

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of January 14, 2010*

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*Town Manager
Gary Broad*

Former Intel CEO Andy Grove once remarked that in business "only the paranoid survive." In the world of government, perhaps "only the fiscally conservative survive." Or survive and thrive. The local paper shouts the glum news, "Novato to cut 39 employees" and "Marin County must cut \$15 million annually." Regrettably, ultimately the residents feel the pain of these cuts as local services are eliminated or reduced.

Ross has a long tradition of fiscal conservatism, which supports the community in good and not-so-good times. Ross Town Councils for decades have conscientiously managed the Town's budget and the public's money. They have avoided the expenses of other municipalities such as paid retiree medical insurance, debt and burgeoning staffing. In return, they created healthy reserves to allow the Town to pursue capital improvements and expanded services to residents.

The Council's decision to opt out of Marin Energy Authority (MEA) can be (and was) debated on many levels, but at one level, it was simply a continuation of decades of fiscal conservatism. The majority of Ross residents spoke against Ross' participation and the unknowns and risks involved in participating in MEA. Ross had a choice between being a "founding member" of MEA or sitting on the sidelines and watching as MEA unfolds. If MEA is successful, and I hope it will be, at that time Ross may petition to join.

With a clearer picture of the risks and rewards, a future Council will be able to make an ultimate decision on MEA consistent with our rich tradition of fiscal conservatism.

Trash Collection Rates to Increase 3.18%

The Town Council unanimously voted to grant Marin Sanitary Service a rate increase of 3.18% effective January 1, 2010. Rates will increase \$0.75 per month for a 32-gallon can and \$1.50 for a 64-gallon can.

Although Marin Sanitary's operating costs have declined, the franchisors' consultant recommended the rate increase to offset declining revenues due to customer downsizing and closure of accounts. Marin Sanitary President Patty Garbarino said volume was down 25% because of the poor economy.

Seniors 65-years old and over are encouraged to take advantage of senior rates for the 32-gallon can by calling Marin Sanitary at 456-2601. The discount is currently 22%.

The Council inquired about weekly green can pick up. Ms. Garbarino suggested rental of a second green can for a small additional monthly fee as a more environmentally sensitive approach. She also noted the refuse collector is planning to introduce food waste recycling in Ross by the end of the year.



New Shady Lane Stop Signs Considered

The Council discussed potential installation of stop signs at the Shady Lane and Locust Avenue intersection. Public Works Director Mel Jarjoura presented options for installation of one stop sign at Locust Avenue and two stop signs on Shady Lane. Three area residents spoke in favor of the Shady Lane stop signs, stating the narrow bridge, blind curve, and increased traffic have created dangerous conditions on the roadway. The Council agreed to have a traffic engineer study the situation and determine whether the Shady Lane stop signs would qualify for a warrant.

Outdoor Fireplace Regulations Approved

The Council voted unanimously to approve an ordinance that extends existing Bay Area Air Quality Management District fireplace regulations to permit only cleaner burning fireplaces, such as EPA-certified fireplace inserts or natural gas devices, to be installed outside. The ordinance also prohibits burning in outdoor fireplaces on Winter Spare the Air days.



Mayor Rick Strauss' Report

At a special Council meeting held on Tuesday, the Council voted 3-2 to withdraw from the Marin Energy Authority. While we all acknowledge the important and worthwhile goals of Marin Clean Energy, the majority of the Council felt the program was just too risky and the benefits too uncertain for us to proceed at this time. I would like to thank all of the residents who provided such thoughtful written comments and public testimony during this long process. I have been extremely impressed by the effort our residents have put into researching and understanding this very complex subject. I also want to thank Council member Martin for the many hours he has spent representing the Town on the MEA Board over the past year.

The next election to fill two four-year Council seats will be held on Tuesday, June 8, 2010. The terms of Council members Bill Cahill and Michael Skall will end at that time. This is an opportunity for anyone interested in local politics to throw their hat into the ring. If you are interested in running for a Council seat, you must be a registered voter and a resident of Ross. The filing period for Council candidates begins on February 16 and extends through March 12. If either Council members Cahill or Skall choose not to file for re-election, the date will be extended to March 17. Please contact Linda Lopez for more information at 453-1453 ext.105 or llopez@townofross.org.

The Town has asked David Parisi, a traffic engineer and Safe Routes to School representative, to review and make a recommendation on installation of a ramp or stairs on Shady Lane across from its intersection with Ames Avenue.

Flood Control Report

The Flood Mitigation League of Ross Valley is hosting a public meeting on January 21 at 7:30 p.m. at San Anselm's School in San Anselmo. Jack Curley will be providing an update on flood mitigation strategies the County is evaluating with Stetson Engineers, including water detention basins upstream and within Ross. The consultants are exploring Phoenix Lake as a detention basin, including pumping water up to the lake. This could require the lake be raised and/or sediment removed.

Residents are encouraged to be prepared as potentially heavy winter storms are forecast over the next ten days. Sand bags are available at the entrance to Natalie Coffin Greene Park.



Volunteers Needed

The Council announced Advisory Design Review (ADR) Group openings for five member and four alternate positions that are set to expire in February 2010. Two applications from current members have been received. Contact Elise Semonian at esemonian@townofross.org for more information.



The Council is also seeking a Town representative to serve on the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District Board of Trustees. The District maintains a small, highly trained staff responsible for the control of mosquitoes and other carriers of infectious diseases. The agency is governed by a board of trustees comprised of one representative from each of the twenty cities located within the District's service area, and four selected by the county Board of Supervisors. Please contact Town Manager Gary Broad at gbroad@townofross.org if interested.

Town Honors Employees

The Council recognized three employees for their years of dedicated work to the Town. Receiving awards were: School Resource Officer Bob Besgrove for 15 years of service; Building and Public Works Secretary Simone Jamotte, 15 years; and Public Works Director and Building Official Mel Jarjoura, 10 years.

Ross began its Employee Appreciation Program in 2007 to thank long-time employees and recognize those celebrating a 5-year employment anniversary with the Town. No employees have left Town employment since it began this recognition program. Congratulations to all!

Town Withdraws from Marin Energy Authority (A January 12 Highlight)

At a special Council meeting held on Tuesday, January 12, the Council voted 3-2 to withdraw from the Marin Energy Authority (MEA). Mayor Rick Strauss, Mayor Pro Tempore Scot Hunter and Council member Michael Skall voted to withdraw, citing reservations with the opt-out provision and potential risks that outweighed the possible benefits of the program. Council members Chris Martin and Bill Cahill voted against withdrawal, stating Marin Clean Energy offered an important opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and would provide residents with a choice in energy providers.



About a dozen Ross residents spoke at the meeting, most in favor of abandoning the Marin Clean Energy initiative. Resident Dick Bobo said there were too many unknowns in the MEA plan and expressed concern that so few Ross residents were even aware of Marin Clean Energy. Under the opt-out provision, residents would be automatically enrolled in the program and would need to opt out to remain with PG&E. Resident David Peterson challenged MEA's ability to run a power company. "This is a huge risk," he said, "maybe not for the Town's general funds, but certainly for the ratepayers and taxpayers."

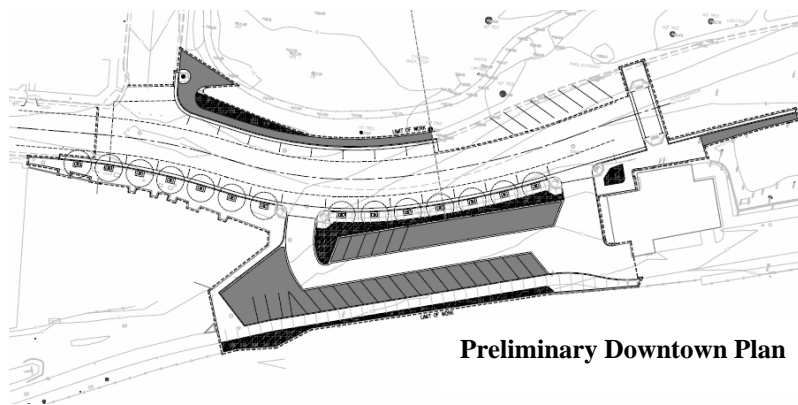
Other speakers urged the Council to support Marin Clean Energy, believing that it provided the only way to achieve significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Resident Lynn Langford noted the benefits that would come from increased competition and local control of renewable energy production.

Although the Town has passed on Marin Clean Energy, there may be another opportunity to revisit the program in the future. "There's no harm in opting out now," said Mayor Pro Tempore Scot Hunter. "If it looks good a few years from now, when the risks are better understood, we can consider opting in then."

Council Members Report on 09-10 Goals

Council member Bill Cahill reported the Town has contracted with architect Kathy Strauss and Mach 5 for pro bono services to develop initial schemes, budgeting and scheduling for public facilities improvements. Next steps are to interview department heads to ascertain existing and future needs. Schemes will consider remodeling and new facility alternatives.

Mayor Rick Strauss unveiled for Council a preliminary downtown design plan. The plan shows a narrowed roadway that accommodates new street trees in front of the Post Office parking lot and downtown shops, as well as redesigned parking spaces and sidewalks. A bio-swale will be incorporated into the design to improve drainage.



Preliminary Downtown Plan

NERA Bonds to Be Refunded

The Council voted to pass a resolution authorizing Marin Emergency Radio Authority, which includes Ross as one of its 25 members, to refund 1999 revenue bonds and issue new 2010 bonds in the same principal amount of \$26,940,000. Due to the decline in interest rates since 1999, the refunding will enable the Authority to save approximately \$1.3 million in interest payments. The windfall will be directed to future capital projects at the Board's discretion. The bond maturity will remain the same, and the Town's annual debt service obligation of approximately \$17,300 will not change. The Town's final payment will occur in August 2020.



No Parking Zone Considered for Fernhill Avenue

The Council introduced an ordinance to prohibit parking on the residential north side of Fernhill Avenue from Norwood Avenue to Glenwood Avenue. Police Chief Jim Reis said the prohibition would ensure safe passage of automobiles by limiting parking to one side of the street. Woody Price, head of Branson School, explained that big school events were primarily responsible for the overflow parking and offered to work with the Town to find solutions to accommodate the school's parking needs.



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 after approval at the February Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
7 North Road	Charles and Paige Meuse			
74 Wellington Ave.	Keith and Bridget Mathos			
186 Prospect Ave.	James Proctor			
201 Lagunitas Rd.	Kara and Josh Fisher			
51 Wellington Ave.	Craig and Melissa Slayen			

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next regular Council meeting is on Thursday, February 11, 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.