

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of July 9, 2009*

Volume 3, No. 7

July 10, 2009



*Council member
Michael Skall*

DISCO (Disaster Council) Stages a Comeback in Ross

That's right folks, it's time to do "The Hustle" and get up to date on "Staying Alive" and be well prepared in the event of an emergency.

DISCO's main mission is to communicate and educate the residents of Ross on how to be prepared for a disaster. DISCO and its members have volunteered to be our town's educators around the ways to prepare yourself even if you live in a "Brick House" or think you can just "Knock on Wood." DISCO members are not responsible for taking care of you in an emergency, but are willing to provide the information necessary to help you better survive an emergency or disaster event.

The DISCO team is comprised of community members from the Town Council, Fire Department, Ross School, RPOA, CERT-trained residents, and other interested community members. DISCO will be reporting quarterly to the Town Council on our progress.

To date, we have been communicating to residents through channels such as email, mail drops, the Ross Town website, as well as GET READY and CERT events. In August, we will be placing flyers in the back to school packets. On October 10, we will be hosting a Disaster Fair in coordination with the Ross School Family Day events. Please try to attend this event as many local and county agencies will be providing valuable information to help all of us prepare for the emergency that is sure to come.

We are currently recruiting neighborhood Block Captains to help get the word out to all residents. If you are interested in serving your community, please [contact Fire Chief Tom Vallee](#). Remember "We are Family," so do your share and learn all you can.

Downtown Plan Concept Approved

The Council approved the downtown plan in concept, including a redesign of the Post Office parking lot adjacent to the commercial area, and unanimously voted to solicit bids for engineering and design work. The project will convert diagonal parking on the east side of Ross Common to parallel spaces, narrow the roadway between the post office crossing and Redwood Drive, provide "double loaded" parallel parking in the parking lot, and install new street trees, landscaping and sidewalks.



The project will also include new entrances to the Commons across from the Post Office and at the corner of Redwood Drive. "Bulb outs" on both corners of Redwood Drive will discourage illegal U-turns and add an 8-foot wide seating area in front of the Ross Grocery. The plan also envisions new street signage, benches and street trees in the commercial area.

A new plaza at the entrance of Fred Allen Park could provide space for a coffee kiosk, outdoor seating and bike parking. Mayor Strauss noted the Town wants to promote bicycling as an alternative means of transportation and wants to draw more customers for the downtown merchants. Resident Carla Small

expressed frustration with what she termed “rude and law-breaking cyclists” and said she “didn’t want to make the Town a magnet for bikes.”

The Town budgeted approximately \$250,000 for downtown plan improvements this year with additional grant funding potentially available for park improvements.



Mayor Bill Cahill’s Report

This is my last Mayor’s Report and I must say it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your Mayor during our Town’s Centennial. I particularly want to thank our Town Manager, Gary Broad, and his tireless staff for their hard work on behalf of the Town. I am proud of the many accomplishments by our staff and the Town Council this year. A thorough description of our work is detailed in our newly published Annual Report. While we are planning on releasing an internet version of the report, we are also printing a limited number of copies, available on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last. If you would like to reserve a copy, please let Gary Broad know as soon as possible. Reserved copies may be picked up weekdays at the Town Administration office. Please take the opportunity to read the report and provide us with feedback.



On Saturday, Ross once again celebrated the Fourth of July with our parade and picnic. John Lill, following in Dad’s footsteps, won the award for best costume. Steve Holmes and his family won the award for the best parade vehicle for their beautifully decorated woody. Special thanks go to Roseanna Lourdeaux, our Chief of Protocol, and Wendy Battey, who organized the parade, for their fine work.

On a sad note, Preston Maginis passed away last month. Preston was a former Council member and served two terms as vice mayor. He was one of the authors of the very fine book *Ross, California: the People, the Places and the History*. Preston was well-loved and admired and we shall miss him.

New Mayor Selected

The Council unanimously selected Mayor Pro Tempore Rick Strauss to serve as Mayor. In what was jokingly described as a “peaceful transfer of power,” outgoing Mayor Bill Cahill handed over the gavel to Mayor Strauss, who presided over the remainder of the meeting. Mayor Cahill received a standing ovation as he was given a commemorative plaque in appreciation for his work over the past year. Council member Scot Hunter was selected as Mayor Pro Tempore by a 3-2 vote, edging out Council member Chris Martin, who was nominated by Council member Michael Skall.



Mayor Rick Strauss



Parking Restrictions Implemented on Redwood Drive

In response to resident frustration with traffic and parking problems stemming from the temporary relocation of Ross School, the Council agreed to implement parking restrictions on Redwood Drive. The Town had previously tried increased police enforcement during the student drop off and pick up period and has installed a sign prohibiting U-turns, but residents reported school traffic and parking were still an issue.

Parking will be restricted from 8 Redwood Drive to Brookwood Road on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. during the Ross School construction period through August 2010. The Town will issue up to two parking permits to eligible Redwood Drive residents. Recognizing the parking restriction will impact the commercial area, the Council decided to offer parking permits to downtown businesses as well.

Mayor Pro Tempore Hunter suggested using pylons at the Redwood Drive bend to prevent drivers from making illegal U-turns. The Town's public works subcommittee will further discuss the idea.

Council Discusses New Stormwater Management Ordinance

The Council discussed a draft stormwater management ordinance written by Council member Chris Martin. The ordinance which promotes better stormwater management practices to reduce flooding by minimizing stormwater runoff from new development.

The draft ordinance lists a comprehensive set of guidelines that would apply to any new development that disturbs an area of at least 500 square feet or adds at least 250 square feet of new impervious area. Development, re-grading and clearing of vegetation would be discouraged on slopes greater than 35%.

The proposed guidelines encourage shorter and narrower driveways, two-story buildings that reduce building footprints, and the use of permeable paving materials. They promote the use of natural controls, such as bioretention areas and vegetative swales, to intercept the path of surface runoff and retain stormwater so it can naturally infiltrate the ground. The guidelines also encourage the use of dry wells and cisterns to catch rainwater from roof downspouts and paved areas.

Council member Cahill said a new ordinance would need to provide standards to measure a proposed project's compliance with the guidelines. If the intent is to reduce runoff as compared to existing conditions, or to limit the runoff from new development, then the guidelines need to set appropriate and objective levels.

The Council agreed to incorporate comments from Town staff, the Town Attorney and the Town Hydrologist and introduce the ordinance in the fall. The Council decided to take the lead on developing a model ordinance and to encourage our upstream neighbors, including Fairfax, San Anselmo and the unincorporated areas of the county, to adopt a similar ordinance.



Marin Energy Authority Update

Dawn Weisz, Interim Director, provided an update on the Marin Energy Authority (MEA), a joint powers agency created earlier this year among the County of Marin and eight other cities and towns, including Ross, in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.



MEA's initial and best-known project to date is Marin Clean Energy, which intends to provide residents with a green energy alternative to PG&E. MEA is currently soliciting bids from energy suppliers to provide power with a 25% renewable energy mix at a cost equivalent to PG&E rates, as well as 100% green energy to those willing to pay more. Bids are due July 20, and the MEA board will determine project feasibility at that time. A recent bid solicitation for the San Joaquin Valley Power Authority, the state's first community choice aggregation program, failed to meet its price objectives and the program has been suspended.

Weisz described other greenhouse gas reduction programs MEA is proposing for grant funding. These include a plan to provide financing for energy efficiency retrofits that could be paid off through a tax assessment attached to the property. MEA is also developing a project to install 70 electric vehicle charging stations with solar panel shade structures in seven Marin parking lots.

Update on Unit 4 Fish Ladder Replacement Project

Representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided a briefing on the status of the Unit 4 channel improvement and fish ladder replacement project. The Corps is currently analyzing baseline conditions for the environmental reports and developing project alternatives that will be used in the cost-benefit analysis. Draft environmental reports are projected to be complete in June 2010 and finalized in 2011. If funding is approved by Congress, construction could be completed in the summer of 2012.

In order to increase the flood capacity from the current channel capacity of 3,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 5,400 cfs, the Corps recommends replacing the fish ladder, lowering the channel bed and widening the channel in some places, and building flood walls 1 to 3 feet high in some locations. These improvements would be adequate to contain a 30-year flood.



The Council agreed to lobby Senator Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey to designate funding for the project. The Council also asked the Corps to confirm the Town's understanding that federal funding will pay for 98.5% of the project.

Town Council Discusses Advisory Design Review Process

The Council completed a one year "check in" on the Advisory Design Review (ADR) process and agreed to implement changes to improve transparency and efficiency.

Council member Chris Martin noted the Council received a "mixed bag" of letters reviewing the ADR process. "While ADR allows neighbors to have the benefit of professional design guidance and builds understanding of a project in an informal setting," he said, "some believe it adds another layer of bureaucracy that can delay a project." ADR is a voluntary design review process that is free of charge.

Council directed ADR members to recuse themselves whenever there is a perception of a conflict of interest and asked staff to develop written conflict of interest procedures. Council members discussed but decided against barring ADR members from working on projects in Town. They asked ADR members to encourage neighbors to sit at the table during project reviews and to ensure no one person dominates the conversation.

During a self-assessment, Advisory Design Review Group members decided to begin requiring some basic information, including setbacks and floor area ratio, lot coverage and slope calculations, with design submittals. Concerned that their recommendations are not clearly being communicated, the group agreed to take five minutes at the end of each meeting to summarize recommendations and make one or more definitive points.



Police Officer Steve Nelson Promoted

Police Chief Jim Reis announced Police Officer Steve Nelson was promoted to sergeant effective July 1, 2009. Sergeant Nelson has served the Town for seven years and has over 22 years of law enforcement experience. He will fill the vacant sergeant position created by the promotion of Jim Reis to Chief last year. Congratulations, Steve!



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 after approval at the September Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
39 Fernhill Avenue	The Branson School			
2 Chestnut Avenue	Daniel and Iris Winey			
97 Shady Lane	Archdiocese of San Francisco			
93 Bolinas Avenue	Paul and Tori Steege			
81 Wellington Ave.	Paul and Valerie Herzog			
126 Winding Way	Douglas and Miranda Abrams			

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

In order to accommodate summer schedules, the Council agreed to cancel the August 13 meeting. The next regular Council meeting is on Thursday, September 10, 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. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

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.