

Town Topics



CITY COUNCIL

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Mayor's Message



When I last wrote about the pool and recreation center in the March edition, we had just hired ARC Architects and we were in the process of appointing a steering committee of Fircrest residents who volunteered to help guide the project. They've been very productive, and I want to share this update with you.

The City Council received valuable input from the steering committee and the architects and made some decisions in November:

We unanimously agreed to put a combined pool and recreation center replacement project on the ballot in April 2019. Voters will make the final decision.

We considered two design options for the pool, and while both versions included a "kiddie pool" we chose the design that separates it from the main pool.

If approved by voters, the project would be built in two phases. The pool construction would start as soon as the summer 2019 season ends, with the goal of opening the new pool in time for the 2020 season. Construction of the new recreation center would start a couple of years later.

With those decisions made, we were working at the time of this writing (in mid-November) to finalize the design and complete the cost estimates.

We are working hard to seek outside sources of funding to alleviate the burden on taxpayers. To date, we have secured a generous \$1 million grant from the Edwards Family Foundation, \$750,000 from the Washington Legislature for the pool replacement, and \$750,000 in City of Fircrest reserves. We are working on plans to request several million dollars from other philanthropic foundations, and we plan to ask for another grant from the Legislature for the community center portion of the project.

The pool and recreation center have been the centerpiece of our community since 1962. Public surveys conducted in 2017 and 2018 both showed very strong support for taking the steps necessary to ensure we have quality facilities for community use for years to come.

We will continue to post updated information at www.CityofFircrest.net under the "Up-To-Date Information" link.

I want to close by thanking everyone who served on the project steering committee, and everyone who took the time to take the surveys that influenced the design. This is not a City Council project. It's a city project.

I hope all of you have an enjoyable and fulfilling holiday season.

Hunter T. George
Mayor

2019 Utility Billing Rate Increases

This is a reminder that water, sewer, and storm drain rates will increase in 2019 as the final step of a 3-year plan to address infrastructure needs throughout the City of Fircrest.

The City had not raised these utility rates in at least eight years prior to the adoption of the 3-year plan in late 2016. The new rates will start effective Feb. 1, 2019 and you will begin to notice the increase on your April 2019 utility bill.

Rate adjustments for the water, sewer and storm drain utilities make the utilities sustainable, support the operation and maintenance of the utilities, and provide funding for capital improvements. Those projects include:

- Replacing the Alameda and Drake Street sewer lift stations.
- Repaying loans that were obtained to repair and replace the backyard sewer mains and 70- to 80-year-old pipelines.
- Repairing and replacing water mains, some of which are more than 70 years old.
- Painting and coating systems on the water tanks, which is necessary to preserve them.
- Improving the storm water outfall treatment system to help improve water quality where our storm water drains.

What can you expect? For Single Family Residential (SFR) within city limits, customers will notice a minimum increase of \$4.25 per month (\$8.50 for each billing cycle). Here is how that breaks down:

The "Water Ready to Serve" fee will increase \$1.50 (\$35.50 to \$37.00). Water usage is billed by cubic foot (cf) based on tiers.

- Tier 1 usage will increase \$0.0005 (from \$0.0104 to \$0.0109/cf)
- Tier 2 usage will increase \$0.0006 (from \$0.0157 to \$0.0163/cf)
- Tier 3 will increase \$0.0011 (from \$0.0261 to \$0.0272/cf)



Sewer Base fee will increase \$2.20 (\$81.20 to \$83.40)
 Sewer Treatment will increase \$3.80 (64.00 to \$67.80)
 Storm Drain fee will increase \$1.00 (\$33.50 to \$34.50)

These rate schedules can be found in Fircrest Municipal Code 21.04, 20.12, and 20.16. For more information, please call the Public Works Department at 253-564-8900.

City Offices Will Be Closed:

| | |
|---------------|------------|
| December 14th | 11:30-1:30 |
| December 24th | 12:00-5:00 |
| December 25th | Closed |
| December 31st | 12:00-5:00 |
| January 1st | Closed |



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City Manager's Corner



Hello Fircrest Residents,

A few months ago, I wrote about our Police Department and Municipal Court. For this Town Topics, I want to share some news about our court and introduce you to our Judge and Court Staff.

Earlier this year, the City of Ruston asked us if Fircrest was willing to provide Municipal Court services for their city. The City of Ruston's court facilities are outdated, and that city's leaders felt it was more cost effective to contract with another city rather than build a court facility. After many months of research, discussion and negotiation, the city councils of both cities approved a contract that takes effect Jan. 1, 2019.

Here in Fircrest, we are excited, and a little nervous, about this opportunity to work with Ruston in this capacity. We believe this partnership will be successful for both communities. We are able to take advantage of economies of scale in providing this service for Ruston while also getting a boost in court revenue. It has been gratifying to see our staff work through this transition with great professionalism.

This brings me to our Municipal Judge and Court staff. Judge John Miller has presided over Fircrest Municipal Court since 1995. He has been a resident of Fircrest for about 42 years, married for 46 years, and practiced law for 45 years. Judges

have a difficult job. Finding the balance between justice, fairness and mercy is a delicate balancing act, and Judge Miller seems to do it with ease. The city holds court every Wednesday from about 8:30-11:30. It is open to the public if you ever want to observe.

Our Court Administrator is Kristi Perry, who has worked in this capacity for two years and has worked for the city since 2012. She worked as a court clerk in Auburn and Fircrest prior to becoming the Court Administrator. Kristi is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the court and has done a great job managing the transition of taking on another city's Municipal Court.

She shares the credit with our two full-time court clerks, Erin Campbell and Gina Constanti-Eacrett. Erin has been with the city since 2010 and Gina joined us two years ago. In conjunction with taking on Ruston Municipal Court, the City of Fircrest has recently hired Susan Robinson as a part-time clerk, and we are excited for her to join our court staff. "It has been wonderful and meaningful to work with the Municipal Court staff who have been absolutely the best of any courts I've been around," Judge Miller says.

I agree with him. The City of Fircrest is well served by its professional Municipal Court staff, and I am confident they are ready for this next challenge.

Scott Pingel –City Manager

Holiday Safety Tips



The Holiday season is upon us and with that comes increased shopping. In the past several years, events such as Black Friday or Cyber Monday, coupled with companies like Amazon and eBay, have made online shopping very convenient. This year, more than ever, record numbers of packages will be delivered by UPS, FedEx and the US Postal Service to doorsteps across the country. The dark side of that is that each year there are increased numbers of thefts of packages from the doorsteps of unsuspecting victims. The following are some holiday crime prevention tips that the Fircrest Police Department encourages you to employ. These simple steps will help thwart porch pirates and outsmart doorstep grinchies.

Think about having your goods delivered to a more secure location such as your office, a local UPS store or an Amazon Locker.

- Customize your deliveries. Contact the carrier that is delivering your package by phone or online and specify where to leave your package – anywhere from the back door to behind a plant on your porch. "Out of sight, out of mind".
- Don't leave a note on the door stating when you will be home or where to place the package. Remember anyone can read those notes including criminals who now know where the package is and what time you will be gone from the house.
- Consider an alternate destination. Use a trusted neighbor or family member as a safe location if you won't be home. If you live in an apartment complex, check with the office and see if they will accept the package on your behalf.
- Request a signature and specify who can sign for it in your absence.
- Request a vacation hold. If you know ahead of time that you will be away you can request a hold usually up to 14 days.
- Reroute your packages even when they're already on the way. You can contact your carrier either by phone or online and reroute packages if necessary.
- If you are able, purchase the insurance. This will protect your package from damage during shipping, as well as theft.
- Place security stickers and yard signs in strategic areas. That can catch the attention of burglars and make them think twice about targeting you.

Our hope is that everyone has a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. Your safety is our priority. Call 9-1-1 immediately about all suspicious activity or criminal activity in progress.

John Cheesman-Chief of Police