

# THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the  
Ross Town Council Meeting  
of May 8, 2008*

Volume 2, No. 5

May 9, 2008



## **A Year to Remember**

It's been a year since we opened the inner workings of Town Hall to your front row computer seat. I am proud of Council and staff's efforts and pleased you can view our challenges and accomplishments firsthand in The Morning After. We've covered the Council adopting a new general plan, exploring fire consolidation, initiating a downtown plan, hiring a Town Hydrologist, encouraging solar energy, securing pathway grants, working to calm traffic, promoting emergency preparedness and much, much more. The Council's work has involved coordinating with the Ross School, the Branson School, San Anselmo, Larkspur, Marin County Flood Control, Ross Valley Watershed, Marin Art & Garden Center and the Army Corps of Engineers. City managers have praised The Morning After and our work and have expressed a desire to initiate some of our programs. We look forward to keeping you informed in the year to come.

## **New Ross School Under Construction**

The fencing is up and the Ross School construction project is underway. Town Manager Gary Broad reported that School Superintendent Tammy Murphy and he have inked the agreement for the school to use the Ross Common as a temporary campus and construction staging area through February 2010.

The Ross School Board has also voiced its support for a shared Town-School Emergency Operation Center (EOC) in the new Ross School building. The school is designated as an emergency Red Cross center, so Superintendent Murphy will also obtain Red Cross consent for the center. The move would provide residents with an EOC in a seismically-safe structure built above the 100-year flood plain level and allow the school and the Town to better coordinate disaster response.



## **Wildland Urban Interface Building Standards Approved**

The Council voted to approve an ordinance adding new vegetation management and building regulations to the municipal code. Owners of hillside properties must now provide 100 feet of defensible space around each structure and must consider special wildland urban interface building code standards when planning new construction or remodeling projects. The Council also approved new driveway design and construction standards to enhance fire truck and emergency access.



According to a new Marin Grand Jury report, "Marin on Fire! Not if, but when," the overabundance of flammable vegetation and the failure of property owners to maintain defensible spaces pose a great fire risk in Marin. Ross' new vegetation management regulations are designed to address these

problems. In addition, fire inspections will now be part of all resale inspections. Residents are encouraged to visit [www.firesafemarin.org](http://www.firesafemarin.org) to learn how to create defensible spaces on their properties. Residents may also contact our Fire Marshal, Captain Tom Vallee, at 453-1453 ext. 157 to schedule a fire inspection.



### Mayor Scot Hunter's Report

There are still opportunities to familiarize yourself with the proposed improvements at Ross School before the election. The next informational meeting will be May 21 at Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. You may also visit the school's website at [www.rossschool.net](http://www.rossschool.net) to check in on the school's construction plans and progress. School officials have also set up an informative question and answer page on their site. You can also email questions to [construction@rossschool.net](mailto:construction@rossschool.net).

### Council Goals for 2008-2009

The Council discussed their five goals for fiscal year 2008-2009. After the successful downtown visioning event last Saturday, the Council agreed to again include downtown plan development as a goal for the coming year. The Council is also considering the following goals: flood control; fire consolidation and police department reorganization; emergency preparedness, with a focus on assisting seniors; and, encouraging bicycle and pedestrian opportunities. Residents and community stakeholders are encouraged to email their comments on these proposed goals to [gbroad@townofross.org](mailto:gbroad@townofross.org).



### Council Authorizes Paramedic Tax

The Council voted to approve the annual paramedic services tax for the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority of \$42 per residence and \$42 per 1,500 feet of commercial space. The tax will increase \$3 per year for the next two years.

### Council Approves New Downtown Parking Regulations



The Council voted to approve two resolutions modifying existing downtown parking. In order to make room for the downtown farmers market, parking will be restricted in the south Post Office parking lot between 3 and 8 p.m. on Thursdays during June through September. The Council also approved two 20-minute parking spaces along the west side of Ross Common near the Ross Grocery and Marmalades. The parking restriction will be in effect between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. to provide short-term customer parking for downtown businesses.

### Road Repaving Projects Slated

The Council authorized road repaving projects totaling \$474,068 for the upcoming year. In order to receive its \$400,000 allocation of Proposition 1B state funds for transportation projects, the Town must authorize specific capital improvement projects in advance, although the project list may be amended in the future. The current project list includes: East Road, West Road, Hill Road, Olive Avenue, Prospect Avenue, Skyland Avenue, Redwood Drive, Norwood Avenue, Walters Road, and Fernhill Avenue. These roads were selected based on their Pavement Condition Index ratings. The overall condition of Town roads has improved dramatically in the last few years as the Town continues to invest funding from state and local sources in roadway maintenance.



## Marin Open Space District Establishes Trust for Donations



Phil Paisley, Ross resident and Marin County Parks and Open Space Commissioner, reported on the establishment of the Marin Open Space Trust to raise funds and secure open space easements. The Trust will augment funding for the Marin Open Space District, which was created in 1972 and has amassed 14,000 acres in 29 open space preserves. The Trust hopes to raise \$20 million in the next five years to purchase or secure an additional 14,000 acres of remaining significant open space land and trail corridors. Donations can be sent to the Marin Open Space Trust at P.O. Box 4133, San Rafael, CA 94913.

## Council Agrees to Sign the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement

The Council authorized Mayor Hunter to sign the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which commits Ross to striving to meet the Kyoto Protocol targets and supporting state and federal greenhouse gas emission reduction legislation.

Under the agreement, the Town will target a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. The Town will achieve this by adopting land-use policies that create a walkable community, promoting alternative transportation options and energy use, increasing energy efficiency and recycling efforts, and encouraging sustainable building practices. The Town is already working on many of these objectives with the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership.



## Council Discusses Construction Done without Permits

The Council discussed ongoing issues with property owners who make improvements to their properties without planning approvals or building permits. There are 17 pending abatements for such violations, many discovered through neighbors' complaints or during resale inspections.



Last year the Council increased fees for after-the-fact applications and building permits in an effort to discourage unlawful behavior. Resident Richard Hannum asked the Council to consider how much of the illegal construction is a legacy from a period when it was difficult to get Council approval for projects. "We have a very different Council now and a much more reasoned process," he said. "We should look not at how to punish people, but at how we can encourage people to go through the process." Mayor Scot Hunter added that the new Advisory Design Review (ADR) process was created to do just that!



### 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 June Council meeting.

Address	Applicant	Approved	Modified Approval	Denied	Continued
30 Ross Common	Kathleen Firestone				
18 Ross Terrace	Dan and Mia Beckham				
7 Woodhaven Road	Steve Bode				
59 Bridge Rd.	Jay and Katie Kern				
115 Lagunitas Rd.	Martin Rosen				

### Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next Town Council meeting will be Thursday, June 12, at 6:30 pm. Agendas and staff reports are posted in advance of the meeting on the town's website at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org).

*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. The newsletter is not an official record of the meeting's proceedings. No portion of this newsletter may be copied, reproduced or reprinted without advance written permission from the Town of Ross. 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).*