

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of March 8, 2012*

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## **Tree Plan Approved for Downtown and Ross Common**

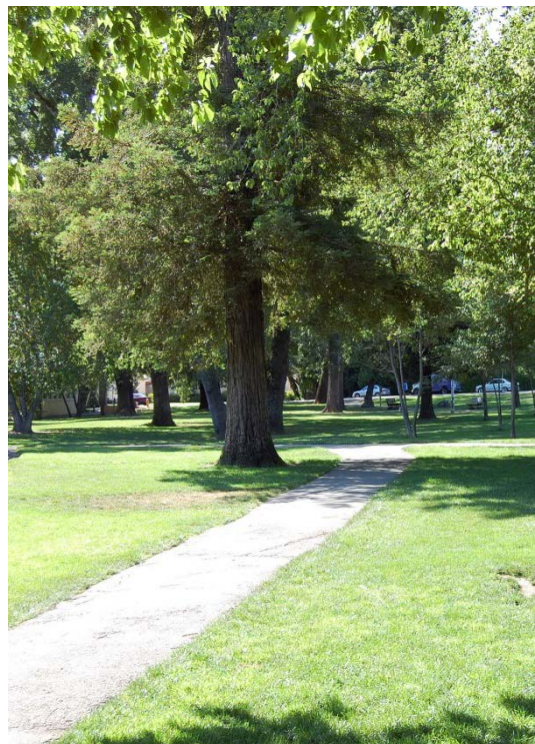
The Council approved a tree infill plan for the downtown area and Ross Common. According to the plan, native valley oaks will be planted along Lagunitas Avenue and elm trees along Ross Common. Behind the post office, a mix of trees, including autumn blaze maple, Chinese pistache and red alder, will be planted. In all, about 70 new trees are indicated on the plan.

The plan is expected to cost about \$100,000 to implement, with some funds slated for sidewalk improvements next to the Post Office parking lot. With about \$20,000 left in this year's fiscal budget for tree planting, the Council agreed to plant four trees in front of the Post Office parking lot and repair the sidewalk tripping hazard.

The Council discussed implementing the plan in phases over several years, and bringing each phase to the Council for approval. In any event, the Council decided to wait until June to discuss appropriating more money for tree planting, when the Town will know the outcome of the municipal services tax measure. If the tax fails to pass, the Town will need to cut approximately \$640,000 from its \$5.1 million annual budget.

The plan was supported by both the Advisory Design Review Group and the Town's Street Tree Committee. The Ross Property Owner's Association has generously offered to contribute \$10,000 to the tree planting effort, and Street Tree Committee member Jennifer Leathers said the committee would spearhead a capital campaign to raise additional funds. Joe Garbarino from Marin Sanitary Service offered to provide free planting soil and dumpsters to haul away the construction debris.

The tree plan is the culmination of Council member Rick Strauss' Council goal for this fiscal year. Landscape architect Michael Yandle helped design the plan. The tree plan can be viewed at [http://www.townofross.org/pdf/staff\\_reports\\_council/agenda-item-20-landscape-tree-plan.pdf](http://www.townofross.org/pdf/staff_reports_council/agenda-item-20-landscape-tree-plan.pdf).





*Mayor Carla Small*

## **Mayor Carla Small's Report**

On Tuesday, June 5, 2012, our current Municipal Services Tax will be up for renewal for another four years. This tax currently placed on your property tax bill raises approximately \$642,000 each year. This election defines that the funds must be dedicated towards the \$3.4 million budget for Public Safety. Due to changes in the law, this now requires a two-thirds vote of the electors. I strongly encourage your participation in the upcoming election.

I would like to congratulate Dr. Elizabeth Robbins who was recently awarded the Marin County Trustee of the Year. Dr. Robbins served on the Board of Trustees for sixteen years, showing remarkable leadership in a balanced and steadfast manner. She will be honored at the annual Golden Bell event on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

On a personal note, the Town of Ross has lost two pillars of our community, Judge William T. McGivern, Jr., and Mr. John Rodger Pitcairn. Also, our long-time, well-respected County Supervisor Hal Brown has lost his battle with cancer. These highly accomplished gentlemen have been our friends and neighbors for many years. Although their legacies live on, they will be greatly missed. The Town Council and I extend our sincerest condolences to their family and friends.

## **Council Agrees to Trash Collection Rate Increase**

The Council approved a Marin Sanitary Service rate increase of 4.84%, effective January 1, 2012. The rate for a 32-gallon container will increase from \$26.90 to \$28.20 per month for flat service areas and from \$33.77 to \$35.40 for hillside areas. The average rate for all Marin communities is \$31.94 per month for 30-35 gallon collection service.

Over half of the rate increase is due to an increase in fuel costs. Salaries and benefits increased by 2.9% and 3.9%, respectively, in line with the consumer price indices for these costs. Marin Sanitary Services revenue decreased in 2011 due to customers downsizing their subscription services. A portion of the rate increase was therefore to make up for a projected revenue shortfall for 2012.

## **New Regulations Proposed for Group Use of the Common**

The Council introduced an ordinance to allow community events in Town parks to exceed the 50 person limit that currently exists in the Ross Municipal Code. The Town currently requires all organizations to obtain a special permit, approved by the Town Council, for any picnic, celebration or recreational activity that involves 25 or more people. The ordinance would exempt Town-sponsored events and events conducted by the Ross School District while school is in session from having to obtain a permit. The ordinance also permits the Town Council to allow the sale of food, beverages and merchandise as part of these special events.



## Council Appoints Liz Welsh as Chief of Protocol

The Council appointed Liz Welsh to replace outgoing Chief of Protocol Roseanna Lourdeaux. Ms. Welsh has experience in event planning and fundraising for St. John's Church and the Ross School, and was most recently president of the Ross School PTA board. She also co-chaired the Town's Fourth of July festivities in 2005 and 2006.

The Chief of Protocol plans the Town's Fourth of July parade and festivities, the Town Dinner, and dedication ceremonies for new Town improvements. "Liz has already done so much for our community, and we are fortunate to have her as our new Chief of Protocol," said Mayor Carla Small.

## Council Approves Zero Waste Goal

The Council adopted a resolution committing the Town to achieve 94% diversion of waste from landfills by 2025 and an ultimate goal of zero waste, whereby no materials are landfilled but are fully recycled, repaired and reused.

The most recent statistics show that the County diverted 74% of waste from landfills in 2010. A number of new programs – including curbside food waste collection and the Central Marin Sanitation Agency's new Food Waste to Energy program – will likely bring that rate higher. In July, state mandates for commercial and multi-family housing recycling will also go into effect.

In an effort to achieve the zero waste goal, the Council introduced an ordinance to require recycling of construction and demolition (C&D) debris for projects over \$10,000 in value. Projects will be required to meet minimum diversion requirements that increase over time, from the current diversion rate of 70% to 94% by 2025.

The building permit applicant will have to submit receipts documenting that the C&D waste was appropriately recycled, and will have the option of using a certified facility, such as Redwood Landfill and the Marin Resource Recovery Center (owned and operated by Marin Sanitary Service), to process the C&D waste.

The C&D ordinance is expected to increase the Town's overall diversion rate by about 4%. The Council will consider adoption of the ordinance at their April meeting.



## Engineer Selected for Bolinas Avenue Improvement Project

The Council authorized Public Works Director Bob Hemati to sign a contract with Harrison Engineering to proceed with design work for safety improvements to Bolinas Avenue. Harrison Engineering was selected from a group of four recommended consultants. The firm will begin design work on roadway improvements that include safer crosswalks for pedestrians, curb ramps for disabled persons using wheelchairs, and traffic calming measures to slow down vehicles. The work will be funded with a \$250,000 Safe Pathways to School grant from the Transportation Authority of Marin. Harrison will also provide engineering services for a \$25,000 drainage improvement study for Bolinas Avenue. These drainage improvement expenses were previously approved in the budget for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.



## Farmers' Market May Return to Ross Post Office Parking Lot

After a two year run at the Marin Art & Garden Center, the Ross farmers' market may return to the Ross Post Office parking lot this year. The Council agreed to the change in location, pending finalization of the construction schedule for the Lagunitas Road and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard intersection project. The project is expected to require the use of the north parking lot for construction equipment and material, which would make it difficult to park downtown during market hours. If possible, the farmers' market season may be shortened or scheduled around the construction period.



## Council Approves Moving Forward with Fire Department Merger

The Council approved moving forward with the merger of the Ross Fire Department and the Ross Valley Fire Department. The Town has been exploring a fire department merger for many years, and has been considering this particular proposal with the Ross Valley Fire Department since January 2011. Over the past year, the Town has held numerous community meetings to discuss the merger. The Council agreed to a timeline to develop a cost sharing agreement and approve the merger through an amendment to the existing Ross Valley Fire Department joint powers agreement. If all goes as planned, the Ross Fire Department will become a member of the Ross Valley Fire Department on July 1, 2012.

## Ordinance Introduced for Housing Regulations

The Council introduced an ordinance to provide a density bonus for affordable housing developers, as required by state law, and to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. Fair housing laws require the Town to provide flexibility or even waive certain requirements when it is necessary to eliminate barriers to housing opportunities for people with disabilities. Currently, a resident with a disability would need to apply for a variance from a development standard, such as installation of a ramp to a front door within a front setback. The ordinance allows the town planner to approve an exception to certain development regulations, without the need for a public hearing.

The ordinance also amends the zoning code by allowing transitional and supportive housing in all residential zoning districts, as required by state law. Transitional housing provides intermediate housing for formerly homeless people for up to nine months. Supportive housing is occupied by residents seeking to improve their health and their ability to live and, when possible, work in the community.

Finally, the ordinance establishes multi-family housing as a permitted use not requiring a conditional use permit in the downtown commercial, community cultural, and civic districts. The zoning code would be amended to include development standards for housing in the commercial district, such as minimum parking of one space per unit, a maximum building height of two stories and an attic, and a maximum floor area of 130%. All of these zoning code changes are required by the Town's housing element.

The Council will consider adoption of the ordinance at its April meeting.



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](http://www.townofross.org/pages/town_council/staff_reports.html). 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.

Address	Applicant	Council Action	Vote (for/against/abstain)
18 Upper Road West	Clifford and Adriana Booth	Approved	5-0-0
10 Norwood Avenue and 12 Norwood Avenue	Shlain and Kruttschnitt	Lot line adjustment approved	5-0-0
10 Norwood Avenue	Caroline and Jordan Shlain	Approved in part, variance for shed denied and fence limited to 4’.	4-0-0 (Russell recused)
61 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.	MJC Ventures 1, LLC, Andrew Johnston	Approved	5-0-0
6 Southwood Avenue	Darr and Sandy Aley	Approved in part, basement denied.	5-0-0
12 Norwood Avenue	Mark and Sarah Kruttschnitt	Continued	3-0-0 (Martin and Russell recused)

## Upcoming Meetings

The Community Protection Committee will meet on Wednesday, March 14, at 8:30 a.m. The General Government Committee will meet on Thursday, March 15, at 9:00 a.m.

The next Town Council meeting will be held on the special date of Thursday, April 5, 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](http://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](http://www.townofross.org/pages/contact/email_council.html).

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