

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of April 8, 2010*

Volume 4, No. 7

April 9, 2010



## **Shady Lane Pathway Now Really Complete**

The final touches were quietly added to the Shady Lane Pathway this week with the completion of a crosswalk at Ames Avenue, including an ADA-compliant ramp to the decomposed granite pathway. Council member Chris Martin thanked the Town's Public Works Department at last night's Council meeting for getting this work completed. The efforts, and patience, of Douglas Khan and other neighborhood residents as the Town evaluated how to address their safety concerns are equally appreciated. So too is all the time Town Council members spent weighing how to best proceed, especially Public Works Committee members Martin and Bill Cahill. Sometimes it takes a village to complete a pathway, but the ramp is done, pedestrian safety is enhanced, and the work was completed for half the estimated \$30,000 cost.

—Town Manager Gary Broad

## **Finance Committee Report**

Council member Mike Skall reported on the Town's fiscal position. The Finance Committee recently reviewed the final January 2010 financials for the current fiscal year and found that revenues and expenditures are almost dead on with overall budget projections through seven months.

"The Town has a long history of fiscal conservatism, which is directly responsible for its current, financially sound position," said Council member Skall. "Even during the last few challenging fiscal years, the Town has been able to continue to increase its reserves each year."

The Town has paid careful attention to income and expenditures throughout the year, which will result in approximately \$15,700 in annual savings by:

- Moving payroll and billables in-house and switching to a local accountant to improve operations should reduce direct costs by an estimated \$10,000 a year in future years.
- Changing cell providers and service, which reduced costs by approximately 50% and will save approximately \$3,000 a year.
- Switching building cleaning service, improving service and reducing costs by over \$1,500 a year.
- Uncovering a PG&E streetlight billing error, saving \$815 a year going forward and generating a \$2,400 refund this year.
- Installing a \$30 software program to automatically shut down Town computers at night, saving energy and \$380 in annual PG&E costs.



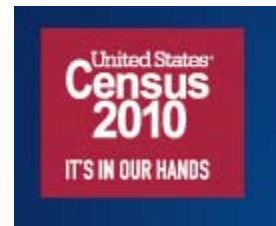
The Town has also saved money through the prudent use of consultants. We had our draft housing element completed for \$25,800, a savings of approximately \$45,000 over the cost in other comparable communities. The \$3,500 we paid Project Planner Christine O'Rourke to prepare a Highway Safety Improvement grant application resulted in a \$442,900 grant to improve the Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Lagunitas Road intersection.

We just contracted with the Expense Management Group to audit all Town utility bills going back three years, which is guaranteed to produce only savings, with no cash outlay, for the Town.

## Residents Encouraged to Complete Census

Residents who have not yet received a U.S. Census form are encouraged to pick one up outside the Administrative Office at Town Hall. Forms are available 24/7 during April. The Census Bureau will not mail Census questionnaires to post office boxes, but they will dispatch Census takers door-to-door to Ross residences in May. The Census costs \$.42 if you mail back the form in the postage-paid envelope; it costs \$25 if a Census taker must go to your house to collect the same information.

Residents are required by law to complete and return the Census questionnaire. The primary purpose of the Census is to determine how seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned. California, the most populous state, is expected to either hold steady at 53 seats or, perhaps, lose one seat. Texas, the second most populous state with 32 seats, may gain four seats.



Information collected by the Census is also used to determine how more than \$400 billion dollars of federal funding is allocated each year to state and local governments for roads, public works projects, schools, hospitals, senior centers, emergency services, etc. Recently, Ross was awarded federal money to repave Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, improve the intersection of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Lagunitas Road, and reconstruct the Lagunitas Road Bridge.

California's share of federal funding in the 2007 fiscal year was approximately \$41 billion, resulting in an average federal outlay of \$1,100 for every person counted in California.

As of April 9, the U.S. Census website tallied Ross' mail participation rate at 62%, below Marin County's overall rate of 67%. In 2000, the national mail participation rate was 72%.

## Ahrens Family of Ross Grocery Commended



The Council passed a resolution commending Don Ahrens, owner of Eddie's Ross Cash Grocery and long-time Ross resident, who will be moving to Nevada with his wife Denise after selling their popular corner market to Don Santa of Woodlands Market.

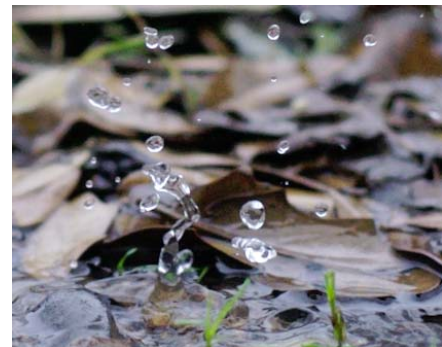
Last week, the Council voted to contribute funding to a plaque marking the historic site of the Ross Cash Grocery and recognizing the two generations of the Ahrens family who have served the Ross community over the past 64 years. The Ross Property Owners Association and the Ross Historical Society are also contributing to the plaque.

The Town is throwing a thank you party for Denise and Don Ahrens on Friday, April 30, at the Ross Fire Station from 6 to 9 p.m. Chief of Protocol Roseanna Lourdeaux is asking each Ross household to bring their favorite finger-food or appetizer. Woodlands Market will stock the bar. Please RSVP by April 25 to [rossevents@gmail.com](mailto:rossevents@gmail.com) or call 453-1453 ext. 176.

## Stormwater Ordinance Under Consideration

The Town Council, sitting as a planning commission, voted to recommend introduction of an ordinance that contains regulations to reduce stormwater runoff from new development. The proposed ordinance would add design guidelines and building regulations to the municipal code and require projects valued over \$250,000 to include a stormwater management plan. 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.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian explained that engineered stormwater plans would not be necessary for small projects and that staff would assist these applicants in planning for inexpensive solutions to eliminate any increase in site runoff. She recommended the Council modify the text ordinance so that the Town could waive the stormwater management plan requirement and exempt projects that do not increase impervious surfaces.



The Council agreed to recommend a design review requirement for projects that create over 1,000 square feet of impervious surfaces. These projects could potentially be reviewed at staff level, similar to new fences. The Council will consider introducing the stormwater ordinance at its May Council meeting.

## Cellular Lease Amended to Allow Additional Antennas

The Council approved an amendment to an existing cellular lease agreement between the Town of Ross and Crown Castle to allow Clearwire Communications to install three new antennas at a height of 34 feet on the existing 40-foot tall pole adjacent to the Town's corporation yard building. Two Sprint antennas are currently located at the top of the pole.



*The Town's new siren will be operational in the next week.*

Crown Castle's monthly lease payment to the Town will increase by \$525 from \$1,150 to \$1,675. The increased payment is expected to bring in nearly \$100,000 over the remaining 15 years of the lease term. The Council will consider a separate planning application for the new antennas at the May meeting.

## Disaster Council Update

Fire Chief Tom Vallee announced that the Town's new warning siren would be fully operational in a few days, as soon as a \$2.95 part arrives. The Fire Department will be testing the siren in the next week or two. Town staff will be able to activate the new siren remotely from any cell phone.

Chief Vallee reported there are now 1,000 people in the Town's telephone notification system and the Fire Department trained 27 residents in disaster preparedness during three recent Get Ready classes. Residents are encouraged to participate in both programs.

## Preliminary Costs for New Public Safety Building Discussed

Council member Bill Cahill reported that Mack5 had prepared conceptual cost estimates to replace and repair the Town's existing public safety building. Hard costs are estimated at \$360 per square foot and would exceed \$5 million based on Mack5's space estimates. Remodeling the existing building would cost \$200,000 more. Soft costs are likely to add another 25-40%. Architect Kathy Strauss is currently preparing a schematic design for a new public safety building. Residents have expressed their desire to retain the historic character of the existing building. The conceptual design and financing options will be presented at the June Council meeting.

## Council Approves Grujic Project at 2 Upper Road West

Council members Chris Martin, Michael Skall and Bill Cahill voted unanimously to approve a site improvement project at 2 Upper Road West and execute a settlement agreement in which property owner Alan Grujic will dismiss his existing court action against the Town.

The project modifies plans originally considered and denied by the Council in April 2009. The new plans relocate the pool and driveway closer to the residence, lower the elevation of the pool area, and reduce the length and height of the retaining walls so that none are over 5 feet tall. "Landscape architect Michael Yandle has made a great effort to address my original concern with the project's relationship to the natural grade," said Council member Bill Cahill.

Although the new project reduces the amount of concrete and fill needed to be imported to the site, Council member Chris Martin expressed concern about the significant



amount of truck traffic that will be generated by the project. Town staff advised Council that Upper Road between Upper Road West and Woodhaven Road might not be able to support large construction vehicles. The Council agreed to include a condition that prohibits trucks on this stretch of the road unless an engineer approves the road for such use.

The project contains a stormwater detention system that will collect and detain stormwater until a storm passes and rainwater can be safely discharged without exacerbating peak flows into the creeks. Permeable pavers will also help to reduce runoff from the driveway.

## Candidates Night

The Ross Property Owner's Association will be hosting a Candidates Night for prospective Town Council members on Wednesday, April 28, at 7 p.m. at The Branson School. The four residents that have tossed their hats into the ring for the two July Council openings are Mark Fritts, Carla Small, Rupert Russell and Iris Winey.

## April is Fair Housing Month

The Council passed a resolution declaring April to be Fair Housing Month and recognizing fair housing as a fundamental human right. Discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, disability, familial status (with an exclusion of minor children), religion, marital status, and sexual orientation is illegal in California.



## 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 [here](#). The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the May Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
2 Upper Road West	Alan Grujic	X		
5 Madera Avenue	Jeremy and Wendy Coon	X		
2 Glenwood Avenue	Ed and Betsy McDermott			X
88 Laurel Grove Ave.	Courtney and Nicole Haslett	X		
50 Wellington Ave.	Courtney and Gregory Smith	X		
5 Fernhill Avenue	Tahlia Van			X
90 Laurel Grove Ave.	Steve and Kirsten Polsky			X

## Upcoming Town Meetings

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 13, 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](http://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.*