

THE MORNING AFTER

SPECIAL EDITION

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Council Finalizes Response to Grand Jury Report on Marin Clean Energy

At a special Council meeting on Tuesday morning, March 2, the Council voted to approve an official response to the Marin Civil Grand Jury's report entitled, "Marin Clean Energy: Pull the Plug." The Council agreed with six of the fourteen findings and partially disagreed or wholly disagreed with seven findings.

In a split decision, two Council members agreed and two disagreed with Finding #11 which stated, "The service contract recently approved by the Marin Energy Authority Board is incomplete and only covers Phase I and excludes pricing." The Council also stated the Town was implementing all three of the Grand Jury report's recommendations. Council member Michael Skall was absent.

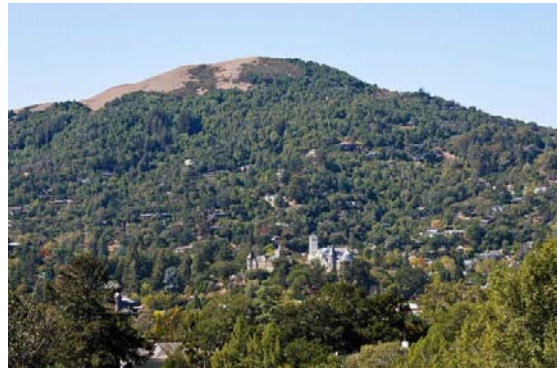
Third Public Meeting Held on Hillside Lot Ordinance Review

Council member Michael Skall hosted a public workshop at Town Hall Tuesday night to discuss the Hillside Lot Ordinance and revisions proposed by staff to address issues identified at public meetings in October and January. Six community members, including three property owners and representatives of undeveloped hillside lots, reviewed a red-line draft of a proposed ordinance.

The draft ordinance attempts to strike a balance between providing more clarity for property owners and preserving the Council's ability to make exceptions for developed sites where warranted. The draft contains a new method to calculate average slope using the "contour method" that is regularly employed by engineers. Slope is currently measured from a low point on the site to a high point, running a line that is perpendicular to the contour lines. Although more time-consuming and expensive to calculate, the contour method more accurately represents the average slope of sites with multiple slopes and irregular contours.

Staff also introduced a floor area formula to replace the existing stepped approach. The proposed formula attempts to smooth out the floor area calculations. Math whizzes are invited to develop a better formula to replace the existing method to gradually reduce guideline floor area as slope increases, also taking into consideration the size of a site.

The draft ordinance contains a provision that would extend special consideration to hillside lots with flat areas where the house will be sited on the flatter portion of the lot. It would allow the applicant to apply the standard floor area ratio to the flatter area of the lot and the hillside floor area ratio to the steeper portion, adding the floor area results together.



Town Staff also proposed design guidelines to address deck and high ceiling areas. Staff suggested the ordinance allow the Council to consider limiting the areas during design review where they “exaggerate the height, bulk and mass of a building” or impact “aesthetics, potential for noise, bulk and mass, privacy of adjacent sites, and visibility.”



The draft replaces the controversial “excellence of design” provision with specific criteria that could be used to support floor area above the guidelines for developed sites. These include: existing development that exceeds the guideline; an improvement of existing unfinished area that does not increase bulk and mass; and, unusual site topography, such as a site with a level building area that is not visually prominent.

The proposed ordinance also reinstates larger setback guidelines that were removed by the Council two years ago, although new language would provide criteria for exceptions to the setbacks. Staff noted that exceptions would likely be requested on nearly every hillside lot. Senior Planner Elise Semonian did not recommend a return to the larger setback requirements, but meeting participants encouraged staff to include the provision so it could be discussed further, and staff agreed to provide additional information on the application of the larger setbacks at the next workshop.

A fourth workshop to further refine the draft ordinance will be held on Tuesday, March 23 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., following the Advisory Design Review Group meeting. The red-line draft ordinance changes, as well as background information on the hillside lot ordinance and review process, is available at www.townofross.org. Council member Michael Skall hopes to wrap up his 2009-2010 goal with a final ordinance adopted by the Council in June. Written comments may be submitted to Town Hall or emailed to [Elise Semonian](mailto:Elise.Semonian@townofross.org) or [Council member Michael Skall](mailto:Michael.Skall@townofross.org). Residents may also call Elise for additional information at 453-1453 ext.121.

The Morning After is published 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.