

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of May 13, 2010*

Volume 4, No. 8

May 14, 2010

Draft Bicycle Plan Discussed

The Council discussed a draft Town of Ross Bicycle Plan that proposes a complete bikeway system as well as a number of support facilities and programs intended to increase cycling, reduce automobile trips, and promote safety.

Although bicycles are permitted on all roads in Ross, a designated bikeway system provides connectivity for cyclists riding within Ross and between neighboring communities. The existing bikeway system in Ross contains one Class I bikeway, the Corte Madera Creek bike path. This bikeway is part of Route 20 which connects Ross Valley communities from Larkspur to Fairfax. No new bike path is proposed for Ross.

A Class II bikeway, which is a striped and stenciled bike lane at least 4' wide, is proposed for Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, although the existing roadway could not accommodate bike lanes in both directions due to physical limitations and open drainageways. Andy Peri, Advocacy Outreach Coordinator for the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, urged the Council to make room for bike lanes wherever possible on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, explaining that a Class II bike lane need not be continuous the entire length of the roadway. Council member Chris Martin suggested hiring a traffic engineer to study the issue.

Class III bikeways are bike routes along existing roadways. Bike routes along Poplar Avenue, Ross Common, Lagunitas Road, and Shady Lane, have already been signed as part of a County of Marin bicycle route signage program. The plan also proposes new bike routes along Laurel Grove Avenue, Lagunitas Road between Shady Lane and Natalie Coffin Greene Park, Glenwood Avenue and Bolinas Avenue. These routes would be established by placing bike route signs, and possibly "Share the Road" signs, along the roadways. The Council agreed to also consider Fernhill and Norwood Avenues for bike routes.



The Council discussed programs to encourage cycling to large public and private events, install bicycle detectors at signalized intersections on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and provide bike parking at downtown locations, the Post Office, the tennis courts, Ross Common, Town Hall, and Natalie Coffin Greene Park.

The Public Works Committee will discuss the plan further and staff will bring back a revised draft plan for Council review in July.

Public Works Projects in Progress

Council member Chris Martin reported the Lagunitas Road Bridge replacement project was back on track after Public Works Director Mel Jarjoura miraculously righted a bureaucratic snafu that had threatened to put off the project for another year. The construction project will be advertised on May 3, a pre-bid conference meeting is scheduled for May 17, and bids will be opened on May 24. The Council will award the project in June, and construction will start mid-June and be completed in October.

In order to facilitate traffic rerouting, the Council passed a resolution temporarily suspending the left turn prohibition from Bolinas Avenue onto Shady Lane during the time the bridge is out of service.

The Sir Francis Drake Boulevard pipeline replacement project will continue until the second week of June. Traffic is flowing reasonably well with minor delays and few complaints.

The Public Works Department installed a stop sign and warning signs at the Locust Avenue Bridge on Shady Lane. Cyclists are requested to walk their bikes on the narrow bridge sidewalk.



Mayor Rick Strauss' Report

Many thanks to Chief of Protocol Roseanna Lourdeaux for organizing the farewell party for Ross Grocery owners Denise and Don Ahrens. It was a wonderful event, and we are all very thankful for the Ahrens' years of service to the Town.



The Public Works Department recently planted a number of trees on Shady Lane and Lagunitas Road. If these trees front your property, please do your part to regularly water the trees and help them get established.

Census workers are currently canvassing Ross neighborhoods. If a Census taker visits your home, please take the time to answer the Census questions even if you previously mailed in a Census form. It is important for everyone in Ross to be counted.

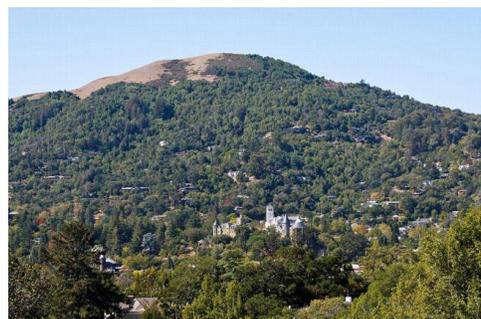
Thanks to the Ross Property Owners Association for hosting Candidates Night. It was a great evening and we are looking forward to the election of our new Council members.

Ross Recreation Auxiliary will be hosting their annual fundraiser on Saturday, May 22. Join us for a scavenger hunt at 5 pm followed by cocktails, dinner, dancing and a live auction to benefit Ross Rec.

Hillside Lot Regulations Considered

The Council, sitting as a Planning Commission, recommended Town Council introduction of an ordinance to amend the Town's hillside development regulations. The new regulations will affect properties with an average slope of thirty percent or greater or that are wholly or partially within a hazard zone 3 or 4. Council member Michael Skall and Senior Planner Elise Semonian worked with community members during four public workshops to draft the proposed ordinance. The Advisory Design Review group also reviewed the draft ordinance.

The proposed ordinance contains a new floor area formula to replace the existing stepped method with a smooth-line formula, which results in an increase in the maximum permitted floor areas for some lots and a decrease on other lots. The maximum permitted floor area would become a mandatory development regulation, not a guideline, and a variance would be necessary to exceed the hillside floor area.



Staff had considered, but ultimately decided not to recommend, a new method to calculate the average lot slope called the "contour method." Slope is currently measured from a low point on the site to a high point, running a line that is perpendicular to the contour lines. The contour method results in a more accurate average slope determination for site with unusual topography, but could drastically reduce potential site floor area and add additional development expenses for property owners.

New guidelines would permit the Town Council to consider the design and privacy impacts of decks and take into consideration aesthetic impacts of tall building walls. Council member Chris Martin suggested limiting deck area to a percentage of floor area.

The draft ordinance reinstates larger setback requirements for hillside lots as a strongly recommended guideline, but allows the Council to reduce setbacks to protect creeks, trees, or to allow development on a more level area of a site. Council members discussed making the setbacks a mandatory requirement and asked Senior Planner Semonian to return next month with an analysis of how larger setbacks would affect hillside lots.



Council Introduces Stormwater Ordinance

The Town Council unanimously voted to introduce an ordinance that contains regulations to reduce stormwater runoff from new development. The ordinance's intent is to ensure development projects do not produce any new net increase in peak runoff from the site as compared to pre-project conditions.

Under the proposed ordinance, the Town may require projects valued over \$250,000 that increase site runoff to include a stormwater management plan. The ordinance also adds new design review regulations to reduce impervious surfaces, encourage the use of permeable surfaces, disperse stormwater runoff on site, and store stormwater for reuse or slow release. Projects that create over 1,000 square feet of impervious surfaces would be subject to design review.

The Council will consider the stormwater ordinance for adoption at its June Council meeting.

Council Continues Town Engineer Discussion

The Council continued a proposal to hire a Town Engineer in FY 2010-11 at an annual cost of approximately \$150,000 for salary and benefits. The new Town Engineer would transition into the Public Works Director position after current Director Mel Jarjoura retires in December 2011.

Town Manager Gary Broad urged the Council to consider hiring a Town Engineer to assist with current important public works projects, including the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard overlay and pathway projects. The Town Engineer would also work on future projects such as the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Lagunitas Road intersection improvement project and Bolinas Avenue drainage, traffic and overlay improvements. Mayor Rick Strauss agreed, citing a backlog of public work projects that could not adequately be addressed by existing staff.



Council member Martin said he did not see a lot of new public works projects or grant funding on the horizon to justify the expense. "I'm uncomfortable with this proposal and I don't see how it benefits the Town," he said. "I think it's extravagant, as [contract engineer] John Moe already provides excellent, on-demand, fee-based engineering services for the Town."

Some Ross residents questioned the necessity of adding a staff member when the Town is under fiscal stress. Town Manager Broad explained that the Town had ample total reserves of over \$6 million and that cost savings could be realized by reducing the Town's dependence on outside engineers. Members of both the public and Council railed against a concept to further reduce costs by bringing contracted building inspection services in-house. Building Inspector Bob Haggett asked the Council to consider his 8+ years of "continuous, outstanding, and professional work" before making such a decision.

In order to assist the Council's deliberations, an interview panel had previously qualified two promising candidates for the Town Engineer position from a pool of 40 applicants. Council member Michael Skall

felt that the Town would still be able to find good candidates a few months from now and suggested the Council slow down the hiring process and take its time in making a decision.

Council Agrees to Not Raise Taxes

The Council voted to keep the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) annual tax at \$42 per residential parcel, marking the second year in a row the RVPA tax was not increased. The RVPA was formed in 1983 to provide medical emergency services and transport to local medical facilities.



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 on the Town’s website. The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at www.townofross.org after approval at the June Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
20 Ross Common	John Levinsohn	X		
2 Glenwood Avenue	Ed and Betsy McDermott	X		
5 Fernhill Avenue	Tahlia Van			X
90 Laurel Grove Ave.	Steve and Kirsten Polsky			X
33 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.	Town of Ross			X
90 Glenwood Ave.	Peter Ausnit and Traci McCarty	X		
7 Woodside Way	Stephanie and Lee Notowich			X

Upcoming Town Meetings

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 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.

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 Administrative Manager 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.