

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of December 13, 2007*

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## **Welcome From Mayor Pro-Tempore Bill Cahill**

Welcome to our final issue of 2007. We hope The Morning After has been an effective and useful way to keep you informed of the details of our Town government. Last night's Council meeting covered several interesting topics, including the Shady Lane safe pathway to school project, consideration of a social host ordinance for underage drinking and hillside lot regulation clarifications. If you would like your opinion heard, please email or call your Council. Active citizen input makes for better government. This is the season to be thankful for all of our blessings. We live in a town of great natural beauty with the best residents in Marin! We wish you all a very happy holiday season.

## **Council Discusses Social Host Ordinance**

The Town Council unanimously agreed not to draft a social host ordinance at this time that would impose civil fines on parents and juveniles who host parties in which alcohol is consumed by underage individuals.

The Council reviewed Marin County's 2006 social host ordinance, which imposes civil fines on the party responsible for the underage drinking in their homes. The County law holds parents accountable, even if they are not present during the party or are unaware of the underage drinking. The County issued eight citations during the first eleven months that the ordinance was in effect. Other Marin communities have adopted similar ordinances.



Public Safety Director Barry Heying said Ross police break up one or two juvenile parties each year in Ross. He noted that there are several existing state laws that the police can use to cite underage people who are drinking and the adults who provide alcohol to them.

The Council concluded that additional regulations were not needed to address underage drinking at house parties in Ross. Council member Diane Durst stated that the majority of Ross parents were aware of the problems regarding teenage drinking and were acting responsibly.



## **Outdoor Smoking Ordinance Adopted**

The Town Council adopted an ordinance expanding existing smoking regulations to include a ban on smoking in some outdoor public places. As of January 12, 2008, smoking will not be allowed in Town-owned parks and recreation areas, outdoor dining areas of restaurants, bus stops, and within 20 feet of any opening of an enclosed area within which smoking is prohibited. Fines are \$100 for the first violation of the ordinance, \$200 for the second violation, and \$500 for a third.



## Mayor Scot Hunter's Report

Three Town Council seats will be open for four-year terms starting July 2008. Interested residents can pull papers from the Town Administration office beginning February 11<sup>th</sup> for the June 3<sup>rd</sup> election.

The Larkspur City Council voted to pursue fire consolidation with our department. Staff from the two towns will begin drafting a joint powers agreement.

The town's new General Plan has just been printed and it looks terrific. Copies can be purchased from the Town Administration or Planning Departments. Look for it soon on the town's website, including links to zoning regulations and other relevant sites at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org).



Thanks to the Ross Property Owners Association for the festive holiday decorations around town!

## Shady Lane Pathway Update

Town Manager Gary Broad updated the Council on the 4-foot wide asphalt pathway that is to be constructed on the east side of Shady Lane between Lagunitas Road and Bolinas Avenue. Town staff and the Council's public works subcommittee have developed several typical sections for the pathway and have been working closely with Shady Lane residents to resolve engineering and drainage questions. The project should go to bid in early 2008 and be completed soon thereafter.



In response to residents' concerns, the Council agreed to revisit a 1982 Town ordinance that compels property owners to share in the liability for improvements in the right-of-way.

The recommendation for an improved pathway was part of a Safe Routes report endorsed by over 150 Ross residents in 2003 and by the Town Council. In October 2007, the Transportation Authority of Marin awarded the Town a \$246,207 grant to construct the pathway.

## Designers Brainstorm Ideas for Downtown Plan

Work on preparing a plan for downtown Ross is underway! A group of Ross design professionals met in November to brainstorm ideas for the downtown plan. The group suggested the following objectives for the plan:

- Improve safety for pedestrians and bikers.
- Improve circulation around school, post office and retail areas. Eliminate conditions for illegal u-turns.
- Enhance vitality of downtown retail area, both during the day and at night.
- Increase number of parking spaces in downtown and amount of parking close to retail area.
- Provide outdoor gathering/eating areas and small "pocket" parks throughout the downtown.
- Enhance downtown landscaping; provide green buffers and more street trees.
- Create visual gateways for the downtown area and the Ross Common.
- Improve design of built structures while preserving historic references.



The next step in the downtown plan process will be a public visioning meeting in early 2008 to further explore the ideas generated by the designers.

## Kentfield Fire to Relocate Temporarily to Ross

Kentfield Fire Protection District firefighters will be spending much of 2008 operating from the Ross Fire Station. The Council agreed to provide space to Kentfield during its \$2.5 million firehouse remodel, to start in April 2008 and last nearly a year.

Kentfield's stay will be facilitated by the addition of a temporary modular trailer, a temporary tent to shelter their ladder truck and an additional cargo container onto the site. Because Kentfield has approximately 1,000 service calls a year, far more than the Ross Fire Department, area residents may experience more fire traffic and siren noise than usual.

The Council complimented the Ross firefighters for graciously agreeing to provide space for Kentfield, as they will bear the brunt of the inconvenience of having additional staff and equipment in tight quarters at the station.



*Kentfield firehouse construction will begin April 2008*

## Get Ready Marin Training Class

The next Get Ready disaster preparedness training class will be held on Tuesday, December 18, from 7 to 9 pm at the Marin Art & Garden Center. See the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) for more details and for important information on disaster preparedness.



## Advisory Design Review Approved

The Council passed a resolution establishing an advisory design review process to enable applicants to get early feedback on their proposals. The Council expects advisory design review will result in better proposals that fit in with the neighborhood context and are supported by neighbors. Creation of advisory design review was one of the major new ideas in the town's recently adopted General Plan.

Advisory design review is completely voluntary. At the applicant's request, the design review group will meet with the property owner to discuss the proposed design. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to invite neighbors to the design review meeting in order to hear their feedback early in the project design stage. Property owners will then be able to incorporate these design suggestions into their formal planning application.

The Council would like to appoint Advisory Design Review Group members at its January 2008 meeting. The five-person group will include four residents with professional design backgrounds, one resident with an interest in design, plus two alternates. Interested residents should submit letters of interest, including background and qualifications, to the Town Council by January 2, 2008.

## Council Approves Gift to Homeward Bound

The Council agreed to donate \$1 per resident, or \$2,379, to Homeward Bound of Marin. The money will be used to support The Next Key Center, a job training program and affordable housing development that provides 32 homes for homeless adults and families in Hamilton Field, Novato. The Town committed to supporting countywide homeless programs in its Housing Element, and the Homeward Bound gift is one way the Town is assisting the homeless in Marin.





## Municipal Code Changes Proposed



The Council, sitting as a planning commission, agreed to recommend introduction of an ordinance in January to revise some municipal code sections. The changes are generally intended to reorganize certain code sections and clarify others so they better reflect current policies. Among the proposed zoning code amendments are adding a creek definition, exempting front arbors from setback requirements and allowing decorative fence elements above the six foot height limit.

Other changes include permitting mixed use development with a use permit in the commercial district and requiring design review of outdoor advertising in the commercial district. It was also recommended that the Council eliminate the variance requirement for installing solar panels on existing, primary structures that are within side or rear setbacks.



## 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 at <http://www.townofross.org/town-council/current-meeting-reports/>. The minutes of this meeting will be available on the Town website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org) after approval at the January Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Approved	Modified Approval	Denied	Continued
81 Sir Francis Drake	Harold and Carol Sherley				
Upper Toyon Lots	Harvey Glasser, Douglas Abrams and Mike Guelfi				

## Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next Town Council meeting will be Thursday, January 10, at 6:30 pm. Agendas are posted in advance of the meeting on the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org). Happy holidays!

*The Morning After is published monthly by The Town of Ross and is written by Project Planner Christine O'Rourke and edited by Town Manager Gary Broad. It is available at Town Hall and on-line at the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org). The newsletter is also delivered to everyone on the town's Information by Email list. If you'd like to receive The Morning After and other town information via email, contact Linda Lopez at [llopez@townofross.org](mailto:llopez@townofross.org).*