

# City of Fircrest Town Topics

December 2023

## CITY COUNCIL

Brett Wittner, *Mayor*  
Joe Barrentine, *Mayor Pro Tempore*  
David M. Viafore  
Shannon Reynolds  
Hunter T. George  
Nikki Bufford  
Jim Andrews



### City Manager Corner: Dawn Masko



Happy Holidays from all of us here at the City! The end of the year is a time to wind down and reflect on the past year. It is a time to recognize accomplishments, look back on the journey of the past year, and set goals for the upcoming year. This past year has brought continued changes, challenges, and growth to the City in terms of how we operate. Unforeseen events, significant staffing transitions, and mandates beyond our control have necessitated continuous adaptation to maintain a high level of service to our community, meet statutory requirements, and plan for our future.

2023 has been a busy year for our City, and despite many changes, we have achieved much. The City hired a new City Manager, a Community Development Director, and a part-time Information Technology Coordinator. The Police Department had a change in leadership, with Chief Ron Schaub taking over for Chief John Cheesman, who retired after 40 years of service to Fircrest. We hired two Police Officers, and are close to hiring another. Other employees have stepped up to fill voids created by staffing transitions. It has undoubtedly been a year of rebuilding!

But wow, what a year it's been! Some highlights from 2023 include:

- We celebrated the first anniversary of our beautiful Roy H. Murphy Community Center, which has become a hub for various activities, celebrations, and events.
- Recreation programs and community events saw a record number of participants. Our Recreation and Parks staff really outdid themselves this year with another fantastic lineup of events, including the Strawberry Festival, Fircrest Picnic & Rod Run, Fircrest Fun Days, Concerts & Markets in the Park, Haunted Trails, and Scarecrows & Skeletons of Fircrest. The year will finish on a festive note with our Annual Tree Lighting and the Lights of Fircrest outdoor holiday displays.
- We completed numerous street, sidewalk, and utility repairs and improvements, contributing to the functionality and safety of the City's infrastructure, and Public Works acquired a bucket truck, enabling efficient maintenance and repairs.
- The Fircrest Park tennis court resurfacing project has been completed, along with enhancements to the Fircrest Park athletic field. These improvements will enhance playability for users.
- Significant progress has been achieved on the Comprehensive Plan Update, and the Whittier Park Master Planning process is underway, both of which will guide the City forward into the future.
- Through enhanced social media platforms and a weekly update from the City Manager, we have endeavored to strengthen communications with our residents.

My first months as City Manager have been packed with meeting fantastic people, engaging in thoughtful strategic conversations, hiring excellent staff, and poring over spreadsheets (I love a good spreadsheet)! Developing an effective working relationship with City Council and the leadership team has been a priority, as well as ensuring open, transparent communications. I remain humbled and delighted to be in this role with this amazing community, and I am thrilled with the work that we've been able to accomplish in the second half of this year.

As we near the close of the year, I want to thank outgoing City Councilmember Joe Barrentine and retiring Municipal Court Judge John Miller for their service to the City. Both have made significant contributions to our community.

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

# Serving the Community Since 1925

## City Manager Corner Continued

Councilmember Barrentine joined the Fircrest City Council in 2020 and has been an engaged and active leader. He has been Mayor Pro Tempore and the liaison to various City departments during his tenure. He has been a passionate advocate for our parks, recreation programs, and community events and helped organize the Fircrest Parks and Recreation Foundation, which will have a lasting impact on our community for generations to come. Thank you, Councilmember Barrentine, for your dedication and service – you will be missed!

Judge John Miller has presided over the Fircrest Municipal Court since 1995 and is a long-time City resident. Judge Miller's balance of justice, fairness, and compassion has earned him the respect of prosecutors and defense attorneys alike over his 28 years of exemplary years on the bench. Judge Miller has also presided over the Ruston Municipal Court since 2019, when the City of Ruston contracted with Fircrest for municipal court services, and was instrumental in ensuring the success of the transition. Thank you, Judge Miller! Your City family will greatly miss your wisdom, dedication, and sense of humor!

To the City of Fircrest team – thank you for all you do to make Fircrest such an excellent community! And, of course, thank you to our residents for your feedback and support. All of us at the City consider it an honor to serve you each and every day.

I am proud of the work our staff has done and will continue to do as we enter the new year. It is my honor to serve as your City Manager, and I look forward to the coming year.

## Police



Traffic-related concerns like speeding and aggressive driving continue to be a major concern in our community. I hear it at community events, the City Council meetings, and from individual citizens. We will continue to focus on traffic enforcement as one prong to improving traffic safety. Personal accountability and responsibility for individual driving behavior is another.

Drivers are more aggressive in their driving behavior and during interactions with our officers than I can remember in my 29-year career. While using BWC (Body Worn Cameras) tends to exonerate our officers quickly when they are accused of discourteous behavior, it still degenerates the relationship between law enforcement and our community.

We are stepping up our enforcement efforts, which will, unfortunately, catch both residents and non-residents of Fircrest. We will focus on speed, failure to stop at red lights or stop signs, school zone violations, cell phone usage, and expired vehicle licensing.

Our department is committed to the impartial policing of our community. This is a polite reminder to every resident to obey all the traffic laws and, if contacted, be respectful and courteous to our officers. They are only addressing your community concerns.

## Planning & Building

It has been a busy few months for the Planning & Building Department. We are currently completing several large initiatives:

- Final Design Review and Demolition Permit for the Prose Project/Goat Property at 2119 Mildred Street West.
- Editing the initial draft of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan.
- Applying for a wide variety of state grants – including planning for climate change, electric vehicle charging stations, and different housing types for those looking to downsize, but still remain in Fircrest.
- Reviewing code enforcement requests – typically on over-height vegetation, temporary signs, and unpermitted work.



Email the Community Development Director  
At [mnewman@cityoffircrest.net](mailto:mnewman@cityoffircrest.net)  
Or stop by City Hall to say hello.



Subscribe to Comprehensive Plan  
Updates

# Serving the Community Since 1925

## Parks & Recreation:



### 2023 Parks Project Update

In 2023, the City of Fircrest achieved significant milestones. In 2020, we secured a substantial \$16,000 grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office to resurface the Fircrest Park Tennis Courts.

Historically, the courts were primarily used for tennis, with one pickleball court lined on the far east court. During the grant application, we didn't anticipate the surge in pickleball's popularity, but over the past three years, pickleball participation has grown by an average of 160%. As this is a new development, we are still determining the best approach for programming the courts, managing shared usage between the two net sports, and ensuring harmony among park visitors and the neighborhood.

Also in 2020, we applied for and successfully secured a \$158,515 grant from RCO to renovate the natural turf at the south end of Fircrest Park. This project aims to create a more uniform surface, enhancing the experience for field sports and community events for years to come.

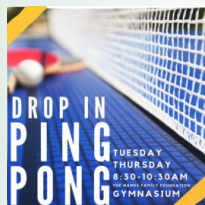
Furthermore, we've launched the Whittier Park Master Plan process, marking a pivotal moment for our community. This event provides residents with a powerful platform to influence the park's future design and features, and their input will be instrumental in shaping the very essence of our neighborhood.

### Winter Programming at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center

We're excited to present a diverse range of programs and activities this winter at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center. Our adult programming features fitness activities like Gentle Hatha Yoga, Chair Yoga, Drop-in Pickleball, and Drop-in Table Tennis. Thanks to the generous donation from the Edwards Family Foundation, we were able to subsidize several Senior Trips and the Senior Mornings in the Gathering Room. For community members aged 65 and above, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM offer a chance to enjoy local freshly brewed coffee, donuts, and the daily newspaper.

Preschool-aged kids have various options, including dance classes, Tot Story time, Tot Gym, Skyhawks Sports Clinics, and STEM-based Snapology programs. Registration for our 4 & 5-year-old Pee Wee Soccer program opens in January. Keep an eye on our website in December for more details about upcoming afterschool and teen programs for 2024.

The Gym will be bustling this winter as we launch our second basketball season in the Names Family Foundation Gymnasium. Elementary-aged kids registered for this basketball league will be participating in practices and games from Monday through Saturday in the Community Center Gym.



### Facility Rentals

Many of our community members have already had the pleasure of utilizing the reservable spaces within the new Roy H. Murphy Community Center. Our community center boasts a diverse range of spaces suitable for various gathering sizes. To begin the process of renting a facility, the first step is to create an online RecDesk Account if you don't already have one. Once your account is set up and approved, you can access the City of Fircrest RecDesk site to review specific details about all our available spaces.

Once you've found a space that suits your needs, our real-time availability calendar will display the dates and times that are open. After selecting your desired date, you'll be prompted to complete and sign the rental agreement. Reservation approval can take up to 10 business days. We are currently taking reservations for community center rooms, party room and outdoor pavilions for January-May 2024. Summer 2024 Pool and Party Room rentals will begin February 2024.

Our office staff is readily available to assist you with the RecDesk account and Facility Rental process. You can visit us or give us a call at the front desk, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM at 253-564-8177.



# Serving the Community Since 1925

## Public Works:



Fall and winter have arrived here in the PNW and the Fircrest Public Works team works diligently to keep the storm systems clear. Our street sweeper is out, following the posted schedule Street Sweeping Map, to combat the “fall” debris. Public Works staff encourage residents to not blow leaves and other yard debris into the streets, as plugged storm drains are the leading contributor to flooding streets in the City. Residents along with Public Works share the responsibility to keep storm drains clear. It takes all of us working together to keep our streets free of debris and safe for all.

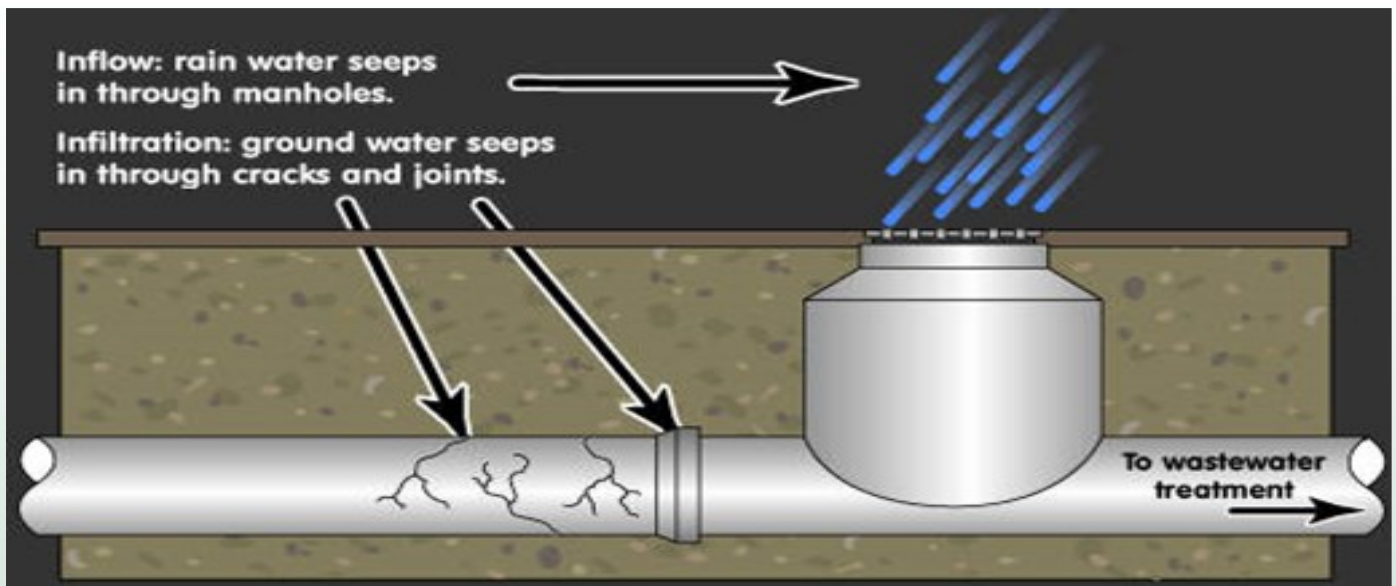
As temperatures drop, we may see snow and ice impact our city streets. Public Works staff can proactively apply salt brine to pretreat roads and/or reactively fight compact snow and ice along with use of our two plow trucks. Snow and Ice removal schedules will be followed as in years past.

The City of Fircrest (COF) owns and operates its wastewater conveyance system. All wastewater is pumped to the City of Tacoma for treatment. The City maintains a positive partnership with Tacoma Environmental Services, and as part of this partnership, Fircrest is committed to an ongoing Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) reduction program.

A sewer system is one of the most valuable assets in an urban area. After years of operating, these infrastructures need to be repaired or replaced. Inflow and infiltration (I&I) are two major problems in a separate sewer system (which is designed to convey household wastewater to the Wastewater Treatment Plant). Inflow represents the precipitation entering sewers from illicit connections of roof downspouts and yard drains. Apart from household connections, leaky manhole covers and misconnections of storm drains and local creeks may contribute to a high proportion of rainwater inflow. Infiltration represents the water intruding sewers through pipe cracks or loose joints.

I&I causes different types of problems, including decreasing available hydraulic capacity of sewers, urban flooding and consequent public health hazards, high pumping costs and energy usage, and accelerating structural deterioration.

It is not permissible to connect roof downspouts to side sewer, sewer main, or stormwater mains. Connections to stormwater mains or catch basins can impact the structural integrity of those systems. The City does allow for downspout splash pads and/or daylighting roof downspouts at the gutter line of the road. In some scenarios a drywell (underground injection control system) may be permissible.



The Fircrest Municipal Code (FMC) states in chapter 20.04.160 Violations of plumbing or sewage standards.  
<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Fircrest/#!/Fircrest20/Fircrest2004.html#20.04.160>

If you have questions, please call Public Works at (253) 564-8900 or email at [publicworks@cityoffircrest.net](mailto:publicworks@cityoffircrest.net)

***Join us! City Council Meetings are held the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m. Council Study Sessions are the 3rd Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. & Planning Commission Meetings are the 1st Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.***