

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Special Meeting
of December 13, 2010*

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December 14, 2010

Council Approves Hiring of New Public Works Director

The Council unanimously agreed to support Town Manager Gary Broad's recommendation to offer the Public Works Director job to the top Town Engineer candidate interviewed in the spring. Although the candidate is a licensed engineer with a public works background, Council members were generally satisfied the building department responsibilities would be covered during the transition period while the new public works director learns the building official role.

Town Manager Broad reported he had met with staff earlier that day, and all who had an opinion supported the new hire. The Council discussed options to ensure the building department functions were covered during the transition, including temporarily increasing the part-time building department secretary and building inspector's hours, and contracting out for plan checks. Instead, the Council agreed to let the new public works director run the department in the manner he sees fit.



As a matter of policy, the Council insisted the new employee pay the CalPERS employee retirement contribution of 7% of base salary. The Town currently pays both the employee and employer contributions. Public Works Director/Building Official Mel Jarjoura retires on January 3rd. The Town may explore contracting with Mr. Jarjoura after that date to orient the new employee and ensure a smooth transition.

Council Requests Delay in Smart Meter Installation

The Council voted to submit a letter to PG&E requesting the company suspend deployment of smart meters in Ross until a California Council on Science and Technology study on the safety of meters is completed. PG&E representative Josh Townsend said a draft of the study will be released next week and a final report issued in early January.



Photo credit: PG&E

Smart meters are digital meters that can transmit detailed electricity and natural gas usage data to PG&E over a wireless network. Although 110 smart meters have been installed in Ross to date, the meters are not currently transmitting data and must still be read manually. PG&E plans to install the remaining 1,743 meters by February. Meters will be activated 60 days after all are installed.

Three wireless transmitters will be installed on PG&E-owned utility poles in Ross. One of these transmitters is located at 2 Lagunitas Road, across from Ross School, and opponents are concerned about health risks to school children. While PG&E maintains the meters are safe, representative Josh Townsend said he would see if there were any other viable options for placement of the transmitter. The Council will discuss this issue further at the January 13th Council meeting.

The Council discussed possible adoption of an ordinance banning smart meters in Ross, but Mayor Christopher Martin stated there was not enough time to introduce, adopt and put into effect an ordinance before installation is completed in February. Mr. Townsend further noted the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) recently sent a letter to the Town of Fairfax stating they didn't have the legal

authority to enforce an ordinance banning the installation of smart meters. PG&E has voluntarily agreed to delay installation in Fairfax.

Residents may request a delay of their smart meter installation by calling PG&E at 866-743-0263. Residents may also place a sign on their meter telling the contractor not to install the smart meter. Mr. Townsend said PG&E will honor these requests and put these customers at the "end of the line."

Although residents have reported they did not receive any notification about their smart meter installation, Mr. Townsend said PG&E sends notices in advance and mails packets one week before the scheduled installation date.

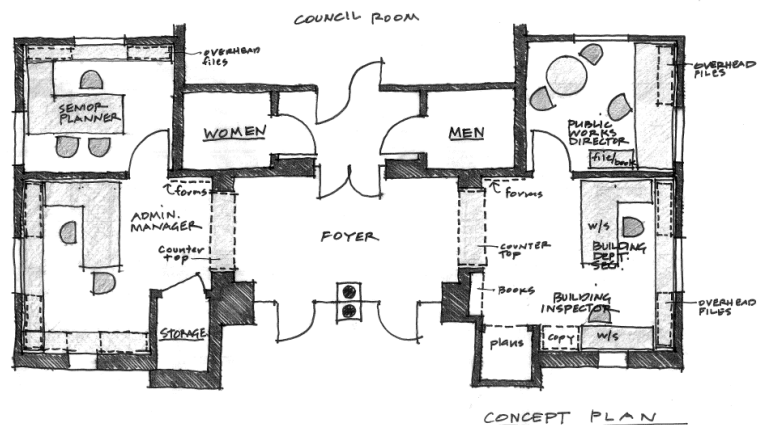
Assemblyman Jared Huffman introduced a bill earlier this month to require the CPUC to provide an opt-out alternative for customers who do not wish to have the meters installed. The CPUC approved smart meters for PG&E customers in 2006, and views smart meters as a way for ratepayers to monitor and reduce their energy use and lower their energy bills.

Reorganization of Town Hall Offices Discussed

Council member Rick Strauss provided a preliminary cost estimate of \$57,000 to \$67,000 for the Town Hall minor remodel and reorganization of office spaces. The estimate includes costs to construct a glass wall and entry doors between the columns in the front of the building, remodel offices, install new carpeting and office furniture, and hire a designer to work with staff on interior selections. The Town plans to meet with a contractor on December 15th to further develop the cost estimate.

The plan includes shifting existing Town Hall offices so that Building, Public Works, Planning Department and Administration personnel would all be located in offices at the front of the building. The Town Hall Council chambers would be used as a conference room on an as-needed basis. The Town Manager's office would move to the office at the rear of the Council chambers. The remodel will provide each staff member with an office, improve overall layout and should improve efficiency and customer service.

The remodel could be paid out of two separate accounts: the \$282,000 building permit excess reserve fund and the \$1.4 million facilities fund. The Council asked staff to bring the refined cost estimates and necessary budget amendments to a future Council meeting.



Council Approves Additional Bridge Expense

The Council approved an \$81,000 expense for installation of sheet piling and bank stabilization work at the new Lagunitas Road Bridge site to prevent erosion during peak storms. The additional expense would result in the \$1.2 million bridge reconstruction project being approximately \$31,000 over budget, however, project consultants anticipated Caltrans would reimburse the additional work at the 88.5% federal program rate. Construction work in the streambed and removal of invasive arundo (giant reed) necessitated additional measures to stabilize the loose soil and prevent a washout behind the bridge wing wall. The sheet piling and bank stabilization work will not delay the opening of the bridge, as the contractor will be able to access the site from behind Town Hall.

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.