any questions. We believe this will be a great opportunity to get information distributed and receive feedback so that we can make those decisions that meet the needs of our residents.

Look for the notices in November that will advertise the date and location of this upcoming townhall meeting. Please come join us to help shape the future transportation needs of our city.

We are always looking for ways to improve in all areas. Any comments on ways to improve communications that would benefit our residents receiving or providing information would be welcomed. An environment of effective communications will build trust and confidence and help us to maintain the unique characteristics of Fair Oaks Ranch.