

City of Fircrest

June 2018

Town Topics



CITY COUNCIL

Hunter T. George, Mayor
Denny Waltier, Mayor Pro Tempore
David M. Viafore
Shannon Reynolds
Brett L. Wittner
Blake L. Surina
Jamie Nixon

City Manager's Corner

Hello Fircrest residents,

For this edition of Town Topics, I want to provide some basic information regarding our utilities and rates, along with some comparisons to other cities. We will be adding some additional information to the City website as well.



The City of Fircrest has just under 2,800 utility customers. The utility bill you receive from the City every other month includes charges for water, sewer, and storm utilities. Quite often the utility bill is referred to as the "water" bill, and then when the utility bill goes up, there is often the perception that the increase is attributed only to water rates. Water rates have certainly changed and we are in the 2nd year of a 3-year water rate increase intended to get our rate where it needs to be to take care of our water utility needs. My goal here is simply to provide some clarification and context to our utility rates in general and what is really pushing your utility rates up.

Each of the utilities operated by the City has its own fund and these are referred to as enterprise funds. Really all that means is that the fund essentially has to take care of itself. Unlike the general fund, which relies on several different types of revenue sources, including property tax and sales tax, utility funds rely on rates. Those rates have to be sufficient to operate and maintain the utility, as well as to replace aging utility infrastructure as necessary, which is an ongoing concern for all cities. As costs increase and the need to replace water, sewer and storm water infrastructure grows, rates have to come up to meet those needs.

The City recently conducted a study of all three utilities to determine what rates are necessary to maintain those systems that provide the foundation for our community. There was a particular emphasis on water rates to determine the best way to structure the rate based on the cost of operations and maintenance. The result of that was a decision to lower the base rate for water by \$10 per billing cycle, and remove all water usage from the base rate. Under the old system, everyone paid \$44 up to a certain amount of water, even if they didn't use it. Under the new structure, you pay for what you use. Some residents saw their bill increase, especially in the summer, but others actually saw their water bill go down.

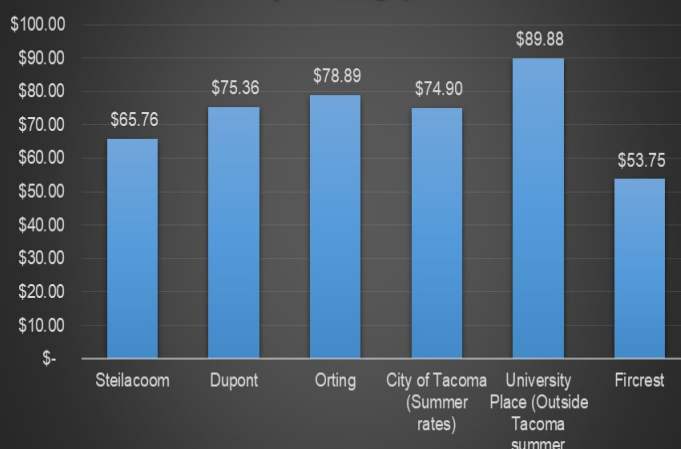
The largest part of the Fircrest utility bill, and the main source of the overall utility bill increase, is for sewer service. A major portion of that is for sewer treatment. That vital service, which is expensive to operate, is provided by the City of Tacoma. We itemize this service on your utility bill so you can see how your rates support these services. The City operates and maintains

the rest of the City's sewer system other than the treatment portion. The City has been able to address some of the most needed improvements to the sewer system, however, some of those improvements required financing. The City pays about \$315,000 in annual debt service for previous sewer system improvements. The City's current Capital Improvement Plan (through 2023) has identified about \$2.66 million in needed sewer infrastructure repairs, replacements or improvements, which the City plans to pay for with funds we have on hand (not using debt).

Below are comparisons with other cities (and Pierce County) on our water and sewer rates.

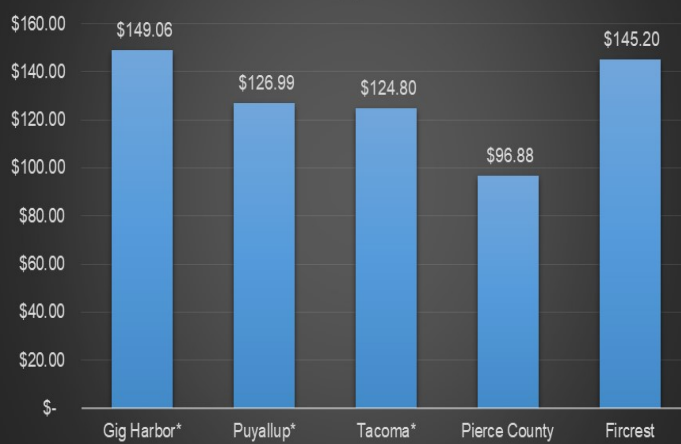
WATER

Bi-Monthly Billing per 1,500/cf



SEWER

Bi-Monthly Billing Based on 1,600/cf where applicable*



Serving the community since 1925

Mayor's Message



Police Chief John Cheesman and his officers work hard to be visible to the community.

They want you — and the bad guys — to see them patrolling our neighborhoods and business districts. And they especially focus on connecting with the children of our community because they want kids to grow up trusting the police.

That's why you see Fircrest Police officers at National Night Out, the Santa Sleigh Ride, Polar Plunge for Special Olympics, Chief For A Day, Kiwanis Terrific Kid awards, and more. I love that my 9-year-old son sees our officers and wants to talk to them (especially if they'll let him sit on the FPD motorcycle).

Still, it's not all fun and games and school lunch buddies. Policing is serious business, and Fircrest is not immune to the challenges in society. From domestic violence and drunken drivers to burglaries and those awful "porch pirates," our police officers handle difficult situations on a daily basis.

Thanks to their hard work, our crime rate is relatively flat in many categories, and declining in others. Here are a few highlights of Chief Cheesman's recent 2017 crime report:

Crime	2016	2017
Burglary	43	45
Theft	137	103
Auto theft	19	13
Assault	59	39
Domestic violence	150	90
Malicious mischief	34	33
Drug arrests	17	16

There were two notable increases. Arrests for driving while the license is suspended jumped from 179 to 384. And criminal citations increased from 361 to 550. If you're in trouble with the law, or your license has been suspended for various reasons, you're going to want to avoid Fircrest.

Due to space constraints, I've only shared a few highlights from the Chief's report. The full report offers statistics over a four-year period. You can find it under the "Up-to-date Information" link at www.CityOfFircrest.net.

The Fircrest Police Department does an amazing job, but they can't do it alone. Even in a small city, our officers can't be everywhere at once. We all have to pitch in and do our part to watch our neighborhoods and report crimes and suspicious activities. As the chief says, "If you see something, say something."

Hunter T. George
Mayor



Thanks to the Pierce County Auditor's office, a new ballot drop box has been installed at the Fircrest City Hall (115 Ramsdell Street). Residents will now have a greater opportunity to express their voice and participate in the democratic process.



Would We, Could We, Be Fircrest Without the Fir Trees?

A signature sign of entering Fircrest is the tall, majestic Fir trees that envelop our city. Living umbrellas, they catch and disperse falling water, create natural noise buffers, block winds, and give shade. Beyond maintaining our namesake, preserving and improving the existing fir tree canopy is vital to maintaining that - sometimes hard to describe - feel that makes Fircrest stand out from our neighbors.

We understand trees may need to be removed due to disease, damage, or construction. In this case, we strongly encourage you to replant one or maybe more. And if replanting a Fir tree just isn't feasible, staff is happy to provide a list of trees that may be more appropriate for the location.

Thanks to your donations, the City is once again beautified with flags and hanging flower baskets. If you wish to help keep this tradition going, please consider a donation no matter how small (or large). We will list your name as a donor in a future edition of the Town Topics. You may also memorialize a loved one or celebrate a joyous event. Flyers are included with your utility bill or feel free to contact City Hall.



Serving the community since 1925

2019 Budget Starting Soon

Even though we are only halfway through 2018, the City is starting the 2019 budget process. Staff will begin compiling data and crunching numbers in June. If you would like to see something added, please contact the City Manager for possible inclusion in the 2019 budget. The preliminary budget will be presented to Council on September 11th. Budget study sessions will be held Monday, September 17th and every Monday in October with public hearings set for October 9th and October 23rd.

WHAT YOU GET

How every \$1 you pay in CITY PROPERTY TAXES is spent:



2018 Total Property Tax Levy Per Year Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value

Property Tax Levy	Rate
City of Fircrest	\$1.95
State	\$1.88
County	\$1.18
City of Fircrest EMS	\$0.41
Regional Transit	\$0.23
Port of Tacoma (Other)	\$0.18
Flood Control Zone (Other)	\$0.08
Conservation Futures (Other)	\$0.04
Schools (State/Tacoma)	\$7.31
Total per \$1,000	\$13.26

Summer Water Conservation Tips

- Spreading a layer of organic mulch around plants retains moisture and saves water, time and money.
- Check the root zone of your lawn or garden for moisture before watering using a spade or trowel. If it's still moist 2 inches under the soil surface, you still have enough water (you can also check this by sticking your finger into the ground).
- Set a kitchen timer when watering your lawn or garden to remind you when to stop. A running hose can discharge up to 10 gallons a minute.
- Use sprinklers that deliver big drops of water close to the ground. Smaller water drops and mist often evaporate before they hit the ground.
- Water only when necessary. More plants die from over-watering than from under-watering.
- Dethatch and aerate your lawn at least once a year so water can reach the roots rather than run off the surface.



Toilet	Faucet	Shower	Clothes washer	Leak	Bath	Other*	Dishwasher
24%	20%	20%	16%	13%	3%	3%	2%
32.6 gphd	27.0 gphd	26.9 gphd	22.0 gphd	17.8 gphd	4.4 gphd	4.0 gphd	2.2 gphd

* The "Other" category includes evaporative cooling, humidification, water softening, and other uncategorized indoor uses.
Source: Residential End Uses of Water, AWWA April 2016.



- Avoid using the toilet as a trash can for facial tissues, etc.
- Take shorter showers and turn off the shower while soaping.
- Install low flow aerators and shower heads.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Run dish washers and clothes washing machines only when full and use the proper water level or load size selection on the washing machine.
- Repair leaking faucets and toilet (a leaking toilet can waste 200 gallons a day).
- Refrigerate a bottle of drinking water instead of letting a faucet flow until the water is cold enough to drink.
- Use a dishpan or plug the sink when rinsing fruits and vegetables. This water can then be used to water plants.
- Use a dishpan or plug the sink for washing and rinsing dishes.
- Add your garbage to the trash instead of putting it down the garbage disposal. Disposals use a great deal of water and add unnecessary solids to the sewer or septic system.



Serving the community since 1925

Summer Events

Strawberry Feed & Band Concert

June 24, 6-8pm

Listen to great music at the Ron Russo Pavilion at Fircrest Park while enjoying Strawberry Shortcake. Shortcake will be served at 5:30pm and the band will begin at 6pm. Cost is \$2.00 per shortcake.



National Night Out

Tuesday, August 7th, 2018

6-9pm

Fircrest Recreation Center and Park



We will be kicking off the event with sky divers dropping in from above and wrap up the evening with a fireworks show. There will be lots of family fun, displays, and interactive activities throughout the evening.

National Night Out is an opportunity to build neighborhood unity and strengthen the police and community partnership this is so important to the success of our community policing efforts. Please join us at the park for this fun-filled evening!



Fircrest Picnic and Rod Run

July 8, 10am-3pm

A wonderful tradition is back again to showcase over 300 cars. The Fircrest Kiwanis will be serving a great breakfast and burgers for lunch.

Movie & Picnic in the Park

July 20, 6pm (Movie starts at 9:00pm)

Join us for this year's feature presentation of Star Wars: The Last Jedi. The event starts at 6pm, so find your spot on the grass and have some fun playing frisbee, volleyball, and eating hot dogs prepared by the Fircrest Kiwanis. The movie is scheduled to start at 9pm.



Fircrest Fun Days

August 10, 5-9pm

August 11, 10am-10pm

Two days of fun you don't want to miss! Visit over 50 booths featuring local artists and businesses. Friday night festivities start with the Kiwanis Spaghetti Dinner and live music. Join us Saturday for the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast followed by kid's performances, reptiles and three great bands. Close out the evening with our annual Fircrest Fun Days Fireworks Show.

