

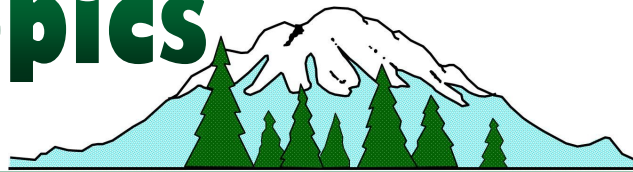
# City of Fircrest

# Town Topics

October 2020

## CITY COUNCIL

Hunter T. George, *Mayor*  
Brett Wittner, *Mayor Pro Tempore*  
David M. Viafore  
Shannon Reynolds  
Joe Barrentine  
Denny Waltier  
Jamie Nixon



## Mayor's Message



In June, the Fircrest City Council unanimously approved a proclamation that condemns systemic racism and declared our intention “to listen, to learn, to be willing to experience discomfort, to collaborate with community partners, and protect the Constitutional and human rights of every person who lives, works and visits our city.”

That first commitment – to listen – has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In mid-summer I wrote in this space that we were waiting for a safer time to gather in groups for community conversations. Not long after I wrote those words I spoke with some concerned community members and we agreed that we could wait no longer to start the conversation.

On a Saturday morning in August, Councilmember Joe Barrentine and I met with six residents in the pavilion at Fircrest Park. We wore masks and sat at separate tables to maintain social distancing. These six residents had contacted us in recent months to talk about social justice, so that’s why Joe and I reached out to them first. I am not going to name the residents here because each talked about deeply personal experiences, and I want to honor and respect that.

Joe and I did a lot of listening. We heard things that should make each of us uncomfortable:

- Racism is not just a “big city” problem. People of color in Fircrest experience racism in ways that most white people don’t notice. For example, they’ve been mistaken for “the help.” People cross the street to avoid them, and commit other micro-aggressions. As white people, we may not even be aware of these actions (known as “unconscious bias”), but people of color are extremely aware.
- Some white people think of Fircrest’s reputation as a speed trap – an annoyance to drive around and avoid. Other white people like the reputation because of its effect on

slowing drivers down as they pass through. But ask people of color about this. These six residents told us that people of color often avoid Fircrest because of a fear of being pulled over and treated unfairly. Is that true? I don’t know. But it’s their truth, and that matters.

- School choice offers lots of options for students and families, but a downside is it also creates self-segregation. High school students in Fircrest spread out among lots of schools (Wilson, Foss, Curtis, SOTA, SAMi, Bellarmine, Charles Wright, Annie Wright, Life Christian, etc). Knowing that, how can our police officers improve interactions and trust with our teens? We hope the new, larger and more modern community center will offer opportunities for teens to gather, but that won’t open until the end of 2021, so what else can we do in the meantime?
- It feels like every industry is talking deeply about systemic racism except police.
- Data makes the invisible visible. We need to analyze police and court data, and get updated demographics on how the makeup of Fircrest has changed.
- How do we view Fun Days and other city events through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens? Fircrest events should incorporate cultural awareness and celebrate our gifts.
- Fircrest Police officers do a great job of being in the schools every week (when we’re not in a pandemic) to give out awards and have fun with kids, which builds trusting relationships. But what about relationships with adults? Our National Night Out event is one of the best in the nation, but it only occurs once a year. What are other steps our officers can do throughout the year to improve community engagement, especially with populations that don’t trust police? What can we as residents do to support those interactions?

You may disagree with some of these statements. You might even be offended

by these statements. But to these six people, those statements are their truths, their perspectives, their experiences. We should not ignore them.

### Ideas for “next first steps”

I very much appreciate Police Chief John Cheesman’s efforts. As you’ll read elsewhere in this newsletter, our officers have undergone additional training, and our Police Department is adopting the use-of-force principles around the “8 Can’t Wait” initiative. A lot of work has been done in a relatively short period of time, and that’s a credit to the Chief and his officers.

Our six residents agreed that it’s important for our police officers to join the conversation. All of us have so much to learn from each other.

In addition, here are some other questions we’re asking ourselves at the City of Fircrest:

What are we doing to diversify the City’s workforce so that it better reflects the community it serves? Since institutional racism permeates every aspect of our society, what meaningful training can we offer to all city employees, not just police? How can we apply a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to our city events? What will police and court data tell us? How can we use our new recreation complex to reach more people and build deeper relationships? What changes can we make to our City Council meeting agendas to give the public a more efficient way to learn more and ask questions? Would community members be willing to serve on an advisory committee to keep the conversation going and vet more ideas?

This is a much longer column than usual, but it barely scratches the surface of a topic that affects us all. From the bottom of my heart I thank all of the residents who have reached out so far. This is a special place, and I know we are up to the huge challenges before us.

Hunter T. George, Mayor  
[hgeorge@cityoffircrest.net](mailto:hgeorge@cityoffircrest.net)



# Serving the Community Since 1925

## Words from Chief Cheesman



I have had the honor of working for the Fircrest Police Department for 38 years and I have been the Police Chief for over 21 years. During my 38 years in law enforcement, I have learned and seen firsthand the value of community policing in our City. I understand how close relationships build community trust and how it is our job as peace officers to help build and foster that trust. Forming strong relationships with our community makes for a stronger and safer community.

In May I was horrified as I watched the video where three Minneapolis Police Officers held down a handcuffed African-American man on the pavement next to a patrol car, with one officer with his knee on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes until Mr. Floyd died. This was one of the most disturbing and horrific things I have ever witnessed.

This incident was the spark that led to protests in our area and around the country demanding police reform and racial justice. We are paying attention. We have had some difficult conversations and talked about building relationships, trust, accountability, training, and inclusion. We also talked about the organization Campaign Zero, which works to educate and implement "policy solutions that are based on data, research and human rights principals." They created the "8 Can't Wait Campaign" to address 8 specific policing policies that are designed to reduce police violence. The policies are:

- Ban chokeholds and strangleholds
- Require officers to de-escalate situations
- Require officers to give warning before shooting
- Exhaust all other means before shooting
- Require officers to intervene
- Ban shooting at moving vehicles
- Require a force continuum
- Require comprehensive reporting of instances when officers use force

We have closely reviewed our policies and worked with our city attorney to make adjustments so they closely align with this initiative. The changes were embraced by all our officers.

Some of the other steps we have taken in the past few months include:

- Developed and joined Pierce County Force Investigation Teams (FIT), which are designed to ensure that deadly or potentially deadly use-of-force incidents will be independently investigated.
- Selected two community representatives who have volunteered to serve on the FIT Team: Yolanda Brooks and

Venus Dean-Bullinger, who will help ensure that any investigation will be performed in a manner that is thorough, fair, complete, and professional.

- All officers completed Crisis Intervention Training – including de-escalation and mental health training – sponsored by the Criminal Justice Training Commission.
- All officers completed firearms training that included de-escalation topics.
- All officers completed Shoot Don't Shoot Training – which included de-escalation training.
- All police staff watched training videos by Dr. Bryant Marks on bias and policing in America. Dr. Marks is a professor at Morehouse College and lead trainer for the National Training Institute on Race and Equity.
- Signed up through the FBI Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal to report the Fircrest Police Use of Force incidents into the National Database on a monthly basis.

Despite these items, there is clearly a lot of work to be done, as we must listen to and embrace the concerns being voiced. I assure you we will continue to work tirelessly to earn and maintain trust with our entire community.

I see our officers doing great things in our community every day as they strive to serve you in a positive fashion. Our officers have grown up in a culture knowing the difference in what we "can do" and what we "should do." Having a quality police force that is respectful and responsive to our community is dependent on a lot of things, including how we hire, how we train, and how we supervise. If you have contact with our officers you should be treated in a fair, equitable, and impartial manner in accordance with the law and without regard to demographics.

As a police agency, we understand that we cannot successfully do our jobs without community involvement. We pride ourselves on being an agency that listens to the public's concerns and we are committed to being responsive to the needs of the community and realize we can only be successful with our community's support. We have a professional organization that is filled with officers who truly care about their department and the community they serve.

We will continue to work hard as we strive to keep Fircrest the wonderful place it is to live, work, and play. If you have any concerns, comments, or suggestions that may assist us in enhancing the quality of your service, please do not hesitate to contact me at 253-565-1198.

John Cheesman  
Fircrest Police Chief

# Town Topics



## Special Thank You Edition

The Fircrest Police Department would like to thank the following people and businesses for their generous donation of time, talents and treasures. All their efforts make our City a safer and more enjoyable place to live.

Ahnalyse Glen-Leufroy	Derek Stansbury	Kevin Gollinger	Riley Girard
Alyssa Johnson	Dick Trask	Kevin Hansen	Riley Medley
American Family Insurance	Espresso Yourself	Kyrach Nguyen	Samantha Brown
Amy Blair	Fircrest Kiwanis	Larry & Dori Annoni	Sandi Trask
Andrew Bisbing	Frank & Carol Blair	Larry Lowery	Sarah Viafore
Anna Leach	Greg Bergstrom	Lauren Berg	Selena Byrd
Bob & Leslie Deal	Isiah Glen-Leufroy	Leanna Mason	Sherry Maenhout
Bonnie Viafore	Jake Varriano	Liberty Towing Co.	Shogun
Brynn Quesenberry	Janie Johnson	Lisa O'Day	Stella Pedroni
Caden Grant	Jasiah Glen-Leufroy	Lorrie Solara	Steve Schoettler
Carter Johnson	Jeffery Johnson	Luke Glen-Leufroy	TAPCO Credit Union
Chaplin Jeffrey Ries	Jim Marzano	Luke Viafore	Victor Celis
Charlie Bergstrom	Joe Darminio	Lynn Elliott	Walter & Nicole Channel
Charlotte Lowery	John Roberts	Mackenzie Sellas	Yolanda Brooks
Chris Roberts	Josh, Emily & Olivia Miller	Marcia Riler	
D & M Embroidery	Kalel Brown	Matt & Aimee Brown	
Dana, Sarah & Alyssa Cheesman	Kelsey Monaghan	Rhonda Edenhalm	
Dave Rockefeller	Kennedy Cox	Richard Trask Photography	



The Parks & Recreation team has an amazing group of volunteers. We are thankful for all their help in making our community events so special and fun!



Amy Rider	Chontofalsky Family	Jenny Huntsman	Nicolle Hall
Angela Tutton	Clifton Family	John Lewis	Oliver Stratton
Anthony & Christina Chelf	Cooper Fielding	Jordan Family	Pastor Greg Kaurin
Ayton Family	Councilmember Denny Waltier	Josh & Danae Dotolo	Rachel Bracali
b.well Fitness Studio	Councilmember Joe Barrentine	Josh Ricker	Randall Family
Barnett Family	Craig & Jill Hamilton	Karen Gower	Richard & Sandi Trask
Berkshire Hathaway	Curtis High School Key Club	Kathleen Weber	Rodenbeck Family
Bliss Creamery	Cutters Point Coffee	Kathy Owens & Kate Owens	Sarah Viafore
Bonnie & Bruce Viafore	Dianna Cox	Ken, Jake & Grant Schmidtke	Scott & Mary Mannering
Bryce Kalland	Donna O'Connor	Lacey Bierman	Scott Pingel
Carla Brown	Effie Stilnovich	Leslie Rider	Selena Byrd
Channel Family	Elisabeth Albers	Lis Saunders	Steve & Sue Schoettler
Cheryl Burlingame	Espresso Yourself	Lynne Dickson	Stonefeld Family
Chief John & Dana Cheesman	Fircrest Kiwanis	Magic in the PNW	T'wina Nobles
	Fircrest Towing	Mary Ruth Pape	Theresa Fouquette
	Foss High School Key Club	Mayor Hunter & Kathleen George	Tronson Family
	Hanford Family	Mimi's Tea	Westside Disposal
	Jack Viafore	Mosaic Real Estate	Westside Pizza
	Jeff Grover		Zeeb Family

# Serving the Community Since 1925

## City Manager's Corner



Hello Fircrest Residents,

For this edition of Town Topics, I want to make everyone aware of what we have done so far with the Business and Tenant Assistance grant program and what more is to come. Chief Cheesman and I also have two new police officers to introduce to you.

In July 2020, the City received a grant from the Department of Commerce for CARES Act funds for COVID-19 related costs. In order to take full advantage of the funds available, the City Council adopted a Business and Tenant Assistance grant program. Applications were due August 31<sup>st</sup>. We were able to provide grants to 29 businesses and 9 tenants totaling \$129,000. Since then, Governor Inslee has announced additional funds being made available to cities through the CARES Act funds provided to the State. The City of Fircrest is slated to receive an additional \$101,500. At the time of this writing, we are preparing to do a second round of business and rental assistance grants. By the time you read this, the program for round two will likely be up and running. Check the City's website for additional information at [www.cityoffircrest.net](http://www.cityoffircrest.net).

Bill O'Meara started with our Police Department Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2020. Officer O'Meara comes to us after 17 years

with the Vancouver Police Department. He brings a plethora of knowledge and experience as a police officer that is obvious from the first time you get to talk with him. His approach to police work and community policing fits well with the community policing and service-oriented environment Chief Cheesman continues to strive to model and establish in the Fircrest community.

The second officer we have to introduce is Eduardo Garcia. Officer Garcia comes to us from the Bothell Police Department. Officer Garcia was from the Dominican Republic before being raised in Massachusetts. His military service brought him and his family to our part of the world, and Chief Cheesman and I are excited that it did. Officer Garcia is bilingual (also speaking Spanish), which is a hole we have had in the department for a couple of years. Officer Garcia has a desire to really get to know the community and build on the good the department can do.

I hope you will welcome these officers to the community as you have the opportunity to meet them. We are happy to have a full department again to serve the community.

Scott Pingel  
City Manager



**Edwards Family Aquatic Center**