

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of January 12, 2012*

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Council Decides to Install Video System in Council Chambers

On a split 3:2 decision, the Ross Town Council voted to install a video system to record public meetings and provide video-on-demand of public meetings through the Town's website. The Council's decision is contingent upon at least two other cities signing up with the same service provider, as this will reduce upfront costs and monthly fees. The towns of Fairfax and San Anselmo are currently considering installation of a similar video system.

Mayor Pro Tempore Rupert Russell cast the deciding vote in favor of the video system, although he expressed reservations about the cost. Council members Scot Hunter and Rick Strauss opposed the motion, arguing that the video system was a waste of money and not necessary for a small town like Ross. "We have many ways to keep the community informed," said Council member Strauss. "If people want to be involved they should come to the Council meetings."

All three Council members in favor of the video system felt that it would improve transparency and accountability. Council member Chris Martin said it was an inexpensive way to better inform the public and provide access for community members who cannot attend the meeting. The Granicus software system, installation and training is expected to cost \$4,817 for installation and \$326 per month in fees if three cities participate. The actual video equipment and installation, estimated to cost \$10,000, will be paid by the Marin Telecommunications Agency with PEG funds.



Once installed, users will be able to watch archived meetings on the Town's website. The video will be linked to agendas and staff reports, and users will be able to jump to a particular agenda item and read the staff report while watching the video. The user will also be able to search for a specific topic or project across all recorded meetings.

Although many towns opt to save costs by switching to brief "action" minutes once a video system is installed, Council members said they did not see the video as a substitute for written minutes.

The Council agreed that an audio system, podium with microphone, and projection system also need to be installed in the Council chambers. The Council expects these items to add \$10,000 to \$12,000 to the

bill, although actual cost estimates need to be developed and will be discussed at the February 9th Council meeting.



Mayor Carla Small

Mayor Carla Small's Report

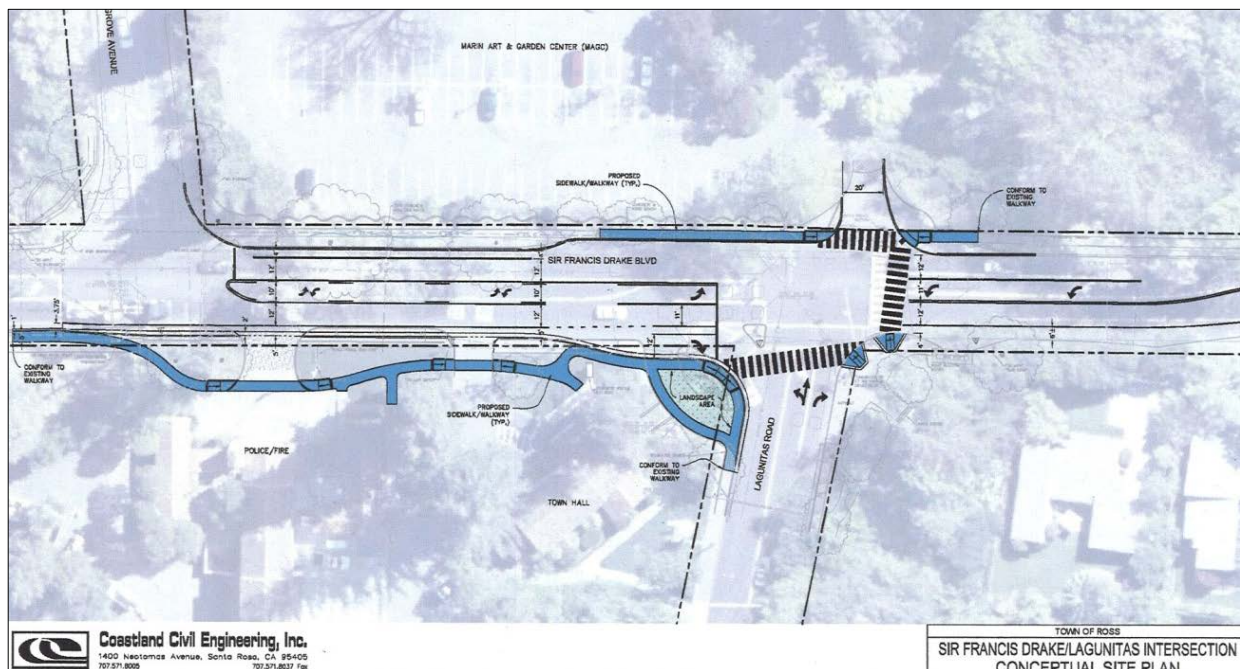
As we enter the New Year I look positively towards continued transition to benefit our community. With your continued encouragement, support and participation, the Council will be managing change that includes Town leadership, fire consolidation and a newly constructed Sir Francis Drake/Lagunitas intersection, along with the goals established at our September retreat.

The Town Council is committed to accomplishing our tasks ahead without compromising our principles established in the General Plan as well as the need to be fiscally responsible. I encourage your attendance and input at our public meetings, or email me at Carlasmall@aol.com. I look forward to your participation.

Council Approves SFD/Lagunitas Intersection Conceptual Plan

The Council approved a conceptual plan for improvements to the Sir Francis Drake/Lagunitas Road intersection, with some minor modifications to the site plan shown below. The conceptual plan was developed over multiple meetings with input from community members, Town staff (including fire and police), the Advisory Design Review group, and the Marin Art & Garden Center.

The plan shows the elimination of two existing pedestrian refuge islands and the vehicle “slip” lane in front of Town Hall. In their place, the Town will construct new crosswalks with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curb ramps, and a pathway with landscaping in front of Town Hall. The design improves pedestrian and bicycle safety, while retaining the existing Sir Francis Drake Boulevard turning lanes. A meandering pathway will connect Town Hall to the Public Safety Building.



The entrance to the Marin Art & Garden Center will be widened to twenty feet to improve access for buses and trucks, and a six-foot wide pedestrian pathway will run adjacent to the entranceway. The entrance will also shift a few feet to the north from the position shown on the plan on page 2. The Marin Art & Garden Center will construct the part of the project that falls on their property.

The Council discussed visibility problems at the southwest corner of the intersection, where a traffic light pole obstructs the driver's view, endangering the safety of pedestrians as they step into the crosswalk. The Council asked staff to investigate costs for relocating or reconfiguring the traffic light pole, and to add that element to the project scope if the budget can accommodate the additional cost.

The Town has received a federal Highway Safety Improvement Program grant for \$443,000 for the project. The Town has committed to contributing an additional \$110,000 to the project. Construction is expected to take place this summer.



*Mayor Pro Tem
Rupert Russell*

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee met in the morning of December 22, 2011. The key items that were discussed were the unaudited financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2011, and an update of the fiscal year 2011-2012 budget. Although Ross has been more fortunate than most other local governments in recent years, it has not been able to avoid the issues that are currently faced by essentially all municipalities of flat or falling revenues and increasing expenditures.

Revenues for fiscal year 2010-2011 were below budget for various reasons, including building permits falling off quite sharply by approximately \$114,000. Expenditures exceeded budgeted amounts in some areas, including unexpected retirement costs for the Chief of Police and the Public Works Director. These two items alone cost approximately \$182,000. As a result, Ross suffered a deficiency of approximately \$357,000 in its General Fund for fiscal year 2010-2011.

In the current fiscal year Ross continues to experience the same difficult economic pressures, accentuated by the current low interest rate environment which has depressed the Town's income from its investment portfolio. However, as of November 30, 2011, the Town was much closer to keeping to its budget for the current fiscal year. The main variance was caused by the departure of our Town Manager, resulting in an unbudgeted cost to the Town of approximately \$70,000. The Finance Committee discussed and is monitoring upcoming likely additional retirement expenses.

The Finance Committee also discussed and is considering whether to recommend paying off a significant outstanding obligation, which would reduce the Town's reserves substantially but would also create substantial savings to the Town. The Finance Committee wants to ensure prudent stewardship of the Town's finances. The Finance Committee will continue to balance the ongoing needs of the Town and is expected to meet again in early February to get a more current update on the Town's finances.

Municipal Services Tax to Be on the June 5th Ballot

The Council voted to again place a municipal services tax on the June 5th ballot to raise funds for public safety, police and fire services in Ross. The municipal services tax has been in place in Ross since 1984, but the current tax sunsets on June 30, 2012. The tax will allow the Town to assess each developed

parcel up to \$1,000 per year, the same as the present level. The Council establishes the municipal service tax annually at a public meeting, with the current level set at \$775.

Due to changes in State law, the tax must now be approved by a two-thirds majority, instead of a simple majority as in years past. The tax currently raises approximately \$650,000 of the \$5.3 million in revenue the Town collects. Police and fire services are the biggest expenditure for the Town, requiring about \$3.4 million, or 64%, of the Town’s current budget. If the tax fails to pass, the Town will be forced to make difficult cuts and/or spend funds from the Town’s reserves.



Town Honors Employees

The Council recognized three employees for their years of dedicated service to the Town. Fire Engineer Rick Rosecrans, Maintenance Worker Buzz Doughty, and Senior Planner Elise Semonian received awards and a small gift of appreciation. Each has worked for the Town for five years.



*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 February Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
18 Redwood Drive	Lisa and Michael Gorham	X ¹		
7 Woodhaven Road	Shyla and Doug Hendrickson	X ²		
24 Woodside Way	Elizabeth McLaughlin-Burgis	X		
Ivy Drive right-of-way, north of 8 Hill Road	Daniel and Andrea Elkort	X		
30 Ross Common	Busy Bees Collections	X		

¹ Approved with modification to height.

² Subject to Town Council approval of a design that involves no variances.

Upcoming Meetings

The General Government Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26, at 9 a.m. The next regular Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, February 9, 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.