

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of February 9, 2012*

Volume 6, No. 2

February 10, 2012

Council Reviews Mid-Year Budget

The Council reviewed expenses and revenues for the first six months of the 2011-2012 fiscal year. On the revenue side, property taxes came in at approximately \$24,000 over budget and building permits exceeded expectations by \$26,000. However, sales taxes, interest income, and planning application fees all come in under projections. Overall, revenues slightly exceeded budget estimates by \$2,169 by the end of December 2011.

Several line items are exceeding projections on the expenditure side of the budget. The departure of the former Town Manager in November is expected to cost about \$15,000 (net, after considering savings in benefits and contract costs for the interim Town Manager) and \$22,000 for a professional recruiting firm to assist the Town in filling the position. Legal, auditing, and contract engineering costs are expected to exceed budgeted amounts by approximately \$54,000. Police and Fire Department expenditures are also expected to exceed budgeted amounts by about \$31,000 to \$36,000. In total, expenditures are tracking to exceed budget projections by approximately \$139,000 by fiscal year end. Interim Town Manager Pat Thompson noted that this was a substantial improvement over the last fiscal year, when expenditures exceeded the budget by over \$325,000.



Interim Town Manager Thompson will be preparing two draft budgets for fiscal year 2012-2013 – one assuming the municipal services tax passes, and another that cuts \$650,000 out of the budget. The draft budgets will be discussed at a special community workshop tentatively scheduled for May 3rd. The Council is expected to adopt the final budget on June 21st, once the outcome of the election is known.

Budget Concerns Put Audio Equipment Purchase on Hold

The Council agreed to continue discussion of a purchase of audio equipment and podium for the Council chambers until after the June 5th election, when the fate of the Town's municipal services tax is known. Each year, the tax raises approximately \$650,000 of the \$5.1 million in revenue the Town collects. Although the municipal services tax has been approved by the voters since 1984, this time the tax will require a two-thirds majority, instead of a simple majority as in years past. The tax has been set at \$775 per parcel for the past several years.

"I'm very concerned about having an axe come down if the municipal services tax fails to pass in June," said Mayor Pro Tempore Rupert Russell. "Where are we going to find \$650,000 to cut from the budget?"

Quotes for the audio equipment and podium ranged from a total of approximately \$12,300 to \$20,000, about double what the Council expected to spend. Staff has not yet obtained quotes for a projection system, as the Town is awaiting a final decision from the Marin Telecommunications Agency (MTA) on the feasibility of shared video streaming for Ross and neighboring towns.

Last month, the Council voted to install a video system and provide video recordings of public meetings if at least two other cities sign up with the same service provider, Granicus. The towns of Larkspur and San Anselmo have not yet decided whether they will participate. The Fairfax Town Council said it was interested in installing a video system, but wanted to explore other service providers.

The Council agreed to consider budgeting expenditures for the audio system, podium and projection system for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.



Mayor Carla Small

Mayor Carla Small's Report

On Tuesday, June 5, 2012, the voters in Ross will be filling three Council seats for a 4-year term. The terms of Council members Scot Hunter, Chris Martin and Rick Strauss will end at that time.

This is a rewarding opportunity for any registered voter and resident of Ross who wishes to give back to their community. The filing period for Council candidates begins this coming Monday, February 13, 2012 and continues through Friday, March 9, 2012. If any of the incumbents choose not to file for re-election, the filing deadline will be extended to Wednesday, March 14, 2012.

This election will also see our current Municipal Services Tax back on the ballot to continue for another four years. This special tax is dedicated to funding a portion of the \$3.4 million budget for Public Safety. Due to changes in the law, this will now require a two-thirds vote of the electors.

As noticed last night by Pat Thompson, our Interim Town Manager, February 16th will be another opportunity to give public input regarding the potential merger of the Ross Fire Department with the Ross Valley Fire Department.

Also, Monday, February 27th, Ralph Anderson and Associates, the selected search firm for recruiting our new Town Manager, will be hosting a community meeting. Heather Renschler, their CEO and our designated contact, will be soliciting input from the public. This is an opportunity for residents to participate in the process.

On a side note, Ross Valley Sanitary District is hosting a workshop Wednesday, February 15th, 6:45 p.m. at Kent Middle School's Multi-Purpose Room. They are considering a new rate structure based on the amount of fresh water used by customers rather than the current fixed rate.

Police Department to Replace Patrol Car

The Council authorized Police Chief Erik Masterson to replace an existing six-year-old police patrol car with a new vehicle on a four-year lease/purchase agreement. The Police Department traditionally purchases its vehicles outright and retains them for six years. Instead of purchasing a new Dodge Charger for approximately \$40,000, the Town will spread payments over four years, at which time the Town will own the vehicle. Financing costs add about \$3,000 onto the purchase price of the patrol car.

However, the Town will realize some savings because the purchase and outfitting of the patrol car will be handled by the same vendor under the lease/purchase plan.

The current mileage on the vehicle scheduled to be replaced is 67,000 miles. Additional idling time results in significant wear and tear on the vehicle. Patrol cars are scheduled for replacement prior to the point where, because of their age and condition, vehicle downtime and repair costs become problematic.



The Council discussed putting off the purchase for a few months, but agreed it was critical for police officers to have the equipment they need to effectively do their jobs. Mayor Pro Tempore Rupert Russell encouraged the police officers to use the new patrol bicycles. "I'd like to see more policemen getting out of their cars," he said. "Community policing is about interacting with the people."

Council Approves Temporary Ball Field Locations

The Council approved temporary locations on the Ross Common for both the Little League rookie and T-ball fields. The fields will remain where they were located during the Ross School construction project, with the Rookie field in the southeast corner of the Common across from the Ross Grocery and the T-ball field across from the Post Office. The Council will discuss the permanent field locations this spring once the restoration of the Common is complete.



The Council agreed to not permit storage lockers for Little League equipment on the Common this year, and to request the Ross Valley Little League to do a better job at picking up garbage and collecting forgotten items. Ross resident Barbara Call suggested placing recycling bins on the Common to deal with the overflowing trash cans on game days.

Council Appointments

The Council reappointed Mark Fritts and Jim Kemp to the Advisory Design Review (ADR) Group. Both have served on the ADR Group as design professional members since the group's inception in 2008. Mr. Fritts is the current ADR chair, and Mr. Kemp served as ADR chair from 2008-2010.

In a separate item, the Council appointed Brian Salmen, from a field of four candidates, to serve as an alternate member to the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) Board of Directors. Mr. Salmen is a physician on the medical staff of four local hospitals, and has been active in community affairs, having represented Ross on the Flood Zone 9 Advisory Committee and as a board member of the Flood Mitigation League of Ross Valley. Mr. Salmen will step in for Bruce Hart, the Town's longstanding RVPA board member, when he is unable to attend a board meeting. The RVPA is a joint powers authority that provides advanced life support paramedic services to the communities who are members.

Council Reviews General Plan Annual Progress Report

The Council discussed a General Plan Annual Progress Report that, by law, must be filed with state agencies each year.

The report also provides an update on the implementation of the Town's housing element. The housing element, which was adopted in November 2010, plans for the development of 27 new housing units in Ross between 2007 and 2014. No new single-family homes or second units were built in 2011, leaving the Town with a remaining regional housing need of 21 units for the rest of the planning period. The Town made some progress on implementing housing element programs in 2011. In particular, the Council adopted a Second Unit Ordinance that relaxes some development standards and provides a 500 square foot floor area bonus to certain property owners that agree to deed restrict their newly constructed second units to be affordable to very low income households.



The Council discussed additional programs that need to be implemented. Next month, the Council will consider introduction of an ordinance to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities and a density bonus for affordable housing developers. The ordinance will also amend the zoning code to comply with state law and facilitate the development of housing in the downtown and at certain housing opportunity sites identified in the housing element.

Small Business Development Center at Your Service

Business Advisor Leonard Weingarten briefed the Council on the services and capabilities of the Small Business Development Center. With six outreach offices in Marin County, the Center offers complimentary, professional and confidential business advising to small businesses that wish to start-up, expand or improve their businesses. The Center also offers workshops, online courses, on-site employee training and special programs for business owners. The highly-acclaimed NXLevel™ Entrepreneur Course, a 12-session program designed to help entrepreneurs advance their skills in growing and managing their companies, will be offered in Marin beginning March 7th. For more information, visit www.santarosabdc.org.

Council Approves Recruitment Brochure for Town Manager

The Council approved a draft recruitment brochure for the Town Manager position. The brochure has information about the Town, its major civic projects, and some description of the skills, experience, and qualities the Council is looking for in a Town Manager. The full candidate profile will be refined with input from Town staff and the community during a public workshop later in February. The recruitment deadline is March 16th and interviews are tentatively scheduled for April 20th and 21st.



Senior Planner
Elise Semonian

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, visit www.townofross.org/pages/town_council/staff_reports.html. The minutes of this meeting will be available on the website at www.townofross.org after approval at the March Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Council Action	Vote (for/against/abstain)
10 Morrison Rd.	Margaret Haas	Approved	4-0-0
30 Baywood Ave.	Jeff Alpert and Lisa Wing-Alpert	Approved	4-0-0
10 Ames Ave.	Bradley and Kristin Matsik	Revised drainage plan approved with additional landscape screening	4-0-0
74 Baywood Ave.	Charles and Renee Sheppard	Approved	4-0-0
61 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.	MJC Ventures 1, LLC	Continued to March 8, 2012	3-0-0 (Martin recused)
6 Southwood Ave.	Darr and Sandy Aley	Hearing continued to March 8, 2012, at the applicants’ request	

Upcoming Meetings

The Town will host a community workshop on the Ross Valley Fire Department merger on Thursday, February 16, at 7 p.m.

The Town will host a community input meeting regarding Town Manager recruitment on Monday, February 27, at 7 p.m.

The next regular Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, March 8, at 6:30 p.m. Agendas and staff reports for all meetings are posted in advance of the meetings on the Town’s website at www.townofross.org. All meetings are held at Town Hall unless indicated otherwise. You may email Council members by accessing the website at www.townofross.org/pages/contact/email_council.html.

The Morning After is published following each regular Council meeting by the Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O’Rourke with support from Administrative Manager Linda Lopez, and reviewed by Mayor Carla Small prior to publication. 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.