

Town Topics



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

Mayor's Message



This month I will complete my second 2-year term as Mayor, which makes this my last Town Topics column and an opportunity to reflect on how far we've come and where we are headed.

I looked through copies of the Town Topics newsletter from the past few years, and the December 2018 edition caught my eye. At that time I shared that the city was finalizing the design of a proposed new pool and community center. That was months before an incredible 79% of Fircrest voters approved the park bond, and before the Names family pledged \$4.15 million and the Edwards family pledged \$2 million to support the project. And that was before a dynamic group of residents created the privately-run Fircrest Parks and Recreation Foundation to support those vital services in perpetuity.

Three years later (including a 1-year delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic), we've had an outstanding first summer season in the new pool, and the community center is set to open soon, which will offer all sorts of opportunities for years to come.

Those are the big, exciting projects that are easy to notice and celebrate. Here are some others:

We are replacing all water meters with a modern system that will enable each of you to see in real time how much water you're using and also save the city a lot of time and expense manually reading the old meters. By the way, Fircrest continues to rank among the lowest utility rates (water + sewer + stormwater) in the region.

We have made thoughtful investments in the maintenance and operations of our streets and sidewalks. It's hard to highlight just one, but the new sidewalks and mid-block crosswalk on Emerson Street definitely improve pedestrian safety on a busy corridor.

City Manager Scott Pingel and Finance Director Colleen Corcoran worked with staff to build a 5-year financial forecasting model that will help protect the fiscal sustainability of our city.

All city staff went through a first round of diversity, equity and inclusion training, and the Police Department updated its use-of-force policies in a manner that paced it ahead of some of our peer agencies in the region. I know from talking with many of you about your lived experiences that we have much more work to do and I will continue advocating for more training and community conversations.

And finally, one of Fircrest's biggest accomplishments, was the way you looked out for each other during the pandemic. Neighbors engaged in acts of kindness big and small to support each other and our businesses, and that's part of what makes Fircrest special.

Looking ahead to 2022, we will welcome two new members – Nikki Bufford and Jim Andrews – to the seven-member Fircrest City Council. I thank former Councilmember Jamie Nixon, interim Councilmember Marc Rieke, and Councilmember Denny Waltier for honorable service to all who live, work, and play in Fircrest.

Whoever is selected as mayor in January will tell you more about what's in store. And I have two more years remaining in my term as a Councilmember to assist in any way that I can.

Being mayor has been an amazing experience. One of the best parts is that my kids actually think what I do is pretty cool! Our community investments now will pay dividends for all the kids in Fircrest for generations. Thank you for the honor of my life.

Hunter T. George, Mayor
hgeorge@cityoffircrest.net

Public Works



Fall and winter have arrived at Public Works and that means keeping the roads and storm systems clear and clean. It would be most helpful if the residents assisted us in keeping the leaves off of the storm grates and not blowing or throwing debris into the streets as this tends to be the biggest cause of flooding. Our street sweeper will be out to try to keep up with the fall debris. Residents along with Public Works share the responsibility to keep the storm drains clear. It takes all of us working together to keep our streets clear.



As it gets colder, we may get some ice and snow and we will then be deicing the streets and following our snow removal schedule as we have done in the past years.

As always, if you have questions or need to report any problem areas, please give us a call at 253-564-8900. If you call after hours this will go to an answering service and it will report the problem.

Serving the Community Since 1925

City Manager's Corner



Hello Fircrest Residents,

As we near the close of the year, I want to thank our outgoing City Councilmembers for their service, discuss the Community Center opening, and provide helpful information about property taxes.

While two new City Councilmembers were elected in November - congrats to Nikki Bufford and Jim Andrews - we have three departing City Councilmembers to thank: Denny Waltier, Jamie Nixon, and Marc Rieke.

Councilmember Waltier is completing his third term this month after taking office in 2010. He has seen the City through good times and major challenges during his 12 years on the Council. He took office during the Great Recession, and his longtime management experience in the private sector provided excellent insight as the City navigated through that difficult time. More recently, Councilmember Waltier has participated from start to finish on the pool and community center project, which became a priority during the development of the 2014 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. He also helped work through upgrading water and sewer mains, especially through the "pipe-bursting" process that saved the City millions of dollars, along with seeing each of the City's sewer pump stations updated. He has been an active City Councilmember for City Manager transitions, administrative changes, municipal code updates, major and minor parks projects, and countless other City accomplishments.

Councilmember Nixon was elected in 2017 for a 2018 - 2021 term. He resigned in June 2021 due to a career change that affected his ability to serve. Councilmember Nixon helped move the pool and community center project forward, along with obtaining \$1.75 million in grants from the State Legislature for the project. He also helped the Council adjust to operating under pandemic restrictions, and he helped pass the City's initial programs to assist businesses and renters with CARES Act funds.

Councilmember Marc Rieke was appointed in late June to fill the seat vacated by Councilmember Nixon. Councilmember Rieke has been an engaged and active leader in his short time on the City Council. He has been an effective Council liaison to the City's Planning and Building division, and he provided thoughtful input during the process of writing the City's 2022 budget. Councilmember Rieke also helped approve the City's updated assistance grants program as a part of utilizing the American Rescue Plan Act funds the City received from the federal government.

Community Center: As of this writing in November, we are anticipating that the Community Center will be ready to open by early February. Keep an eye on the City's website and official Facebook page for updates as we get closer to completion in the coming weeks. Supply chain challenges with some materials have pushed completion back several weeks from the original target of a December opening.

Property taxes: Having just completed the process for the City's 2022 Budget, I thought it would be helpful to share some information on where your property taxes go. Only about 22% of what a Fircrest homeowner pays in property taxes goes to the City of Fircrest. In fact, as you will see in the graphic below, nearly half of every dollar goes to local schools. In 2021, the average homeowner in Fircrest paid roughly \$11.60 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Of that \$11.60, \$1.48 goes to the City of Fircrest regular tax levy, 50 cents goes to the City's EMS levy, and 55 cents goes to the City's Park Bond levy for the pool and community center project. For a third consecutive year, the City Council declined the option under state law to increase its property tax revenues by 1%. However, it's important to note that your tax bill may still increase due to collections by the state and your school district.

Scott Pingel
City Manager



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Fircrest Police



DON'T LET THE PORCH PIRATES RUIN YOUR HOLIDAYS

It's that time of year again. Everyone is gearing up for the holidays, which means online shopping and packages being mailed to your home. However, when the delivery trucks start rolling so do the porch pirates. In fact, according to theft statistics, each year more than 23 million (shocking!) Americans report packages stolen from their doorsteps. Sadly, Fircrest is not immune to this problem. So, let's make sure it's a happy holiday by using these amazing tips to stop thieves from walking away with your packages.

Use a Smart Package Locker. If you are ordering from Amazon, you have the option of having your package sent to a secure locker near you. You can choose a locker located near you, have your package delivered there and Amazon will send you a secure code to open your locker. There are lots of locations including most Safeway Stores.

Have Packages Delivered to Your Work. If you work during typical delivery times, having your packages delivered to your work may be a great option. Of course, you should check with your boss first. This guarantees that the package will be brought inside to an employee instead of sitting on your porch for hours unattended.

Have Packages Delivered to a Friend. You could also have your packages delivered to the home of a relative that you

know will be home.

Install a Door Camera. While this won't stop anyone from taking things from your porch it may deter them. Install smart security cameras at your front door and post signs stating that the area is under surveillance. Even if it fails to deter thieves, you will have them on video, which enables officers to track them down.

Require Signature on Delivery. This means the driver cannot just drop the package off at your door and walk away. Someone must be home to sign for and accept the package. If you miss the driver, they generally will leave a note on your door letting you know when they will attempt redelivery OR the location of the facility you can pick up your package from. This is not the most convenient option, but better than losing that hard won Cyber Monday find.

Reroute or reschedule. Both FedEx and UPS have the option to sign up for a package tracking service. If you notice you won't be home for the delivery you can reroute or reschedule it from your computer or smart phone. Be aware that they typically charge you for this service.

Let's work together to make this a bright and happy holiday season for our entire community. If you see something, say something! Call 911 to report any suspicious activity. Happy Holidays from your Fircrest Police Department.

Chief John Cheesman

Who Do I Call?

Do you have a question, but are not sure which department to call? From street sweepers to pool hours, fence permits to alarm permits, there is a City staff person who would be happy to speak with you. To help point you in the right direction, we have listed each department, with some of their most frequently asked about topics.

City Hall: 253-564-8901

City Manager, City Council dates, Finance, agenda items, public disclosures

Municipal Court: 253-564-8922

Tickets, court dates, impounds

Public Works: 253-564-8900

Water, sewer, streets, utility billing, sidewalks

Planning and Building: 253-564-8902

Remodels, additions, repair, fences, nuisances, trees, land use. Passports

Police Department Emergency: 911

Active crime, suspicious activity, any other emergency

To report a crime NOT in progress: 253-287-4455

Police Department Non-Emergency: 253-565-1198

Alarm permits, parking concerns, follow-up

Parks and Recreation: 253-327-1213

Hours, activities, sign-up, park concerns

Don't see your issue?

Call **City Hall** at **253-564-8901** and we will be happy to direct you to the right person.

OTHER AGENCIES OUTSIDE OF THE CITY OF FIRCREST:

Westside Disposal: 253-564-3212

Animal Care & Control: 253-627-PETS

Humane Society: 253-383-2733

Puget Sound Energy: 888-225-5773

Tacoma Power: 253-502-8600

Serving the Community Since 1925

Fircrest Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Department is anxiously preparing to welcome the community into the new Roy H. Murphy Community Center in early 2022. Initially anticipated to open in December 2021, shipping and manufacturing delays set the project back several weeks. Although considering all of the factors that could have taken place, the overall project has gone fairly smooth. We are looking forward to opening to the public in early February. Once open, we will welcome our K-3rd Youth Basketball league into the facility shortly followed by a variety of recreation programming and the Grand Opening Celebration.

A gathering place for all ages, The Roy H. Murphy community center is designed to promote immense usage. The rooms and areas inside the facility will offer a variety of spaces that are large enough to accommodate a conference or small enough for a team meeting. The Roy H. Murphy Community Center, will offer a place to meet and connect, whether for education, leisure, fitness, or recreation.

Please visit our website for up to date information about programs, events and other activities happening within the Parks & Recreation Department. If you haven't already created an online registration profile, you can do so now visiting the following website : <https://www.cityoffircrest.net/government/parks-and-recreation/>

A Word from TPU

Recovering Together: Useful COVID-19 resources to manage utility bill payments and balances

As we move forward through the phases of pandemic recovery together, we know many customers in our community struggle financially. Here are several resources available to help:

- Information about limited federal and other relief funds for utility bills available to Tacoma and Pierce County residents
- Expanded residential utility payment assistance so more households can qualify to receive additional help
- Updates about when disconnects and late fees will resume
- Multiple ways to pay your bill, including online and Pay Box locations
- Extended payment arrangements and waiver of late fees
- Tips for lowering electricity and water use at your home or business

We encourage anyone struggling to make payments to take advantage of those resources before resuming our normal billing practices.

Visit [MYTPU.org/COVID19/](https://www.mytpu.org/COVID19/) for up-to-date information

Upcoming Events!

Lights of Fircrest Holiday Display Contest

Enjoy the beautiful holiday displays created by our residents throughout our City for the month of December.

Sponsored by Valez Financial Planning, the Kiwanis Club of Fircrest Parks & Recreation

Fircrest Holiday Lights -Stroll Around Fircrest

Take an evening stroll to enjoy the Lights of Fircrest. Sign up to participate and receive TWO holiday light necklaces to wear on your stroll.

Sponsored by Fircrest Pharmacy and Fircrest Parks & Recreation

Coming up in 2022

Daddy Daughter Dance – February 11th (date subject to change)

Medallion Madness - March 17th

Fish N Fun – March 26th

City Buildings Will Be Closed:

December 24th— Observation of Christmas Day

December 31st—Observation of New Year's Day

January 17th— Martin Luther King Day



Check out our Up To Date Information webpage www.cityoffircrest.net/updates for the latest information, including current meeting agendas, minutes, resolutions, ordinances, and project updates.