

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of June 14, 2012*

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Council Approves Austerity Budget

The Council approved a General Fund budget for fiscal year 2012-2013 that slashes expenditures by \$358,000 and transfers nearly \$647,000 from reserve funds in order to close a gaping hole in the Town's budget caused by an operating deficit and the failure of Measure C, a public safety tax that did not get the two-thirds vote it needed to pass on June 5th. The public safety tax was intended to replace the municipal services tax, which had been approved by voters seven times since 1984, and contributed approximately \$642,000, or 16%, of the Town's general fund budget.

While the Council had previously discussed a "Plan B" budget that would have eliminated three apprentice firefighter positions and two police officer positions, the Council decided to transfer \$284,000 from the Facilities Fund to save two firefighter apprentice positions and one police officer position. School Resource Officer Bob Besgrove, who has worked for the Town for 18 years, will be laid off. Apprentice firefighter Steven Morlock left last month to take a position with the Mill Valley Fire Department.



The Council discussed placing the Public Safety Tax back on the ballot in November. If the tax fails to pass at that time, the apprentice firefighter program will be eliminated and the two remaining apprentice firefighters will be laid off in December. In the meantime, the Town has requested the Ross Valley Fire Department to not fill any vacant apprentice positions if one or both firefighters find employment elsewhere.

The approved budget transfers almost \$263,000 from the Equipment Replacement Fund to cover one-time retirement costs and other expenses. Interim Director Pat Thompson explained that, in her opinion, this use of the Equipment Reserve Fund was warranted since there is less of a need to use the funds to replace fire engines and equipment now that the Town has joined the Ross Valley Fire Department. The fire department merger is expected to result in annual savings of roughly \$100,000, which will help defray any future operating deficit.

In order to save money in other special revenue funds, the Council agreed to defer projects to improve buildings and grounds. Funding was eliminated for the Town Hall office remodel, engineering design work for anticipated improvements to the public safety building, legal and environmental review expenses for the ball field on the Commons, and audio and video recording and a projection screen for the Council chambers. Funding was also cut for legal services, town events, public information updates, grant writing, and office supplies.

Fire Chief Vallee to Retire July 2nd

After 37 years with the Ross Fire Department, Fire Chief Tom Vallee is retiring. The community gave Chief Vallee a farewell celebration just prior to the Council meeting, and the Council followed with parting gifts and adoption of a resolution honoring Chief Vallee and his many contributions to the Ross community. It was a touching, and at times hilarious, send-off.



Council member Scot Hunter reported on some observations Chief Vallee had made at the most recent Ross Valley Fire Department JPA meeting. "It's hard to leave when you've been building something for so long," Chief Vallee said. "But the community is in good shape and my guys are in good shape, so I can leave now."

Tom, you will be deeply missed by all.



Mayor Carla Small

Mayor Carla Small's Report

I would like to thank the five individuals, P. Beach Kuhl, Elizabeth Brekhus, Katie Hoertkorn, Jed Nelson and Barbara Call for stepping up to run for Ross Town Council and making it a real election. And thank you to Ross Property Owners Association for organizing a candidate's night on short notice. It was well attended. After the election is certified, we look forward to swearing in our three new Council Members, P. Beach Kuhl, Elizabeth Brekhus and Katie Hoertkorn.

As disappointing as it was that Measure C did not pass, the Town Council and Town Staff are working hard to finalize a budget that covers the basic services for all our residents. Some have questioned why we are cutting from other areas since this was a Public Safety Tax. To clarify, up until this year, this tax was called a Municipal Services Tax and showed up on your property tax bill as a general purpose tax, a tax the Town has collected since the 80's. This is no longer legal and the tax's use now has to be attached to a specific purpose similar to the Ross School Parcel Tax.

Since Public Safety is the largest cost to our Town Budget, it was most appropriate to identify this department as the recipient of these funds. But since it did not pass, we would significantly impact your public safety if the Town Council pulled \$642,000 from their budget. So in developing the Plan B budget if the measure did not pass, the Police and Fire Departments were asked to deduct \$440,000 from their budgets and General Government and Public Works were each asked to deduct \$100,000, totaling \$640,000. This was not a matter of addressing unrelated issues. The Town Council was just trying to ensure that no one department is rendered ineffective.

Although the Town Council is looking at placing a new measure on the ballot in November, we are not blind to the fiscal concerns of our residents. Although Measure C received the usual amount of yes votes in the recent election, it did not meet the two-thirds vote now needed. We understand as a Council that we must be as vigilant and fiscally responsible with your tax dollars without depleting your services. Our 2012-2013 budgets will contain cost cutting measures; some may be temporary depending on the November election, but others will be permanent and incorporated into future budgets.

This council and future councils, along with our Town staff, are committed to being fiscally-responsible stewards of your tax dollars.

In an effort to keep a focus on our downtown businesses, I would like to congratulate Anar Sandhir, owner of “A Touch of Class” drycleaners, for going green. At great expense they have invested in a non-hazardous material and substance called SYSTEM4 that is organic and environmentally-friendly. We wish them continued success.

In closing, I would like to thank Christine O’Rourke for her production of the Morning After. She has worked on this publication with Gary Broad since its inception. She has also been responsible for helping the Town of Ross obtain grants and implement the General Plan. As a Project Planner, she completed our current Housing Element, along with many other projects. As she sits here tonight and listens to our budget cuts, the Town Council wants her to know how much we appreciate her contributions to our community.

Council Discusses Proposed Flood Insurance Rate Maps

The Council discussed preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) that incorporate new data from the latest hydraulic studies and modeling technology. The new maps identify the area contained within the Special Flood Hazard Area, or the area within the 100-year flood boundary. In Ross, this area is generally smaller than the area identified on the current FIRMS.

Unlike previous FIRMS, the preliminary maps also delineate a Regulatory Floodway, which is an area within the Special Flood Hazard Area that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without a rise in the water surface elevation. The Federal Agency Management Agency (FEMA) has developed regulations that jurisdictions must adopt that will affect new development in the Regulatory Floodway. Existing structures will be allowed to rebuild as long as the new construction stays within the existing footprint. Projects that cost more than 50% of the value of the building will be required to elevate the structure. New development that increases the water surface elevation will not be approved. Applicants will be required to submit a hydraulic study that certifies the project will not result in a rise in the water surface elevation.



FEMA will be holding a community meeting on June 28, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. at Sir Francis Drake High School to discuss the preliminary maps and development regulations. Property owners within the flood zone are encouraged to attend. The new FIRMS and development regulations are expected to become effective in 2013.

Council Approves Council Procedures Manual

The Council approved a procedures manual that will help familiarize new Council members with the existing practices and procedures of Town government. The manual, which was Council member Chris Martin’s Council goal for the year, is intended to 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.

“This is so helpful and so great to have,” said Council member-elect Elizabeth Brekhus. “Thank you for the effort that is behind it.”



Town to Stay with Marin Clean Energy

The Council voted to stay with Marin Clean Energy as the electricity provider for the Town’s facilities. An analysis provided by the Marin Energy Authority (MEA) showed that opting out of Marin Clean Energy and remaining with PG&E would save the Town about \$88 per year on approximately \$35,792 in electricity costs to power the Town’s buildings, streetlight, traffic signals, and irrigation systems. The Council considered, but rejected, a proposal to purchase 100% renewable energy from MEA – the Deep Green product – for an additional \$2,049 per year.

As with all residential and business accounts in Ross, the switch to Marin Clean Energy will become effective on July 1, 2012. Residents who wish to opt-out of Marin Clean Energy must contact MEA by August 29th; otherwise, your account will automatically be enrolled in MEA’s 50% renewable Light Green electricity. Residents who wish to enroll in the Deep Green 100% renewable electricity must also contact MEA.

Twenty-Minute Parking Spaces Approved

The Council approved a resolution establishing two additional twenty-minute restricted parking spaces in the downtown area. The last two parking spaces on the east side of Ross Common, just south of the southern entrance to the Post Office parking lot, will be designated for twenty-minute parking between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Staff recommended these spaces after discussing parking needs with the downtown business owners.

Council Reappoints Dowling

The Council voted to reappoint Teri Dowling to serve on the Marin County Commission on Aging for a three-year term. Ms. Dowling replaced Loraine Berry as Ross’ representative in August 2011.

Ross School Campout on the Commons to take Place Sept. 7-8

The Council authorized the Town Manager to issue a special events permit for the Ross School Campout on the Commons that will take place from Friday, September 7, at 7 p.m. to Saturday, September 8, at 10 a.m. About 40 families will participate in this fundraiser for Ross School. Families will pitch individual tents and take them down in the morning. Refreshments will be served in the evening and in the morning.

The Council also voted to waive the \$125 application fee and \$400 special event permit fee.





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 July Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Council Action	Vote (for/against/abstain)
33 Winship Avenue	Chris and Mary Ann Neumann	Approved	4-0-1
42 Fernhill Avenue	Tim Wood	Approved	5-0-0
93 Bolinas Avenue	Paul and Tori Steege	Approved	5-0-0
19 Woodside Way	Todd and Julie Boes	Approved; applicant must pull building permit by June 22, 2012	5-0-0
20 Olive Avenue	Ezra and Kate Ripple	Approved	5-0-0
662 Goodhill Road	Steve Scarpa	Approved	4-0-1
27 Upper Road	Eric Greenberg	Continued	-
14 Madrona Avenue	Elika and Michael Rosenbaum	Approved	4-0-1
8 Southwood Avenue	Cam and Edward Lanphier	Approved with applicants' agreement on additional planting	4-0-0
7 Hillgirt Avenue	Tony Curtiss and Marta Osterloh	Approved with 4-foot tall fencing	5-0-0
4 Canyon Road	Christian Lind and Lisa Bernardi	Entry deck approved; pool continued	4-0-1
6 Southwood Avenue	Darr and Sandy Aley	Continued	-

Upcoming Meetings

There will be a reception and special Council meeting on Thursday, June 21, at 6 p.m. to honor outgoing Council members Scot Hunter, Rick Strauss and Chris Martin, and to welcome new Town Manager Rob Braulik. On Monday, June 25, at 7 p.m. there will be a public meeting to discuss proposed regulations for Town right-of ways.

The next regular Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, July 12, 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.

On A Personal Note

This is the last issue of The Morning After that I will be writing for the Town of Ross. It is somewhat fitting that my final issue should take place on the fifth anniversary of The Morning After. I will always remember the avalanche of enthusiastic emails we received after the inaugural publication. Sixty-four issues later, I hope you have found The Morning After an informative and easy way to keep up with your local government. It has been a pleasure.

Christine O'Rourke