

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of April 16, 2009*

Volume 3, No. 4

April 17, 2009



*Town Manager  
Gary Broad*

## **Can We Talk?**

Sir Francis Drake residents are deserving of praise for the decorum they displayed last night in commenting on the proposed Sir Francis Drake Boulevard pathway. The pathway plan is certainly of substantial importance to these property owners as it will run within the Town's right-of-way directly past their houses. While residents had a number of questions on pathway design, location, material, parking, drainage and even why was the Town "rushing" this project, I was struck by their calm, thoughtful, non-accusatory demeanor as they commented and questioned the project engineer, staff and Council on the project.

The best solutions do emerge from a process that allows for open back and forth dialogue. Last night the Council voted to hold a public workshop to give these residents additional opportunity for input on the project. Town employees have been working on ways to improve communication with residents. Let me know if there's anything on your mind. My office number is 453.1453 extension 107. My cell phone number is 747.2311.

## **Council Sets May 2 SFD Pathway Public Workshop**

The Council considered plans for a 4-foot wide asphalt pedestrian pathway along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Based on public input at the December Council meeting, the pathway begins on the east side of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard just north of Ross Terrace Drive, crosses over to the west side at the Lagunitas Road intersection, and terminates at Bolinas Avenue.

The pathway will be constructed entirely in the Town right-of-way and will necessitate the reconstruction of portions of several private driveways and some removal of trees and shrubs within the right-of-way. In response to some residents concerns related to parking, vehicle access, stormwater runoff, aesthetics and landscaping, the Council agreed to hold a "walking" public workshop on Saturday, May 2, for residents to meet with the Town and project engineers to discuss issues affecting individual properties. The meeting will start at 10 a.m. at Town Hall and proceed along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.



The design and construction of the pathway is being funded by a \$200,000 federal grant. In order to secure funding, the Council approved the pathway plans, subject to future refinement based on public input. Construction must be completed this year to avoid funding forfeiture.

## **Housing Element Strategies Discussed**

Project Planner Christine O'Rourke presented the Town's draft Housing Element 2009-2014 and solicited public and Council feedback on various strategies to meet the Town's regional housing need allocation. The Town has been allocated, through the Association of Bay Area Government's planning process, a total of 27 new housing units for the 2007-2014 planning period. Four units have already been approved, which leaves 23 new units, of which only 8 may be new single family homes developed on vacant lots.



*The Council discussed redevelopment of its employee housing at 6 Redwood Drive.*

The Council discussed ways to increase second unit production, including relaxing development standards so the Council can more easily approve larger units and new second story units. Staff also suggested adopting incentives to encourage property owners to voluntarily deed-restrict their second units to be affordable to very low income households. A one-bedroom second unit affordable to a two-person, very low income household would currently rent for a maximum of \$1,131.

The Council agreed to carry over sites identified in the previous housing element for affordable housing. These sites provide a total estimated capacity of 9 to 16 units and include The Branson School, the Marin Art & Garden Center, and the town-owned properties at 37 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and 6 Redwood Drive.

The Council also discussed adding the St. Anselm’s parking lot to the inventory of affordable housing sites. Mayor Cahill suggested permitting three stories on the site to accommodate housing for very low income households.

Staff identified mixed-use development in the downtown area as a potential source for additional housing, projecting one to two new units could be realistically developed during the next planning period. Council considered increasing the maximum height requirement in the commercial district to three stories to facilitate affordable housing development above commercial space.

In response to new state laws, the Council agreed to include programs in the housing element to permit emergency shelters and single-room occupancy hotels in the commercial district, and to treat transitional and supportive housing as a residential use in all districts that permit housing.

The Town plans to submit its draft housing element to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in May. The public will have another opportunity to comment on the draft sometime in July, after HCD has completed its initial review.



*Additional mixed-use development can increase the supply of affordable housing in the downtown.*



### **Mayor Bill Cahill’s Report**

Within the next few weeks we will be updating both the Town’s phone system and website. We hope that these upgrades will provide better and easier communications with residents. Some residents have complained that our current phone system does not allow them to talk to a real person. The new, more user-friendly system will feature a live attendant option. Once the phone systems are in place, please let any member of the Town Council or Town Manager Gary Broad know if you see any glitches in the system. If you like the improvements, you can let us know that as well.

It’s been over four years since any town employee has left Ross to take a job elsewhere. As many of you who are employers know, losing experienced employees and hiring new employees is costly both in training and the inefficiencies that come from the lack of familiarity with the procedures and people of the Town. I think credit is due former councils, the current council and Town Manager Gary Broad for the steps we have taken to retain employees through contracts we have negotiated with police and fire, adding an employee education reimbursement program, creating fire and police chief positions and promoting from within to fill them, and annually recognizing employees’ five-year milestone anniversaries with the Town. We value the terrific work of our employees and will encourage them to spend their careers working in Ross.



## Lagunitas Road Bridge Update

The Council adopted resolutions certifying the final environmental impact report for the Lagunitas Road Bridge replacement project, adopting a mitigation and monitoring program, and approving the bridge construction project.

The new bridge will provide greater seismic strength and an increased storm water flow capacity of 5,400 cubic feet per second. The design features wider traffic lanes as well as a walkway separated from the roadway to provide safer pedestrian passage.



A Federal Highway Bridge Program grant will fund 88.5% of the estimated \$2.1 million bridge replacement cost. Due to state and federal delays in issuing permits for the project, the project engineer recommended bridge reconstruction be delayed till the summer of 2010. The revised schedule will ensure the contractor has the maximum four months permitted to work in Corte Madera Creek. Construction in the creek is restricted to from June 15 to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Council member Chris Martin recommended the Council immediately begin to take other flood control actions, including dredging Corte Madera Creek this year and setting aside funds for clearing vegetation and debris from the creeks. He also suggested the Town adopt tougher building standards that could reduce or eliminate stormwater runoff.



## SFD Pedestrian Bridge Considered

As a result of collaborative meetings with the Marin Art & Garden Center, Ross Recreation and the Ross School, the Council agreed to explore, as part of the downtown plan, the possibility of building a pedestrian bridge across Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to link the Town's east and west sides.

At the request of downtown merchants, the Council also agreed to place a new sign on the Frederick Allen Park bike path that will alert visitors to the downtown businesses, including Ross Grocery, Café Marmalade and Breaking

Away Bicycles, that are ready to serve cyclists and pedestrians.

## Council Amends Zoning Code

The Council voted to introduce an ordinance amending the Ross zoning code to implement a 2005 housing element program to allow limited, ancillary development at the Marin Art & Garden Center. Supported by the Marin Art & Garden Center's board of directors, the proposed ordinance will allow up to 2,100 square feet of total development, with each residential unit size limited to a maximum of 700 square feet. The intent is to permit affordable housing for MAGC employees.

In a separate action, the Council adopted an ordinance to allow school faculty and staff residences at The Branson School and to permit emergency shelters and transitional housing in the Civic District.

## Road Overlay Projects Approved

The Council approved expenditures for three road resurfacing projects totaling \$240,485. The winning bids were nearly 38% under the Town Engineer's original estimate for the project – a savings of over \$146,000. Ghilotti Brothers was awarded the Norwood Avenue/Fernhill Avenue project as well as the North/East/West/Hill Road project. Skyland Way and Walters Road will be paved by Team Ghilotti. Public Works Director Mel Jarjoura anticipates completion of the work before the end of June – please contact him with any questions at 453-1453



ext. 119 or [mjarjoura@townofross.org](mailto:mjarjoura@townofross.org). The projects are part of the more than \$550,000 the Council approved to resurface Town roads in this year's budget.

### New Police Officer Sworn In

Mayor Cahill swore in Kenneth Nicholas, Jr. as the newest addition to the Ross Police Department. Ken served in Ross as a police officer between 1999 and 2001, and has been working in Fairfax as a police officer for the past 8 years. Police Chief Jim Reis stated, "We are fortunate that Ken is now returning to the Ross Police Department with a wealth of experience to serve our community once again." Welcome back, Ken!



### Planning Application Scoreboard

The Town Council took the following action on planning applications considered at last night's Council meeting. For more information on each planning application, you can view staff reports at <http://www.townofross.org/town-council/current-meeting-reports/>. The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the May Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Modified Approval	Denied	Continued
2 Upper Road West *	Alan Grujic		 *		
191 Lagunitas Road	Paris and Martha Royo				
3 Ross Common	John and June Lord, SL:ID Studio, and Alain Pinel Realtors				
68 Bridge Road	Janell Hobart				
198 Lagunitas Road	Jamie O'Hara and Cynthia Weldon				
42 Winship Avenue	Jon Dickinson				
18 Canyon Road	Douglas Abrams				

\* Guesthouse only was approved.

### Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next regular Council meeting is on Thursday, May 14, at 6:30 p.m. Agendas and staff reports are posted in advance of the meetings on the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org).

*The Morning After is published following each regular Council meeting by The Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke and edited by Town Manager Gary Broad with support from Linda Lopez. The newsletter is not an official record of the meeting's proceedings and does not cover all agenda items. No portion of this newsletter may be copied, reproduced or reprinted without advance written permission from the Town of Ross. If you'd like to receive The Morning After and other town information via email, contact [llopez@townofross.org](mailto:llopez@townofross.org).*