

# THE MORNING AFTER

## TOWN OF ROSS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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### Mayor's Corner



Julie McMillan  
Mayor

Today our country faces a crisis with a pandemic, a recession, and racial inequality all at the forefront. Here's how the Town of Ross is addressing these issues.

#### **The Pandemic:**

The Town of Ross is faring well in the fight against COVID-19. Based on recent numbers, fewer than 10 Ross residents have been infected, thanks to wearing masks, sheltering in place, social distancing and hand washing. We salute the dedicated health care workers and front line workers helping us through these unprecedented times. All Town employees have resumed working from Town buildings, except for the Recreation Department. Because of the need for social dis-

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### Ross Undergrounding Moves Forward

The formation of a 114-parcel underground utility assessment district took a major step forward with the Town Council adopting a Resolution of Intent to initiate the formation of Assessment District No. 2020-01, including the approval of a preliminary boundary of the proposed district and enter into contracts with professional assessment district engineers and a bond counsel firm. In November, 2019 the Town Council adopted the "Underground Utility District Formation Policies and Procedures" which provides guidance for private homeowners who wish to form an assessment district to underground the overhead utilities in their neighborhood.



The procedure to form an assessment district and sell bonds to fund the design and construction of the project is for the most part already defined under California law. Local agencies do have flexibility to change the petitioning and balloting rules as long as they are more strict than the law provides. The Town's adopted policy requires that at least 65% of the homeowner parcels sign the petition of interest. State law only requires that at least 50% of the parcels sign. Another condition is that at least 50% of the parcel land area of the district is owned by the petition signers. The West Ross Undergrounding District residents presented petitions from 69% of the homeowner parcels, representing 82% of the parcels by area.

The next step in what could be a long process is for the consultants to prepare construction documents for the project and a Preliminary Engineer's Report that provides more accurate estimates of the individual property assessment costs required to fund the project. This process could take 12-18 months to complete and bring to the Council for consideration. If the Preliminary Report is approved at that hearing, the Town would seek construction bids on the project to further refine the cost estimates so that a Final Engineer's Report can be considered. The property owners within the assessment district boundary would then vote on whether or not the district should be formed. This vote, which could be 2 or more years from now, would form the district if more than 50% of the weighted (by assessment) votes approve and more than 50% of the parcels approve.



tancing, Ross School and Ross Recreation requested additional space for outdoor classes and activities on the Ross Common. Last night we discussed expanding areas where dogs are prohibited on the Common.

**The Recession:** Last night we approved our Town's budget for fiscal year 2021. Unlike many other Marin towns and cities that depend on sales tax revenue, Ross is in better financial shape. This is because property taxes, our largest revenue source, are more stable and slow to respond to deteriorating, as well as improving, economic conditions. Overall, Ross operating revenues are anticipated to decline; most departments' expense budgets are being reduced accordingly. In addition, some Ross businesses are struggling given the lengthy shut down and resulting recession. Please take a look at the list of Ross retail businesses sent in a Townwide email yesterday, and let's support them. Last night we also ratified a June 5 Emergency Order to help Ross restaurants expand their space to use sidewalks for outdoor dining.

**Racial Inequality:** Many residents attended the moving **Black Lives Matter** gathering on the Ross Common on June 6 following the appalling and inhumane death of George Floyd. Thank you to the Mortimer, Earl and Bakker families for organizing this event. Heartfelt speeches were given by Amanda Mortimer, the Earl Family, Ross School Superintendent Michael McDowell, Branson Head of School Chris Mazzola, St. John's Reverend Chris Rankin-Williams, Ross Police Chief Erik Masterson, and me. As we have stated, the Ross Town Council, Police Department, staff and I will treat members of our community with empathy, fairness and compassion. We will work to ensure that every voice is heard in the fight for social justice and racial equity in our community. ■



### Bolinas Avenue Rehabilitation Project

Council approved the design for the Bolinas Avenue Rehabilitation Project and approved the Town of San Anselmo's recommendation to award the contract to Team Ghilotti, the lowest responsible and responsive bidder, for \$737,141. A total of four bids were received for this project, which was estimated to cost \$875,000.



In addition to the complete reconstruction of the pavement from San Anselmo Avenue to Upper Road, the project includes traffic calming measures including speed humps at two locations between Richmond Road and Kensington Road, shoulder islands at the Kensington Road intersection, and narrowing of the travel lanes. The two traffic islands that were built in 2013 will remain. The maintenance of Bolinas Avenue is shared by the Towns of Ross and San Anselmo. In March 2019, the Town Council approved a cost share agreement between the towns for drainage improvements which were completed last year, and this roadway rehabilitation project.

### Winship Park Becomes FireWise



**FIREWISE USA**  
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Congratulations to Winship Park for becoming Ross' second FireWise neighborhood

on May 27 after the Woodhaven FireWise neighborhood! The work on the Winship Neighborhood began in July, spearheaded by Carla Buchanan, Theani Louskos, Julie McMillan, and our San Anselmo neighbor, Alex Cowley.

The FireWise USA Program encourages local solutions for safety by involving homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes from the risk of wildfire. The program provides resources to help homeowners learn how to adapt to living with wildfire while encouraging and empowering neighbors to work together to take action now to reduce their wildfire risk and prevent losses. Scientific research has shown the effectiveness and benefits of implementing wildfire mitigation concepts across individual property boundaries and throughout communities.

If your neighborhood is interested in becoming FireWise, please visit [firesafemarin.org](https://firesafemarin.org) to learn more about this excellent program. FireSafe Marin can also provide great resources and help with the application process.

## PLANNING RESULTS

The Town Council took the following action on planning applications at the June Council meeting. Staff reports and audio for the meeting can be found on the Town's website [June 18th](#) meeting page. The minutes for this meeting will be posted after adoption by the Council at the July 9, 2020 Council meeting.

**Address:** 43 Laurel Grove Avenue  
**Owner:** Scott & Debra Hilleboe  
**Council Action:** Approved  
**Vote (for/against/abstain):** 5-0-0

**Address:** 9 Skyland Way  
**Owner:** Chris & Gina Fasano  
**Council Action:** Approved  
**Vote (for/against/abstain):** 5-0-0

## July 4th Celebration Cancelled

We are sorry to announce this year's 4th of July celebration is cancelled due to COVID-19. We look forward to returning next year. We hope everyone has a happy and safe 4th of July.

## ADR Group Seeks New Members

The Town Council is seeking volunteers interested in serving on the Advisory Design Review Group (ADR). The five-member ADR Group traditionally includes four architects, design professionals, or building designers and one resident-at-large, however any resident interested in serving is encouraged to apply. ADR members serve two-year terms.

Serving on the ADR is a unique opportunity to make a positive contribution to the design and appearance of our community and help neighbors come together on development issues. This group, which is advisory to staff and not a decision-making body, meets once a month at Ross Town Hall (but meeting remotely until further notice) to provide community members with early input on development plans. The meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month from 7 to 9 pm.

If you are interested in serving, please submit an application form by July 31, 2020. The application form is available on the Town's website: [townofross.org](http://townofross.org) or by contacting [Patrick Streeter](#), Planning and Building Director, at 415 453-1453 x121. The Council will consider applications from current and prospective members at its August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## Creating Defensible Space

**Defensible Space:** The newly created Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority in partnership with the Town and the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) have begun defensible space and home evaluations in Ross. You may receive a visit from the team; the inspectors are there to assist you in preparing your home for wildfire. Please take the opportunity to ask questions and receive information how you can be better prepared.



Creating defensible space is essential to improve your home's chance of surviving a wildfire. It's the buffer you create between a building on your property and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surrounds it. This space is

needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and it protects your home from catching fire - either from direct flame contact, radiant heat or ember showers. Defensible space is also important for the protection of the firefighters defending your home. Fire-resistant landscaping isn't necessarily the same thing as a well-maintained yard. This type of landscaping uses fire-resistant plants that are strategically planted to resist the spread of fire to your home.

Flying embers can destroy homes up to a mile from a wildfire. "Harden" your home now before a fire starts by using ember-resistant building materials. Keep your roof clear of dead pine needles, leaves and other dry material. Vents on homes create openings for flying embers. Replace or cover vents with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) compliant vents or metal mesh no greater than 1/8") Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

## Chipper Days Are Coming

We are happy to announce that on Monday, July 6 and Tuesday, July 7, FireSafe Marin, with funding support from the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, will conduct "Chipper Days" in the Town of Ross to assist individual landowners with vegetation - fuel reduction to reduce wildfire hazards in Marin. The Chipper Program is a curbside pickup program for residents to collect waste material such as tree limbs, shrubs, brush, woody bushes, pampas grass, etc., that is within 10x4x4. We will send out a townwide email providing more detailed information in the coming days.

2021

## Budget Adopted

The Town Council passed the Fiscal Year 2020-21 (FYE21) budget last night. The budget is the Town's financial plan for the upcoming year and includes revenues and expenses related to Town operations and capital improvements. The budget was developed based on the continuing objectives of providing high quality services to the community in an efficient, effective, responsive, and financially responsible manner. The overall budget for all Town Funds is \$9.8 million for FYE21, a reduction from \$10.7 million in FYE20. The budget provides for a small General Fund surplus (revenues in excess of expenses).

The COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 has significantly changed all sectors of society. The economic impact has been drastic and quick with the U.S. job losses soaring with the pandemic. Overall, Ross operating revenues are anticipated to decline compared to the prior fiscal year due to the COVID-19 emergency but not as much as other jurisdictions that rely more heavily on sales tax and hotel/motel tax revenues. Accordingly, with the decrease in Town revenues, most departments' expense budgets are being reduced from the prior fiscal year. The emphasis continues to be to sustain financial responsibility and stability as we continue to support the Town's goals and objectives.

We will continue to move forward by investing in services and facilities for the community in FYE21. The new projects for the year include additional emphasis on maintaining a safe community and improving emergency preparedness as well as enhancing maintenance of facilities and infrastructure. The budget also includes projects such as the Ross Common landscaping master plan, facilities analysis of the Civic Center site, downtown visioning including zoning review, participation in the County flood protection plan including a potential redesign of Allen Park, and processing underground utilities district(s). The budget includes \$2 million for improving Town infrastructure and facilities such as the rehabilitation of Bolinas Avenue (finally) and Thomas Court, a road seal program, seismic improvements at Town Hall, resurfacing Allen Park tennis courts, Natalie Coffin Greene Park pedestrian bridge rehabilitation, and Ross Common restoration within the next two years.

We strive to provide high quality services to the community in a financially responsible manner. Please contact Town Manager Joe Chinn if you have any questions related to the Town services, finances and budget.

## RECREATION NEWS

Ross Recreation is offering summer programs both virtually and in-person. The virtual programs began in June and include Lego, Science, Acting, Marin Explorers and chess. There are still openings in the science, chess and Marin Explorers virtual programs.



In-person camps will begin on July 6<sup>th</sup> and run through August 14. Two sessions will be offered in three week intervals. Programs include Top Gun sports camp, Sporty Girls, Fishing, Lego Engineering and Holly Hoppin' outdoor camp at Natalie Coffin Park. The camps will operate under guidelines issued by the county of Marin Covid-19 order. Camps are limited to twelve participants per camp for each three week session. Instructors will stay with the same group throughout the three week intervals and camps will not intermingle with each other. All in-person camps are full.

If you have any questions about Ross Recreation programs please email: [rossrec@rossrecreation.org](mailto:rossrec@rossrecreation.org).

## Bufano Bear Gets a Facelift



The Town's beloved Bufano Bear sculpture has received some much needed maintenance. Donated to the Town in 1971, the bear has been an iconic landmark and mascot for Ross for many years outside Town Hall.

The Town has contracted with Preservation Arts to oversee the maintenance of the bear on an annual basis. The bear was cleaned with biodegradable surfactants and biocide to reduce dirt and discoloration, and the hairline cracks throughout were filled and repaired.

# ROSS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## JUNE 2020

Jun 16	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting ( <i>virtual meeting</i> )
Jun 18*	6:00	pm	Council Meeting ( <i>*note special date</i> ) ( <i>virtual meeting</i> )
Jun 30	6:00	pm	Marin County Flood Control & Town of Ross Community Workshop ( <i>virtual meeting</i> )

## JULY 2020

Jul 3	--	--	Town Hall offices closed for Independence Day
Jul 4	--	--	4th of July Celebration Cancelled p
Jul 9	6:00	pm	Council Meeting ( <i>virtual meeting</i> )
Jul 21	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting ( <i>virtual meeting</i> )

## AUGUST 2020

Aug 13	6:00	pm	Council Meeting
Aug 18	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting

## CONTACT US

Administration - <a href="mailto:llopez@townofross.org">llopez@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x105	Police	415-453-1453, Opt. 2
Building - <a href="mailto:breher@townofross.org">breher@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x106	Public Works Director - <a href="mailto:rsimonitch@townofross.org">rsimonitch@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x115
Bldg Inspection Hotline - <a href="mailto:erobbe@townofross.org">erobbe@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x170	Recreation - <a href="mailto:rossrec@rossrecreation.org">rossrec@rossrecreation.org</a>	415-453-6020
Planning/Building Director - <a href="mailto:pstreeter@townofross.org">pstreeter@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x121	Ross Valley Fire Dept	415-258-4686
Planner - <a href="mailto:mweintraub@townofross.org">mweintraub@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x116	Town Manager - <a href="mailto:jchinn@townofross.org">jchinn@townofross.org</a>	415-453-1453 x107

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