

Cyndie Martel

From: Genny Biggs <genny.biggs@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 3:23 PM
To: CouncilAll
Cc: Jason Weber; Mark Brown
Subject: re: [EXTERNAL] March 13 agenda item, discussion of fire services in Ross
Attachments: Ross Town Council_fire services.docx

Dear Town Council Members,

Please find comments attached, regarding the March 13th meeting agenda item for a general discussion of town fire services.

Thank you,

Genny

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Dear Members of the Ross Town Council,

Thank you for the opportunity for a general discussion regarding the provision of fire services in our town. I write as a Ross resident—we have lived on Fernhill for a little over a decade—but also as someone whose job it is to direct philanthropic funding for science and innovation to advance wildfire resilience across Western North America. That role informs the following three points I would like to convey:

- First, the hard news: Extreme wildfire events are increasing in incidence, severity, and speed. That means that the January 2025 LA fires are not as much of an outlier as we wish they were, and we should be very clear that this kind of event could also happen here.
- Second, the good news for Marin: We already know enough, and have the county-wide resources, to change conditions on the ground, with confidence, in order to reduce our vulnerability to the frightening and tragic home-to-home conflagration we witnessed in Pacific Palisades and Altadena, and in Jasper, Lahaina, Boulder, Santa Rosa, Paradise, Gatlinburg, and so many other places in recent years. As a county, we benefit from the extraordinary leadership at Marin County Fire and Marin Wildfire; the latter was established to build on the large body of evidence that exists and can be implemented for both community-scale and parcel-level risk reduction.
- Third, and most important for this conversation underway in Ross: We have agency, even in the face of these fires we should anticipate on the horizon. The town council and every resident should know that the wildfire challenge that confronts us is solvable, if we ensure that:
 - (1) collectively, we support work to reduce vegetation and fuel loads in the open space around our town to slow and disrupt the fire pathways that can lead from these open spaces into the built environment, and (this is an important “and,” because both are required to reduce vulnerability),
 - (2) a critical mass of property owners embraces our individual responsibility to remove vegetation and mulch and other combustible materials in the area from zero to five feet around our own homes, and also to remove wooden fences that otherwise function essentially as fuses leading into and between our houses. Other easy steps to help safeguard our homes include installing gutter guards to keep flammable vegetation out and swapping old vents for ember-resistant, finer-mesh vents. Marin Wildfire’s defensible space program identifies connective fuels and actionable mitigations for each one of us in the tailored inspection reports we receive.Together, these community-scale and parcel-level efforts are science-backed, effective, and *cost*-effective measures that can meaningfully increase our security and reduce the risk of property loss if, or when, a wildfire occurs during a worst-condition scenario.

My hope is that the March 2025 council discussion of fire services will round a corner and shift our discourse, focus, and energy to encouraging all of us, as Ross residents, to implement parcel-level mitigations—the mitigations that matter to safeguard our homes, protect our families and neighbors, and aid the first responders who work to save lives and property.

If the town council would like to learn more from the grantees and other partners I know who are working to advance wildfire resilience and align insurance incentives with mitigations that matter, please let me know, anytime, and I’d be happy to make connections.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important challenge, and your consideration of these proven solutions for a more fire-resilient future.

Sincerely,
Genny Biggs
12 Fernhill Ave.