



# THE MORNING AFTER

Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of August 9, 2012

Town of Ross

Volume 6, Issue 8  
August 10, 2012

## Council Considers Procedural Changes for Council Meetings



The Council discussed making the following procedural changes to the regular Council meetings: 1) changing the start time of the meetings to begin at 6:00 p.m.; 2) establishing a set ending time for the meeting; and 3) reducing the Town Attorney presence at the meetings.

1) Changing the start time to begin earlier offers the benefit of giving the public with business before the Council a chance to complete their item earlier in the evening. It also offers Council the opportunity to complete their meeting at a more reasonable hour. The Council agreed

to begin the regular Council meetings at 6:00 p.m. and will adopt the new start time by formal Resolution at the September 13th Council meeting.

2) Many California public agencies have set times for regular Council meetings. The meeting starts at a set time and they end by an established time unless the Council by formal motion agrees to continue the meeting beyond the agreed time limit. A common end time is 11:00 p.m. for evening meetings. The reasons for this are many including giving the public notice of meeting times, helping the Council organize and manage their time on Council business, and ensuring the public and the Council have an opportunity to review business items at a time when they can participate effectively. The Council agreed to the following practice:

*“The Town Council will make every effort to end its meetings before 11:00 p.m. The Council also generally will not take up new matters after 10:30 p.m. Before 10:00 p.m. the Council will decide and announce whether it will begin consideration of any agenda items after 10:30 p.m. and, if so, which specific items will be taken up.”*

3) In an effort to reduce costs, the Council agreed to limit the Town Attorney’s presence at Council meetings to attending the administrative and business portion of the meeting only.

## Finance Committee Report



Council Member  
Katie Hoertkorn

The Finance Committee (FC) met July 16th and reviewed the

latest monthly Town financial data and reports, and made suggestions on changes to future reports that the council will see starting in July. The reports will provide greater clarity and transparency. The committee also discussed the RBC investment portfolio report and plans to meet directly with the RBC representative in September. The committee has also reviewed the draft ballot pro-argument lan-

guage for the Public Safety Services tax that will be on the November 2012 election.

The FC also recommended creating a Financial Investment Oversight Advisory Committee to advise the FC on the Town’s investment portfolio. (See Page 3 for full story.)

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## The Mayor's Report



Rupert Russell  
Mayor

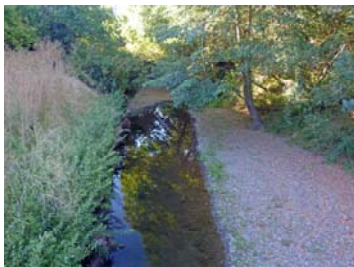
**T**his is my first Mayor's Report and first I would like to thank Carla, our last Mayor, for all her hard work and diligence during the last year, applying her charm, wit and tenacity to the benefit of our residents. As your new Mayor, you should know that I believe strongly in the tenets of consistency, objectivity and transparency, and these will be my guiding stars. We now have a majority of new Council members, a new Town Manager, and a new Mayor. This will lead to fresh challenges and opportunity, and I promise you that we will all be doing our best as a team on your behalf.

Last week Council member Elizabeth Brekhus and I met with Chi Kim, the new Ross School Superintendent. We had the opportunity to discuss some of the issues that face both the School and the Town. This was a useful and constructive meeting and we plan to have similar meetings in the future at least on a quarterly basis. The rebuilding of the Ross School, including its gym, is behind us and we look forward to a period when hopefully relations

between the Ross School and the broader community will be harmonious. The Ross School has been the glue within our community for generations (both my kids each spent 9 years there). It is in our interests as a community that the Ross School succeed, be the magnet that we are proud of that attracts new generations to the Town, and as a result frankly underwrites all of our real estate values.

On August 14, 2012, the Ross School has kindly allowed the Town Council to use its facilities to hold our annual Town Council retreat. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage residents to attend and participate. We plan to discuss new goals and objectives from a planning perspective, such as what needs to come to Council, when is Design Review required, and whether there should be a procedure for neighbor objections, but above all we will be holding effectively a workshop on how to fix the Town's finances going forward. Unlike the last nearly 30 years, we no longer have any municipal tax to support the Town, and whether we will have next year will depend on whether two-thirds

of voters support the public safety tax measure in the November election. Even with the tax in the last fiscal year the Town's General Fund ran a deficit of over \$100,000. Without the tax we have had to make some painful cuts and transfer about \$600,000 from our reserves. We have a structural deficit at a time when our main source of income, property taxes, is at best flat and we cannot just sit back and rely on historical windfalls that are unlikely to repeat, such as construction penalty income or substantial investment returns. It is our duty as a Council to seek to chart a new course, resolve the current tricky situation and avoid "Greek"-like tendencies of storing up problems for the future. To do this, we need to have an active, open discussion, without any sacred cows, and with a willingness to have a shared approach, so that we can find the way most fairly and effectively to increase Town revenues and cut Town expenditures. Residents, please come to the Retreat, help us proactively to design a fiscally secure future for the Town. Thank you.



Cortes Madera Creek

Now that the County of Marin is implementing its Capital Improvement Plan, to reduce the frequency and intensity of flooding of the Cortes Madera Creek, it is critical that the Army Corps of Engineers' Unit 4 Project in Ross and Kentfield is completed

## Flood Control Report (by Chris Martin)

in a timely manner. During the next 10 years, the County intends to construct a series of large detention basins, including Phoenix Lake, which will hold stormwater over brief periods of time until downstream creeks have the capacity to handle more water. The County program also includes replacement of bridges that impede the flow of water, and creek bank improvements to increase creek capacity and the passage of fish. The County's Flood Control Plan is an integrated, watershed-wide approach that effec-

tively manages the 100-year flood in flood-prone areas. The linchpin of the Ross Valley Flood Control Program is completion of the Army Corps' Unit 4 Project, which includes removal of the fish ladder and increasing the capacity of the concrete channel to between 5,600 to 6,000 cubic feet/second. Failure to complete this project will undermine the effectiveness of the entire project. Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross, Kentfield, Larkspur, and Cortes Madera will continue to experience flooding risking public safety and resulting in millions of

dollars of damage. Unfortunately, the Unit 4 Project is not a current priority of Congress. Supervisor Katie Rice has organized a series of meetings with Army Corps of Engineers' staff to articulate the urgency and need for the Unit 4 Project. Supervisor Rice asks that the Town of Ross and other Ross Valley communities initiate a letter campaign to key Federal administration decision makers and Congressional leaders urging immediate funding for the Unit 4 Project, which was originally authorized by Congress in 1962.

## Attic and Basement Amnesty Extended

Residents that have finished attic and basement areas without permits have one more year to apply to legalize the spaces under the Attic and Basement Exception Ordinance without paying penalties. The Town Council voted to adopt Ordinance No. 636 to extend the amnesty period until September 12, 2013. The regulations allow residents to finish existing attic and basement areas, even if they do not comply with current development regulations, such as floor area ratio. For basements that have not yet been finished, the existing ordinance,

adopted in 2011, limits areas that may be improved. The existing basement area must have at least 5-1/2 feet of ceiling height. Grading to improve the space is limited to 35 cubic yards. If grading is proposed, the new floor area may not exceed 20% of the existing floor area. Residents are encouraged to review the checklist on the [Basement/Attic Exception Application](#) to determine if their project complies with the requirements, particularly requirements for parking. After September 12, 2013, triple planning fees will be required for an after-the-fact Basement/Attic Exception Appli-

cation (currently \$1,800), in addition to penalties for a building permit (10% of the value of the project). Ordinance No. 636 also permits the Town Council to consider minor changes to the exterior for improvement of attic areas, "such as the addition of windows or skylights, if they will not create view, light or privacy issues for neighbors." The Town will continue to notify neighbors regarding any attic or basement exception application, which are considered at a public meeting.



## Response to Marin County Grand Jury Report

The Council issued its response to the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report dated June 1, 2012 entitled "Pre-Schoolers Learn to Share — Can Local Government?" The report asked cities to respond to the recommendations of sharing services with other agencies.

Ross is already a participating member of numerous joint agencies and authorities (JPAs)

such as emergency radios, telecommunications, transportation, solid waste, and animal control services, to name a few. In addition, Ross has partnered with other jurisdictions to find cost effective solutions to sharing services. A sample of shared services includes the following:

- Ross Fire Department merger with the Ross Valley Fire Department;;
- Ross Police Department/ Fairfax Police Department agree-

ment for emergency dispatch services and shared supervision;

- Our Emergency Services coordinates with the County for emergency communications
- Ross Police share training with other agencies for crime investigations, and special weapons & tactics.



## Council Establishes Financial Investment Oversight Advisory Committee

With the recommendation from the Finance Committee, the Council discussed creating a Financial Investment Oversight Committee to provide greater transparency with the Town's investment portfolio, instill greater confidence in the public that the Town is prudently investing their investment resources; and to take advantage of residents whose investment knowledge, skills and expertise

could assist the Town with their investment portfolio. The Oversight Committee would consist of the Town Manager, the Town's Auditor, two members of the Finance Committee, and two Town residents. The residents should have demonstrated experience, expertise and knowledge in investment management with particular emphasis in public agency investment management. The Committee would be responsible for

reviewing the Town's portfolio quarterly to determine compliance with the Town's Investment Policy and making recommendations regarding the Town's investment policies and practices.

A Resolution enacting this will be before the Town Council at the September meeting.





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](http://www.townofross.org/pages/town_council/staff_reports.html). The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the September Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Council Action	Vote (for/against/abstain)
21 Loma Linda Avenue & 220 Wellington Avenue	Cris & Pilar Torresi James & Megan Calhoun	Approved	4-0-0

**The following websites offer helpful tips on water conservation, energy savings, tree information, and wildfire protection.**

Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) Water Conservation  
[www.marinwater.org/controller?action=menuclick&id=257](http://www.marinwater.org/controller?action=menuclick&id=257)

PG&E Energy Saving Tips  
<http://www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/savingstips/>

Trees Information  
[www.arboday.org/index.cfm](http://www.arboday.org/index.cfm)

Wildfire - Are you Prepared?  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home\\_fire\\_prev/wildfire/index.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/wildfire/index.shtm)

## What's Next...

- The Town Council will hold its annual strategic planning workshop on Tuesday, August 14, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Ross School, Classroom 5.
- The Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, August 16, 2012 at 8:00 a.m. and September 19, 2012 at 2:00 p.m.
- The Advisory Design Review Group meets Tuesday, August 28, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.
- The next regular Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, September 13, 2012 at **6:00 p.m.** (note new start time). Agendas and staff reports for all meetings are posted in advance of the meetings on the Town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://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](http://www.townofross.org/pages/contact/email_council.html).
- The Community Picnic is Friday, September 28, 2012. If you would like to help underwrite this event, please contact Chief of Protocol Liz Welsh at [lizwelsh@comcast.net](mailto:lizwelsh@comcast.net).
- Town Hall offices (Administration, Planning, Building & Public Works) will be closed Monday, September 3, 2012 in observance of Labor Day.

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Town of Ross  
 P.O. Box 320  
 Ross, CA 94957  
 415-453-1453  
 Fax: 415-453-1950  
 Visit us at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org)

