

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of November 8, 2007*

Volume 1, No. 5

November 9, 2007



## **Get Ready, Ross!**

Raging fires in Southern California, earthquakes in San Jose, oil spills in the bay and though the sun is shining, the Ross Valley can flood. Several times during last night's Council meeting, our conversation turned to natural disasters and emergency preparedness. As we move into the holiday season, take a 2-hour break from the shopping malls and attend a Get Ready Marin session on surviving the first 72 hours after a natural disaster. It's the best gift you can give yourself and your family. The ubiquitous yellow signs will show you the way.

## **Council Receives Update on Flood Control Projects**

The Town Council discussed the status of flood control projects and litigation resulting from the New Year's Eve flood of 2005.

Many homeowners and businesses in the floodplain have taken steps to protect their property from flooding. Since the 2005 New Year's Eve flood, 14 houses have been raised above the 100-year flood plain and downtown businesses have taken advantage of Town funding to install floodgates on more than half of their entryways.

Work is continuing on the Army Corps project to replace the Corte Madera Creek fish ladder and on the Lagunitas Road Bridge, which will also increase drainage flow. The Town has also retained Matt Smeltzer to provide hydrologic analysis for public and private projects.



*This Shady Lane house is one of 14 houses that have been raised*

Fifty property owners and 26 businesses representing 177 individuals are pursuing litigation against the Town of Ross and other Ross Valley agencies related to the New Year's Eve flood. The ongoing litigation diverts Town staff and financial resources from other work and affects the Town's ability to pursue drainage projects and studies in the community.



## **Outdoor Smoking Restrictions Approved**

The Town Council introduced an ordinance further restricting smoking in some outdoor public places and during Town events such as the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration and the Town Dinner.

The ordinance bans outdoor smoking in Town-owned parks and recreation areas, including the Ross Common, outdoor dining areas of restaurants, service areas such as ticket lines and bus stops, and within 20 feet of any opening of an enclosed area within which smoking is prohibited. The ordinance also considers potential land uses in Ross and prohibits smoking in bars and common areas of multi-family housing.

The ordinance was approved without a controversial public nuisance provision which would have provided the legal means necessary for a resident to file a legal action against a neighbor whose outdoor smoking bothered him. The Council also deleted ordinance sections establishing a designated smoking area in the downtown area and requiring the posting of "No Smoking" signs.

The ordinance is scheduled for adoption at the December 13, 2007, Council meeting and would become effective 30 days later. For more information, visit the Town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org).

### **Council Discusses Design Review**

The Council agreed to establish a voluntary design review process that would enable applicants to get early feedback on their design proposals. At the applicant's request, a design review group, comprised of design professionals and Ross residents with an interest in design, would meet with the applicant to explore design alternatives.



Applicants would be encouraged to invite neighbors to the design review meeting. A staff planner would also attend the meeting. Meetings would be held once a month at Town Hall and would be open to the public. The review could include visits to the project sites.

Meetings would be informal and collaborative, with all stakeholders able to provide input and thoughts. Ideally, the applicant would use this feedback to propose projects that incorporate the ideas of design professionals and were respectful of neighbors' concerns.

The Council directed staff to prepare a resolution to establish the design review process for consideration at the December Council meeting.

### **New Building Codes Adopted**

The Town Council passed an ordinance to adopt the 2007 California building code, plumbing code, mechanical code, electrical code, energy code and fire code. The codes will replace the existing 2001 codes.

Some technical aspects of the code have changed substantially since the new California building and fire codes are based on the 2006 International Code. The code also includes many minor changes. For example, the heights of railings and pool barriers have been increased and stair risers have been modified.



All cities and towns in California are required to adopt the new codes by January 1, 2008, and all building permit applications submitted after that date must meet the new code requirements.



### **Peter Daly Commended for Assistance with Town Events**

The Town Council commended resident Peter Daly for his generous assistance with town events over the years. Peter has contributed the services of his company, Top Productions, to set up tables, chairs, and lighting for many July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebrations and Town Dinners. Peter, his wife, Jenny, and their two children, Megan and Miles, were on hand to receive their commendation and applause from the Council and audience. Thank you, Peter!

## Council Discusses Solar Energy Incentives

The Council discussed additional incentives to encourage solar energy installation. The Council indicated support for amending zoning laws to allow solar energy panels within side and rear setbacks on existing rooftops and to exempt panels from lot coverage calculations. Both moves would enable more homeowners to apply for solar energy system permits without the time and cost of requesting a variance.



Last December, the Council waived all building permit fees for solar energy systems and approved a rebate of up to \$1,000 on building projects that included solar energy components. In July, the variance fee for solar energy systems was reduced by half. The number of solar permits approved this year is already triple the number of permits issued in 2006.

## Downtown Plan Moves Forward

The Council agreed to schedule visioning workshops for the downtown plan. The first meeting will be for Ross design professionals and will be a no-holds-barred effort to visualize the future of the downtown area. A subsequent public visioning meeting will use ideas from the designer meeting as a springboard for community input. Both meetings should occur before the end of this year – check your email for more information.



The downtown is broadly defined as the area bordered by Lagunitas Road and running south through the Town's commercial area, including the Ross Common, Ross School, the post office and post office park, downtown parking areas, Corte Madera Creek and Fred Allen Park.

The General Plan 2007-2025 calls for a downtown plan that addresses street design improvements, parking, future uses, design guidelines, pedestrian and bicycle access, and outdoor gathering areas. Preparation of a downtown plan is one of the Council's five goals for this fiscal year.

## Ross Fire Department Fights Structure Fires in Southern California

On October 21, Ross Fire Department Engine 18 responded to a mutual aid call to combat the devastating Southern California fires. Capt. Peterson, Eng. Grasser, and Apprentice Firefighter Mario Juarez joined crews from San Rafael, Novato, Mill Valley, and Marin County to create Strike Team 2126A. They were assigned to do structure protection, moving from neighborhood to neighborhood and protecting homes directly threatened by the Witch Fire in San Diego County. Ross Apprentice Firefighter Lorne Ahlers also responded as part of a separate mutual aid team from Marin County.

The crew fought spot fires over seven days, saving homes in and around the town of Ramona. Many of the homes destroyed were in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) area, and the firefighters noticed an appreciable difference in houses conforming to WUI building standards and those that did not.

The Ross firefighters were greeted by grateful residents and experienced some terrible scenes. They met President Bush and Governor Schwarzenegger during the political leaders' visits to the area.





### From Public Safety Director Barry Heying

Get Ready disaster preparedness training classes will be held on Wednesday, November 14, and Tuesday, December 18, from 7 to 9 pm at the Marin Art & Garden Center. Cecilia Conte, the Town's volunteer coordinator, and Apprentice Firefighter Mario Juarez will teach interested residents to become Get Ready instructors, who can then teach disaster preparedness to Ross residents at community and social gatherings. The program is designed to educate residents in just two hours with basic skills to survive a disaster. A Disaster Plan Worksheet is now available on the Town's website. Check it out and see if you're ready for the next disaster!



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

Address	Applicant	Approved	Modified Approval	Denied	Continued
7 Woodside Way	Lee and Stephanie Notowich				
83 Laurel Grove	Eric and Trisha Ashworth				
2 Hillgirt Drive	Timothy and Katrina Harmon				
14 Walnut Avenue	Loretta Gargan and Catherine Wagner				
23 Baywood Ave.	Richard and Cynthia Hannum				
30 El Camino Bueno	Colin Lind and Anne Dickerson-Lind				
37 Upper Road	Thomas and Susan Reinhart				
Upper Toyon Lots	Harvey Glasser, Douglas Abrams and Mike Guelfi				

### Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next Town Council meeting will be Thursday, December 13, at 6:30 pm. Agendas are posted in advance of the meeting on the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org).

*The Morning After is published monthly by The Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke and edited by Town Manager Gary Broad. It is available at Town Hall and on-line at the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org). The newsletter is also delivered to everyone on the town's Information by Email list. If you'd like to receive The Morning After and other town information via email, contact Linda Lopez at [llopez@townofross.org](mailto:llopez@townofross.org).*