

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of April 7, 2011*

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## **Post Office Parking Lot to be Rehabbed and Landscaped Only**

On a split 3 to 2 decision, the Council voted to only pursue a sidewalk repair, new trees and landscaping at the South Post Office parking lot. The decision effectively derailed the Downtown Plan conceptual plan approved in 2009 to provide a double-loaded parking lot and narrow the Ross Common roadway. Mayor Martin, Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small and Council member Rupert Russell supported, with Council members Rick Strauss and Scot Hunter opposed.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian had requested the Council authorize a \$1,000 expenditure for the Town engineer to produce two drawings, the one approved by the Council and a second drawing that refined the 2009 plan. Both plans were to be presented to the Advisory Design Review Group to get input before the Council would consider whether or not to move forward with the downtown plan concept.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small said that the Town had discussed the Downtown Plan before but that the Town had not estimated the cost of the plan at that time. She indicated that since then the engineer has estimated it would cost \$455,000 to reconstruct the parking lot and make other related downtown improvements.

"I don't believe the Town ever really understood we would be changing the whole downtown and narrowing the roadway by fifteen feet," said Mayor Pro Tempore Small. "I cannot support spending \$300,000 to redesign the parking lot and narrow the road. We should just beautify the area and leave the parking lot and street alone."

Council member Strauss said the original plan could be modified, and that since the sidewalk and curb would need to be reconstructed in any case, it could be moved for little additional cost. Council member Hunter supported spending the \$1,000 in order to analyze the two options and obtain cost estimates.

## **Ross School For Extended Construction Hours Denied**

The Council denied the Ross School's request to allow extended hours for construction work on the school gymnasium. Ross School Board President Elizabeth Robbins explained that due to the rainy weather, the construction project will miss its scheduled September 1 completion date by about four weeks. The contractor said the project could make up for lost time by working Saturdays and extending the permitted 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekday construction time period by one hour. However, Dr. Robbins said the delay would not cause the school to incur additional expenses or significantly impact school activities. Neighbors were unanimously opposed to the request, preferring to see the construction project extended for an additional month to enduring construction noise on weekends and outside of the regular work day.



In a separate but related item, Town Manager Gary Broad reported that the initial study for the rookie baseball field will be completed later than originally estimated in order to prepare a survey, engineering and architectural plans before initial study work commences. Following gymnasium construction, the

Common will be winterized and Ross Common restoration and baseball field construction deferred till spring of 2012.



### **Mayor Chris Martin's Report**

Recently, PG&E notified 93 Ross households about the need to replace the existing copper gas lines providing service to their residence. This past Tuesday night Mayor Pro Tempore Carla Small and Public Works Consulting Engineer Phiroze Wadia organized a public meeting for PG&E and its contractor for the gas line replacement program, ARB, Inc., to explain the work and their procedures directly to residents. Though approximately 25 homeowners attended the meeting, a majority of homeowners were not able to attend. Homes in nearly every Ross neighborhood are impacted. The program is scheduled to start this May or June. PG&E and their contractor will notify all affected homeowners at least three weeks in advance of their work and mark all existing utility locations in the public right-of-way. To avoid potential damage to trees or landscaping, it is critical that each resident meet with a project representative prior to the initiation of work to clearly understand the scope of the work on their property and to avoid unwarranted disruption. PG&E and their contractor should be responsive to your concern and direction. Please call PG&E Project Manager Don Johansen at (650) 598-7218 with any questions or concerns.

Recently, Marin County lost a dedicated visionary, and I lost a friend. Less than two weeks ago, Marin Board of Supervisor member Charles McGlashan passed away in the prime of his life. Charles was a devoted advocate for protecting the environment and actively addressing climate change. His keen business acumen coupled with his evolved understanding of the environment provided leadership to accomplish many new County programs and policies that will be an enduring benefit to the residents of Marin County and its environment. Rather than bask in the success of an effort, Charles would immediately take on the next challenge, which inevitably meant facing tremendous opposition and personal criticism. The development of the Smart train, the successful launch of Marin Clean Energy, and legislation to ban single use plastic bags were all some of the reforms Charles achieved. In Phil Burton-style, he fought for underrepresented communities, and sought fairness and respect for all. His tenacity, commitment, and leadership ability will long be remembered. He was a humble giant. I hope his legacy will inspire others to follow in his steps.

### **Frederick Allen Park Project Update**

Project Planner Christine O'Rourke reported that the Frederick Allen Park project was moving ahead. The portion that was funded with \$226,363 in state grants was completed in time for the Town to submit its reimbursement request by the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Those improvements included landscaping, new furnishings, the new paved areas in front of the tennis courts, and new fencing and metal stairs for the paddle court. The grant-funded portion of the project came in just \$2,415 over budget.

The Town's contractor, Sonoma Mountain Landscaping, is now finishing up the final improvements, including laying a brick pathway at the north end of the park and installing a native grass/wildflower sod in front of the tennis courts. The additional work will cost approximately \$10,000.

The tennis court contractor, Saviano, Inc., recently informed the Town that the portion of the resurfacing project that was completed last fall did not cure correctly because of the cold and rainy conditions and all of the slip-sheet material needs to be completely removed before the job can continue. The Council directed staff to work with Saviano to ensure the slip-sheet surface, as originally bid and contracted, would be installed in a reasonable amount of time.



### **Council Approves Car Purchase for Police Chief**

The Town Council authorized spending up to \$23,000 to replace the Police Chief's vehicle with a more fuel-efficient, mid-sized car that can be outfitted with emergency lights, siren and radio. Police Chief Erik Masterson currently drives a 2006 full-sized patrol car that is scheduled for replacement as it has 75,000

miles on it, plus idling time, which is estimated to triple the actual engine use time. Chief Masterson explained that he did not need a fully outfitted patrol vehicle since the car would not be expected to meet the demands of a general patrol vehicle.

With the help of Fire Chief Tom Vallee, Chief Masterson has identified a new Ford Fusion that could be purchased for \$17,600 and outfitted for an additional \$2,500. The purchase will save the Town money as the FY 2010-11 Capital Improvement Budget included \$55,000 for the purchase of a new patrol car.

### **Energy Upgrade California Program Comes to Ross**

The Marin County Community Development Agency Sustainability Team gave a presentation on Energy Upgrade California, a new statewide energy efficiency and renewable energy program for residential and commercial buildings. The program provides significant rebates for homeowners who do a “whole house” energy retrofit program – a \$1,000 rebate for basic sealing and insulating and up to \$4,000 for more extensive upgrades. Residents can expect energy savings of 10% for a basic upgrade and up to 40% for an advanced upgrade. An additional \$750 rebate is available from the County for any homeowner who achieves 20% or greater energy savings.

Residents are encouraged to visit the Energy Upgrade website at <http://www.EnergyUpgradeCa.org> to learn more. One of the best things about the website is that it compiles all of the available rebates and tax incentives from a variety of sources – from water-saving upgrade rebates from the water district, to rebates for energy-saving appliances from PG&E, to solar energy incentives from the state agencies, to federal tax credits. The website can also direct you to participating contractors near Ross who specialize in “whole house” energy audits and energy efficiency projects.

### **Budget for Town Hall Remodel Project Increased to \$110,000**

The Council unanimously voted to amend the FY 2010-11 budget to provide increased funding for a Town Hall remodel project. The project, which was approved by the Council in January, was originally estimated to cost \$87,000. The project architect’s final plans include several additional items, including two lockable roll-down doors over the front counter area, two tables for the rear of Town Hall and a building department plan cabinet. The construction cost is also slightly higher than originally estimated. The project budget is now \$100,000, plus a 10% contingency.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small said that despite the increased cost, she considers the project a savings over what it would cost to replace or expand the public safety building to provide office space for Town Hall employees. Mayor Martin added that the remodel will significantly improve the working space for Town employees.

### **Council Discusses All-Hazard Mitigation Plan**

The Council discussed the draft Town of Ross All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was developed over the past year with assistance from the Town’s consultant, Dimensions Unlimited, and with public input from a town survey and a community workshop last October. The Town received a \$50,000 FEMA grant to develop the plan.

The All-Hazard Mitigation plan’s purpose is to identify and evaluate hazard risks to which the Town is vulnerable and mitigation strategies that may be implemented by the Town. The Town is required to have a FEMA approved multi-hazard mitigation plan to be eligible for disaster recovery assistance and mitigation funding.



The plan is also intended to follow FEMA’s Community Rating System (CRS) guidelines so that the Town of Ross can participate in the CRS program. The CRS program is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum National Flood Insurance Program requirements. Participation in the program would reduce flood insurance premium rates in the Town.

The plan evaluates both natural and man-made risks in Ross, and provides strategies to reduce the risks. Natural hazards include earthquakes, flood, wildland fires, extreme weather and storms, landslide and tsunami. Technological (man-made) hazards include dam failure, hazardous material, transportation emergencies, domestic security threats, civil unrest and terrorism. Mitigation strategies included in the plan are potentially eligible for disaster mitigation funding.

Council members requested the consultant include a discussion of the Ross Valley Flood Control plan to construct detention basins in the upper reaches of the watershed and a more thorough analysis of the potential for Phoenix Lake dam failure. Mayor Martin also requested a flood mitigation strategy to remove the fish ladder be included in the plan.

The plan is available for review on the Town's website, and the public is encouraged to submit comments to the Town.

## Art House to Return to Ross

The Council approved the Ritter Center's request to place an Art House in Post Office Park from April 15 through June 15 in an effort to raise awareness about homelessness. The 2011 Art House is a curved metal sculpture approximately 6 1/2 feet wide and 5 1/2 feet high. Five similar sculptures will be placed in other Marin communities, and each will be prepared by a different artist. Ritter House Executive Director Diane Linn explained that Art Houses are designed to stimulate a discussion about the plight of the working poor and low-income people in Marin.

## Council Approves Zero Waste Grant Application

Town Council adopted a resolution authorizing the filing of a \$7,207 Zero Waste Grant application to draft a zero waste resolution, a construction/demolition ordinance, and a commercial and multi-family recycling ordinance during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. The Marin County Hazardous and Solid Waste Joint Powers Authority (JPA) is providing grants to cities and towns that develop waste reduction programs to meet the JPA's goal of 80% landfill diversion by 2012 and a zero waste goal by 2025. Marin's current diversion rate is 72%. Grant funds can be used to pay for staff and contractor's time for planning activities.



## 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](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the April Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued
33 Spring Road	Geoffrey Franklin	X		

## Upcoming Meetings

The next regular Public Works Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3, at 8:00 a.m. The next Town Council meeting will be held on Thursday, May 12, 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](http://www.townofross.org). All meetings are held at Town Hall unless indicated otherwise. You may email Town Council members by accessing the website [here](#).

*The Morning After is published following each regular Council meeting by the Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke, edited by Town Manager Gary Broad with support from Administrative Manager Linda Lopez, and reviewed by the Ross Mayor 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.*