

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of March 12, 2009*

Volume 3, No. 3

March 13, 2009



Ross Community Survey Wants Your Opinions

Thanks to Carla Small, Anne Brush, Wendy Battey, Ken Fineman and Stanley Stern for their efforts in compiling the first Ross Community Survey. The survey solicits community opinions on a number of important local topics. We encourage residents to complete and submit the survey by its March 31, 2009 deadline.

Town Manager Gary Broad

Council Agrees to Battalion Chief Coverage

The Council voted to enter into an agreement with the Ross Valley Fire District to provide contract battalion chief coverage to the Ross Fire Department. The move will ensure the Town has a dedicated battalion chief available 24 hours a day.

The annual cost to the Town will be approximately \$24,000, far less than the \$200,000 originally budgeted for the battalion chief position under fire consolidation plans. Fire Chief Tom Vallee said the Town will benefit from having a battalion chief who has trained with Ross fire personnel and knows the streets and fire water system of Ross.



The additional battalion chief coverage could also improve the Town's rating with the Insurance Services Office (ISO), which could potentially save residents 5-10% on their insurance premiums. The Council asked staff to immediately request ISO to rerate the Town's fire protection services.



Farmers Market to Return to Ross

The Council agreed to again hold a Thursday afternoon farmers market in the Ross Post Office parking lot over the summer. This year, the market will run from late May through mid September, adding two weeks to the market schedule. Based on last year's attendance patterns, market hours will be shifted to 3 to 7 p.m., and the parking lot will be closed at 2 p.m. to enable vendor set-up. Market organizers suggested the changes in order to improve the commercial viability of the market.

The Marin Art & Garden Center is planning to move their successful summer concert series to Thursday nights to coincide with the market and allow residents to enjoy farmers market treats with the live music. Free parking will be available at the Art & Garden Center.

The farmers market will again feature produce sold by various California farmers. Residents are encouraged to help fight global warming by bringing their own shopping bags and by walking or cycling to the market. As the market schedule will overlap with the Ross School calendar, parents are also encouraged to walk or bike with their children to school on market days – and pick up some fresh fruit and vegetables on the way home!



Mayor Bill Cahill's Report

While the Town government is not involved in the community survey underway, I enthusiastically encourage all residents to complete the survey, which will provide valuable input to the Town Council and help improve Town services. Residents may access the survey [here](#). Many thanks to survey committee members Wendy Battey, Anne Brush, Ken Fineman, Carla Small and Stanley Stern for taking on this important town initiative. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the committee members or email rosscommunitysurvey@gmail.com.

Downtown Plan Discussion Recap

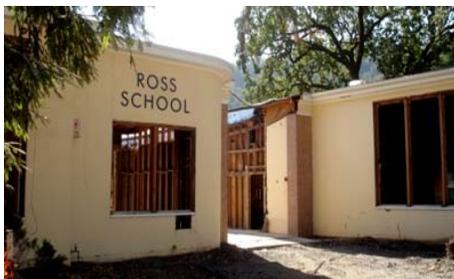
The Town Council and the Advisory Design Review Group held a joint public meeting on downtown plan ideas on February 26. The meeting included suggested design concepts from landscape architects, SWA Group, and transportation planner Nelson/Nygaard. The consultants explained that the plan's objectives were to calm and better manage traffic, encourage pedestrian use, beautify the streets, and build on the inherent character of Ross.

The draft plan showed a narrower Ross Common roadway with parallel parking spaces replacing the existing diagonal parking spaces and wider sidewalks with additional trees and landscaping. The parking lot between the post office and commercial area was enlarged with two rows of diagonal parking, enabling the planners to add 11 parking spaces to the total number of downtown spaces. A plaza at the entrance to Allen Park and a new entry to the Commons located directly across from the post office completed the conceptual design.



SWA Group unveiled this conceptual plan for the downtown on February 26.

Residents offered mixed response to the design concepts. Some were not in favor of removing the diagonal parking on Ross Common. Many were concerned about bicycle safety at the intersection of the bike path and the newly designed post office parking lot, and various alternatives were explored to redirect bike traffic to a safer exit. Residents also requested bike racks, a public bathroom, and additional park benches and gathering areas. Many were interested in encouraging cyclists to stop and shop in Ross and in using the creek as a visual focus of the downtown area. Downtown plan work will continue to be honed and refined.



School Construction to Start

Dan Bernhard, President of the Ross School Board of Trustees, reported the school construction project is back on track and construction crews will start to mobilize on Monday, March 16. The Board recently solicited bids for the second construction phase and, thanks to the poor California economy, the 16 bids came in 30-40% under the \$18 million construction cost estimated last July.

Zoning Code Changes Introduced

The Council voted to introduce an ordinance amending the Ross zoning code to implement housing element programs adopted in 2005. The proposed ordinance allows school faculty and staff residences at The Branson School and permits emergency shelters and transitional housing in the Civic District, as state law requires the Town to designate a zone for such uses. The Council also considered an ordinance provision to allow limited, ancillary residential development at the Marin Art & Garden Center as proposed in the adopted housing element. However, the proposal was continued to the April Council meeting to allow the board additional time to explore the effects of the rezoning.

Expert Advice Offered to Creekside Property Owners – For Free!



Ross residents with property fronting Ross Creek or Corte Madera Creek are urged to take advantage of a new streamside management program offered by the Urban Creeks Council (UCC). Funded by the County of Marin, UCC is offering free consultation services for a limited number of Ross Valley property owners with severe erosion problems on their creekside properties.

UCC will identify the cause of the erosion problem, recommend solutions and, in some cases, assist with design and permitting of repair work. Property owners are encouraged to complete a brief application on-line at www.rossvalleywatershed.org.

Lagunitas Road Bridge Update

On the recommendation of URS Corporation, the Town's project engineer for the Lagunitas Road bridge reconstruction project, the Council voted to eliminate the midblock crosswalk on Lagunitas Road. URS determined that the crosswalk would be unsafe in its current midblock location, particularly with the increased elevation of the new bridge. Pedestrians will need to use the crosswalk at the signalized corner at Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

URS is currently preparing responses to comments submitted during the February 10th public meeting on the draft environmental impact report. The Council continues to request assistance from county and state elected officials to expedite state agency review of the bridge replacement project so construction can take place this summer.

Bolinas Avenue Traffic Improvements to be Implemented

Mayor Pro Tempore Rick Strauss reported that the Towns of Ross and San Anselmo have jointly agreed to implement sign and striping improvements recommended by David Parisi, a traffic consultant retained by both communities, and presented at a Bolinas Avenue neighborhood meeting on February 23rd.

The idea was also floated at the meeting that San Anselmo permit overnight parking on its side of Bolinas Avenue in order to narrow the street width and slow traffic speed. The Council agreed to formally request the San Anselmo town council implement the recommendation.





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 Town website at www.townofross.org after approval at the April Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
8 Norwood Avenue	Philip and Susanna Rice			
39 Fernhill Avenue	The Branson School			
109 Bolinas Avenue	Mark Millstein			
191 Lagunitas Road	Paris and Martha Royo			
54 Baywood Avenue	Ross and Ligia Parmenter			

Closed Session

The Council met in closed session to discuss criteria to be used for evaluating the performance of the Town Manager. No reportable action was taken. Mayor Cahill announced that proposed performance evaluation criteria will be discussed publicly at the May Council meeting. Residents are encouraged to [contact Mayor Cahill](#) with comments regarding the performance and evaluation of the Town Manager. In order to protect employees' privacy, public comments will be limited to performance evaluation criteria.

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next regular Council meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, April 16, at 6:30 p.m. However, due to conflicts with school vacation schedules, the meeting may be moved. Please check the Town's website for further information. 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 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.