

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of April 5, 2012*

Volume 6, No. 4

April 6, 2012

Council Discusses Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget Alternatives

The Council gave direction to staff to prepare two budget alternatives for further discussion at a May 3rd special Council meeting. Plan A assumes the Measure C tax initiative that is up for renewal on the June 5th ballot passes, and Plan B assumes that it does not and the Town will need to cut an additional \$640,000 from the budget. Both alternatives assume the Town will join the Ross Valley Fire Department JPA.

Even if the tax passes, the Town is currently looking at a \$300,000 budget shortfall due, in part, to some one-time expenses such as the Fire Chief's retirement in July and recruitment for a new Town Manager. Interim Town Manager Pat Thompson recommended using some of the equipment reserve fund to close the gap, since not all of this money will be needed for fire equipment replacement once the Town joins the Ross Valley Fire Department JPA. The funds have accumulated through contributions from the general fund over the years.

If the tax doesn't pass, each department will need to make significant cuts from their operating expenses. Interim Town Manager Thompson said she has asked the Police and Fire Departments to each cut \$220,000 from their budgets and General Government and Public Works to each cut \$100,000. In order to do that, the Fire Department will need to eliminate the fire apprenticeship program and three apprentice firefighters, and the Police Department will need to cut two police officers, including the school resource officer position. In General Government there would need to be a reduction in public meetings, office hours, minutes, legal services, and contributions for town events. These cuts, and others, will be discussed at a special Council meeting on May 3rd at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Council Discusses Rebuilding of Structures after a Disaster

The Council, sitting as a planning commission, discussed a draft ordinance that would allow the building official to issue building permits to property owners to rebuild structures after a disaster, such as a fire or earthquake, without a public hearing. The ordinance would also create a streamlined process to allow structures to maintain existing nonconformities in setbacks, floor area, lot coverage, height and parking when rebuilding or expanding a structure.

Some Council members objected to giving the building official such wide latitude in approving new buildings and argued that the Council should retain review over projects.



Council member Hunter said that in the wake of the December 31, 2005, flood, the Council passed an emergency rule that allowed the Council to expedite approval of reconstruction projects, and that it worked.

Mayor Pro Tempore Rupert Russell, who said his home was one of 16 or 20 homes affected by the flood, objected to Council member Hunter's characterization of the approval process. "It took nine months to go through the process and it was not simple at all," he said. "I feel very strongly about passing this ordinance."

The Council agreed to continue the discussion and asked staff to revise the proposed ordinance and establish parameters under which the Council would review reconstruction projects after a disaster.



Mayor Carla Small

Mayor Carla Small's Report

Measure C, our Special Tax for Public Safety, will be on the June 5, 2012, ballot. This is not a new tax but a renewal of what has been previously referred to as our Municipal Service Tax. It is identified on your property tax bill as a general purpose tax. The tax raises approximately \$642,000 and is dedicated toward the \$3.4 million budget for Public Safety. Continuation of this tax is paramount to maintaining current staffing levels. Due to changes in the law, the tax now requires a two-thirds vote of the electors. I strongly encourage your participation in the upcoming election.

Monday, April 9, is the first day that interested, registered Ross residents may pull papers to be a write-in candidate for the Ross Town Council on the June 5th ballot. Potential write-in candidates must fill out the same forms as required during the regular filing period. Please make an appointment with Linda Lopez, our interim Town Clerk, so that she can give you the time needed to explain the process. She can be reached at 453-1453, ext. 105, or llopez@townofross.org. Since absentee ballots will be mailed out around May 7, I encourage any interested individuals to step forward sooner than later.

Although, the Town cannot promote individual candidates, we can inform the community who has filed all the appropriate paperwork with the County Registrar's Office and plan to do so. This is a great opportunity to give back to your community and make a difference.

Marin Art and Garden Center which sits on 11 beautiful acres in the heart of Ross is facing fiscal challenges and must increase revenue to allow for a sustainable future. They are embarking on a two-year master planning process that will result in their roadmap for the future. They have scheduled a series of town hall-style meetings and will continue to do so throughout this process. I, along with my fellow Council members, encourage you to become involved in the process. This is a jewel in our community that we want to continue to shine.

Council Discusses Council Procedures Manual

The Council reviewed a draft description of the Town's four Council standing committees and a draft procedures manual that describes the practices and procedures of Town government. The manual, which was Council member Chris Martin's Council goal for the year, is intended to educate new Council members and assist the Council in performing its duties. It describes: the roles and responsibilities of the Town Council; Town council meeting procedures; interactions between the Council and staff; communication protocols; and other operating procedures.

"I think this is a great idea, especially now that we are about to have three new Council members," said Council member Hunter. He was, however, concerned about the time Council members must devote to standing committees, which are subject to the Brown Act. He suggested Council members act as liaisons to staff instead. While Council member Strauss supported the idea, the Council ultimately agreed to keep standing committees intact.

In the interest of reducing time commitments for Council members, the Council agreed to consider appointing community members to positions traditionally held by Council members, such as representatives on county boards and liaisons to local organizations. Council members currently fill twelve of these positions.



Council Commends Outgoing Chief of Protocol

The Council commended outgoing Chief of Protocol Roseanna Lourdeaux and thanked her for her three years of service to the Town. As Chief of Protocol, Ms. Lourdeaux planned the Town's Fourth of July parade and festivities, the Town Dinner, and a dedication ceremony for the new Lagunitas Road Bridge.

Mayor Carla Small presented Ms. Lourdeaux with a gift and praised her performance as Chief of Protocol. "You did everything so beautifully, and you gave a lot of people in this town a lot of great memories," said Mayor Small.

Council Gives Preliminary Approval for Fire Dept. Cost Sharing

The Council approved preliminary recommendations of a joint committee of the Ross Community Protection Committee and the Ross Valley Fire Department Ad-Hoc Shared Service Subcommittee (the "working group") on the merger of the Ross Fire Department with the Ross Valley Fire Department JPA. The recommendations relate to the payment of annual contributions for medical retiree benefits, treatment of side fund liabilities for retirement plans, lease payments for fire engines, allocation of compensated absences liabilities, and payments for Marin Emergency Radio Authority bonds.

The working group also recommended that the apprentice firefighter program remain intact, with the Town of Ross sponsoring the program. If the Measure C tax passes in June, the three apprentice firefighters will remain at the Ross fire station, and the Ross fire engine will continue to be staffed with three firefighters on a 24/7 basis.

The working group developed a cost sharing proposal for the four JPA members as follows: Ross, 23.37%; San Anselmo, 40.53%; Fairfax, 23.30%, and Sleepy Hollow, 12.80%. In an expanded JPA, Ross would represent 25% of the full-time engine company staffing and fire stations, 10% of the parcels and population, and 13.7% of the service calls. The working group recommended that Ross shoulder 25% of the site costs for fire station staffing and operations and 15% of the administrative costs, for a blended rate of 23.37%.



Current budget estimates indicate that Ross will save approximately \$110,000 in the first year of joint operations. It is anticipated that the combined agency will realize additional savings in the future. Above all, the merger is expected to provide a higher level of fire service for Ross.

Bolinas Avenue Advisory Committee Formed

The Council agreed with a proposal made by the Town of San Anselmo to create a Bolinas Avenue Advisory Committee and appointed Ross resident John Martin from the Bolinas Avenue Neighborhood Committee and Council member Chris Martin to serve on the committee. The committee will also include two representatives from San Anselmo and a representative from the San Francisco Theological Seminary, which is undergoing a major reconstruction of their facilities. The committee will work on drainage and safety improvements for the roadway.



Town Objects to Jobs and Housing Projections for Ross

The Council approved a letter to regional planning agencies protesting the latest jobs and housing projections for Ross. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is currently projecting 80 new housing units and 110 new jobs to be created in Ross between 2010 and 2040. The final projections will be used to formulate the regional housing need allocation that the Town is required to accommodate during the next housing element update.

The letter, which will be sent by the Council to officials at ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, points out that projected growth is more than double what has actually occurred in Ross over the past 30 years. It further states that the Town is essentially built-out and unable to accommodate significant new growth. The letter also questions the agency's job projections since the Town has a very small commercial area and the Town's major employers, including Ross School and Branson School, do not anticipate any notable growth over the next 30 years.

Council Adopts New Ordinances

The Council adopted three new ordinances. The first allows community events in Town parks to exceed the 50 person limit that currently exists in the Ross Municipal Code and permits the Town Council to allow the sale of food, beverages and merchandise as part of these special events.

A second ordinance requires recycling of construction and demolition (C&D) debris for projects over \$10,000 in value. The building permit applicant will have to submit receipts documenting that the C&D waste was appropriately recycled, and will have the option of using a certified facility, such as Redwood Landfill and the Marin Resource Recovery Center (owned and operated by Marin Sanitary Service), to process the C&D waste. The new ordinance will help the Town reach its goal for zero waste by 2025.

The third ordinance amends the zoning code to provide a density bonus for affordable housing developers and to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. It also implements zoning code amendments that were adopted in the Town's housing element.



Senior Planner
Elise Semonian

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, visit www.townofross.org/pages/town_council/staff_reports.html. The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at www.townofross.org after approval at the May Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Council Action	Vote (for/against/abstain)
2 Fernhill Avenue	Christopher and Stephanie Roeder	Attic exception approved	3-0-0 (Martin and Russell recused)
30 Walnut Avenue	Paul and Noreen Slivon	Basement exception approved	5-0-0
23 Ross Common	Pete Woodring, Cypress Partners, and Peter Maguire	Use permit for a wealth consulting firm approved	5-0-0
25 Crest Road	Adamson Molina Design, Inc.	Variance approved	4-0-0 (Hunter abstained)
95 Wellington Avenue	Germana Macii	Approved	5-0-0
12 Norwood Avenue	Mark and Sarah Kruttschnitt	Approved with conditions added for landscape and construction management	3-0-0 (Martin and Russell recused)
Upper Road Land Division	Skip and Brenda Berg	Continued	

Upcoming Meetings

On Wednesday, April 18, and Thursday, April 19, the Council will meet in closed session for Town Manager interviews. The Council will hold a special meeting on Thursday, April 19, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss Marin Clean Energy electricity rates and the enrollment/opt-out process. On Thursday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m. the Town Council will hold a special meeting on Fiscal Year 2012-2013 budget alternatives.

The next regular Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, May 10, at 6:30 p.m. Agendas and staff reports for all meetings are posted in advance of the meetings on the Town's website at www.townofross.org. All meetings are held at Town Hall unless indicated otherwise. You may email Council members by accessing the website at www.townofross.org/pages/contact/email_council.html.

The Morning After is published following each regular Council meeting by the Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke with support from Administrative Manager Linda Lopez, and reviewed by Mayor Carla Small prior to publication. 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.