

Shannon Reynolds, *Mayor*
Nikki Bufford, *Mayor Pro Tempore*
David M. Viafore
Brett Wittner
Karen Mauer-Smith
Hunter T. George
Jim Andrews

Town Topics



City Council Spotlight—Nikki Bufford



Hello Fircrest! As we welcome the new year, we also welcome a new council member! Karen Mauer-Smith was elected to position 4, and her term runs from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027. Brett Wittner and Hunter George were re-elected to their positions and began new four-year terms. And at our January 9th council meeting Shannon Reynolds and I were unanimously selected by our Council colleagues to serve a two-year term as Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore (deputy mayor), respectively.

We have an exciting year ahead of us! Our Parks & Rec team has 14 community events and numerous recreation activities scheduled throughout the year. These events are made possible thanks to hundreds of volunteer hours provided by members of our community. Having participated behind the scenes for multiple events, including Haunted Trails and Fun Days, I continue to be in awe of the amount of work it takes to complete a successful event. Volunteers are always needed. Please consider joining me as a member of the Fircrest volunteer team!

In 2025 Fircrest will celebrate its 100th anniversary as a city. Our centennial committee, chaired by Councilmember David Viafore, will spend this year planning for our 2025 centennial celebration. More information and opportunities to get involved will be shared in the coming months.

February is Black History Month, a time to recognize the achievements of Black Americans and their role in U.S. history. Numerous events and activities are planned around the region during the month. There are also virtual activities available through the Buffalo Soldiers Museum, Washington State History Museum, and other platforms. In Fircrest, a community-led event will take place on February 25th at 1 PM highlighting local Black history. I encourage residents to join me in observing Black History Month by attending an event or activity in February. There is so much to see and do this year.

I hope to see you at an event soon! - Nikki

Police: A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



In my brief tenure, I have noticed positive attributes about Fircrest, the “community.” First, the community is engaged. Whether at the city council meeting, a community meeting about the Whittier Park Master Plan, or attending Fircrest Fun Days and National Night Out, community members are actively engaged in their local community. I was astounded at how many families stood near their homes to watch the Santa Sleigh pass by for just a moment. It was heartwarming to see.

I have been impressed with how much activity I see daily. People are out walking, playing pickleball, using the park, or grabbing coffee together at Espresso Yourself. I look forward to seeing the large crowds this summer as people enjoy the pool, city parks, and community center. It is incredibly encouraging to see people engaging in life beyond their residences.

As we leave 2023 behind and look forward to an eventful 2024, I encourage people to connect with their neighbors and friends. Presidential election years are always eventful, and tensions tend to rise as we discuss complex topics like politics. I encourage everyone to engage in these difficult topics in a respectful manner. Assume positive intent.

Relearning the social skill of civility may be the greatest challenge of our time. Social media does not help develop these skills. I would argue that it reinforces our baser impulses. Stay involved in your community. Communities grow when we look out for each other and consider what is in everyone’s best interest. Dr. Martin Luther King said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

-Chief Ronald Schaub

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Fircrest Parks and Recreation

Fircrest Park Athletic Field Improvement Project

With financial assistance from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation office we recently replaced the natural grass at the south end of Fircrest Park. Our contractors were hard at work trying to beat the rain, restoring the natural grass athletic field at the south end of Fircrest Park last fall. This project's primary goals include achieving a uniform field surface and establishing an even stand of natural grass. The state is contributing \$158,515.00, which is 50% of the cost associated with this project. The fencing will remain in place until the spring after the contractor conducts their initial rounds of fertilizing and mowing on the new sod making things ready for spring and summer activities.

Whittier Park Master Plan

Over 50 community members actively participated in the second outreach session for the Whittier Master Plan held on December 14th at 6:30 PM in the Community Center. At this open house, the city's consultant, AHBL, introduced preliminary concepts for the Whittier Park Master Plan Project. The meeting was split into two parts: a quick presentation of the concepts, followed by an open house format session, with informational boards and staff present to answer questions and receive comments. During the open house, the public was encouraged to provide feedback on comment forms and sticky notes, and through a dot exercise. These invaluable contributions from the community will steer the creation of the Whittier Park Master Plan, ensuring it resonates with the wishes and desires of Fircrest residents. You can find project information by visiting the web address for the Whittier Master Plan Project. <https://www.cityoffircrest.net/government/parks-and-recreation/parks/whittier-park-master-plan/>

Discover Exceptional Event Spaces in Fircrest!

Fircrest invites you to explore our versatile rental rooms and spaces available at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center, Edwards Family Aquatic Center, Fircrest Park, and Whittier Park. Secure your spot by booking early as reservation approvals may take up to 10 business days

Exciting news! Summer 2024 Pool and Party Room reservations open on Wednesday, February 22nd at 12:00 PM. Don't miss out on these sought-after spots! Apply for a facility rental, access detailed information, and check availability conveniently at fircrest.recdesk.com.

Have questions about planning a memorable event, be it a wedding, a grand family gathering, or simply seeking more details? Reach out to us at 253-564-8177. Let us guide you seamlessly through your event planning journey.

Activities and Programs

Start the new year off with activities at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center! Our website hosts a wealth of information covering an array of classes and programs, including invigorating Barre sessions and Wednesday Workouts Basketball Training.

BARRE

Led by the adept instructor, Patricia Rubke, our Barre sessions offer an energizing experience, allowing you to elevate your fitness journey while fostering a harmonious mind-body connection. Discover the transformative power of Barre—a dynamic fusion of Pilates, yoga, and ballet. Engage in low-impact isometric movements crafted to bolster balance, core stability, and upper body strength

WEDNESDAY WORKOUTS

Does your K-8th grader enjoy basketball? Triple Impact Basketball training sessions start back up in March with Wednesday Workouts. Join our specialized K-8th Grade basketball development program for an exclusive opportunity to enhance your child's basketball proficiency. Under the guidance of Tacoma's own Arvin Mosley Jr. and his seasoned coaching team, K-8th graders will participate in a structured program tailored to elevate skills and basketball intelligence.



Visit our Parks & Recreation webpage for up-to-date information on all of our programs, events, and facility rentals.

<https://www.cityoffircrest.net/government/parks-and-recreation/>

Roy H. Murphy Community Center Phone: 253-564-8177

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

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Social Media Update

We're thrilled to share some big news with you! The city's original Facebook page has transitioned to become the official "Fircrest Parks and Recreation" page. There, you'll find all the latest updates, events, and information about our parks, recreation programs, and community activities. Get ready for a feed full of fun, recreation and events!

For any Police, Public Works, or general city updates follow the new "City of Fircrest" page on both Facebook and Instagram!



@cityoffircrest @fircrestparksandrec

Planning and Building

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The City of Fircrest is updating its' Comprehensive plan, which outlines a vision and goals and policies that guide the City's land use, housing, transportation, capital facilities, and parks and recreation for the next 20 years. You are invited to help review the draft 2024 Fircrest Comprehensive Plan, which the Planning Commission is currently reviewing as well. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.cityoffircrest.net/2024-comp-plan/>



Please use the QR code to sign up for email updates.

PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

- Permit Coordinator Kristin Singh issued 214 permits. The majority were mechanical permits, followed by building permits, and plumbing permits.
- Passport Specialist Laura Thompson and Permit Coordinator Singh processed a staggering 2,307 passport appointment requests this year!
- Code Enforcement handled 31 cases total and was able to close 30 cases – achieving a 97% voluntary compliance rate. A majority of the cases involved temporary yard signs/political signs.
- The Planning Commission continues to review Missing Middle Housing amendments. This is a state law requiring the City to plan for duplexes and accessory dwelling units in residential areas to increase housing supply.
- The 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update for Year 1 is complete. Year 2 will involve several opportunities for public participation. Please use the QR Code below to sign up for updates and stay involved.

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Public Works: 2024 UTILITY BILLING RATE INCREASES

On November 28, 2023, the City Council held a public hearing to receive comments on a Proposed Water Rate Adjustment. On December 12, 2023, the City Council adopted a 4.5% water rate increase. The new rates are effective February 1, 2024, and you will notice the increase on your April 2024 utility bill.

Rate adjustments help support water utility operation and maintenance costs and provide funding for capital improvements.

What can you expect? For Single Family Residential (SFR) within city limits, customers will notice a minimum increase on your water base charge of \$1.73 for each bi-monthly (2-month) billing cycle. Here is how that breaks down:

- The “Water Ready to Serve” fee will increase by \$1.73 (from \$38.49 to 44.22).
- Water usage is billed by cubic foot (cf) based on the following tiers and is not included in the minimum increase above. Water usage charges will increase as follows:

- Tier 1: (1 - 1,000 / cf)

§ Charges will increase by \$0.0005/cf (from \$0.0113 to \$0.0118/cf)

- Tier 2: (1,001 - 4,000 / cf)

§ Charges will increase by \$0.0008/cf (from \$0.0169 to \$0.0177/cf)

- Tier 3: (4,000 - + / cf)

§ Charges will increase by \$0.0013/cf (from \$0.0288 to \$0.0301/cf)



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

Small Business Spotlight:

Fircrest has many small businesses throughout town which make our great city what it is. The City would like to recognize these local establishments in the Town Topics. If you, or someone you know has a small business and would like to be featured in our Small Business Spotlight please reach out!

Email slee@cityoffircrest.net or call [\(253\) 564-8901](tel:2535648901) if you are interested or have any questions.

