



Staff Report

Date: June 14, 2016
To: Mayor Hoertkorn and Councilmembers
From: Joe Chinn, Town Manager
Subject: Discussion of Town-Owned Property at 6 Redwood Drive

Recommendation

Council to discuss and decide on the preferred future use for the Town-owned building at 6 Redwood that was severely damaged by a fire in 2015, and further direct staff to provide a resolution on the consent calendar in the following Council meeting which supports that decision.

Background and discussion

The building known as 6 Redwood is located on southwest portion of the Ross Commons (APN 073-242-25). Ross Commons was deeded from Annie S.E. Worn on July 1, 1911. There are Town records showing that the building at 6 Redwood has been located on the Ross Commons parcel since at least 1914. The Town has historically rented the building for many years. On February 28, 2015, the house was severely damaged by a fire. Staff is seeking direction from Council on what use makes the most sense for 6 Redwood. Attachment 1 shows an aerial of the Ross Commons and buildings at 6 Redwood.

The house is currently part of the 4.36 acre (189,923 square feet) parcel that is described as "Ross Common Town Park" on the zoning map. The building is approximately 925 square feet and is separated from the rest of the Ross Common with a fence and heavy vegetation. The fenced in area related to the building is approximately 7,200 square feet. The parcel is zoned as Civic District (C-D) zoning district. Uses permitted in the C-D district are considered to be for public purposes, including but not limited to town hall, library, museum, fire and police station, emergency shelters, multifamily housing, transitional housing, auditorium, school, park and recreational uses, off-street parking lots, and public utility lines and structures for local distribution and local service. Conditionally permitted uses would allow for single family residences and antennas used for transmission purposes.

Staff brought four options to the Council at our June 14, 2016 Council meeting (staff report and minutes attached). Town Council agreed to direct staff to further explore the option of repairing the house and renting it, and the option of demolishing the house and converting the land to be a part of the Ross Common Park. As part of the park there has been interest with some Town residents of exploring the option of having a natural playground in that space to serve children of various ages.

The staff is requesting that the Council decide between the two remaining options for this space. The options will be referred to as:

1. Repair the house and continue renting
2. Build a natural playground

Each option is discussed below.

Option 1 – Repair the House and Continue Renting

Under this option, the house would be repaired and include changes for any code requirements, including flood regulations and sprinkler requirements. Insurance would fund most of this cost unless the Town wanted to upgrade the house from its prior level (that being said there would be some upgrades funded by insurance, such as it will be all new cabinets, fixtures, flooring, etc. since that was all destroyed in the fire so it will all be newly purchased and installed). At this time, the drywall in the house has been removed and the framing inside is exposed. Under this option, the Town would pay for any costs related to the site clean-up and landscaping around the house.

If this option is selected, an architect would be hired to put together the plans for the house utilizing the existing frame to the extent possible. The structure elevation would be increased by 3 to 4 feet to meet the FEMA Base Flood Elevation (BFE) requirements with any costs associated with meeting the requirements such as installing new cripple walls to elevate the lowest floor using flood-resistant materials and flood vents in the under-floor space being covered by the Town's insurance. An arborist will be utilized to establish tree protection measures to best protect the three large redwood trees during construction.

Returning the use of the building to a single family residence rental can provide more affordable workforce housing in a very expensive rental market (note that the house is not classified as a low-income housing unit). Also, if the house was rented to a Town employee it could provide an in-Town employee which could be beneficial in cases of emergency and to have another set of eyes in Town. The rental unit could assist in providing some net revenue to the Town of say \$10,000 to 20,000 annually after expenses such as routine maintenance items and minor repairs needed over time.

One of the drawbacks to this plan is being a landlord for a house is not part of the mission of the Town in providing services to the residents so the goal is to divert as little employee time and resources as possible from providing more normal Town services.

Option 2 - Build a Natural Playground

Town Council has directed staff to develop a proposal to expand the Ross Commons to include the 6 Redwood site. Ross community members have communicated to Town staff that there is a need to have a playground that can be utilized by families with young children under the age of five. Their concern was based on the lack of facilities that can be accessed during the day for this age group. They also communicated their interest in a natural play area for this age group as well as older children.

Currently, there are two playgrounds located on the Ross School property adjacent to Ross Commons. Both of these playgrounds have fixed structures for climbing and are certified for use by children ages five and above. These playgrounds are not designed for use by children under the age of five. Also, public use of these playgrounds is prohibited during the school day. However, the Ross Commons is public property and a park at this site would be available to public use during the school day.

A concept plan (attached) was developed for a nature play area by MIG consulting group. It is important to note that the attached plan is conceptual and shows some optional elements that could be included with the overall plan which would be refined based on public and Council input if Council chose to pursue this option and a more detailed architectural plan would then be prepared. The concept plan incorporates natural elements, which provides an alternative to the play structures that exist at the Ross School playgrounds. The nature play area theme is based on Redwood trees, which currently exist at 6 Redwood, and are a main feature of the area. The nature play concept plan provides a non-traditional natural playground that encourages outdoor play with natural elements and promotes environmental sensitivity.

Under this plan, the fence and overgrown landscaping that separates the rest of the Common and the 6 Redwood site would be removed to have it be part of the larger park. It is planned that a short fence would be installed at the approximate location of the current fence to keep children within the playground while allowing a visual connection across the whole Common into this space.

The proposed nature play area would accommodate children under five during school hours. As an alternative to the static structures in the school playgrounds, the nature play area will also provide opportunities for passive play activities for older children after school and on weekends, in addition to those under five.

Last year, the outdoor play space at the Ross Preschool, located at St. John's Church, was converted to a natural themed outdoor classroom. The space now consists of installations of logs, pebble boxes, planter boxes, tee pees and sand tables. The conversion has increased the variety of play options and supports environmental education activities. One challenge at the preschool is the relatively small size of the area that can be used for these activities. The addition of the nature play area at 6 Redwood would provide a larger venue that could provide additional variety in the curriculum for the preschool's students.

As an educational benefit, Ross School teachers and students would be able to conduct passive learning activities in environmental education during the school day at the nature play site. Similarly, Ross Recreation could program the site during the summer for environmentally themed programs for preschool age children.

Some benefits to children are outlined below.

Increased Activity - A natural setting lends itself to an increased level of activity. Studies show that when natural elements are incorporated into a playground, the length of time a child plays is more than doubled. Natural playgrounds present a wealth of opportunities for children of all skill and activity levels to improve their fitness levels through play.

Accessibility - Natural playgrounds, unlike traditional plastic style playgrounds, are more welcoming to children of all abilities. A natural playground does not discriminate when it comes to differing fitness levels, abilities, intelligences, genders and cultures. Children are encouraged to create their own ways to play, rather than being dictated on how to play by the equipment available to them.

Imaginative Play - Many natural playscapes are designed to stimulate the imagination and encourage creativity. Features are typically incorporated to promote imaginative play through a variety of sensory stimulation, including touch, sight and sound. It has been found that children who play in more natural settings tend to play in more diverse and creative ways, and show improvement in the areas of collaboration and language skills.

Social Skills - Since by nature, a natural play space does not dictate how children should play, young people are encouraged to collaborate and communicate with their peers. Through play in an open-ended setting, children improve their sharing, negotiation, problem solving, empathy, and leadership skills as they work together.

Motor Skills - One of the greatest benefits of natural playgrounds is found in the way they help children improve their fine motor skills. A natural setting involves a vast array of textures, sensory activities, gardens and natural sounds to encourage children to engage all of their senses. Through touching, feeling and collecting natural objects, fine motor activity is challenged and strengthened.

The park option provides an opportunity for the public to use this part of the Ross Common that previously was only available to the private renters of the house. As such, it will put more people closer to the Redwood residential neighbors. It is anticipated that the addition of a nature play area will attract more people to the park and thus increase the demand for parking particularly along Redwood and Ross Commons. The park will likely attract some families with children from neighboring communities in Ross Valley similar to Ross families being attracted to various parks in the Valley. With the increased usage, there is the possible increase of noise and traffic from the use. The park plan would include buffering plants along the border with the current residence on Redwood to help with some of the noise and visual buffering with the neighboring residence. The various impacts will be studied as part of the environmental analysis pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act for this project if Council proceeds with the park option.

MIG consultants believe some of the elements of the nature play area could work at other sites in Ross such as the current open space grass area adjacent to the Post Office. However, they felt the 6 Redwood site provided an excellent nature play space opportunity - fitting in very well with the large redwoods and palm tree which would be a key part of the park experience. If this option is selected, similar to the house reconstruction, an arborist will be utilized to best protect the three large redwood trees during construction.

Zoning Consistency

The project site is located within the Civic District (CD) zoning district. The CD district classifications is intended to be applied to land areas which are now, or which may in the future be found to be particularly suitable for use as sites for public, quasi-public, cultural, educational and/or recreational uses and purposes. Permitted uses within the district are intended for public purposes, including but not limited to town hall, library, museum, fire and police station, emergency shelters, multifamily housing, transitional housing, auditorium, school, park and recreational uses, off-street parking lots, and public utility lines and structures for local distribution and local service. The new construction of single-family residence is a conditionally permitted use within the district.

The project site is developed with an existing single family residence and considered to be legal nonconforming as the residence was constructed prior to the Town's incorporation and regulations. Both the proposed park use and the existing single-family residential use are considered to be permitted within the zoning district. The demolition of the existing residence and the new construction of the natural park within 25 feet of a creek or drainageway would require Design Review pursuant to Section 18.41.020 of the Ross Municipal Code. As Design Review is considered to be a discretionary action, the project would require a public hearing, Town Council consideration and actions, and compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The preparation of an Initial Study would determine the level of environmental review (e.g., Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report) that would be necessary. Based on a cursory analysis, staff anticipates the preparation of

a Mitigated Negative Declaration. The estimated cost of the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration is approximately \$30,000.

As for the repair and rehabilitation of the existing legal nonconforming single family residence, pursuant to Section 15.56.020 of the Ross Municipal Code, the town building official may permit with a ministerial building permit the repair, reconstruction, restoration, or rebuilding of any single-family dwelling that is involuntarily damaged or destroyed. No prior Town Council discretionary review or a public hearing that may otherwise be required under Title 18, including variance, design review, hillside lot or other approvals, would be required. As the issuance of a building permit is considered a ministerial act, compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) would not be required.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

One of the main funding sources for either option is from insurance payments for the fire damaged house. The Town has property insurance through ABAG PLAN. Under the insurance coverage, the Town has a \$5,000 deductible. Insurance would fully pay for the replacement of the house (Option 1) as it was including any documented code upgrade requirements, such as the installation of fire sprinklers and increasing the house elevation by 3 to 4 feet to meet the FEMA Base Flood Elevation (BFE) requirements. In addition, the Town would receive a loss of rents income (estimated at approximately \$13,800).

If the Town does not build a replacement building, then insurance would pay an actual cash value (which is the estimated replacement cash value less depreciation) which is currently estimated by insurance at approximately \$140,000. Under this option the Town would also receive the \$13,800 for the loss of rent income.

For now, the rough draft net cost to the Town if we do not run into unforeseen costs expenses are as follows:

Option 1 Repair the house - rough estimate to Town range from \$20,000 to \$50,000 including site work.

Option 2 Build a natural playground – rough estimate total cost of this initial conceptual plan is \$200,000 to \$250,000 with the potential to reduce the cost by removing some elements from the initial design. In addition, other costs would include the demolition of the house which is anticipated to be in the range of \$30,000 to \$50,000, and environmental analysis estimated at \$30,000. The Town is anticipated to receive approximately \$150,000 in insurance proceeds leaving a rough net cost of \$110,000 to \$180,000.

The funding for the capital costs for the repair of the house would come from the Facilities and Equipment fund. The funding for the natural playground could come from a variety of sources which could include the Facilities and Equipment Fund, the Recreation Fund, and fundraising a portion of the park costs. In addition, some elements could be removed from the plan to reduce costs. The elements could be added later if fundraising or Town funds are made available to fund.

The annual maintenance costs under each option are estimated as follows. In the case of Option 1, rental income net revenue to the Town of \$10,000 to 20,000 annually after expenses such as routine maintenance items and some repairs needed over time.

For the park option, annual maintenance is estimated at \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year including inspections and maintenance twice per week and minor replacement costs.

Staff believes both options provide benefits to the Town though they are very different. Staff can successfully develop, operate, and fund either option.

Alternative actions

Council could request staff explore other options from those discussed in this report though a number of other options have been previously explored.

Public Comment

A number of letters and emails are attached which we received by the completion of this report. Other letters and emails will be forwarded to Council as they are received.

Environmental review (if applicable)

Not applicable

Attachments

1. Aerial Exhibit of "Ross Commons"
2. Ross Nature Play Area Concept Plan by MIG
3. June 14, 2016 staff report and minutes
4. Email correspondence

ATTACHMENT 1



Legend

- Condominium Common Area
 - Mobile Home Pad
 - City
 - Community
 - Marin County Legal Boundary
 - Other Bay Area County
 - Ocean and Bay
- Address
- 2014 Marin 6 inch
- Red: Band_1
 - Green: Band_2
 - Blue: Band_3

1: 932



NAD_1983_HARN_StatePlane_California_III_FIPS_0403_Feet
 © Latitude Geographics Group Ltd.

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Notes

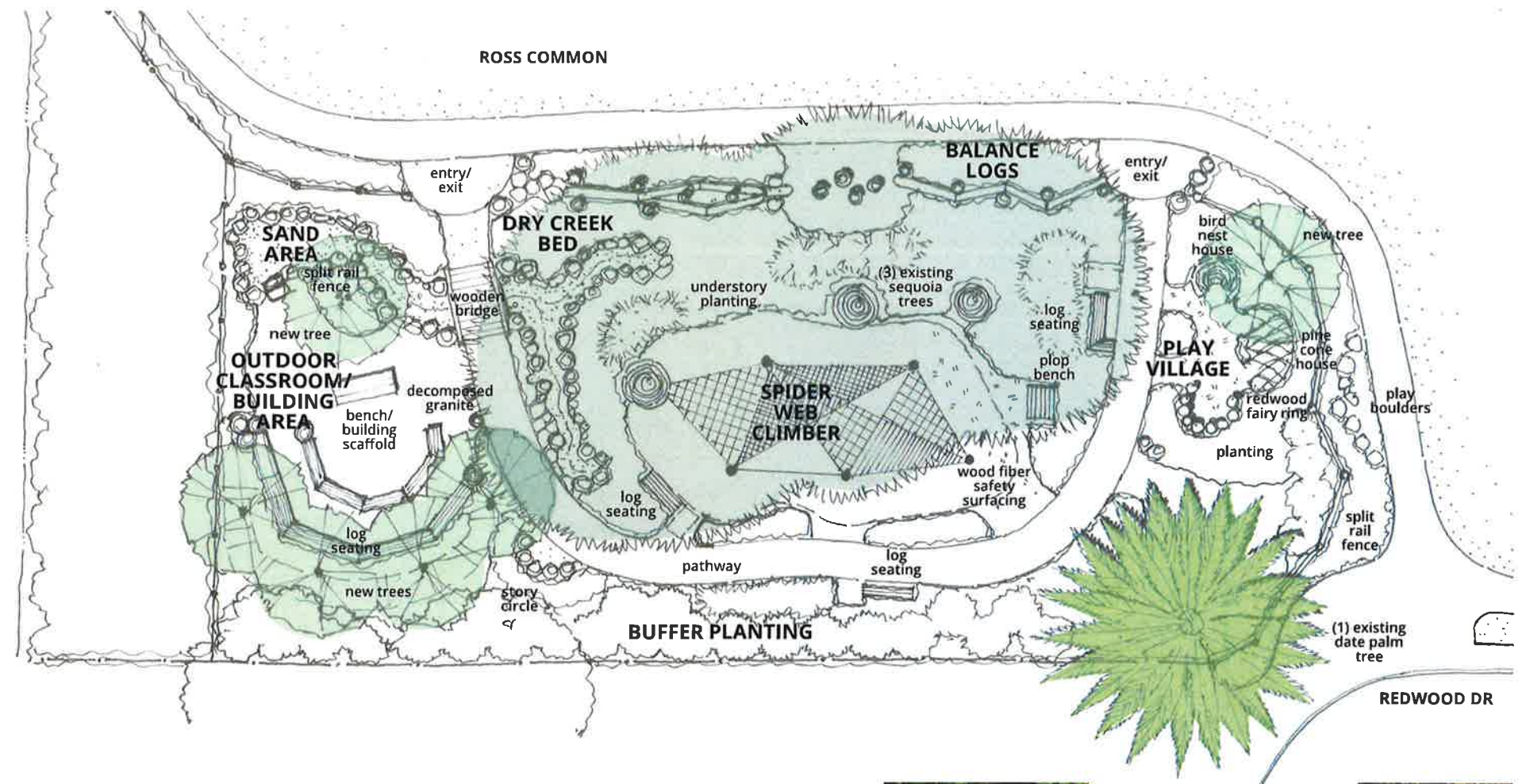
ATTACHMENT 2

ROSS NATURE PLAY AREA CONCEPT PLAN

Go wild, Ross child! This natural play area is for you.

Located smack in the center of town and right next to the Ross Elementary School and Ross Common, this 1/6 acre site could provide local families with a place for children to dig in the sand, balance on logs, scramble on rocks, play in the bushes, make mud pies, hide in a bird's nest, climb on ropes, swing in hammocks, run along a path, build with sticks, and play in a dry creek bed.

Built out of natural materials and slipped under the canopy of three existing sequoia trees, this is a space for wonder and imagination — a place where children of all ages can explore and engage in free, unstructured, open-ended play. With plenty of comfortable seating options and an outdoor area for teaching and learning, this natural play area will be an engaging, tactile environment that bolsters children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical health and encourages them to play in nature every day.



ATTACHMENT 3



Staff Report

Date: June 14, 2016
To: Mayor Hoertkorn and Councilmembers
From: Joe Chinn, Town Manager
Subject: Discussion of Town-Owned Property at 6 Redwood Drive

Recommendation

Discuss and provide direction regarding preferred future use for the Town-owned building at 6 Redwood that was severely damaged by a fire in 2015.

Background and discussion

The building known as 6 Redwood is located on southwest portion of the Ross Commons (APN 073-242-25). Ross Commons was deeded from Annie S.E. Worn on July 1, 1911. There are Town records showing that the building at 6 Redwood has been located on the Ross Commons parcel since at least 1914. The Town has historically rented the building for many years. On February 28, 2015, the house was severely damaged by a fire. Staff is seeking direction from Council on what use makes the most sense for 6 Redwood. Attachment 1 shows an aerial of the Ross Commons and buildings at 6 Redwood.

The house is currently part of the 4.36 acre (189,923 square feet) parcel that is described as "Ross Common Town Park" on the zoning map. The building is approximately 925 square feet and is separated from the rest of the Ross Common with a fence and heavy vegetation. The fenced in area related to the building is approximately 7,200 square feet. The parcel is zoned as Civic District (C-D) zoning district. Uses permitted in the C-D district are considered to be for public purposes, including but not limited to town hall, library, museum, fire and police station, emergency shelters, multifamily housing, transitional housing, auditorium, school, park and recreational uses, off-street parking lots, and public utility lines and structures for local distribution and local service. Conditionally permitted uses would allow for single family residences and antennas used for transmission purposes.

Staff believes it is not viable to do nothing with the property and is therefore exploring four different options related to the property. The options are:

1. Repair the house and continue renting it as a single family residence
2. Build a Ross Recreation community center
3. Expand the Ross Commons park area with this area
4. Tear down the house and determine use later

Another option that was initially discussed was building a preschool at this location – for a variety of reasons that option was not seen as viable.

The Town has property insurance through ABAG PLAN. Under the insurance coverage, the Town has a \$5,000 deductible. Insurance would fully pay for the replacement of the house (Option 1) as it was including any documented code upgrade requirements, such as the installation of fire sprinklers and increasing the house elevation by 3 to 4 feet to meet the FEMA Base Flood Elevation (BFE) requirements. In addition, the Town would receive a loss of rents income (estimated at approximately \$13,800).

If the Town wants to build an alternative building on the site (e.g., Option 2), the Town would be paid replacement cash value from insurance which is currently estimated by insurance at approximately \$175,000 (a value the Town will negotiate if we proceed with any option other than Option 1) less the \$5,000 deductible. If the Town does not build a replacement building at all (Options 3 and 4) then insurance would pay an actual cash value (which is the estimated replacement cash value less depreciation) which is currently estimated by insurance at approximately \$140,000. Under Options 2 through 4 the Town would also receive the \$13,800 for the loss of rent income.

Each option is discussed below.

Option 1 – Repair the House and Continue Renting

Under this option, the house would be repaired and include changes for any code requirements, including flood regulations. As discussed above, insurance would fund most of this cost unless the Town wanted to upgrade the house from its prior level (that being said there would be some upgrades funded by insurance, such as it will be all new cabinets, fixtures, flooring, etc. since that was all destroyed in the fire so it will all be newly purchased and installed). However, it should be noted that the real damage to the house will not be known until the drywall is removed and work occurs in the attic area. Once the drywall is removed, then it can be determined if there is more serious damage from the fire, water damage, mold, etc. Additionally, there would be some cost to the Town related to landscaping around the house.

Returning the use of the building to a single family residence rental can provide more affordable workforce housing in a very expensive rental market. Also, if the house was rented to a Town employee it would provide an in-Town employee which could be beneficial in cases of emergency and to have another set of eyes in Town. The rental unit could assist in providing some net revenue to the Town of say \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually after expenses.

One of the drawbacks to this plan is being a landlord for a house is not part of the mission of the Town in providing services to the residents so the goal is to divert as little employee time and resources as possible from providing more normal Town services.

Option 2 - Build a Ross Recreation Community Center

The addition of a small recreation community center on the 6 redwood site would provide the Recreation Department with program space for after school and summer activities. Popular programs, such as carpentry, could be conducted on a regular basis at the center with access to both interior and exterior space. The Ross Rec carpentry classes at Bacich and Ross schools cannot be conducted inside the classrooms due to restrictions on the type of activities that can be held inside these spaces. The

summer camps that are based primarily on the fields would access the center for morning and afternoon drop off and pick up. Staff working the field camps would use the center as an operational base. These camps would also be able to utilize the center for indoor activities. Currently, the Town has three sports camps and several classroom programs during the summer at Ross school. The lack of indoor common space other than the gym creates some logistical challenges for lunch and registration. By providing a venue that would be more proximate to the camps based on Ross Commons, the congestion that currently impacts the Rec office and gym can be mitigated.

Building a community center would create the only indoor recreational space owned by the city. All other indoor space utilized by Ross Rec programs is provided through an hourly rental or lease basis. The ability to provide consistent space, that is overseen and owned by the Town of Ross, would be a welcome addition to the rec program. The additional space would allow the Department to provide consistent programming, which is not subject to interruption due to other priorities. Under the existing Ross School District and Ross Park and Recreation MOU, the Recreation Department is granted the permanent designation of the Ross Recreation Office and Community Room space for Department use. Ross Recreation is also granted access to additional classrooms subject to availability. The school has priority for use of these additional rooms, which has preempted use of these spaces by Ross Recreation at various times during the school year. This also occurs at Bacich School where the school has priority use of the classrooms and some of the Ross Recreations programs have had to be cancelled due to school events such as open house. In addition, the proposed community center could also provide program space for Town of Ross meetings such as Council retreats and interview panels.

The current facility rental program would be expanded to provide space for groups requesting access to Ross Commons for their activities. For example, community groups such as Ross Valley Little League, Ross Valley Grizzlies Lacrosse and Ross Valley Youth Soccer would be able to access the center for game day operations and meetings.

A rough draft floor plan of a 1,500 square foot proposed Recreation Community Center is attached. The recreation center would include approximately 700 sf of flexible interior program space, a small staff office, restrooms, storage, and a deck. The exterior beyond the center would be used for passive recreational programming.

This rough concept would expand the approximate 925 square foot house to 1,500 square foot. The building could also be moved on the site to be further away from the large redwoods. The fence and landscaping that separates the rest of the Common and the 6 Redwood site would be removed to have the building be part of the park space. Parking would be the same parking as currently utilized by the school. It would make this end of the park busier at parts of the day compared to being a house. Similar to the house, the recreation center would be built above the Base Flood Elevation. The recreation center would be built as ADA accessible.

A ballpark cost estimate for the recreation center is \$450,000 (roughly \$300 per square foot) plus demolition of the house (\$30,000 to \$50,000), some additional site costs associated with removing the fence and landscaping separating the house site from the rest of the Commons, re-landscaping the parcel, and likely installation of a couple of parking spaces near the building. Staff still needs to obtain costs associated with the raised building and ADA ramp required to serve the raised building. Insurance would fund approximately \$170,000 of the cost and the Town Facilities and Equipment Fund would fund the balance. There would be some annual cost of maintenance of the space which would be partially offset by rental income.

3. Park Expansion of Ross Commons

The demolition of the house and fence adjoining Ross Commons would expand the park area to include the current 6 Redwood site. Removing the fence and ivy that borders the property would open up the southeast portion of the Commons. The view towards that area of the park would be improved as the existing redwood trees on the 6 Redwood site would be integrated into the park area. The addition of benches on the property, together with connecting paths, would create a passive quiet area within the Commons. Turf could be installed near the street side of the property. However, the current combination of undergrowth and redwood leaves surrounding the redwood trees should be retained.

By creating a passive, open area, the park would gain a quiet area for rest and contemplation. In the future, the more active part of the park could be extended more toward this site given the existing fence/ivy border would be moved back.

The cost associated with this option is not known but could be kept less than the amount of insurance proceeds.

4. Tear Down the House and Determine Use Later

This option is a holding option. Under this option the building would be torn down and the area should be landscaped to some degree to improve the current level of attractiveness. This land is well-sited near the activity center of Ross with the nearby school, recreation area, post office, and commercial district. In the future, a master plan could be developed to identify future uses of the area that can be beneficial to the Town residents.

The annual cost associated with this option is limited to vegetation and landscaping maintenance of the site.

Staff Recommendation

Staff does not have a strong recommendation of any one of the options over the others given the mix of pros and cons associated with each. Staff is leaning to Option 1 – Repairing and renting the house for the following reasons: the insurance should cover most all of the costs; the house creates a more affordable workforce housing unit in Ross which would be even more beneficial if it was rented to a Town employee who would then be in and around Town more; the Town would receive a small amount of annual revenue; and in the future, the Town could decide to convert the building into another use at not much one-time cost loss of repairing the house (i.e. a low cost hold that has some level of benefit to the community).

The second best alternative would be for Option 2 – Build a Ross Recreation community center. The key to this alternative would be getting enough activities at the space that either could not occur at or would be improved by being hosted at the recreation center compared to being at Ross or Bacich Schools. This option has more up-front and annual costs than the house, however, if well utilized could be justified.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

Some discussion of costs to the Town are discussed above. Some of the options will need to be better defined in order to provide a better cost estimate. Once Council selects one or two options, staff can do more refined analysis to be able to provide better cost estimates. For now, the rough draft net cost to the Town if we do not run into unforeseen costs expenses are as follows:

Option 1 Repair the house - rough estimate to Town range from \$25,000 to \$75,000 including site work.

Option 2 Build the recreation center – rough estimate net cost from \$350,000 to \$500,000 including demolition and site work after accounting for insurance proceeds of approximately \$175,000. Costs would need to be adjusted with further refinement of the plan.

Option 3 Park expansion of Commons with this site – costs are not known given we would have to define project. Insurance proceeds of approximately \$140,000 would be used to offset cost of demolition is \$30,000 to \$50,000 and landscaping and site work.

Option 4 Tear down the house - net cost to Town would depend on amount of landscaping and site work. Insurance proceeds of approximately \$140,000 would be used to offset cost of demolition is \$30,000 to \$50,000 and landscaping and site work.

The net capital costs shown above would be funded from the Town Facilities and Equipment fund balance.

The annual maintenance costs under each option would vary. In the case of Option 1, rental income should generate approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year of net revenue to the Town. Option 2 would have some maintenance costs associated with the building and landscaping with some additional revenue being generated by additional recreation programming and rentals. Option 3 and 4 would have annual landscape maintenance costs associated with each which would be dependent on the landscaping plan under either option.

Alternative actions

Council could request staff explore other options from those discussed in this report.

Public Comment

An email from Catherine Babcock dated June 8, 2016 was submitted to the Council for consideration.

Environmental review (if applicable)

Not applicable

Attachments

1. Aerial Exhibit of "Ross Commons"
2. Recreation Community Center Rough Design Idea
3. Email from Catherine Babcock dated June 8, 2016

June 14, 2016 Minutes

right to weigh in and approve the collection and expenditure of these revenues. If the appropriations limit is not approved by the voters, the tax revenues cannot be spent.

Mayor Hoertkorn asked for a motion.

Council Member Robbins moved and Mayor Pro Tempore Small seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 1955 calling for a Municipal Election to be held on November 8, 2016; requesting the Marin County Board of Supervisors to consolidate with the General Election conducted on that date. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Town Council discussion/action of Town-owned property at 6 Redwood Drive.

Town Manager Joe Chinn summarized the staff report and recommended that the Council discuss and provide direction regarding preferred future use of the Town-owned building at 6 Redwood that was severely damaged by a fire in 2015. Staff believes it is not viable to do nothing with the property and is therefore exploring four different options related to the property. The options are as follows:

1. Repair the house and continue renting it as a single-family residence
2. Build a Ross Recreation community center
3. Expand the Ross Commons park area with this area
4. Tear down the house and determine use later

Council Member Kuhl asked staff if there is a fifth option of selling this property. Town Manager Chinn explained that the Town was deeded this property in 1911, so selling is not an option under the deed. Obviously, it would have great real estate value for a single-family home.

Council Member Robbins asked staff if the Town has the ability to set the rate for the rental such as market rate or affordable housing. Town Manager Chinn responded in the affirmative. It is a small house. The insurance company is repairing the house and paying for code upgrade requirements such as fire sprinklers and raising the home out of the floodplain.

Council Member Brekhus stating that if they try to rebuild this as a house, and then feel it is necessary for recreation services, they will be stuck. If they built it as a building they would make different choices. She wanted to know their timeframe in regard to continued use of Ross Rec such as more space for a pre-school. She expressed concerns for placing limitations on this property. She further believed it is a very difficult choice at this time.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small added that if down the road they look at needing this for something more permanent, they would end up tearing down the house and starting fresh. The money spent on this house will be gone. She believed any contractor would demolish the house and construct a facility.

Mike Armstrong, Recreation Manager, believed the design and approach should be what is the long-term community benefit. Currently, there is no space that the Town has that is a community space for meetings or community groups and for the population. There is no focal point in the Town of Ross. They need to look at this as an asset community wide. It is more long-term look as to what would benefit the Town of Ross. From that view, they thought a

June 14, 2016 Minutes

small community center might benefit the residents of Ross. Local community groups such as little leagues, youth soccer, and the events at Ross Common that have no access to rooms to meet. It is difficult on the weekends. Also, there are no restroom facilities, except for the portable facilities across the street, so it becomes a logistical problem.

Mayor Hoertkorn asked staff if they do not rebuild a house, how much money would they receive from the insurance company. Town Manager Chinn responded that at this time insurance estimates we would receive \$140,000 for park space without a building and \$170,000 if we rebuild with a building. A public building must be ADA accessible, but ADA compliance is not required for a single-family home.

Mayor Hoertkorn opened the public hearing on this item.

Barbara Call, Redwood Drive resident, pointed out that this is a residential neighborhood. She submitted a letter from her attorney indicating very clearly that if the Town considers this a community center site she would fight such use since there is no new parking. She is prepared to talk about protecting the tree canopy. The trees serve as a sound barrier and privacy barrier for the neighborhood. She believed the Town is trying to destroy the environment they live in rather than use the house as a source of income. To remove all those trees that surround 6 Redwood would be a catastrophe. She has been fighting for over 16 years on how to keep these trees alive and hopes the Town makes the right decision.

Peter Nelson, Circle Drive resident, believed if this were a recreation center then vehicles would park on the congested streets. Circulation is already horrible. It is better to meet at Town Hall or MAGC since the parking is better and not as congested.

There being no further public testimony on this item, the Mayor closed the public portion and brought the matter back to the Council for discussion and action.

Council Member Robbins felt having workforce housing is important and the best solution. Council Member Brekhus did not believe this site is any more convenient than parking at the Post Office or MAGC. The intensity of the use should not be increased. She felt they would be shifting uses. The impact on Redwood must be considered. She agreed they must review the site since it is part of the Common. This was a gift so they must be good stewards.

Council Member Kuhl was impressed by the number of letters from residents on Redwood related to their concerns in regard to their options. Their duty is to do what they think is right and then decide what is right, and if necessary defend the lawsuit. It will be awhile before they redo their facilities, so he felt they should make a decision now in regard to rebuilding the house. He did not like the idea of the Town being in the rental business, but the best decision may be to rebuild the house and use it as affordable/employee housing.

Mayor Pro Tempore Small added that the Town has always been concerned about the tree canopy in Ross. The trees encased in ivy will at some point die. She felt more comfortable not renovating the house, maybe tearing it down and leaving that space open to the park and taking that \$140,000. Ross Rec adds value to this community and it is a draw to this community, which enriches this community. Down the road, when they have a facilities plan, use the

June 14, 2016 Minutes

\$140,000 and look at the space and possibly make that a smaller fenced in park for smaller children. Fiscally, to be the most responsible with the dollars is to not replace it, but return it to parkland. She supported not renovating the building and putting that money into the facilities fund.

The Council considered various options for the Town-owned property at 6 Redwood Drive that was significantly damaged by fire in February 2015. The house is currently part of the 4.36-acre parcel that is described as Ross Common Town Park on the zoning map. The building is approximately 925 sq. ft. and is separated from the rest of the Ross Common with a fence and heavy vegetation. The Town has historically rented the house for many years. The Council had asked staff to provide options to consider for the future use of the Town-owned building, which has remained boarded up since the fire. After much discussion, the Council agreed to direct staff to further explore the option of repairing the house and renting it, and the option of demolishing the house and converting the land to be a part of the Ross Common Park.

15. Town Council consideration of introduction of Ordinance No. 674, amending Title 18 "Zoning" of the Ross Municipal Code Chapter 18.46, to revise the applicable findings required in order to grant an exception to certain development standards to allow finished basement and attic areas for storage and living space.

Planning Manager Heidi Scoble summarized the staff report and recommended that the Council introduce Ordinance No. 674, amending Title 18 "Zoning" of the Ross Municipal Code Chapter 18.46, to revise the applicable findings required in order to grant an exception to certain development standards to allow finished basement and attic areas for storage and living space.

Council Member Brekhus asked staff to recap why they are striking the words "*materially*" and "*visible*" and asked for a little history for a better understanding of what is being proposed. Planning Manager Scoble has been reviewing the different zoning ordinance requirements and there is a lot of subjectivity in some of the language and her charge is to provide as much clarity as possible. The intent is to work within the existing footprint of the building and not modify the foundation.

Mayor Hoertkorn opened the public hearing on this item.

Rupert Russell, Ross resident, explained that the reasoning is to allow an additional window for natural light and the intent was never to change the fundamental structure.

Peter Nelson, Circle Drive resident, stated that one reason is to give residents solid advice and have precise guidelines, but striking these words is making the ordinance very defined. The language has been included for over one year and there have been no issues. What staff is proposing is not needed in terms of a practical application.

There being no further public testimony on this item, the Mayor closed the public portion and brought the matter back to the Council for discussion and action.

ATTACHMENT 4

Heidi Scoble

From: wendy huck <wendy.huck@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 7:09 AM
To: Heidi Scoble
Subject: Ross Nature-Based Playground

Hi Heidi, I hope you are well. I wanted to reach out to you with a brief email indicating my support for a nature-based playground adjacent to Ross Commons. Unfortunately, I am out of town on Thursday - otherwise, I would attend the Council Meeting to share my thoughts.

I think this playground is a wonderful opportunity to bring members of our community together and engage our local children.

I assume the cost of the playground would be much less than re-building the burnt down house that seems to have had little vision or need over the last few years. If cost is an issue though, I'm sure that some of us local residents would be happy to make donations.

I also think it would be great to include a public restroom for the park. Given the amount of activity on the Ross Commons every weekend, this would be a welcome addition. Maybe Ross Rec could slightly increase their registration costs to help cover maintenance of the restrooms, or again public donations could help.

Given the size of Ross, I'm sure most visitors to the new park would be walking and pushing strollers or biking. Think of all the central playgrounds in large cities that have zero parking - people just get accustomed to walking there instead of driving. I doubt this relatively small playground would become a destination area for those outside of our local area. Regardless, I'm sure there are creative solutions to help address any parking concerns. It would be a shame if something like that prevented this rare opportunity. How long will it be before Ross has a chance to do something like this again for our young children?

I hope the Council Members vote in support of this project - it's something that will benefit many future generations and increase the community spirit we all enjoy here in Ross.

Kind Regards,

Wendy Huck
147 Lagunitas Road

Linda Lopez

From: Mary Ann Neumann <maryann.neumann@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 10:26 PM
To: CouncilAll
Cc: Linda Lopez; Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: park update
Attachments: signaturesandcomments.pdf

Dear Council Members - In order to reach busy working parents, who frankly often do not have time to write a letter or come to meetings as it requires hiring a babysitter, we made an online petition. In 2 days time, we have collected signatures from 74 households supporting a nature-based park. That is nearly 10% of households in just 2 days; I am confident the support will continue to swell. We have also received many comments of support on both Facebook and the petition directly. I have copied them below for your reference. I will bring the finally tally and list of comments to the meeting on December 8th.

Many thanks in advance for your time and consideration,

Mary Ann Neumann



Build a playground on Ross Common

I just signed a petition at IPetitions.com. Please join me in supporting this important cause!

IPETITIONS.COM

Like Comment Share

Adriana Cox, Stephanie Fazell Roeder and 19 others

Seen by 159

1 share



Mary Ann Neumann If you are in support, please be sure to click on the above the link to the petition, sign it and pass it on! Many many thanks!!!

Like · Reply · 1 · November 29 at 8:32am



Kim Hodges Done!

Unlike · Reply · 2 · November 29 at 8:40am



Elizabeth LaRocque Signed!

Unlike · Reply · 2 · November 29 at 9:31am



Melanie Hoelscher Love this idea!

Unlike · Reply · 2 · November 29 at 1:03pm



Casey Georgeson Fantastic idea! Signed.

Unlike · Reply · 2 · November 29 at 5:10pm



James Gray The town desperately needs to work on the community center and giving residents more reasons to walk into town. This is a very rare opportunity to improve on that. Way to go on coming up with these plans.

Unlike · Reply · 3 · November 29 at 10:05pm

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Elizabeth Brekhue

November 29 at 8:52pm

I just want to add to the good discussion about the idea for a nature park on the Commons. It is an interesting idea - I supported the idea of exploring it for use as a park but I do have concerns - and there are some issues folks should consider. The land has historically been used for lower income or affordable housing. In years past Town employees had priority and it housed safety employees i.e. Police and Fire. It burnt down and if we rebuild it as a house all costs are covered. If we don't rebuild, we get less money from insurance. We could use what we do get to build a park but Staff estimate the park contemplated to cost upwards of \$200k. If we build a world class park, I think parents from all over Marin and beyond will come and that brings certain issues and problems. I have yet to see a park like this without a bathroom and if we add a bathroom that really adds to the cost, maintenance and surroundings. The Commons is off limits for visitors during school hours to keep Ross School kids safe so is it off limits as well during those hours, do Ross School kids get to use it, who pays to maintain it - does the school contribute etc.? How do we enforce Redwood Avenue parking restrictions and is increased traffic and parking in Ross desirable? Should the Town spend this kind of money on this when the police and fire station and Town Hall all need to be rebuilt and we have insufficient funds to rebuild? If a toddler playground is desired should or could the Town partner with Pixie to preserve and enhance it for residents at a lower cost? I honestly don't know the answer but I have received more negative input from residents than positives to date and want folks to understand the issue is complicated. I am keeping an open mind for the hearing but these are important questions we need answered. I encourage you to read the staff report that will be online on 12/2 and send all TC members an email through the Town link. I want to thank Mary Ann for posting about this and encouraging the conversation as we benefit from more input on the issue.

Like

Comment

Rebecca Klempner Nessel and 7 others

Seen by 133

COMMENTS

Filter

Andrea Ahern United States, San Rafael

Dec 02, 2016

I believe that every Town should have a public playground .

Melinda Nowak United States, Ross

Dec 02, 2016

This would be a fantastic addition to Ross!

Emily Abbott United States, San Rafael

Dec 01, 2016

YES!! Lets do this we need something like this in Ross.

Susan Bowman United States, Walnut Creek

Dec 01, 2016

I no longer live in Ross but I support the park!
Susan Bowman

Libby Tracy United States, San Rafael

Dec 01, 2016

What a wonderful idea!

Katelin Mezzetta United States, Belvedere Tiburon

Dec 01, 2016

I am very in favor and think this would enhance community spirit!

Tucky Pogue United States, Mill Valley

Nov 30, 2016

I think it's a wonderful idea and much needed. It would be an appropriate place for younger children to play on weekends and during school hours and a good use of that property.

Online petition signatures and comments, page 1 of 3

Betsy and Martin Rosen United States, Ross Nov 30, 2016
Sounds like a good ideal

Casey Georgeson United States, Mill Valley Nov 30, 2016
Amazing idea! Thank you so much for spearheading this.

Wendy Huck United States, Fairfax Nov 29, 2016
I think this is a brilliant plan that will benefit the local community.

Rebecca Nessel United States, San Francisco Nov 29, 2016
I 100% agree we need more playgrounds and this area is perfect! I especially love the idea of using it for the school kids. I love the idea of a nature based playground. The current playground is rather meek for the entire 1st-8th grade. This would add so much to our town.

Niki Webster United States Nov 29, 2016
Super proposal

Michell kawaja United States, San Rafael Nov 29, 2016
I'm in full support

Stephanie Lamarre United States, Mill Valley Nov 29, 2016
Great idea!

Kim Hodges United States, Ross Nov 29, 2016
This would be great!

SIGNATURES

Andrea Ahern United States	Melinda Nowak United States	Meredith Ioring United States	Matthew Abbott United States	Sarah Atwood United States	Emily Abbott United States	
Diana Werner United States	Josefa Buckingham United States	Susan Bowman United States	Sarah Petrilla United States	Dan Kalafatas United States	Randi Kelly United States	
Jennifer Siebel United States	Newsom United States	Michael Cox United States	Shirley Collette United States	Libby Tracy United States	Mouna Ghilotti United States	Sarah Nutting United States
Katelin Mezzetta United States	Stephanie Fountaine United States	Daniel Gluck United States	Mika Street United States	erin mozaffarian United States	Adriana Cox United States	
Laura Rees United States	Paige Meuse United States	Tucky Pogue United States	Allison Abta United States	James Gray United States	Monica Nelson United States	Matt Nemer United States
Sophie Gray United States	Courtney de Balmann United States	Sarah Kruttschnitt United States	Dana Lee United States	Betsy and Martin Rosen United States		
Casey Georgeson United States	Stephanie Roeder United States	Meghan Forman United States	Megan Calhoun United States	Sarah Swain United States	Melanie Deltch United States	
Wendy Huck United States	Carrie Weinstein United States	Rebecca Nessel United States	Meghan Adelman United States	Elizabeth Abrahamson United States		
Lisa United States	Paul Macomber United States	Cris Roskelley United States	Kristin Klein United States	Danielle Walker United States	Elise Lamarre United States	
Trent Nutting United States	Tim Wood United States	Jennifer Malcoun United States	Liz Nogueiro United States	Mary Ann Neumann United States	Niki Webster United States	
Lisa Zampa United States	Julie McGuire United States	Elizabeth Bretnier United States	Michell Kawaja United States	Rachel Greenspon United States	Shannon Matthiesen United States	
Stephanie Smith United States	Stephanie Lamarre United States	Kim Hodges United States				

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 10:00 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Letter in support of park
Attachments: Dear Council Members v.3.pdf

Packet letter

From: Sophie Gray [mailto:sophieemmagray@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 9:57 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>; CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Letter in support of park

Dear Town Council and Town Manager,

Please find my letter in support of the park attached.

Sincerely,

Sophie Gray

Dear Council Members,

Every town in Marin has decided to offer a public park for their young children, except for our town of Ross. Now we get to show our true colors. Do we choose to provide a public park, like every other town, for our 150-200 children aged between 0-5 years old, or do we choose to build an 800 sq ft home, hoping it will be rented by 1 town employee?

I've always felt grateful to call Ross my hometown - as a 10 year old and now as an adult. Our little town is simply wonderful and the golden thread of continuity that ties us all together is our great community and its members.

I've learned quickly since moving back to Ross that some of the amazing experiences we treasure in our town should not be taken for granted - for example, we almost lost Eddies recently - this would have devastated the feel of our town. Thank goodness for two Ross residents that stood up and fought for what they loved by buying Eddies and keeping the store going and even making it better. Similarly, I am standing up to fight for this park because I believe it will make Ross a better place to live and more enjoyable for people of all ages. It is the actions of Ross residents caring for their community that keeps our town vibrant and connected.

My reasons for championing the park instead of the alternative plan to rebuild workforce housing (note: workforce housing is NOT low-incoming housing) are supported by the following:

- The parcel in question is currently zoned for parkland. The parcel did in fact have a home on it in the past, but it burnt down. At the time it burnt down it was being rented by a private family - not a town worker or employee. Given the fact that history repeats itself, how do we know that this is not going to happen again? And should this parcel as public land serve the many parents and children that would frequent it daily for generations to come, or should it be privatized to serve 1 to 3 people as housing?
- Let's use this land in a way that would positively impact as many of our own Ross residents as possible by creating a place to gather, meet and run into neighbors and create relationships. Rather than focusing on the few that might come into town for the park - I am advocating for our community member who have to LEAVE our town to go to a park with their young children. It seems obvious that the most suitable use of this public land *is* to serve the community on a scale that would positively benefit as many town residents as possible - making a park the better choice - since the workforce housing or rental property would serve only a select few.
- This park is a fraction of the size of Hal Brown or Memorial Park making it unlikely to broadly attract people. I am confident that this 7,500 sq ft park is going to mainly attract local parents who will walk there with their kids in

strollers. From my experience most parents go to their local community parks.

- Bathrooms certainly would be desirable, and I am certain that the droves of people who come to the common on the weekends for Ross Rec programs and soccer matches etc. would also like a bathroom facility. But, bathrooms do not exist and people adapt and use the port-a-potty. I am guessing that the few families that are attracted to the park at any given time will also have to be content to use the port-a-potty.
- Every town in Marin made it a priority to have a public park for young children to play in during the day except for the town of Ross – this fact speaks volumes to the priorities of each community. And as it turns out **the Common is public and open during school hours. In fact, Ross Rec runs programs on the Common during school hours. So, the nature-based park would be accessible during school hours.**
- A large percentage of homes bought in Ross are purchased by families with young kids – these mothers count and should not be written off or just assume that they are comfortable with paying Pixie's no volunteer hours price of \$425 per year.
- Ross Rec is extremely supportive of this park as it would provide an inspiring play area for The Ross Preschool. It seems possible that funds from Ross Rec could help cover the costs of the park along with the \$200K of insurance money (note: the estimate to build the park is \$250K) and some private fundraising could help close the gaps. In short, it seems very possible that the park construction and maintenance costs could be covered.
- With the passing of Proposition K I believe our town police will continue to do a great job keeping this town and park safe. Furthermore, I believe that having more moms in and around town will bring safety standards up given that most moms act as watchdogs for their community and are the first to speak up if there is suspicious activity.
- When I look around the downtown, I see a lot of vacant storefronts. We need to invite people to enjoy what our town has and thereby revitalize Ross and bring in new revenue into town shops.

On a personal note - shortly after moving back to Ross with my husband we had our second baby girl and naturally my favorite activity was to walk down into our beautiful town. One day in Spring, 2016 I decided to set up a picnic on the Commons with my baby and two year old, but within about 10 minutes a lady came up to me told me that I could not be on the commons during school hours but as an alternative I could go over to the dog park. Well I very nicely declined taking my newborn baby and toddler to a dog park and packed up and went home – that was a

sad day. It was sad not only because I was told to leave Ross Common with my young children, but because I realized that there was nowhere in town for me to go and just enjoy the abundant beauty of our town and community. As a result of this most of my days start by getting into the car with my young children and going to another town – this breaks my heart because I don't want to leave Ross. Yes of course I could go to Pixie Park, but I believe there is something inherently wrong with having to pay to go to the park with my daughters. Aside from my own desire to bring my children to a local park within my own town I believe this park will help to revitalize our downtown by bringing new revenue to the shops. The park will also serve as a gathering place for our community members – mothers, grandparents and children alike will have the opportunity to run into one another which we all know is one of the best feelings of a small town.

Sincerely,

Sophie Gray (previously Sophie Boddington)
Ross School class of 1998

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 10:00 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Ross Town Park - Letter to the Council

Packet letter

From: Mindy Nowak [mailto:melindanowak@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 9:34 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>; Dana Lee <dcmlee@gmail.com>
Subject: Ross Town Park - Letter to the Council

Dear Council Members,

As co-presidents of the Ross Preschool PTA we were excited to hear about a nature-based park being a consideration for the space behind Ross Commons. The Ross Preschool (formerly St. Johns) has a unique opportunity to be a premier Marin preschool destination. Since the preschool is run under the Ross Rec umbrella, it is in fact “the Town’s” preschool. Given its close proximity to Ross School and ties with Ross School’s faculty, we are invited to participate in campus activities and get useful insight on how to best prepare our young learners for the transition to Kindergarten.

In 2015, the preschool revamped the outdoor play area to better reflect the school's collaborative play, nature-oriented philosophy. The play area uses natural elements such as logs for hopping, teepees for gathering, wooden tables for discovering, tree slices for building, and pebble boxes for digging. However, one thing we hear consistently from prospective and current parents is their concern about the the lack of outdoor *space* available at the church for the preschoolers to enjoy. A nature-based park within walking distance to the preschool would not only be aligned with the school’s philosophy and curriculum, but would truly help us reach our aspirations of providing an enriching nature-based environment for the children to learn through play.

As parents who live in the town of Ross and have chosen to send our children to a town-run, community preschool, we sincerely hope you consider this nature-based park as a way to support and enhance the town’s preschool.

Warmly,
Mindy Nowak and Dana Lee, Ross Preschool PTA Co-Presidents

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 9:59 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble
Subject: FW: Work force /residential housing, # 6 Redwood

Packet letter

From: Mimi Lapeyre [mailto:mimilapeyre@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 9:02 PM
To: khoertkorn@gmail.com; eliz.robins@gmail.com; elizabethb@brekhus.com; beach.kuhl@sedgwicklaw.com; rrussell@sflaw.com
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Work force /residential housing, # 6 Redwood

Dear Mayor Hoertkorn, Beach Kuhl, Elizabeth Robbins, Elizabeth Brekhus and our Town Manager Mr. Joe Chinn,

I strongly support the restoration of # 6 Redwood.

It is in the Community's best interest to retain workforce housing.

We have all worked hard to maintain our town, most recently, to support measure K.

Hooray!

Please don't delay the renovation of this housing element, as the funds are in place!

We should get the rental stream flowing again, this helps all of us.

We must address the housing needs of our dedicated and well vetted staff. We have lost months and months of income to the town.

The proposed conceptual plans for a nature playground, are out of scale and they have no basis in reality .

I have lived in Ross next to this affordable housing unit for 18 years. I have always enjoyed having neighbors on this parcel.

(*Attendance to a small failing portion of this green wall, is separate and should be addressed separately so that we can move forward.)

Sincerely,

Mimi Lapeyre Orr

Mimi Lapeyre Orr
PO Box 27
Ross, California
94957
415-721-0432
415-602-0432

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 9:58 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble
Subject: FW: #6 Redwood Avenue

Packet letter

From: Jennifer Maxwell [mailto:runningrose@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 7:41 PM
To: 'Kathleen Hoertkorn' <khoertkorn@gmail.com>; 'P. Rupert Russell' <rrussell@sflaw.com>; elizabethb@brekhus.com; 'Elizabeth Robbins' <eliz.robbsins@gmail.com>; beach.kuhl@sedgwicklaw.com
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: #6 Redwood Avenue

Dear Town Council and Town Manager,

I would like to give you my opinion as to what to do with the property at #6 Redwood Avenue.

My recommendation is to renovate the house with the money that was provided by insurance after the fire at this residence. This residence has been part of the town general plan that stipulates the ethical need, and I believe the legal requirement, to provide much needed housing for town employees. I believe it is an ethical responsibility to continue the original plan for this property and make the house livable.

My concern in converting this property into a playground for children is due to the fact that Ross already has two playgrounds (three including Pixie Park). Also, the impact for the neighbors living on Redwood would include more cars driving, more cars parking and generally more noise by children and parents at all hours. This isn't fair to the town residents who live on Redwood Avenue.

Additionally, I believe a park at the location at #6 Redwood is a potentially dangerous area for children since it is adjacent to a baseball field. Fly balls have been known to land in unintended areas.

Lastly, there may be some potential for environmental impact to the existing heritage redwood trees by a lot of demolition to the existed structure and construction of a new environment there for a playground.

I understand some parents may think it might be a useless eyesore in it's current state, but once it is fixed up it will add a lot to the community, especially by setting an example of community effort to provide for people in need and strengthen our community bonds.

I hope you consider my recommendation.

Thank you,
Jennifer Maxwell

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 7:26 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: 6 Redwood

Fyi, letter for packet

From: leesmiles2@aol.com [mailto:leesmiles2@aol.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 11:12 AM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: 6 Redwood

Dear Mr. Chinn:

This is Lisa & Mike Gorham and we live at 18 Redwood Drive. We understand the Town Council will be addressing the property at 6 Redwood in an upcoming meeting. I support the renovation of the property so that it may be made available for lower income housing in Ross. We do not have much in the way of affordable housing in Ross, and so varying from the small precedent that is already set seems counter to the letter and spirit of the use the property has been designated for. It would be great to be able to rent it to a employee of the Town like it used too. It would be nice to offer it to Police, Teachers, merchants etc.

I do strongly support the repair of the damaged/ derelict building at 6 Redwood Drive. It needs to be fixed immediately. It has been sitting for too long.

cheers,
Lisa Gorham
President
Natural Sense [Organic Mattress](#)

Like my [facebook](#) page - thank you!

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 7:24 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: 6 Redwood Dr.

Fyi, letter for packet

-----Original Message-----

From: Ann Cognato [mailto:ann.cognato@icloud.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 11:53 AM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: 6 Redwood Dr.

Dear Mr. Chin,

I am Ann Cognato who has happily lived in Ross for the last 62 years at 12 Redwood Dr. I've seen many changes in Ross in that length of time.

One change I would not like to see is the demolition of 6 Redwood Dr.

I consider this house as a buffer to cushion and neutralize the noise from the field during school hours and the many sports games on weekends.

I am also in total agreement with my neighbors who would support the repair of this building to be used as affordable housing as it has been in the past.

Cordially,
Ann Cognato

Sent from my iPad

Linda Lopez

To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: RE: 6 Redwood Drive

From: Jennifer Leathers [<mailto:jenniferleathers2@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 10:36 AM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: 6 Redwood Drive

Dear Mr. Chinn,

My name is Jennifer Leathers and I live at 4 Norwood Ave. in Ross. Our family has lived her for 18 years and love our town.

I would like to put in my support for the renovation of the house at 6 Redwood to retain its current use. Given the lack of work force housing and the price of Marin's median house (1.1 Million according to today's IJ!), I think restoring the property for that purpose is in the Town's best interest.

Please feel free to forward my email to the Town Council.

Regards,
Jennifer Leathers

Joe Chinn - Town Manager

From: Margaret Francis <margaretfrancis@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 9:44 AM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Cc: Dick Bobo; Ann Cognato; leesmiles2; Mhy; leathers4123@comcast.net; Barbara Call; Sue Johnson; Ann Sorgen; Barbara Gately
Subject: Letter Re Plans for 6 Redwood Drive

Dear Mr. Chinn:

My name is Margaret Francis and I live at 20 Redwood Drive, and have for the last 12 years. I have heard from neighbors that the Town Council will be addressing the property at 6 Redwood in an upcoming meeting. I support the renovation of the property so that it may be made available for lower income housing in Ross. We do not have much in the way of affordable housing in Ross, and so varying from the small precedent that is already set seems counter to the letter and spirit of the use the property has been designated for.

I do strongly support the repair of the damaged/ derelict building at 6 Redwood Drive. It has been sitting too long since the fire already. Please feel free to forward my comments to the Town Council or any other concerned parties.

Sincerely,

Margaret Francis

--
margaret francis
mobile 415 260 8476
margaretfrancis@gmail.com

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 7:18 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: #6 Redwood

Letter for packet

-----Original Message-----

From: Barbara Call [mailto:barbcall@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 1:48 PM
To: Kathleen Hoertkorn <khoertkorn@gmail.com>; Elizabeth Robbins <eliz.robbs@gmail.com>; Elizabeth Brekhus <elizabethb@brekhus.com>; beach.kuhl@sedgwicklaw.com; rrussell@sflaw.com
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: #6 Redwood

Dear Mayor and Council and Manager Joe,

I believe very strongly that it is in the Community's best interest to retain its workforce housing. Ross needs workforce housing; other towns want workforce housing and we have workforce housing. It would be a travesty to tear it down in order to put up a park for 3 year olds.

I have lived in Ross next to this workforce housing for almost 17 years. Before I moved here, the house was occupied by a police chief. When I moved here, a policewoman, Julie, lived there.

The next occupant was a fireman.
After the flood, a Town building inspector lived there.

The next tenants were a couple with two children who attended Ross School.

I realize there is a rumor that no Town employee wants to live there, but this is untrue. I have been approached recently by two police officers who have expressed interest...in the house and living there.

What an asset it would be to have a public safety official living in Ross particularly in times of a disaster!

The house is also a financial asset for the Community. It makes money for the Town.

The greenery surrounding the house is very beautiful. It needs some maintenance, but that could easily happen at low cost.

So I strongly support restoring and continuing to rent the house at #6 Redwood! It makes no sense to tear it down.

The next question is whether the Town even needs a park separate from what we already have.

It seems as if there are a very limited number of ROSS children...2-3 year olds...who would be using it while the older kids are in school. And they would be using it for a very limited period of time. It is not in the best interest of the Community to tear down the workforce housing in order to accommodate a very narrow interest group.

I can envision the I J Headlines:

ROSS TEARS DOWN ITS WORKFORCE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN ORDER TO PUT UP A PARK FOR 3 YEAR OLDS!

#6 Redwood is not a good location for a park anyway. There is very limited parking. There is also a concern it might become a hangout for teenagers and vagrants. If the Town feels it needs a tot park, there are other locations that are more suitable.

Frederick Allen Park would be a wonderful location. There is ample parking and a public restroom! The area down towards the tennis courts is large and beautiful. There is even a drinking fountain. The Ross cafe is just across the street for morning coffee, etc.

There is also a lovely green area next to the Post Office. And, of course, there is Pixie Park which is incredible with plenty of parking, restrooms, and coffee could be brought with you.

So, if Ross feels they really need an additional park, there are other options. Please don't tear down our workforce housing! It would be such a travesty.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Barbara Call

8 Redwood Drive

Sent from my iPhone

Joe Chinn - Town Manager

From: Barbara Call <barbcall@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 4:20 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Cc: Chris Skelton
Subject: Report on Redwood Trees
Attachments: Barbara Call Report FNL.PDF; ATT00001.txt

Please read the arborist's comments on how much damage can be done to the Redwoods in just attempting to remove the existing fences and trees and vines and Ivy that surround #6 Redwood. I shudder to imagine what will happen if you use the heavy equipment necessary to tear down the house . How will 3 dead Redwood Trees benefit the Community?

Cordially,
Barbara

Barbara Call
8 Redwood Dr. Ross, 94904



URBAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATES, INC.

8 Willow Street San Rafael, CA 94901
(415) 454-4212 info@urbanforestryassociates.com

ARBORIST REPORT

for

6 Redwood Drive Ross, CA 94904

PURPOSE

Urban Forestry Associates (UFA) was asked/hired by Barbara Call on the 9th of August, 2014, to assess three redwood trees at 6 Redwood Drive, Ross CA 94904, and the potential impacts to the trees from the removal and/ or replacement of a chain link fence and Ivy. The subject trees are heritage size per Town of Ross code, and provide significant aesthetics to the client, as well as patrons of the community owned, Ross Commons Park. In addition to tree preservation, the client has concerns about the removal of the fence as it and the Ivy provide significant sound buffering and privacy for the client, who lives at 8 Redwood Drive. This report provides recommendations to achieve cities goals of maintenance to the fence, while minimizing damage to tree roots.

SCOPE OF WORK AND LIMITATIONS

Urban Forestry Associates has no personal or monetary interest in the outcome of this investigation. All observations regarding trees in this report were made by UFA, independently, based on our education and experience. All determinations of health condition, structural condition, or hazard potential of a tree or trees at issue are based on our best professional judgment.

OBSERVATIONS

Tree 1

Species	coast redwood (<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>)
Size	49.7" DBH* (Heritage size per city code)
Location	In the side yard of 6 Redwood Drive, immediately adjacent to the house. The base of the tree is 11' 6" from the wooden fence, which is 5 ft. from the steel fence. Distance from the base of the tree to the chain link fence is approximately 17').
Condition	This tree is in good health and structural condition. The structural root zone extends approximately 20.7 feet. The abundance of absorbing roots are in the Ross Commons area.

Tree 2

Species	coast redwood (<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>)
Size	67.1" DBH* (Heritage size per city Code)
Location	In the side yard of 6 Redwood Drive. The base of the tree to the wooden fence inside the yard is 10' 1". Distance from the base of the tree to chain link fence (approx. 15').
Condition	This tree is in good health and structural condition. The structural root zone extends approximately 28 feet. The abundance of absorbing roots are in the Ross Commons area.

Tree 3

Species	coast redwood (<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>)
Size	62.1" DBH* (Heritage size per city code)
Location	In the back yard of 6 Redwood Drive. The base of the tree to the wooden fence inside the yard is 21' 10".

Condition Distance from the base of the tree to the chain link (approx. 26').
This tree is in good health and structural condition. The structural root zone extends approximately 26 feet. The abundance of absorbing roots are in the Ross Commons area.

OBSERVATIONS CONT.

There are two fences that separate 6 Redwood Drive from the Ross Commons Park. There is a chain link fence, with thick, mature Algerian Ivy, and other shrubs growing through and above the fence. The ivy is very well established and has taken on tree like characteristics. This chain link fence is approximately five feet from the shorter wooden fence inside the yard at 6 Redwood. Measurements were taken to document the height of the vegetation along the fence, which range from 10-22 feet tall.

CONCLUSIONS

- The redwood trees are, of course, adapted to the presence of the existing home, fencing and boundary vegetation and visa versa.
- The redwoods prefer deep acidic, loamy soils with a thick mulch layer. On this site they must rely on the frequent, shallow Commons lawn irrigation for water and consequently will have the majority of their roots extending under the fence and out into the lawn. Coast redwood is a very shallow-rooted species but their roots will be particularly shallow due to the frequent, shallow irrigation of the lawn.
- More likely than not the structural root zones of the subject Trees 1 and 2 extend across the fence boundary into the Ross Commons and the absorbing roots of all three redwoods are most abundant in the Ross Commons lawn.
- Fence demolition and construction along this boundary (note: there are two parallel fences) could impact the roots of the three redwoods.
- Redwood root protection and preservation and Town Arborist oversight should be required for any demolition or construction work (heavy equipment traffic, scraping, vegetation clearing, excavation) within the root zones of these trees.
- Screening for the 8 Redwood Drive home requires a minimum of 20 feet along the Ross Commons perimeter of the #6 Redwood Drive property.



Note: Replacement planting could be done in a manner that minimizes root impacts to the redwoods. The proposed planting sites could be hydraulically probed for significant roots by the Town Arborist. If significant size roots were found the hole could be moved slightly to avoid significant roots. The final planting locations could be moistened to the required depth and pneumatically excavated, preserving even fine roots. The roots could be combed aside and planting completed.

However, replacement planting would not quickly restore the prior screening. A minimum of 20 feet of screening is needed to adequately screen light and sound from the baseball field and outdoor theater to the 8 Redwood Drive property.

Note: Removal and eradicating the vines would be next to impossible without herbiciding the canopy before cutting, herbiciding the stumps or root raking the roots and rhizomes. All three of these methods could have significant impacts on the redwoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our client's concerns are 1) Preservation of the three redwood trees) for their roles in creating beauty, screening, noise attenuation, and habitat for the local area, 2) Preservation of the 6 Redwood Drive 20 foot tall property line / boundary vegetation for the green screening and sound attenuation it provides. Our recommendations to the Town are designed to minimize impacts to the redwoods and the local homes, reduce costs to the town and continue or improve screening of the Town Commons, the school and the schoolyard, (particularly the playground and the outdoor theater.

1. The existing fence that has been bent over into the 6 Redwood Drive front and side yards could be straightened. The anchoring concrete has not been disturbed by the bending of the support posts. This would have the least impact on the redwood roots. Note: The second fence paralleling the wire fence is not necessary as long as there is adequate screening.
2. The bent fence poles could be cut off at ground level and new poles welded to the existing bases. The dead ivy vines could be cut away from the fencing and the fence could then be pulled up and attached to the new poles.
3. I recommend against using root raking or herbicide application to eradicate the ivy.
4. I recommend against broad excavation for additional or replacement screen planting as this would excessively impact the redwood roots.
5. The Town Arborist should install a heavy equipment exclusion zone where heavy equipment cannot enter without arborist supervised soil armoring.



Ray Moritz, Urban Forester SAF Cert #241
ISA Certified Tree Risk Assessor



Zachary Vought, Urban Forester
ISA Certified Arborist

APPENDIX

Structural Roots, Absorbing Roots, and Root Development

Structural roots of the large old trees are the major lateral roots close to the tree base, within the “zone of rapid taper”, approximately within a radial area from the root attachment to 3 to 5 times the diameter of the tree at DBH from the root crown depending on tree size and age. Beyond this zone, roots rapidly divide into smaller lateral roots, then thin fibrous roots and, ultimately, into absorbing roots commonly called “feeder” roots.

The function of structural roots is to mechanically support the aerial portion of the tree (both against the force of the tree mass and also the lever force exerted by lean, canopy asymmetry or wind loads), conduct soil nutrients, minerals and water from the smaller roots to the trunk, and store energy reserves. The structural root zone includes the large lateral “buttress” and “sinker” roots close to the tree trunk base (typically within six to nine feet of the base). These are the roots that support the tree’s vertical load and wind lever force loading. The “feeder root” zone is composed of the absorbing roots and fine roots. Ninety percent of these roots are in the upper foot of soil and distal to the structural root zone, even well beyond the canopy drip line. Note that the drip line or canopy perimeter, rule of thumb has no biological significance with respect to root growth extension and health. These are short-lived roots that often dieback during droughts and freezes. They rapidly regenerate during conditions favorable for growth (Urban, 2008).

Most of the absorbing roots are within one foot of the soil surface and grow upward from the woody roots. The term “feeder root” is a misnomer, but it is commonly used to describe non-woody absorbing roots (Shigo, 1993, Harris, Clark and Matheny, 1999). They are considered to be ephemeral in that they are to the most extent very short-lived (days or weeks). Absorbing roots exude carbohydrates into the surrounding soil that supports a rich environment of symbiotic bacteria and fungi (mycorrhizae) that help the tree absorb soil nutrients, minerals and water.

Joe Chinn - Town Manager

From: Barbara Call <barbcall@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 7:42 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Cc: Chris Skelton
Subject: Pixie Park

Hi Again,

The Pixie Park is perfect for young children and mothers who want to have a gab fest while their kids play. It is safe and convenient. There is plenty of parking. No neighborhoods are disturbed. No trees need to be damaged. The current house at #6 Redwood can be restored and rented. It is a winning situation.

Please read about the park.

Thanks,

Barbara

Sent from my iPhone

Joe Chinn - Town Manager

From: Barbara Call <barbcall@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 7:19 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Cc: Chris Skelton
Subject: PIXIE PERFECT / Cooperative park at Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross has been a gathering spot for generations of Marin County families - SFGate

<http://m.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/PIXIE-PERFECT-Cooperative-park-at-Marin-Art-and-2567767.php>

Dawn Yun, Special to The Chronicle | on September 23, 2005



Image 1 of 5

Christie Carlson pushes daughter, Regan, 3, on the swing at Pixie Park. Chronicle photo by Jakub Mosur

For Marin mothers who want to meet and socialize with other mothers, as well as find a safe place for their youngsters 6 and under to play, Pixie Park can approach nirvana.

For more than 50 years youngsters, toddlers, babies and their parents have been coming to Pixie Park, one of the only gated, private, cooperative parks in the country, according to Melissa Felder, the park's president.

Located in the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross, nonprofit Pixie has some 450 members from every city and town in Marin. Although the park is open to anyone who wishes to join, new members are accepted twice a year, in June and September.

Annual membership dues are \$65, plus a one-time \$25 key deposit; grandparent memberships are \$75, plus the key deposit. The park is open dawn to dusk seven days a week, year-round, and is busiest May through October.

On a sunny afternoon, Molly Garhart, 36, of San Anselmo, was at the park pushing her daughter, Avery, 2, on the swings, while her 4-month-old son, Nate, was at home with his father.

"I'm a new member but the main reason I love the park is the age restriction," she said. "The structures are made for Avery's age and size. They're not dangerous for toddlers. I don't have to worry about older kids knocking her over. I love that it's completely fenced in. It feels very safe. There are little picnic tables where she can sit and eat her lunch. And every time I come I meet other mothers."

Judy Violet, 62, of Petaluma was at the park with her 4-year-old granddaughter, Mya, and 8-month-old grandson, J.J., who live in Mill Valley.

"I've been a member for two years," she said. "There's lots of nooks and crannies for the kids to play in. It's well maintained. It has more of a community feel to it. It's like we own it."

Mothers who once brought their children to the park are now bringing their grandchildren. In the '70s, Johanna Boero, 59, of San Anselmo came with her daughters, Sophie and Amy.

"Part of joining was social, it was a way to meet other young mothers," Boero said. "It was a nice way to connect with other moms and catch up on mom talk. I was a member for about six years. I liked having birthday parties there and going to special events and fundraisers there with the kids."

Today, she visits the park with her grandchildren. "As a grandparent, who would want to miss that continuity?"

Her daughter, Sophie Kurnik, 32, of Kentfield, mother of Celeste, 5, and Gavin, 3, is Pixie's recent past president. She remembers going to the park and feeling like she "owned it."

"I was able to do everything there," Kurnik said. "I loved getting my bunny ears at the Spring Fair and attending the Halloween Parade. I love the history of the park. It's great to know that I did that and my daughter does the same activities. And I enjoy having my kids' parties there. Things have become so technical but there's an old-fashioned element here."

[Read Full Article](#)

Linda Lopez

To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: RE: Workforce housing

From: Alison Q [<mailto:aaquoyeser@aol.com>]

Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 2:45 PM

To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>; Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>

Subject: Workforce housing

Dear Mr. Chinn and Ross Town Council,

I am a fourth grade teacher at Ross School, where I have taught for the last 28 years.

I am writing in support of your keeping 6 Redwood as workforce housing for the Town of Ross rather than making it into a park for young children. In an area as expensive as Ross, it is particularly necessary to have some rental properties that are affordable for teachers and town employees. I know that many young Ross teachers would appreciate being able to live so close to school.

Here are three other arguments in favor of repairing and continuing to rent 6 Redwood:

1. There is insurance money to pay the full cost of repairing the house.
2. The town makes a little money on the rent, even when the rent is at below market rates, so it is financially feasible to maintain it.
3. For play areas, the town already has Pixie Park and the Ross School kindergarten playground and back playground, which are open after school and on weekends.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Alison Quoyeser

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 6:35 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Let's keep workforce Housing at 6 Redwood

Fyi, for packet

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeff Koblick [mailto:Jeffkoblick@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 5:43 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>; Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Let's keep workforce Housing at 6 Redwood

Dear Town council,

I personally am in favor of keeping 6 Redwood as work force housing. There is almost no supply of work force housing in the area and such an investment will only gain in value over the years.

Best regards,

Jeff Koblick

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Thursday, December 1, 2016 7:15 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble
Subject: FW: 6 Redwood Drive

Fyi , for packet

From: dickbobo@comcast.net [mailto:dickbobo@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 01, 2016 1:58 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>; khoertkorn@gmail.com; eliz.robins@gmail.com; elizabethb@brekhus.com; beach.kuhl@sedgwicklaw.com; rrussell@sflaw.com; kreid@bortonpetrini.com
Subject: 6 Redwood Drive

We live at 16 Redwood Drive. Among the options for the 6 Redwood property, we would really like to see it repaired & kept as a low income housing.

There are far too many people needing low cost housing in Marin for the Town in good conscience to tear it down. More & more workers who can't afford regular rents in Marin, have to commute, then eventually stop coming to Marin.

I've not heard much about it recently, but my recollection is that every town is required to have X low cost properties. I remember the Town running out of properties, & ended up designating a part of Marin Art & Garden for a low cost housing site.

The current house was insured, so I would guess that would cover most, if not all of the repair work. Tearing it down & converting the property for some other use would mean the Town incurring additional costs likely more that retaining it as a rental property.

Dick Bobo & Ann Sorgen

Linda Lopez

To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: RE: Nature based park in Ross

From: Mary Ann Neumann (via Google Docs) [<mailto:maryann.neumann@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 6:23 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Nature based park in Ross

Mary Ann Neumann has attached the following document:



Nature based park in Ross



Hi Joe - Can you please include a copy of this letter in the council packet? Thank you!

Google Docs: Create and edit documents online.

Google Inc. 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA

You have received this email because someone shared a document with you from Google Docs.

Google™



Petition text ([petition here](#))

In 2015, a town-owned house that sits on the Common burned down (the house was initially used as subsidized employee housing, then as a rental unit when no employees wanted to live there). The Town Council is reviewing a proposal on December 8th to put a nature-based park at this location. We think a nature-based park would prove a commendable and valuable addition to our town for the following reasons:

1. First and foremost, the land in question is designated as part of Ross Common, meaning **this parcel is supposed to be a park for public use** and should be used for the common good.
2. Ross School playgrounds are closed during school hours. Therefore, there is no public playground available for young children during peak play hours.

3. Even when the Ross School playgrounds are open, they are not suitable or safe for younger children (under 5 years of age).
4. A nature-based playground is a radically different concept than the conventional school playgrounds or Pixie Park. Natural playgrounds are amazingly beneficial on numerous levels: they encourage creativity, decrease toxic exposure, are calming, and best of all, the research shows that in such environments "children more than doubled the time they spent playing." [Here is a link to the article](#). Another study by the University of Tennessee (see attachment) supports these findings about nature based playgrounds: "Natural Play helps [children] score higher on tests for concentration and self-discipline, helps them experience more diverse play, and helps them exhibit less aggressive behavior, and become healthier. And — they're perfect outdoor classrooms! "
5. **Ross is only town in Marin without a public playground.** Adding a nature-based park should increase our town's appeal and ability to attract families with young children thereby increasing home values.
6. **The proposed park will benefit the Ross Preschool** by providing ample space for enrolled children, thereby making school more desirable and competitive.
7. The park could provide an outdoor classroom setting for the Ross Elementary School.
8. The park will serve as a sorely needed place for younger siblings to play while waiting during school pick-up, soccer matches, etc. It will also be an ideal setting for children to have impromptu play dates after school (especially for Kindergartners).
9. Foot traffic to the park can increase revenue for local shops as parents will likely grab a cup of coffee before heading to the park or will stop for lunch or a snack before heading home.
10. Peak hours for the park will be morning, as most young children are out in the morning and home for an afternoon nap, which should reduce parking issues.

We sincerely hope that you will lend support to what we feel would be an invaluable asset to the children, parents, schools and businesses in our town. To support this cause:

- Please forward this email.
- Sign the petition and leave a comment if desired.
- Email the Council directly at towncouncil@townofross.org and tell them why you support a nature-based park.
- **Best of all, come to the Town Council meet on December 8th at 6pm.** Your attendance and voice will be a powerful endorsement for the park.

I have been struck over and over with the level of community involvement in Ross, it is easy to list the many tangible ways your efforts have improved our community. Here is yet one more opportunity to make a positive impact on our town. Thank you in advance for your time and efforts.

Warmly and with gratitude,

Mary Ann Neumann, Adriana Cox, Sophie Gray & Mindy Nowak

Linda Lopez

To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: RE: Renovation of Town Rental at 6 Redwood

From: William Curtiss [<mailto:curtisslaw@comcast.net>]
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2016 9:01 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>; Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Renovation of Town Rental at 6 Redwood

This Email is in response to the proposal to tear the Town's Redwood rental property down in order to create a playground/park.

As a Council member for eight years, I was a strong proponent of affordable housing for our town employees. We need to preserve the little we have.

If we have a major disaster in town (flood, earthquake, fast moving fire), I am sure the concerned parents who are seeking additional playground space would not want all of Public Safety commuting in from Santa Rosa or Lakeport and showing up hours after their help was desperately needed. Also, is it not in all of our best interests to provide low cost housing to those serving our community? The cost of renting in Marin on the open market has become astronomical. We all benefit in Ross from increased property values, but does our very standard of living become unsustainable if those who teach our children and keep our Town safe cannot live in or near our community?

When my children were young we were members of Pixie Park, which they both loved. I have fond memories of playing with them and celebrating birthdays with them at Pixie Park. It is a great alternative to the Ross School playgrounds when they are not available. I believe we can make due with the playground opportunities we already have, but can little afford to lose the Redwood rental.

Thank you for all your hard work, I know how much sacrifice it involves.

Tony Curtiss (Ross Town Council 1996-2004)

Linda Lopez

To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: RE: 6 Redwood

-----Original Message-----

From: Marian Mancini [mailto:marianmancini5@icloud.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2016 5:59 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: 6 Redwood

Dear Mr. Chinn, This is Marian Mancini, and my family has lived at 45 Shady Lane for 18 years. I understand that the Town Council will be addressing the property at 6 Redwood in an upcoming meeting. We strongly support the renovation of the property so that it may be made available for lower income housing in Ross. We do not agree that an additional park is necessary in light of the two playgrounds at Ross School and another at Pixie Park. We seem to have adequate playground facilities, but a negligible number of affordable housing units.

In addition, an additional play area will only increase the amount of traffic congestion and noise to which the Redwood neighbors will be subjected. They already have baseball and soccer activities every afternoon and evening in their respective seasons and on every weekend. The parking situation continues from Fall soccer through Winter basketball and into Spring baseball. This doesn't include the Summer camps and their attendant parking congestion. We believe these neighbors deserve some modicum of peace and quiet.

In conclusion, we strongly encourage the Town Council to repair the damaged building at 6 Redwood and decline the installation of another playground.

There is one additional point which we would like to address. Many of our neighbors have expressed consternation with the noise level of the new Ross School bell system. The volume is an intrusion into the lives of any residents who are within earshot. Ross School has been here for years without this assault. We encourage the Town Council to prevail upon the Ross School administration to "turn it down."

Please forward my comments to the Town Council.

Sincerely,

Marian Mancini

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:15 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: In Support of Proposed Park

Letter for packet

From: Sasha Macomber [mailto:sasha.macomber@yahoo.com]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 9:32 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: In Support of Proposed Park

Hello,

I am writing to voice my support of the proposed nature park initiative in Ross on the town common. I strongly support this investment in our community. A park that will be used by the entire community is much more compelling than one unit of private housing which is NOT designated as low income housing. I would consider the investment in a park to be relatively small for an inclusive facility that will serve our community for years to come. We need to focus on the big picture here, the long term vitality of our community. Please support this important initiative!

Sincerely,
Sasha Macomber

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:14 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: 6 Redwood Avenue

Letter for packet

From: Christopher Martin [mailto:zapwharf@comcast.net]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 10:18 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: 6 Redwood Avenue

Dear Members of the Town Council,

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposal eliminating affordable workforce housing at 6 Redwood Avenue. Over a span of many years, this location has provided housing for Town of Ross employees, including Public Safety officers and Public Works staff.

Though one hesitates to oppose a location for a children's playground, the need to generate and preserve scarce affordable housing stock must be a priority. As you are aware expensive housing Marin and particularly Ross makes it very difficult for our teachers, public safety officers, and Town staff to live within a 20-mile radius of their workplace. To better respond to disaster situations, such as floods, fires and earthquakes it must be a priority objective, as it is for other Bay Area communities, for the Town to provide as many as possible housing opportunities for Town employees as possible.

Our Town's General Plan, which by law is to be the blueprint for determining land use decisions in our community, clearly states that workforce housing must be encouraged and preserved. The General Plan also discourages the demolition of existing residential units that will reduce the supply of housing in Ross.

It is critical that the basic policies set forth in the General Plan guide development decisions in order to protect and preserve the existing character of Ross.

We feel privileged to live in a town that, though small, has two public playgrounds, one private playground, a nature-learning center at MAGC, and three recreational parks. There are other playground sites in the Town of Ross that can be enhanced and upgraded that will not eliminate our precious affordable housing stock. The "Three Bears House" at Natalie Coffin Greene Park is in need of restoration and might be a lovely site for us to improve in this manner.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very sincerely,

BJ and Chris Martin

88 Shady Lane

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:13 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Nature Park

Letter for packet

-----Original Message-----

From: Casey Georgeson [mailto:caseygeorgeson@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 10:39 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Nature Park

Hi there!

I wanted to very passionately share my support for the Nature Park initiative.

1. We MUST revitalize downtown Ross. The vacancies and closures are so sad for our town. Adding one house does not create the meaningful social impact that a central meeting place would have for hundreds of young families.
2. This park would allow our businesses to thrive and our community to have a place to gather during school hours. Community is EVERYTHING. This park would be a meeting place for parents to share a cup of coffee and reinforce the bonds and friendships that are so special to this unique Town.
3. Ross is not exclusive or snobby. We need to open our doors to residents of other towns. We already fight a reputation for being exclusive, but that is not who we are or the message we want to send to our children. We want to welcome neighboring communities to join ours and enjoy what this park will offer.
4. The park would bring happiness to hundreds of children for years to come. Ross has a challenge with affordable housing but this is NOT the solution. In 30 years will we regret building another park? They're investments in our children's future and there is nothing more valuable than encouraging imagination and play at their young, innocent ages. The outdoors is one of many things that makes Ross special and we don't have a place to take our kids during school hours that's not a pay to play.
5. To the neighbors who oppose on the grounds of noise - So many of us would feel blessed to live next to the happy sounds of childhood! Given the school's proximity, it's not realistic to think a very small park would add significantly to the laughter and play already happening throughout the day.
6. To the neighbors who oppose based on the concern about parking - most of the increase in traffic would occur in the mid morning time. Before naps. Before school pickups. The benefit to the businesses downtown far outweigh the small increase in people parking around the Common where most spots are open during school hours.
7. Pixie Park is a wonderful part of our community. But many of us work full time and don't have the opportunity to volunteer often. It costs nearly \$500 annually to use this park - and every year it increases.

I hope the Council hears the voices of the young families who see this as an investment in the children of Ross. The plans are beautifully done and this Park would bring so much joy for generations to come!!

Thank you for listening!!

All the best,
Casey Georgeson

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:24 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Proposed town park vs. rebuild residence

Letter for packet

-----Original Message-----

From: Mrmgorham [mailto:mrmgorham@aol.com]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 8:57 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Proposed town park vs. rebuild residence

As a resident at 18 redwood dr

I am most affected by this park.

I think it's a better idea than a low income house or town employee house for the same reasons which Sophie outlined.

I would strongly urge that a secret passage be created to connect the park to the school playground. 😊

Regards
Mike Gorham
Cell 415-602-6669

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:26 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble
Subject: FW: #6 Redwood Drive

Letter for packet

From: suejohnsondale@comcast.net [mailto:suejohnsondale@comcast.net]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 8:29 AM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: #6 Redwood Drive

Dear Mr. Chinn:

My name is Sue Johnson and I live at 25 Redwood Drive, . I have heard from neighbors that the Town Council will be addressing the property at 6 Redwood Drive n an upcoming meeting. I support the renovation of the property so that it may be made available for our fire/police department. We also need affordable housing in the Town of Ross and this location would be an excellent choice for that purpose, as well as a wonderful addition for our neighborhood's safety..

I do support the repair of the damaged/ building at 6 Redwood Drive. Please feel free to forward my comments to the Town Council or any other concerned parties.

Sincerely,

Sue Johnson
25 Redwood Drive
415-461-1604

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:26 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager; Heidi Scoble
Subject: FW: Support for new playground from Ross Landing / Eddie's

Letter for the packet

From: Matt Nemer [mailto:matt@rosslanding.com]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 8:28 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>; Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>; Nick Mettler <nick@rosslanding.com>
Subject: Support for new playground from Ross Landing / Eddie's

Ross Town Council,

We are the new owners of Ross Grocery / Eddie's - which has been renamed Ross Landing, and are writing to express our support for the proposal to add a nature-based playground to the Common. The primary reason for our purchase of the store is to enhance downtown Ross, which has great charm, but would benefit from new retail establishments such as those that have recently opened in Larkspur and San Anselmo. We strongly support anything that adds vibrancy to our downtown, and the proposed park would certainly accomplish this. We are sensitive to those that live near the park, and hope that the town can work towards a solution that also finds common ground with those that oppose it.

Thank you for considering this important enhancement to our town.

Matt Nemer
Nick Mettler

--
Thanks for being a customer or partner.

Linda Lopez

From: Mary Ann Neumann <maryann.neumann@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 11:56 AM
To: CouncilAll
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager; Linda Lopez
Subject: support for building a nature-based playground

Dear Council Members,

Elizabeth Brekus raised many concerns on her Facebook post to the Ross Parents Group with regards to building a nature-based park. I was going to respond online, but decided instead send my comments to the entire council.

It seems this argument is at its core about land use. Currently the land is zoned as a park and because the house burned down, we have a chance to revisit how this parcel is used.

As it stands, the house in question is actually slated to be workforce housing not low-income housing. The house is not deed restricted to low income housing, so it doesn't fulfill our town's low income housing that is mandated by the state. Additionally, currently Ross meets our allocation of low income housing through the many 2nd units that residents have built and continue to build.

So the question is really: Do residents want a nature-based playground to be used by countless families for generations or do they want employee housing to be used by 1 to 3 people (it is an 800 sq. ft. house)? How would the town determine which employee gets to live there? In the past, employees did not want to live there and so became a rental property for the town. Who is to say that that does not happen again? Do other towns in Marin provide housing units for their employees? Since the town manages the property, who acts as the "landlord" and deals with the various issues that inevitably come up (like leaking toilets or fires!), and how much does that cost as town employee salaries are expensive? The town should not be in the business of using parklands for rental properties (privatization), it should be providing services to its residents.

With regards to funding, I think there are multiple options. First, when the town absorbed Ross Rec a few years ago, Ross Rec transferred just under \$1M to the town (I sat on the Ross Rec board that year as the President of the Ross Auxiliary). That money was to be earmarked for Ross Rec needs and a playground is a recreational need that is supported by Ross Rec and by the vast majority of young families. So in addition to the \$200K of insurance money, there should be Ross Rec funds available for use. The estimate to build the park is \$250K. Assuming there are demolition costs and costs to prep the land, we are maybe looking at a gap of \$100-\$125K. The costs of rebuilding the police and fire stations are astronomical and are not eligible to come from the Ross Rec funds; the park is a drop in the bucket in comparison. As the Ross Preschool intends to use the park, it will make the preschool more competitive and parents have already said they are willing to pay a higher tuition for increased services. In other words, a tuition increase could offset maintenance, along with town funds. Finally fundraising could prove an option to fill in any financial shortfalls.

I do hope people come to enjoy a park! I personally would like Ross to be more open and have more attractions, as it would then mean residents also have more to enjoy in town as well. While I like to claim that our goals in building this park are lofty enough to achieve the status of "world class", realistically we are talking about a mere 7500 sq ft. parcel. Like most parks it will mostly serve local parents and families that are already there for school or Ross Rec programs. The audience for this park will not drastically increase parking pressures. This

playground will instead to build more connection between children and our earth, parent and child, friends and community. It will be a safe place where we come together to distress from technology, play and explore.

I agree that bathrooms would be desirable. Currently scores of people come to the Common on the weekends due to Ross Rec programing (namely sports), many are non-residents. They all have to contend with the fact that there is no bathroom, just a port-a-potty. I think it is fair to say that the port-a-potty could support the few additional families that are using the nature-based playground.

With regards to access to the park, I confirmed with Joe Chinn that Common is open to public during school hours. In keeping, there are not any signs notifying the pubic that it is illegal to be on the common when school is in session nor does the town's web site include an ordinance prohibiting use of the common during school hours. And in fact, the Common is used for Ross Rec programing during school hours. That said, if this is a legitimate safety issue, the parcel in question is on the edge of the Common and can be accessed from Redwood Street. It will be fenced in, thereby securing it for those within and for those children outside. My daughter is in 2nd grade at the school, you can believe I am adamant about her safety as well!

Pixie Park is near and dear to many of us. However, it is a private park and while in theory it is an option, the condition of the park keeps many parents away. Additionally the park costs money and or volunteer hours. Many parents have two working parents and not a lot of time to maintain their own homes, let alone clean the sand and fundraise annually for Pixie. Three years ago there were some exploratory talks about the Town of Ross and Pixie joining forces. Pixie & Marin Art & Garden Center wanted to remain private and it turned out it is illegal for the town to appropriate funds to land they cannot lease/control. A town with so many resources should have resources for all living here: that includes young families! I believe a park should be a free service that does not require a fee or mandate volunteer hours. That said, Pixie Park operates as a co-op because it is the only way to pay the bills and local parents all want a park for their younger children! Pixie needs a large infusion of capital, making the fundraising efforts herculean. And as noted before, a nature-based playground is a radically different concept than the traditional play structures found at Pixie Park. A nature-based playground appeals to ages 0-12, Pixie Park is for ages 0-7. Personally as a mom with young children, I'd love to see two beautiful parks in our vicinity. But as it stands today, I have to drive to another town to take my children to play.

I have heard rumblings for a park in another location, but the location that has been proposed is on a very busy intersection (SFD & Lagunitas). No parent will relax knowing that one escapee (as children are inclined to do) could become a fast and devastating fatality. Additionally, if the location of the playground is moved we lose the insurance money to build the park and that is a significant loss. Finally, the parcel on the common would give our children and parents the most flexibility; for example, a parent could keep an eye on a child at the nature-based playground and another child playing soccer.

I really hope the council will hear the pleas of the many young families in town. I hope to make the all of the Common be of use to ALL of our residents, not to privatize public land. I hope we as a town invite parents and grandparents to enjoy this space with their children and grandchildren. Most importantly, I hope to invite our children to discover the calming wonders of nature. I remember as a kid playing outside for hours in our yard, which included acres of woods, and it was magical. As an 8-year-old, I remember taking my bike with my big sister to a creek and playing various fantasy games for hours on end. The sad reality is that kids of this generation don't have those freedoms anymore or exposure to nature. But, maybe we can give them a taste with this nature-based playground.

Thank you in advance for you consideration,

Mary Ann

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Friday, December 2, 2016 12:09 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Cc: Heidi Scoble; Mike Armstrong - Ross Recreation Manager
Subject: FW: Build a playground on Ross Common

Importance: High

Letter for packet

From: Adriana Cox [mailto:Adriana@aloeevents.com]
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 11:51 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Build a playground on Ross Common
Importance: High

Dear Ross Town Council Members,

I am writing in regard to the proposal of developing a nature-based park for the space behind Ross Commons. My husband and I are in full support of this fantastic idea. We moved to Ross only two years ago from the city with a two year old son and a five month old daughter in tow. We fell in love with the small town charm of Ross and the belief that our children would grow up in a town with a strong sense of community and town pride. Some of my fondest memories of raising our first born in our neighborhood in San Francisco was going to the local café close to our house for coffee and breakfast and then off to Moscone Park. We spent hours there a week meeting friends and their children. My son who is now four and attends The Ross Preschool still talks about "his" park in the city.

This park would also help fill the missing piece of downtown Ross for families and greatly help the small businesses of Ross which seem to be leaving our store fronts every month. Also, to address the comment that Ross does not have enough young families to warrant a public park in the Commons mystifies me. The first town members to welcome my family to Ross were young families. Last summer we hosted multiple dinners outside with 10 couples and about 25 kids. I am also a member and an officer of the Ross Auxiliary. We have over 40 members, many mothers of young children who have come from San Francisco and even as far as Connecticut and more families are buying homes in our precious town.

I urge you to consider the parcel in question for a nature based park. It would only strengthen the community of Ross, revitalize downtown and be a place of happiness for all the young children in Ross including my third baby which will be due in a few weeks. My family would be using this park for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration and time,
Adriana Cox

Adriana F Cox
Co-Founder, ALOE Events, LLC
C: 415-439-9286
E: Adriana@aloeevents.com

Joe Chinn - Town Manager

From: Julie McGuire <jwamcguire@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 1:21 PM
To: CouncilAll
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: Support for Nature Park

Hi there,

I wanted to send you a note in very enthusiastic support for the Nature Park initiative.

We are new to Ross (moved here at the end of July from SF), and what drew us to this town was the sense of community, beautiful surroundings, and how family-friendly it is. Our children are quite young - 5, 3.5 and 22 months, and while we live walking distance to the school (which my oldest will start attending next year in kindergarten), we currently have to take the children to Pixie Park for a playground, walking right by Ross Common and the playground there, which is too advanced for our children. We also drive to other towns like Larkspur and Corte Madera to use their parks. This has diminished our sense of community and made it harder for us to meet families with similar-aged children since we are still too young to be part of the Ross School community. The proposed park would be a gathering place for families and would only improve upon Ross' reputation as a wonderful place to live.

Ross is a wonderful community but does have the reputation for being exclusive, and Pixie Park is not the perfect answer given the hefty membership fee. If we were to have a wonderful nature park like the one proposed, it would welcome people from other towns into our town and revitalize downtown Ross in a way that seems important and necessary.

In response to the reasons some are opposing this park, it seems unrealistic to think this park would add meaningfully to noise or traffic above and beyond what the school is responsible for already.

I hope the Council will consider this perspective. This Park would be a true gift to the families and young children of Ross!

Thanks so much.

Warmly,
Julie McGuire