

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of September 10, 2009*

Volume 3, No. 8

September 11, 2009



*Public Works
Superintendent
Robert Maccario*

Get Ready Now for Storm Season

Stormwater that starts in the hills eventually finds its way to the valley floor, and that's why everyone in Ross can help improve water quality in our creeks and prevent flooding regardless of where they live.

Let's get started early this year before the rain actually starts falling. If you live in the hills please go out and clean up those leaves and soil that are building up on the edge of the road in front of your property. Clean the swales, gullies and waterways that run past or through your property. Trim back the brush and trees that are hanging out in the road making it hard for the street sweeper to do its job.

Water moves fast as it flows down hill, picking up debris along the way. When it gets to the level areas it slows down, and the debris drops out and starts stacking up, sometimes forcing water out into the roadway and over the creek banks. Remove any blockage as soon as possible. If you live along a creek you probably own the creek bank and some portion of the creek. It is your responsibility to remove dead or dying trees that may fall into the creek. It is easier and cheaper to remove them now when it is dry than when there is water in the creek. Buzz Doughty and I spend a lot of time cleaning ditches, catch basins, gutters and creeks throughout the entire year. We appreciate everything you do to keep our waterways clean while helping to prevent flooding.

Council Eliminates Second Unit Fees

In response to changing economic conditions, the Town Council adopted a resolution eliminating some fees and reducing others. To encourage more affordable housing and make it more financially feasible for homeowners to convert existing spaces into legal second units, the Council agreed to eliminate the \$300 second unit permit application fee and to cap variance fees for second units in existing nonconforming structures to \$300. The Council also voted unanimously to eliminate the \$100 home occupation permit fee and to reduce the \$1,000 fee to request a one-year extension of a planning approval to \$500.

The Council also discussed potential municipal code amendments to streamline some development applications and reduce applicant processing costs. One proposal is to provide some permitted uses in the commercial area, such as restaurants and retail stores, so potential businesses do not need to pay \$300 and apply for a use permit.

The Council agreed to consider revising the mandatory nine-month break between building permits to give the building official discretion to allow additional work that does not have off-site impacts.

In recognition of the longer time properties typically take to sell these days, the Council supported a code amendment to extend the time a report of residential building records is valid from six months to one year. Staff will draft an ordinance containing these code amendments for future Council review.



A municipal code amendment could make it easier for new downtown businesses to locate in Ross.



Mayor Rick Strauss' Report

The annual Town Dinner will be held on the Ross Common on Friday, September 25, beginning at 6:30 p.m. If you have not already RSVP'd, please do as soon as possible so Chief of Protocol Roseanna Lourdeaux and her committee may order the proper amount of tables and chairs. Trattoria Fresco, Marche Aux Fleur, and Ross Grocery will be providing take out orders for the Town Dinner, and you may pre-order if you like.

Shady Lane will be closed September 14 and 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., between Norwood Avenue and Fernhill Avenue for pathway surfacing. Many residents have commented to me on how the new Shady Lane pathway has made such a difference in their daily lives. I would like to encourage parents to leave their car at home and walk or bike with their children to school. We could greatly improve our circulation and parking issues if more residents would walk to the downtown.

Our annual creek clean up day is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, beginning at 9 a.m. Meet at the Post Office and bring your pruning shears, shovels, waterproof boots and work gloves. The creek is everyone's responsibility, so please come out and join in this very rewarding effort!

Council Members Select 09-10 Goals

The Town Council selected their Council goals for the 2009-10 fiscal year, which were initially identified at a public workshop the Council held in August.

Mayor Rick Strauss will continue to work on the downtown plan, which remains on the list of Council goals for a third year. One of his priorities is to complete drawings on the downtown plan as soon as possible. Council member Michael Skall will spearhead a review of the hillside lot ordinance, with a goal to make the ordinance more specific, so applicants know exactly how it will be applied to their property.



The hillside lot ordinance will be reviewed this year.

Council member Bill Cahill's goal will be to study improvements to public facilities, including the civic center buildings and the Ross Common. The Council will consider the construction of new facilities as well as an offer by the Marin Art & Garden Center to use their facilities for Town business.

Council member Chris Martin will shepherd flood control projects, including development of a new stormwater ordinance. The Council agreed to include right-of-way regulation in this goal, as landscaping and parking in the right-of-way often impacts drainage.

Finally, Mayor Pro Tempore Scot Hunter's goal is to study unfunded mandates and pensions. Although the Town's finances are in great shape, pensions are of countywide concern. Town Manager Gary Broad said the Marin City Managers have been studying this issue and will suggest pension reform measures that could be applied countywide.

Redwood Drive Parking Restrictions Revised

After receiving feedback from residents, the Council amended the Redwood Drive parking restrictions adopted in July. As two permits have proven to be inadequate to meet some residents' needs, each Redwood Drive residence will now be eligible to receive four parking permits. Permits will be free, and residents who have previously paid \$20 for a permit will receive a refund of their payment. The Council also decided to shorten the parking restriction period to June 10, 2010. Parking permits must be hung from the rearview mirror or displayed in the windshield.

The Council discussed issuing Ross School teachers parking permits for specific locations. To free up parking spaces near the Post Office and downtown businesses, teachers are requested to park on Lagunitas Road.

6 Redwood Drive to Be Improved

The Council authorized necessary work for the rental of 6 Redwood Drive and voted to amend the FY09-10 to provide up to \$30,000 for the work. The Town will hire Prandi Property Management to oversee improvements to the property, including fence and roof repairs, relocation of a new heater, completion of a previous bathroom remodel, repainting, and landscaping.

The Council also discussed contracting with Prandi to lease and manage the property for \$175 per month. The Town will explore renting the house to a Town employee or a Ross School teacher as affordable housing.



Ross Signs on to Marin County Major Crimes Task Force Changes

The Council voted unanimously to approve a Marin County Major Crimes Task Force Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement and revise the task force's organizational and financial structure. The Major Crimes Task Force, which has been in existence since 1997, is a specialized undercover unit focused on drug-related criminal activity. In 2004, the City of San Rafael withdrew from the JPA, requiring other members to shoulder a greater portion of the organization's costs. Due to severe budget problems, the City of Novato had planned to withdraw from the task force in June, effectively dissolving the JPA. The new agreement allows Novato to assign an existing police officer to the task force, substantially reducing their cash contribution. Ross' FY 09-10 contribution to the task force is approximately \$17,000.



Street Smarts Signs Approved

The Council voted to continue placement of temporary Street Smarts signs. Six banners are currently hanging on downtown light poles, and twelve additional signs will be placed around town, including locations at Bolinas Avenue, Shady Lane, Winship Park, and Ross School.

Street Smarts is a traffic education campaign designed to change driver, cyclist and pedestrian behavior and reduce accidents. The program targets five problematic behaviors: speeding, stopping, right-of-way violations, distracted driving, and bicyclist violations and safety.

Ross Common to Close for Town Dinner

The Council agreed to temporarily close the Ross Common for the annual Town Dinner from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday, September 25. The roadway will be closed between Lagunitas Road and Redwood Drive, although southbound traffic will be detoured behind the Ross Post Office.

The Town Dinner will be held on the Ross Common beginning at 6:00 p.m. Tables, chairs and tablecloths will be provided. Please RSVP by September 20th to ross.events@gmail.com or call (415) 453-1453 ext. 176. Residents are encouraged to walk, bike, and carpool to the Town Dinner.





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 website at www.townofross.org after approval at the October Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
341 Upper Toyon Dr.	Mike Guelfi			
21 Makin Grade	Phillip and Sharon Pillsbury			
10 Lagunitas Rd.	Jon and Linda Gruber			
7 Woodhaven Rd.	Steve Bode			
81 Wellington Ave.	Paul and Valerie Herzog			
19 Brookwood Rd.	Les Sherman and Patricia Duffy			
15 Fernhill Ave.	Charles Almond			

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next regular Council meeting is on Thursday, October 8, 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 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.