

To Mayor and Ross Town Council
From: Pat Thompson, Interim Town Manager
Re: Bald Hill Property Letter Authorization
Date: February 3, 2012

I. Project Summary

The Council should review and consider authorizing the Mayor to co-sign a letter to the owners of the Ball Hill property in Ross opening a dialog regarding the possible future purchase of the property with privately raised funds.

II. Discussion

The Council is being asked to authorize the Mayor to be a co-signer with the Mayor of San Anselmo on a letter to the property owners of Bald Hill. See Attachment 1. The letter will support the Marin Open Space Trust's interest in approaching the property owners again regarding a possible purchase of the property. See Attachment 2 for a summary of past initiatives to acquire the property. The 60 acre site has issues related to landslides and the need for fire access routes in the area. The current owners or future owners will need to take these issues into account as they will be costly in terms of maintenance. However, the Trust members believe that funds can be raised through grants and private fundraising.

III. Recommendation

The Council should authorize Mayor Small to co-sign the letter along with the Mayor of San Anselmo as a means of opening dialogue with the Bald Hill property owners with the understanding that the Town is not authorizing or considering the use of Town funds for acquisition or maintenance of the property.

Attachments:

Letter to Mr. Wong Luk Kan, Asia Alliance
Bald Hill Background

To: Pat Thompson

From: Jonathan Braun

Re: Bald Hill background

In 1981 the San Anselmo Town Council approved the formation of the San Anselmo Open Space Committee. For the last 30 years preservation of Bald Hill has been the Committee's highest priority. The property in question is approximately 60 acres on the northwestern boundary of the Town of Ross. It includes the summit of the mountain as well as a significant portion of the east slope. In 1988 the Committee spearheaded a steering committee including representatives from Ross, San Anselmo and the Marin County Open Space District to investigate an approach to purchasing the property. The outcome was a bond election for Ross and San Anselmo in 1990. Though it received overwhelming support in Ross the measure was 180 votes shy of the required 2/3 majority.

Subsequent initiatives were made to purchase the property in 1993, 2000 and most recently in 2008 with the nonprofit Marin Open Space Trust taking the lead role. The point person representing Ross has been Phil Paisley. A number of former Ross Council members including Charles Goodman and Peter Barry and former Town Manager Gary Broad participated in the process. Other key players have been Open Space Committee Chairman Jonathan Braun, former San Anselmo Council members, including Paul Chignell, former San Anselmo Town Administrator Beth Pollard and former County Supervisor Hal Brown. The Marin County Open Space District, now called Marin Parks, was the lead agency for most of the earlier efforts.

The draft letter being offered for consideration is an attempt to open a dialogue with the property owner with the goal of commencing negotiations for a purchase agreement. The San Anselmo Town Council approved the mayor signing the letter at its January 10th meeting. Given Bald Hill's regional significance, most of Marin's major conservation organizations have supported the purchase of the property. We believe funds for purchase could be raised through grants and private fundraising.

We would be happy to provide additional information to this brief summary or answer any questions.

Draft

Mr. Wong Luk Kan – Director
Asia Alliance Finance & Investment Limited
Room 1102A, Nan Dao Commercial Building 359-361
Queen's Road
Central Hong Kong

Re: Bald Hill Property in Ross, California

Dear Mr. Kan:

The purpose of this letter is to propose a discussion with Asia Alliance Finance & Investment Limited about the potential sale of its Bald Hill property in Ross, California.

We are the Mayors of the Towns of Ross and San Anselmo, California, and have signed this letter hoping to begin a conversation with Asia Alliance Finance & Investment Limited. As you probably know, this property is of continuing interest to the citizens of both townships, the organizations within our communities and the County of Marin, which would be integrally involved in raising the funds to purchase the property.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter with you, or your authorized agent, to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome for all concerned parties.

If you and your associates would like to proceed, please advise us of the best method to initiate this discussion. Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,