

THE MORNING AFTER

TOWN OF ROSS NEWSLETTER

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Mayor's Corner



Mayor Elizabeth Brekhus

In March 2024, Ross residents will vote on critical matters such as the renewal of the Ross Public Safety Parcel Tax, electing three new Ross Town Councilmembers, and a new Board of Supervisor for the County of Marin. These decisions will significantly impact the future of Ross, so your participation in the voting process is crucial.

The *Marin Independent Journal* recently highlighted the Town's tradition of electing quality Councilmembers, which is correct but is in large part owed to the dedication of our hardworking staff to public service. This legacy underscores the effectiveness of the Town Council in serving our community.

Reflecting on my tenure these past 12 years, I recall a time when the councilmember on the far right of the dais was charged with picking up the phone and telling Ross residents who called in where we were on the agenda so residents could show up for the item they wanted to hear.

That quaint practice went on for a few more years, but there was a lot of change and modernization that was also going on. Ross had just merged fire operations with the Ross Valley Fire Department, the Town had just sworn in a new Town Manager, and the new Town Council was focused on fiscal responsibility and implementing changes to make sure we covered our costs and could project and cover expenses years out.

As is typical in Ross where the Council serves as the Planning Commission, Ross planning consumed a lot of Council time. After about a year on Council, the Council was criticized for being too lenient on planning projects

Continued on Page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

2. Age Friendly Valentine's Day Luncheon-MAGC
3. Planning Results
3. When Will the Next Wildfire Strike?
3. Marin Master Gardeners—January Tips
4. Ross Recreation Update
4. Voices of the Holocaust Event
4. Climate Action Workshop
5. Calendar



Town of Ross MEASURE E

Information about the Upcoming Municipal Election and Measure E

Q: What is Measure E?

A: On October 12, 2023, the Ross Town Council voted unanimously to place Measure E, a renewal of Ross' Public Safety Parcel Tax, on the March 5, 2024 ballot.

Q: is Measure E a new tax?

A: No. The parcel tax was last renewed by Ross residents in 2016.

Q: What services does Measure E support?

A. The Public Safety Parcel Tax funds police and fire department services.

Q: How much does Measure E cost?

A: Measure E continues the current \$1201.50 parcel tax rate that raises approximately \$1million a year to fund police and fire department services. Measure E continues the Town's current parcel tax for ten years and limits annual increases to the Consumer Price Index.

Q: How can I learn more?

A: For additional information visit townofross.org/MeasureE. March 5, 2024 is also the Town's Municipal Election, including Town Council races. For voting information visit marincounty.org/depts/rv or contact the Ross Town Clerk.



and allowing too many variances to floor area i.e., letting residents increase the size of their homes above what the zoning allowed. In fact, that was nothing new and the Council had historically allowed FAR increases or non-conforming expansions on a case by case basis. But a lot of dialogue on the subject ensued.

The Ross zoning regulations were adopted after the community was built. Some neighborhoods were held to an acre or 5-acre standard and others to a much smaller lot size. The size of homes was limited to corresponding square foot-age standards notwithstanding that the vast majority of Ross homes – one Town planner estimated 90% - were already built and didn't comply with the standards. Likewise, we have setbacks standards that don't conform to what is built because they were adopted after the Town was built. Recent discussions have arisen regarding potential amendments to allow floor area exceptions instead of variances. This proposed change aligns with the historical flexibility displayed by the Council in evaluating planning projects on a case-by-case basis. The Council can and should be trusted to make decisions that make sense and enhance the community.

Other issues have consumed Council time, including the Bolinas Road safety and drainage improvements, discussions about bridges including improvements and preservation, Flood District plans, emergency plans, encroachments in the right of way and related parking impacts, amnesty to homeowners who improved basement and attic space, crossing guards, undergrounding utilities, ordinance interpretations and amendments, bike transportation lane expansions, a playground concept that was never accepted, upgrades to the Common including adding the lot where the Town rental house stood, farmer's market on the Common, street and sidewalk safety, Ross Recreation management, operation and programming, continuous discussions about staff hiring and particularly for the Council, hiring a new Town Manager, permit fees, labor negotiations for police and fire, litigation and threatened litigation, special events including the Town Dinner and 4th of July parade and an inordinate amount of time was spent on short term rentals and the dog park.

Tonight's agenda is unusually light and would give the misimpression that the Council has an easy lift. The fact is that the Council can and does go from a part-time job to a nearly full-time job with no warning.

In instances of local controversy, the Council faces the challenge of discerning when the majority opinion does not align with the greater community good. Making decisions for the benefit of the community, even when unpopular, remains a fundamental responsibility.

~~Mayor Elizabeth Brekhuis

Please join us on February 15, 2024, for "Young at Heart," an Age Friendly Valentine's luncheon celebration at the Marin Art and Garden Center to honor Ross' older residents, especially those 80 years of age and older.

Enjoy great food, fine conversation, beautiful music from the Branson School a cappella Choir, lovely art by Cedars residents, and some nice surprises.

The celebration will start at 11:30am and end at 1:30pm.



This free event is for Ross residents aged 60+*

To register or ask questions, contact rossrec@rossrecreation.org or call 415-453-6020. **Please register by February 7th.** Space is limited.

If you know an older Ross resident, especially someone who is 80 years of age or older, please reach out and let them know about this event.

Parking is available at Marin Art and Garden Center.

*Age Friendly residents (60+ years) may be accompanied by a younger resident



The Age Friendly Ross Taskforce is committed to working with residents of all ages, but with a particular focus on older adults, to listen, advocate and act in support of healthy and active aging.

Thank you to our Event Sponsors:

Crown & Crummet Cafe - Marché -
Skall Glassman Group - Tony Tutto Pizza -
Town of Ross - Trader Joe's - Woodlands Market

PLANNING RESULTS

There were no planning items discussed at the January 11, 2024 Ross Town Council Meeting.



When will the Next Wildfire Strike?



The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority is racing against an unknown timeline to prepare our community

WHAT HAS THE MWPA DONE?



WHAT'S NEXT?

Target work on the most fire prone areas	Continue the construction of fuel breaks	Maintain and reduce fuel loads	Continue to clear evacuation routes	Motivate residents to take action
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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Open your report and take care of high risk issues	Limb up your trees and clear under bushes	Sign up for the free Chipper Day program	Maintain your vegetation along the roadside	Join Firewise to make your neighborhood safer
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The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority leads the development of fire adapted communities through vegetation management, community education, evacuation and warning systems. The work relies on sound scientific, financial, programmatic, and ecological practices.

Learn more at marinwildfire.org

 **MARIN WILDFIRE**
PREVENTION AUTHORITY



Fire-Smart Tips from the UC Master Gardeners

JANUARY: Pruning and Thinning for Fire Safety

Winter is a great season to focus on pruning while trees are dormant (except apricot and cherry). When pruning for fire safety, prioritize Zone 0 (0-5 feet from home) and Zone 1 (5-30 feet from home).

Prune to remove dead and dying branches

Dead and dying branches are highly flammable and pose a hazard. Prune them regularly to prevent them from accumulating and creating fuel ladders that can carry fire to the crowns of trees.

Prune and thin to increase space between trees and shrubs

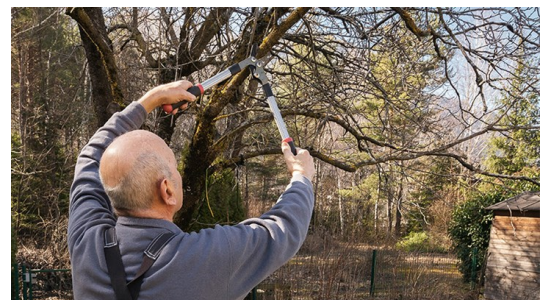
Thinning out dense areas of shrubs and trees reduces the amount of continuous fuel for fire. Proper spacing helps prevent fire from spreading quickly and creates defensible space for firefighters. For more information about spacing, see our November tips: [Plant Spacing in a Fire-Smart Landscape](#).

Additional tips:

- Avoid topping trees as this weakens their structure and encourages dense, twiggy growth that is highly flammable
- Remove branches within 10 feet of your chimney
- Consider removing branches that overhang your roof to minimize plant debris, but not to the detriment of the tree's health
- For more information about healthy pruning techniques, [click here](#)

Remember, fire-smart pruning is an ongoing process. Regularly monitor your landscape and prune as needed to maintain defensible space around your home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FIRE-SMART LANDSCAPING, VISIT [UC MARIN MASTER GARDENER WEBSITE](#).





ROSS SCHOOL D.E.I.B PRESENTS

VOICES *of the* HOLOCAUST

Ross School invites all community members to join the presentations.

Tuesday January 23rd
11:50am - 12:50pm
Ross School Auditorium

Thursday January 25th
11:05am - 12:05pm
Ross School Auditorium



Shelley Bauer

Speaks because her parents are no longer here to tell their own stories.



For more information about Shelley Bauer visit <https://holocauststoryproject.org>



George J. Elbaum

I recognize that we who survived the Holocaust have a responsibility to tell our stories to give hope to the slogan "Never again."



For more information about George J. Elbaum visit <https://neitheryesterday.com>

"I don't think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains."
Anne Frank 1929 -1945



INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY
JANUARY 27
we will never forget



WINTER REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Ross Recreation offers programs for all ages, tots to seniors. From Kids Club Afterschool and STEM with Lego's to Pickleball and Fitness for Seniors, Ross Rec has something for everyone.

Sign up for a class today!



Kids Club Afterschool!



Tennis & Pickleball Classes



Tots (ages 0-4) Classes



Adult & Senior Classes

CONTACT US

(415) 453-6020

www.rossrecreation.org

MARIN RESIDENTS: NOW IS THE TIME to TAKE ACTION on climate!

CLIMATE ACTION WORKSHOP

LEARN TO LIVE LIGHTLY ON THE EARTH, CREATE A HEALTHY LOW-IMPACT HOME



***NEW* SHORTER MEETINGS!**

Wednesday Team:
STARTS JAN 10
Thursday Team:
STARTS JAN 18



SIGN UP TODAY!
ResilientNeighborhoods.org

ROSS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 2024

Jan 15	All Day	Martin Luther King Holiday (Town offices closed)
Jan 16	7:00 pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)

FEBRUARY 2024

Feb 12	7:00 pm	Ross Property Owners Association, Town Hall
Feb 15	11:00 am	Age Friendly Valentine's Day Luncheon-MAGC
Feb 15	6:00 pm	Town Council Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)
Feb 19	All Day	President's Day Holiday (Town offices closed)
Feb 20	7:00 pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)

MARCH 2024

Mar 11	7:00 pm	Ross Property Owners Association, Town Hall
Mar 14	6:00 pm	Town Council Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)
Mar 19	7:00 pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)

APRIL 2024

Apr 8	7:00 pm	Ross Property Owners Association, Town Hall
Apr 4	6:00 pm	Town Council Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)
Apr 16	7:00 pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting (Town Hall & Zoom)
Apr 19	4:30 pm	Live on the Common
Apr 25	9:00 am	Town Council Annual Special Meeting-Budget Workshop

CONTACT US

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- cmartel@townofross.org		- rpata@townofross.org	
Building Department	415-453-1453 x106	Public Works Director	415-453-1453 x115
- breher@townofross.org		- rsimonitch@townofross.org	
Bldg Inspection Hotline	415-453-1453 x170	Recreation Department	415-453-6020
- erobbe@townofross.org		- rossrec@rossrecreation.org	
Planning/Bldg Director	415-453-1453 x121	Ross Valley Fire Dept	415-258-4686
- rfeliciano@townofross.org		Town Manager	415-453-1453 x107
Planner	415-453-1453 x116	- cjohnson@townofross.org	
- alopez-vega@townofross.org			

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We welcome
 suggestions for future
 issues. Email
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