

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of August 12, 2010*

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August 13, 2010

Council Discusses Improvements to Frederick Allen Park

The Council discussed potential improvements that could be made to Frederick Allen Park with \$226,363 in State Department of Parks and Recreation grant funding. Staff presented a number of possible improvements for consideration that had been developed with the assistance of landscape architect Michael Yandle, including resurfacing the two tennis courts, rehabilitating the paddle court, installing picnic tables and park benches, improving the entrances, and adding foot lighting along the path. New trees could be added to the park, invasive and overgrown vegetation removed, and bushes planted to screen views of Poplar Avenue buildings and the concrete channel. Public Works Superintendent Robert Maccario recommended digging a well for irrigation purposes.

The Town could also use the grant money to repave the Corte Madera Creek multi-use pathway and adjacent parking spaces in the south Post Office parking lot. Funds are limited, so the Council will need to set spending priorities. Grant conditions require all construction to be completed by March 31, 2011.

Council members noted that children regularly use the park as a BMX bike course and residents appreciate the open space to throw balls with dogs. There was general agreement that the park should remain natural and not be too gentrified. Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small suggested installing a water fountain for people and dogs.

The Advisory Design Review Committee will discuss possible improvements to Allen Park at its August 24th meeting at 7 p.m., and the Council will further consider the project at its September 16th Council meeting. Residents are encouraged to share their thoughts and provide input on park improvements.



Gateway improvements could include new landscaping, signage, and screening for the portable toilet.



Grant funds could be used to repave the multi-use pathway and install park benches and foot lighting.

Update on Unit 4 Fish Ladder Replacement Project

Representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided an update on the status of Corte Madera Creek channel improvement projects in Ross and the downstream communities. The Corps is currently completing baseline conditions for the environmental reports and developing cost estimates for 34 measures that will make up nine different plan alternatives for the cost-benefit analysis. Draft environmental reports are expected to be finished in January 2012 and environmental review completed by October 2012.

Project measures include: removal and replacement of the fish ladder; lowering and widening the channel bed and re-grading the bed to obtain a smooth transition from Lagunitas Road Bridge to the beginning of the concrete channel; constructing a natural sediment basin within the existing concrete channel; constructing flood walls and raising existing floodwalls approximately 1-3 feet in some locations; and improving fish passage and drainage facilities. Improvements in Unit 4, which is the section that includes the Lagunitas Road Bridge and the fish ladder, will not require any concrete construction. Project construction is tentatively scheduled for 2013 or 2014.

Two of the nine plan alternatives are designed to increase channel flood capacity from the existing capacity of 3,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 5,400 cfs, which is equivalent to the 38-year flood level. The new Lagunitas Road Bridge is designed for a capacity to 5,400 cfs, and the Corps acknowledged the need to design improvements that can accept the increased flood water flow. The Marin County Flood Control District is working on upstream creek capacity improvements and construction of detention basins that will further reduce flood water flows, with the goal of delivering no more than 5,400 cfs during a 100-year storm.



Hillside Lot Ordinance Adopted

The Town Council unanimously voted to adopt an ordinance to amend the Town's hillside development regulations. The new regulations, which will apply to planning applications submitted after September 11, 2010, will affect properties with an average slope of thirty percent or greater or that is wholly or partially within a hazard zone 3 or 4.

Under the new ordinance, the hillside lot floor area is now a mandatory development regulation and no longer a guideline. A new floor area formula replaces the existing stepped method with a smooth-line formula. The new formula results in an increase in the maximum permitted floor areas for some lots and a decrease on other lots. The lot slope will continue to be measured as before: from a representative low point on the site to a high point, and running a line that is perpendicular to the contour lines.



The Council reinstated larger setback requirements for hillside lots as a mandatory requirement. Lots under 3,500 square feet will be required to have 25' front and side setbacks and 40' rear setbacks. Lots over 3,500 square feet must have 25' front setbacks, 45' side setbacks, and 70' rear setbacks.

The ordinance includes a guideline for deck area to be limited to 25% of the allowable floor area. New guidelines permit the Council to consider limiting floor area to account for tall wall heights and other volumes that exaggerate the bulk and mass of a building but are not included in the floor area calculation. An amendment limits the height of retaining walls to six feet.

Development subject to the hillside lot ordinance will now be required to meet wildland-urban interface building regulations, which include tempered glass window panes and fire-resistant materials and design standards. A property owner will need to request a variance to be exempted from any mandatory provision of the ordinance.

The Council commended Senior Planner Elise Semonian and former Council member Michael Skall for their work on the ordinance over the past year.

Contract Awarded for Sir Francis Drake Boulevard Resurfacing

The Council awarded a \$353,200 contract to Ghilotti Brothers, Inc. to resurface Sir Francis Drake Boulevard from the Kentfield town limit to the San Anselmo town limit. Ghilotti Brothers submitted the lowest bid of six construction companies. The bid came in nearly \$50,000 under the engineer's estimate. The Town received a \$250,000 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant for the work, which should begin in mid-September.



Mayor Chris Martin's Report

The Lagunitas Bridge closure is having an adverse impact on our merchant district. Ross merchants need support from Town residents. Grab a sandwich at Eddies, a café latte made with Blue Bottle Coffee at Café on the Commons, get a perm or a spa treatment at Tizka Salon, have a memorable dinner at Marche aux Fleurs, or a plate of pasta at Trattoria Fresco. August is the perfect month to stroll or ride a bike to our wonderful merchant district. Please take advantage of convenient shopping and dining in Ross.

The Ross Town Council makes decisions and sets direction for promoting public safety, the economic well-being of the Town, administration of local government, protection of our environmental assets and our neighborhoods. Good and open governance is accomplished not only via monthly Council meetings, but also through ongoing committee meetings. The assignments for the Town's standing committee during fiscal year 2010-11 are as follows: Community Protection Committee, Council members Scot Hunter (chair) and Rupert Russell; Public Works Committee, Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small (chair) and Council member Rick Strauss; General Government, Council member Rick Strauss (chair) and Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small; Finance Committee, Council members Rupert Russell (chair) and Scot Hunter. Please feel free to contact any of us about any issue of local concern.

Council Requests Delay in SmartMeter Installation

The Council voted to submit a letter to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) requesting PG&E to suspend deployment of SmartMeters in Ross until a CPUC-commissioned study on the accuracy and safety of the meters is completed this fall.

SmartMeters are digital meters that can transmit detailed electricity and natural gas usage data to PG&E over a wireless network. Although 71 SmartMeters have been installed in Ross to date, the meters are not currently transmitting data and must still be read manually. PG&E plans to install the remaining 1,782 meters by December. Three wireless transmitters will be installed on PG&E-owned utility poles in Ross.

Opponents of the new technology have raised concerns about accuracy, data privacy, and health safety. PG&E maintains the meters are more than 99% accurate and have radio frequency exposure levels similar to cell phones. SmartMeters will enable customers to monitor their energy usage on a daily and hourly basis and will aid in energy conservation efforts. Customers will be able to sign up for a service to alert them when their energy usage is trending into a higher pricing tier. The new technology will also enable PG&E to detect power outages remotely and restore service more quickly.

Police Sergeant and Fire Captain Retire

The Council commended Police Sergeant Robert Tucker and Fire Captain Bruce Selfridge for their many years of dedicated service to the Town upon their retirement. Sergeant Tucker has been with the Ross Police Department since 1983, while Captain Selfridge has been with the Ross Fire Department since 1973. The Council also recognized Officer Gianfranco Campa on his promotion to police sergeant and Engineer Jim Popken for his promotion to fire captain.



Retired Fire Captain Bruce Selfridge received a framed commendation.



Police Sergeant Gianfranco Campa



Fire Captain Jim Popken

Council Sets Ambitious Goal for Bike and Pedestrian Trips

Recognizing the environmental, health, and economic benefits of walking and biking, the Council adopted a resolution that sets a town-wide goal for 20% of local trips to be made by bicycle or on foot by the year 2020. According to a 2007 Marin County survey, an estimated 11.8% of non-recreational, utilitarian trips are currently made by walking and 1.8% by bicycle, for a total of 13.6%. The Town's goal for additional walking and biking trips would represent an approximate 50% increase over the current mode share.

The resolution also directs staff to include "complete streets" transportation elements in development and capital improvement projects in Ross. A complete street is one that provides safe and accessible passage for all kinds of transportation, motorized and non-motorized alike. The policy will ensure the Town considers the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, the disabled, transit users, and automobile users whenever a new development or capital improvement project is proposed.



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 [here](#). The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at www.townofross.org after approval at the September Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
30 Ross Common	Arana, Montero, and Hutson-Wiley	X		
59 Winship Avenue	Robert and Carol Momsen	X		
93 Bolinas Avenue	Paul and Tori Steege	X		
30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.	Marin Art & Garden Center	X		
662 Goodhill Road	Donald Santa Family Trust		X*	
14 Walnut Avenue	Loretta Gargan and Catherine Wagner			X
17 Upper Ames Avenue	Kira Matthews			X

*The request for a 395 sq. ft. finished basement and a 400 sq. ft. finished attic were denied. The Council removed a condition of approval precluding construction for 5 years from the date of project final.

...And Finally

Mayor Martin announced the Town Council had reached an agreement in closed session with the Ross Professional Firefighters Association to extend the existing firefighters' contract for one year through June 30, 2011. The agreement includes new language confirming the Town's right to consolidate or contract for fire services, something both the Town and the Association wish to explore, subject to meeting and conferring with the Association regarding the impact of that decision.

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next Council meeting is scheduled for special meeting date of Thursday, September 16, 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.

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 Administrative Manager 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.