

THE MORNING AFTER

*Highlights from the
Ross Town Council Meeting
of September 16, 2010*

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September 17, 2010



Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Bike Lane Postponed

The Town Council unanimously voted to postpone adding a bike lane to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard until the roadway could accommodate a continuous bike lane through most of the Town limits. In the meantime, the Town will stripe the traffic lanes in a manner that will make it easy to add a bike lane in the eastbound direction once improvements have been made to the Sir Francis Drake intersections with Lagunitas Road and Laurel Grove Avenue. The road will be widened when Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is resurfaced in October, and the wider shoulders will improve bike safety even if a bike lane is not striped and stenciled.

An engineering study of the area determined that bike lanes could be added for limited sections of the roadway: about 750 feet in the westbound direction between Ross Terrace and Lagunitas Road and 1,000 feet in the eastbound direction of that same roadway section; and about 1,700 feet in the eastbound direction between Bolinas Avenue and Laurel Grove Avenue.

David Parisi, the Town's transportation consultant, did not recommend creating a westbound bike lane because of the very limited space on that side of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. While an eastbound bike lane is more feasible, the existing conditions would create a gap in the bike lane between Laurel Grove Avenue and Lagunitas Road. He therefore recommended waiting until this area could be addressed in a future public works project to improve the Lagunitas Road intersection. Andy Peri, Marin County Bicycle Coalition spokesman, concurred.

Sir Francis Drake Boulevard residents urged the Council to abandon the bike lane altogether, arguing that the residents needed the parking spaces and that cyclists shouldn't be encouraged to ride on what they consider a dangerous road. In addition, many residents must back out of their driveway, and it is difficult to see cyclists as they approach.

Road Closures Approved – And Not

The Council passed a resolution enacting a temporary closure of Shady Lane on October 31 for Halloween. The road will be closed to vehicles between Norwood Avenue and Fernhill Avenue from 5 to 9 p.m. While the Council discussed closing all of Shady Lane for at least part of the evening, Police Chief Jim Reis recommended against it due to traffic flow concerns. The more limited closure requires only a minor traffic detour, and it improves safety on the narrower section of Shady Lane.

The Council voted to not close Ross Common during the Town Dinner on September 24th. Although the road is typically closed for the annual dinner, the detours resulting from the Lagunitas Road Bridge construction project make a road closure impractical this year. Police Chief Jim Reis recommended leaving the roadway open, citing safety and traffic concerns. Council members said they looked forward to reinstating the road closure next year and agreed with Chief Reis' suggestion to consider moving the Town Dinner to a Saturday or Sunday night when there would be fewer conflicts with Friday night commute traffic.





Mayor Chris Martin's Report

During the past several months, Ross residents and businesses have experienced an unprecedented amount of construction and disruption. On behalf of the Town Council and the Town of Ross staff, I would like to thank all you for your patience and understanding. The replacement of the Lagunitas Bridge, the completion of Ross School classrooms and facilities, the roadway improvements on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and the construction of several large residential projects has impeded access, at times gridlocked traffic, and has temporarily eroded the peace and tranquility we normally enjoy. In a matter of weeks, the bridge and road construction will be complete, and much improved.

I encourage residents to shop and dine locally. Our Town establishments value your business and the bridge project has restricted customer access.

The Council retreat will be Wednesday, October 6th. These meetings are an opportunity for staff and Council members to discuss current Town programs, plan for future needs, and determine priorities with the goal of improving government and services. The retreat is conducted in an informal atmosphere to encourage open discussion and the exchange of ideas. The Council will also select five primary goals to pursue during fiscal year 2010-11. The meeting will be held at the Marin Art & Garden Center and it will commence at 8.30 a.m. It is a public meeting and open to anyone interested in the governance of this Town.

On Thursday, October 7th, at 7:00 p.m., the Town of Ross is convening a community meeting to encourage public input on the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan is an effort to mitigate risks from natural and man-made disasters, including earthquake, flood, and gas-line ruptures. Your participation will help develop a plan that best serves the community. For more information, please contact Fire Chief Vallee.

On Friday, September 24th, nearly 500 neighbors and friends will assemble to celebrate our 5th Annual Ross Town Picnic Dinner. These dinners have become a tradition so popular that some have suggested that this Council meet only once a year and instead that we have a Town Dinner each month. (We can discuss this further at the Council retreat!) See you at the picnic!

Ross Valley Sanitary District Defends Rate Increases and Spending

Ross Valley Sanitary District General Manager Brett Richards discussed recent rate increases, staffing levels and other issues that have been in the media lately. The Ross Valley Sanitary District (RVSD) is the agency responsible for maintaining the wastewater collection system in the Ross Valley and Larkspur. Some ratepayers have had concerns about large rate increases, the lawsuits the district has entered into, the recent increase in hiring, and the expansion of staff contracts.

Although annual fees have nearly doubled in recent years, from \$270 to \$520 for most Ross customers, Dr. Peter Sullivan, RVSD Board member, said rates are comparable to what most other agencies charge in Marin, and significantly below others. Belvedere residents pay the most in annual sewer and wastewater rates, at \$1,748.



A little over half of ratepayers' sewer fees go to the Central Marin Sanitation Agency (CMSA) for wastewater treatment. RVSD was compelled to raise fees to cover debt service on CMSA's \$70 million "Wet Weather Improvement Project." If RVSD had not raised rates beginning in 2008, virtually all of the agency's revenue would now be transferred to CMSA, leaving no money for maintenance and improvement of the collection system.

The district has also had to raise fees to pay for \$67 million in court-ordered pipe repairs. The district is mandated to replace at least 2 miles of pipe every year. Richards said the agency maintains 200 miles of public pipe and 200 miles of private lateral lines, which means that 3 to 4 miles of pipe should be replaced each year to keep up with the lifetime replacement schedule.

Richards provided some information on the district's expenses. While the district has increased its full-time staff recently, it did so in order to reduce labor costs by replacing sub-contractors with permanent staff. RVSD estimates the annual net savings will be over \$600,000.

The district awarded raises to its union members, but those members made concessions that will reduce pension costs to RVSD, saving the district \$450,000 over the 6-year contract.

Ratepayers have also raised concerns about the amount of money the district spends on litigation. RVSD is involved in a \$15 million lawsuit over a proposed development on a Larkspur Landing property owned by the district. While the district has spent over \$1 million annually in legal fees, officials indicated they would be able to recoup their legal fees through the ultimate sale of the property.

Response to Grand Jury Report on School Resource Officers Approved

The Town Council approved a response to the Grand Jury report, entitled "School Resource Officers: A Proactive Approach to School Safety," which agreed with all of the report's findings and recommendations. The Grand Jury found that School Resource Officers perform a relatively unknown, but very important, role in maintaining safe public schools in Marin County. School Resource Officers are police officers who receive specialized training to work effectively with school administrators, teachers, and students. They help to identify and prevent inappropriate juvenile behavior on school campuses, and they often provide classroom instruction and individual counseling. The Grand Jury recommends making the School Resource Officer a budget priority and encourages local governments to find sustainable funding sources for the position. Officer Bob Besgrove has been the Town's School Resource Officer for the past sixteen years. His position is funded through the Town's general fund.

Council Approves Improvements to Frederick Allen Park

The Council approved a list of improvements to be made to Frederick Allen Park with \$226,363 in State Department of Parks and Recreation grants. Funds will be used to resurface the two tennis courts, rehabilitate the paddleball court, and install picnic tables, park benches, bike racks and a new water fountain in the tennis court area. The Town will also plant new trees and bushes throughout the park, and install a well and irrigation system. Improvements will begin as soon as the State approves the Town's application. All construction must be completed by March 31, 2011.



Grant funds will be used to resurface the tennis courts and provide new seating areas.



New landscaping throughout the park will help screen Poplar Avenue buildings.

Brown Act Review

Town Attorney Hadden Roth provided a review of the Brown Act, which requires the Town to notice certain meetings, provide an agenda, and ensure meetings are open to the public and allow public participation. Bodies subject to the Brown Act include the Town Council, committees appointed by the Town Council, and standing committees such as the Public Works Committee. Meetings are defined as a gathering of the majority of the members of the Town Council or of standing committees in which town business is discussed or transacted.

Individual contacts by Council members are not subject to the Brown Act, although Council members must be careful to avoid serial meetings, or “daisy chain” meetings, where one member contacts a member who contacts another member about the same issue. Council members also must refrain from using staff as a conduit to discuss Town business or to reach collective concurrence on an issue.



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 after approval at the October Council meeting.

Senior Planner Elise Semonian

Address	Applicant	Approved	Denied	Continued	Withdrawn
36 Glenwood Avenue*	John and Lisa Pritzker		X		
32 Ross Common	Rossetti Trust and William Markakis	X			
51 Shady Lane	Andy and Alexa Price	X			
10 Ames Avenue**	Bradley and Kristin Matsik	X			
17 Upper Ames Ave.	Kira Matthews	X			
14 Walnut Avenue	Loretta Gargan and Catherine Wagner	X			
23 Ross Common	Peter Maguire and Eric Harr				X
201 Lagunitas Road	Kara and Josh Fisher			X	

*Council granted time extension for creek improvements.

**House improvements approved only; garage continued.

Upcoming Town Council Meeting

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 14, 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.

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