

# The Ross Quarterly

Autumn 2011

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## Interim Director Pat Thompson Takes Over the Helm

In November, the Town Council appointed Pat Thompson to serve as part-time Interim Town Manager while the Town considers its next steps for the town manager position. Ms. Thompson is an experienced city manager, having served the City of Napa in that capacity for 17 years. After retiring in 2006, Ms. Thompson worked as an interim city manager for the cities of Ukiah, Novato, Larkspur, as well as the interim assistant city manager for the City of Santa Rosa.

“We were specifically looking for a person who was not interested in becoming our permanent town manager, since one of our expectations of the interim city manager is to provide recommendations on the Town’s need for a full-time town manager,” said Mayor Carla Small. Prior to hiring Ms. Thompson, the Council had several discussions on the appropriate role for a town manager or town administrator. Some residents have advocated for eliminating the town manager position, arguing that the Mayor and Council should have more control over the day-to-day operations of the Town.



According to Ms. Thompson, people are always curious about how an “interim town manager” position works and what the responsibilities involve. “Having worked for many cities over time, you become familiar with the local ordinances and state laws that apply to all communities,” she explained. “It is like stepping onto a moving platform and already having a basic understanding of how to keep it in motion. Council goals have been established, and department managers are competent in their areas of expertise. The job of the town manager is to establish internal priorities for getting the work done, ensure

that the organization is working as a team, resolve problems that go beyond the boundaries of any one department, administer the budget, and keep the Council and the public informed as to progress being made.”

While small communities, including the Town of Ross, have a strong sense of local culture they want to preserve, increasing service costs and declining revenue have mandated that creative partnerships be explored to save taxpayer dollars. Ross and its neighboring jurisdictions have a good track record of working together in areas such as public safety radio and dispatch services, information and computer services, paramedic response, flood control and stormwater management, and animal control services. Ms. Thompson is looking forward to working with the Ross Fire Department staff, Council and Ross Valley Fire Department as the Town considers becoming a member of the Joint Powers Authority for fire services. Joining the JPA would potentially offer Town residents ongoing high quality service, stabilize service costs in the years ahead, and preserve the home-town feel of this valued public service.

Typically, interim town manager positions last around six months, allowing the Council some time to decide the skills and qualities they want in their next town manager or administrator and then conduct a formal recruitment effort. The Town of Ross is on track to appoint someone in late spring 2012, in time for final budget adoption in June. Ms. Thompson will be working with the Town staff and Council to develop the goals, priorities and budget document for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012, and then help with the transition to the successful candidate for the position. Residents may email Ms. Thompson at [pthompson@townofross.org](mailto:pthompson@townofross.org).

## Police Department Gives Class on Identity Theft

In November, the Ross Police Department held an informational Citizen Class on identity theft and property crimes at the Ross School. Officers Kevin McKendry and Josh Schulman taught the well-attended class and offered pointers on avoiding identity theft scams.



*A regular ATM (above) and one with a "skimmer" attached (below).*

Skilled identity thieves use a variety of methods to gather personal information, including stealing mail, rummaging through trash, stealing wallets and purses, and obtaining credit reports. Thieves may also use a method called "skimming" to get credit and debit card information in an otherwise legitimate transaction. Skimming ranges from the low-tech method of copying information, including the security code, off your credit card when it is out of view (such as at a restaurant or bar) to using a small electronic device placed over a debit card slot at an ATM to record information. When combined with a small hidden camera, thieves can also obtain the PIN code associated with the card.

"Phishing" occurs when a thief attempts to get personal information by masquerading as a legitimate company such as a bank. A common practice is to send an email requesting an unsuspecting person to verify account or billing information. The victim is then lured to a bogus website, where sensitive information, including usernames and passwords, may be collected.

Once the thief has your personal information, he may change the billing address of your current credit card and continue to use the card, open new accounts, write fraudulent checks, and even take out a loan in your name. You may have fallen victim to identity theft if you fail to receive bills or begin to get calls or letters from debt collectors or businesses about merchandise or services you didn't buy.

If you're suspicious, it's best to contact your credit card company or service provider as soon as possible. If you do become a victim of identity theft, you should immediately dispute unauthorized charges and close all affected accounts. You should also place a fraud alert with the credit reporting companies (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion) and then frequently review your credit reports to spot any other instances of fraud.

It is important to stay alert and protect your personal information from identity thieves. Be sure to deposit your mail in a secure mailbox, and keep your wallet or purse in a safe place. Don't

carry your social security card in your wallet, and safeguard your passwords. Always be careful when responding to promotions, and never give out personal information unless you have initiated the contact or are sure you know who you're dealing with. If you suspect you've received a phishing email, call the company at the phone number provided on your bill or on their legitimate website. While it may be impossible to prevent all identity theft, remaining vigilant can greatly reduce your chance of becoming a victim.

## Town to Plant Corte Madera Creek Banks

Heavy construction work to rebuild the left bank of Corte Madera Creek downstream from Lagunitas Road Bridge was completed in October. Now with the rainy season upon us, hand work can begin for installing riparian woodland plants on the erosion control fabric and mulch-covered creek banks.

"Winter is the best time to put water loving riparian plants into the ground because there is less heat stress and much less irrigation attention required," said Matt Smeltzer, Town Hydrologist. "We are installing a live willow brush mattress on the upstream side of the bridge which is woven from live willow branches harvested from Nicasio Creek. More of the cuttings will survive and flourish if they're harvested in winter, when the willow trees are dormant."

The plantings will be installed during December and January both upstream and downstream from the bridge. The plants will be selected primarily from a list of California native riparian woodland trees and shrubs.



"It's the same native riparian and primarily low water use plant list that the Town provides to creekside landowners when site redevelopment proposals plans affect the setback from top of bank," said Mr. Smeltzer. "The Town does well to encourage enhancement of native riparian plant communities along its creek corridors." He added that final plant selection for the bridge site will depend somewhat on local availability of healthy native plant materials at the time of construction, and that some flowering non-native plants will be installed in the area closest to the sidewalk.

## Public Works Department Addresses Flooding on Bolinas Avenue

The Public Works Department has been working to alleviate flooding and drainage problems on Bolinas Avenue. A number of measures were discussed at a community meeting in October, and the Town has been busy implementing some of these items and evaluating others.

Together with the Town of San Anselmo, maintenance staff cleared debris and sedimentation from the culverts and inlets to the drainage system on Oak Avenue. Staff also identified low-cost improvements that could be made to culverts and inlets on Oak Avenue and Bolinas Avenue that will increase capacity, reduce the speed with which the grates plug with leaves and debris during storms, and improve the safety of the inlets with large openings. Some

improvements will be made this winter, while others will become part of the Safe Route to School project to improve traffic and pedestrian safety on Bolinas Avenue. Construction for that project is tentatively scheduled for summer 2013.

In November, Ross staff submitted comments to the Town of San Anselmo on the Seminary redevelopment project, requesting the project meet Ross' Stormwater Management Ordinance and encouraging San Anselmo to require the project to meet a "pre-development" standard, in which peak runoff from the site could not exceed estimated runoff from undeveloped, or natural, conditions. San Anselmo has requested the Seminary developer to provide additional stormwater runoff analysis and consider a broader range of stormwater mitigation measures. Town staff also identified a deteriorated culvert that needs to be replaced. San Anselmo is still very early in the planning process for the Seminary project, so staff is hopeful that the project will provide an opportunity to reduce diversions of stormwater from the north side of Seminary Hill onto Bolinas Avenue.



*A view of a culvert inlet on Oak Avenue.*

Ross and San Anselmo staff also continue to look at reducing other sources of stormwater runoff onto Bolinas Avenue. As noted at the October community meeting, some Ross residents routinely pump stormwater onto Bolinas. Redirecting this stormwater onto the landscape to the south will increase stormwater flow into Fernhill Creek, which would need comprehensive improvements to increase the creek capacity before it could handle additional stormwater. A better alternative may be to direct sump pumpage to an infiltration trench or detention vault within the landscape to the south.

In general, the Town's Stormwater Ordinance encourages on-site detention and requires property owners to ensure their redevelopment projects do not result in an increase in stormwater runoff. San Anselmo has a similar policy in place. Over time, these regulations should decrease runoff into the street.

The Towns are planning a video line inspection of the existing culvert system under the San Anselmo side of Bolinas Ave for better estimating its maximum reliable conveyance capacity and identifying repair needs. Ross is scheduling and budgeting for future necessary repairs to existing failing facilities along the Ross side of Bolinas Avenue, and concurrent with the Safe Routes design work, the Towns are evaluating potential new subsurface culverts for resolving the stormwater ponding problem at the Richmond Avenue intersection. Such a solution may be developed in time to also construct it during summer 2013. As always, residents are requested to do their part and keep drainageways and inlets free from leaves and debris. If you see a culvert that is getting plugged during a storm, please take a few minutes to remove the debris!

*The Ross Quarterly is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke and reviewed by Interim Town Manager Pat Thompson and Mayor Carla Small, with support from Administrative Manager Linda Lopez. No portion of this newsletter may be copied, reproduced or reprinted without advance written permission from the Town of Ross.*