

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of March 10, 2011*

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*March 11, 2011*

## **Council Moves Closer to Siting Baseball Field**

In a 3 to 2 decision, the Council voted to prepare an initial study of environmental impacts for locating the baseball field in the southwest corner of the Ross Common. The initial study will analyze all potential environmental impacts of the new location, including traffic, parking, drainage, trees, noise and aesthetic impacts. Town Manager Gary Broad estimated the initial study will cost between \$30,000 and \$45,000 due to the need to bring in outside experts. The environmental review process will also delay the final decision of the location of the field by several months, as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a 20-day review period of the draft initial study, followed by a public hearing. Ross School Board President Elizabeth Robbins said the school board was willing to split the projected cost of the study with the Town.



*Community members gather in the southwest corner of Ross Common to view story poles for a proposed baseball field location.*

The Council was divided on the best location for the primary baseball field, and their positions reflected many of the opinions that had been voiced by community members. Mayor Chris Martin preferred the “compromise” location across from the Ross Grocery in the southeast corner of the Common. While many community members were opposed to this location for aesthetic reasons, it was one that a number of speakers said they “could live with.” Mayor Martin felt that the southwest corner was not the best location due to the proximity to the redwood trees, Murphy Creek and the Allen Lane, Allen Avenue and Redwood Drive residences. He also said the baseball field’s former location was not suitable due to

conflicts with the new gym and stage. Mayor Martin opposed the motion to complete the initial study exclusively on the southwest corner location, preferring to expand the scope of the initial study to also include the southeast corner location. Though the additional environmental review would add an estimated 25-50% to the cost of the study, he noted that it would be less expensive than two separate studies and would save precious time should the first study be problematic.

Council member Rupert Russell also opposed the motion. He said he would have preferred to wait until the stage was built before making his decision, but that he reluctantly supported the compromise position in the southeast corner.

Both Council members Scot Hunter and Rick Strauss were opposed to the location across from the Ross Grocery. Council member Strauss felt that the location would be a “detriment to the whole Common.” Council member Hunter said the baseball field would “fit in nicely” in the southwest corner but that he was uncomfortable with the added CEQA expense. He noted that the neighbors had taken the brunt of a very long school construction process, and that the Council needed to ensure any potential impacts would be mitigated and the project would be subject to thorough design review.

Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small supported the southwest location, noting that the revised drawings had moved the baseball diamond location out of the redwood trees' root zone. She also felt that the noise and traffic impacts would be less significant than what was currently generated by the soccer field in the same location.

The Council made its decision after hearing statements from about two dozen speakers. Immediately preceding the meeting, the Council met with community members on Ross Common to view story poles that had been erected at the three alternative baseball field locations. In addition, the Council held a special Council meeting last week to hear public testimony. Mayor Martin thanked all of the community members for being involved in the process and for being courteous and respectful to people with opposing views.



*Council members listen to community members' concerns during a site visit to Ross Common.*

The Council will make a final decision on the location of the baseball field after the environmental review process is completed.



### **Mayor Chris Martin's Report**

In the weeks ahead, there is an issue of great consequence that will require the collective engagement of our community. Now that the lawsuit challenging the validity of the Ross Valley Flood Control parcel assessment has been resolved, the County of Marin is funded to proceed with public improvements that will significantly reduce and potentially eliminate flooding that is currently a risk to life and property in our Town as well as surrounding communities. These improvements include deepening the Corte Madera Creek channel and developing a series of detention basins. One of the detention basins under consideration is Phoenix Lake. Under the County's plan, during a major storm event Phoenix Lake would have an increased capacity to hold back stormwater that would normally spill into Ross Creek, which then contributes to Corte Madera Creek and challenges its capacity, ultimately leading to flooding. Allowing Phoenix Lake to function as a detention reservoir may be the only way that Ross can achieve at least a 100-year level of flood protection. Proposed improvements for Phoenix Lake may include strengthening the dam, installing new low-level outlets, excavating the bottom of the lake, modifying the spillway and improving the banks of the lake. Besides addressing flood control, the proposed improvements to Phoenix Lake are intended to enhance fisheries, trail access, stormwater quality, and public enjoyment. This May, the County is expected to release the Flood Reduction Master Plan, which fully analyzes the rationale for these improvements. On behalf of the Town of Ross, I have asked the County upon the release of the Master Plan to conduct a community presentation in Ross, so that our residents and businesses can be fully informed and engaged in this public process.

### **Key Fee Set For Allen Park Paddle Court**

The Council agreed to set the Frederick Allen Park paddle court fee at \$25 per year. Currently, Ross Recreation charges \$125 per year for use of both the paddle court and tennis court. The Council's decision will require Ross Rec to review its pricing schedule and the process it uses to make keys available to the public.



The Town is making improvements to the paddle court as part of a State grant-funded project to improve Allen Park. In order to qualify for funding, the Town was required to set a "reasonable" fee to use the paddle court based upon community input. All of the grant-funded Allen Park improvements, including new landscaping, paved areas, and park benches, should be installed by the end of March. Resurfacing of the tennis courts will be completed as soon as weather permits.



## Council Selects New Town Attorney

The Council selected Greg Stepanicich of Richards Watson & Gershon to serve as the new Town Attorney. Mr. Stepanicich has served as Mill Valley's city attorney for ten years and has practiced law with the same firm for 33 years. His areas of expertise include land use, CEQA, public works, elections, telecommunications, conflict of interest, and the Brown Act.

The Council made their selection in closed session after hearing public presentations from three invited candidates. Council member Russell, who spearheaded the search for the new town attorney, said all three were extremely qualified and well-suited for the position. Mr. Stepanicich immediately took his seat at the dais and assisted the Council in its deliberations during the rest of the evening's agenda. Mr. Stepanicich replaces long-time Town Attorney Hadden Roth.

## New Police Chief Sworn-In

Mayor Martin swore in Erik Masterson as the new Police Chief. Chief Masterson comes to Ross from San Anselmo, where he most recently served as a Police Officer. He previously worked as a Lieutenant in San Rafael during his 30+ year career. A number of police officers from neighboring communities were on hand to congratulate Chief Masterson, and his wife, Jennifer, pinned his new badge to his uniform, as is the Ross tradition. Congratulations Chief Masterson and a warm welcome to Ross!



Town Manager  
Gary Broad

## Town Manager's Report

Town Manager Gary Broad reported that the Town's Draft All-Hazard Mitigation Plan will be available for public review soon. The plan discusses potential natural and man-made hazards to the community, including flood, earthquake and wildland fire risks, and identifies mitigation strategies that may be implemented by the Town. Ross is required to have a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved multi-hazard mitigation plan to be eligible for disaster recovery assistance and mitigation grant funding. The plan is also designed to earn Community Rating System credit that could potentially lower flood insurance premiums for Ross residents. The plan will be posted on the Town's website and public feedback is encouraged. The Council will review the plan at its April meeting.

## Council Revisits Downtown Plan

The Council discussed the Downtown Plan which was conceptually approved by the Council in July 2009. The plan was originally devised to slow vehicular traffic through town and increase the number of available parking spaces by narrowing the Ross Common roadway in one area, redesigning the south Post Office parking lot to "double load" parking spaces, and replacing the diagonal parking spaces in front of the parking lot with parallel spaces. Additional street trees would also be planted along the roadway.

Council member Strauss requested Council move forward with the engineering plans for the parking lot area only and to obtain bids for the project. Mayor Pro Tempore Small questioned the idea, indicating that the



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community did not really understand the scope of the project or the cost. She said that the preliminary cost estimate was “an outrageous amount of money” and that the project would change the look of Ross by narrowing the roadway.

Council member Strauss reported that the project had been vetted by the community during many public meetings and workshops, was approved by the Council two years ago and was only put on hold because the Town was constructing so many public works projects at the time.

“I’d like a reality check,” said Mayor Martin. “I’m not sure we should spend \$300,000 of taxpayer money during these tough economic times. Times have changed.”

Council member Russell said he didn’t feel the downtown plan improvements were a priority right now, and noted that the residents have had to endure a lot of public works projects recently. Council member Hunter said he would like to implement the plan if the money is available.

The Council agreed to have the Advisory Design Review Group review the plan and requested that construction estimates be obtained before the plan returns for further Council deliberation.



### 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](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the April Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
8 Southwood Avenue	Cam and Edward Lanphier	X		

### Upcoming Meetings

A Community Workshop on a draft ordinance to allow finished attics and basements will be held on March 22 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., immediately following the Advisory Design Review Group meeting.

The next regular Public Works Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, at 8:00 a.m. The next Town Council meeting will be held on a special date of Thursday, April 7, 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](http://www.townofross.org). All meetings are held at Town Hall unless indicated otherwise. You may email Town Council members by accessing the website [here](#).

*The Morning After is published following each regular Council meeting by the Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O’Rourke, edited by Town Manager Gary Broad with support from Administrative Manager Linda Lopez, and reviewed by the Ross Mayor prior to publication. 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.*