

# THE MORNING AFTER

## TOWN OF ROSS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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### Mayor's Corner



Beach Kuhl  
Mayor

In addition to being current on local issues, it is important for our Town Council members to keep abreast of developments at the county, state and even national levels that can affect local communities.

One way we do this is through participation in the Marin County Council of Mayors and Council Members (MCCMC), an obviously-named county-wide organization composed of all the members of the city or town councils of each of the eleven cities and towns in our county. MCCMC has nine dinner meetings a year, skipping December and the two summer months. The municipalities rotate in hosting the meetings. The social hour before the meeting provides an opportunity for the Council members to

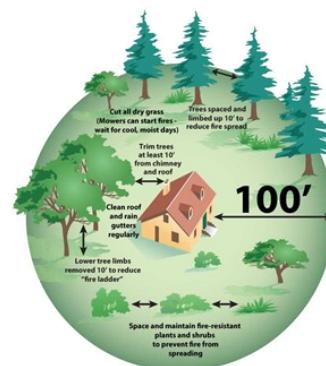
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### Fire Safe Defensible Space Program

In the fall of 2017 and 2018, Northern California suffered devastating wildfires that highlighted the necessity for additional fire prevention and preparedness. Wildland fire protection and vegetation management are key areas in preventing and managing wildfires. While we have taken many steps over the years to prepare for wildfires, there is a need to do more. The current Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) defensible space inspection program consists of one contracted inspector working one day a week during fire season for inspections, follow-ups and documentation. During these inspections, hazards are identified, and residents are directed to take specific actions that will increase the likelihood that their homes and neighborhoods would be defensible and thus survive a wildfire.



The Council approved a new proposal that would allow the RVFD to hire a Lead Supervisor Inspector, 2-4 defensible space inspectors and associated equipment/vehicle costs. The proposal and associated costs would be shared between three Towns (Ross, San Anselmo and Fairfax). The new program will include community outreach and advance notification. Potential community and neighborhood meetings will be held to explain community preparedness actions.

Priority areas have been identified based on the need for defensible space, areas where evacuation routes are challenging due to vegetation overgrowth, and the patterns of how vehicle parking impedes the access on narrow roads that provide challenges to emergency response in combination with public egress. The 2016 Marin County Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP) fire modeling identifies these areas as consistent with rankings for Areas of Concern, and areas ranked as being able to support Very High Flame Length, Rate of Spread combined with high population density (<http://www.firesafemarin.org/cwpp>).

Ross is slated to have 225 parcels inspected in FY19-20. The fire inspections would occur this upcoming fire season beginning in late Spring and going through September.

mingle with their opposite members from other communities, exchanging information about what's going on in their jurisdictions and their views on common issues. Typically the town and city managers attend these meetings, as do members of the Marin County Board of Supervisors.

During the formal part of the gathering, delegates of the organization to other governmental entities, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Golden Gate Bridge district, and SMART present reports on activities in those organizations. Also, MCCMC committees present reports. The legislative committee keeps close track of what is happening in the state legislature of interest to the cities and towns. For example, of late, legislative efforts to tie transportation grants to housing performance of local governments has been watched carefully. Other committees have worked on homelessness, exchanging ideas on disaster preparedness and pension funding. Each meeting features a guest speaker on a subject somehow related to local or regional government. For example, our next meeting, hosted by Tiburon, will feature a talk by state senator Mike McGuire on the state of the state.



As a side note, these meetings are a great chance for the members of the Council to sit together at dinner and just socialize--no discussion of Town issues, something we don't otherwise have a lot of chances for. ■

### New Building Official Hired



*Thomas Ahrens  
Building Official*

Please welcome Thomas Ahrens as the Town's new contract Building Official through Coastland Civil Engineering. Thomas replaces Sal Lucido, whose schedule had become increasingly busier with Coastland projects. Thomas brings over 40 years of construction and building service experience to the Town of Ross. Thomas was formerly the Chief Building Official for 14 years and Fire Marshal at

the City of San Rafael, and spent 4 years as Chief Building Official with the City of Mill Valley. Prior to that he had worked as a building inspector, plan checker and building project manager for several other government and private entities. For 7 years, he also was a general contractor/owner of T. Ahrens Construction. He retired from the City of San Rafael last year, and we are very pleased that he is available to take on this important role as well as assisting in modernizing our building department. Thomas lives locally in Mill Valley.

Thomas can be reached through the Building Department at [tahrens@townofross.org](mailto:tahrens@townofross.org).

### Utility Undergrounding Discussed

Town Council and staff discussed existing State laws and the need for establishing local policy and procedures for forming Utility Undergrounding Districts in the Town. The undergrounding of overhead utilities along private property frontages are funded through the creation of Utility Undergrounding Districts and are normally



paid for by assessments levied on those properties receiving a benefit from the undergrounding project. The Town of Ross supports the undergrounding of overhead utility wires and poles as a means to improve public safety under fire, earthquake and high wind conditions, as well as reducing utility company maintenance costs for tree trimming to maintain overhead lines and equipment, and improve the visual characteristics.

There are currently four underground utility assessment districts in the Town. The first was formed in 1970 on Laurel Grove, followed by one for Poplar and a portion of Redwood in 1978, another on Poplar in 1982, and finally for a portion of Winship Ave in 1994. Since the last district was formed in Ross, there have been significant changes in assessment laws.

## PLANNING RESULTS

The Town Council took the following action on planning applications at the February Council meeting. Staff reports and audio for the meeting can be found on the Town's website [February 14th](#) meeting page. The minutes for this meeting will be posted after adoption by the Council at the March 14, 2019 Council meeting.

**Address:** 1 Upper Road  
**Applicant:** Andrew Mann Architecture  
**Council Action:** Approved  
**Vote (for/against/abstain):** 3-0-2 (Robbins, Russell absent)

## Ross Phone Directory Now a Mobile App



The Ross Auxiliary is excited to announce that they are enabling a Ross Community Mobile Directory in 2019. Online directories are an easy way to access information quickly and easily through your phone or computer. You are able to download and print a copy, information is up to date, and you will be able to look up your new neighbors' information without having to wait for a printed book. For those who love their printed directory, the Auxiliary is aiming to have an updated printed version in 2020. The mobile directory is very secure and easy to use. Only Ross community members who have paid may access the directory. All listings from the previous printed directory have been transferred to the mobile directory. If you are new to Town and would like to be added to the directory, or if you have changes to your information in the directory, email [rossaux@magc.org](mailto:rossaux@magc.org). Access to the DirectorySpot Mobile Directory is \$30 paid annually. To get started, go to [www.rossmobiledirectory.com](http://www.rossmobiledirectory.com).

Once payment has been received, you will receive an email from DirectorySpot with a link to download and access the DirectorySpot Mobile App. If you have any questions contact [rossaux@magc.org](mailto:rossaux@magc.org).

The Directory is one of the Auxiliary's many fundraisers to support the Marin Art & Garden Center (MAGC).

## County Rebate Program



The County of Marin, in collaboration with the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP), has launched a countywide appliance retrofit pilot program, and is providing financial rebates to residents interested in replacing fossil fuel appliances (such as natural gas and propane stoves, water heaters, and furnaces) with high-efficiency electric appliances. This program is open to single-family homeowners across Marin County, and is funded through the Bay Air Quality Management District's (BAAQMD) Climate Protection Grant Program and the County of Marin. It is one of many programs launched in Marin aimed at reducing local greenhouse gas emissions.



Electrical Appliance	Standard Rebate	Income Qualified Rebate
Heat Pump Water Heater	\$1,000	\$2,000
Central Heat Pump	\$1,000	\$4,500
Mini-Split Heat Pump	\$800	\$3,000
Range (Cooktop & Oven)	\$500	\$500
Cooktop only	\$250	\$250
Service Panel Upgrade	\$500	\$1,200

For more information on how to go all-electric, contractor trainings on new technologies, and resources for local governments to help permit and raise awareness about electric appliances, go to [www.marincounty.org/electrify](http://www.marincounty.org/electrify).

## Development Services TRAKiT Goes Live!

On January 31st the Town began issuing permits through the new Community Development permit tracking software known as "TRAKiT". TRAKiT brings a new, state of the art system that allows Building, Planning and Public Works staff to track the issuance of permits, monitor the status of inspections, plan reviews, take credit card payments, and link everything into a geo-referenced database of every parcel in Town. The long-awaited software has been in the works for over a year as staff have been working tirelessly configuring data, developing reports, and testing and training extensively to bring the system online. Kudos to staff for all their hard work!



## Annual Council

### Workshop Highlights

Town Council and staff had their annual Strategic Workshop on February 13. We made great progress on many issues as we move forward with specific projects, including the five year financial forecast and Capital Improvement Plan. The Council affirmed with two modifications to the six Town goals: 1) Sustain financial responsibility and stability; 2) Enhance effectiveness and efficiency of delivery of services; 3) Maintain a safe community and improve emergency preparedness; 4) Foster and strengthen community involvement; 5) Maintain and improve infrastructure and facilities; and 6) Provide transparency and consistency in government.

The financial forecast provides a five year projection of Town revenues and expenses. The forecast projects that the Town is on a financially sustainable path to be able to fund the current level of services in the future and has taken significant steps in the last three years to reduce our long-term pension costs which enhances our future outlook. The major financial challenge the Town faces is related to capital facilities. In particular, the police station and fire station are physically and functionally obsolete and require significant dollars to rehabilitate or re-build new. The Town has been setting aside some savings each year for these type of capital facilities but more will be needed. In the upcoming year, we will be undertaking a review of the Civic Center to determine facilities needed and begin preparing a Town Facilities Master Plan. We will keep you informed as these studies begin.

On the list of Town projects to be completed next year include: pavement rehabilitation for Olive Avenue, Walnut Avenue, and Bolinas Avenue (including drainage improvements); update of the Town Emergency Operations Plan; enhance the fire safe defensible space program; downtown revitalization and zoning review; workforce housing options; preparation of historic preservation policies; develop an action plan for the Age Friendly Community program; new recreation programs (to name a few).

We welcome any input you may have on the Town and priorities. While we believe the Town is on a solid path forward, there is always room for improvement. Please contact Joe Chinn at [jchinn@townofross.org](mailto:jchinn@townofross.org) if you do have any thoughts you want to share.

## RECREATION NEWS

Restoration of the turf on the Ross Common field is underway. The site was prepped in January and sod was installed during the first week of February.

The sod installed is a sports field mix and will be integrated with the existing turf during the remaining weeks of February. The field will reopen in early March and will once again accommodate



Ross Valley Little League, Ross Grizzlies Lacrosse, Ross School physical education classes and Ross Recreation programs in the spring. The project is focused on the turf areas that were impacted during the Ross Valley Sewer District sewer line replacement project.



Spring Program registration is open and Ross Recreation will offer programs in dance, art, sewing, game design and more. Spring youth sports include lacrosse, futsal, soccer and T-Ball.



**Register for Ross Recreation programs at [www.rossrecreation.org](http://www.rossrecreation.org).**

# ROSS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## FEBRUARY 2019

Feb 11	7:15	pm	Ross Property Owners Association Meeting, Town Hall
Feb 13	9:00	am	Annual Strategic Council Workshop, the Studio, MAGC
Feb 14	6:00	pm	Council Meeting, Town Hall
Feb 18	--	--	Town Hall Offices closed for Presidents Day
Feb 26	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting, Town Hall

## MARCH 2019

Mar 11	7:15	pm	Ross Property Owners Association Meeting, Town Hall
Mar 14	6:00	pm	Council Meeting, Town Hall
Mar 26	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting, Town Hall

## APRIL 2019

Apr 4*	6:00	pm	Council Meeting, Town Hall (*on special date)
Apr 20	10-12	pm	Spring Fling Easter Egg Hunt, Ross Common
Apr 23	7:00	pm	Advisory Design Review Group Meeting, Town Hall
Apr 24	9:00	am	Special Council Meeting Annual Budget Workshop, Town Hall

## CONTACT US

Administration	415.453.1453 x105	Public Works Director	415.453.1453 x115
Building & Public Works	415.453.1453 x106	Recreation	415.453.6020
Building Inspections	415.453.1453 x170	Ross Valley Fire Dept	415.258.4686
Planning	415.453.1453 x121	Town Manager	415.453.1453 x107
Police	415.453.1453, Option 2		

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Visit us at [www.townofross.org](http://www.townofross.org)



We welcome suggestions for future issues. Email [llopez@townofross.org](mailto:llopez@townofross.org)

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