

REGULAR MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2025
Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

1. 6:04 p.m. Commencement.

Mayor Julie McMillan; Mayor Pro Tem Elizabeth Robbins; Council Members Teri Dowling; Bill Kircher, Jr., Mathew Salter; Town Manager Christa Johnson; Town Attorney Ben Stock.

2. Posting of agenda/changes to agenda.

Town Manager Johnson confirmed the agenda was posted according to government requirements, and she requested removal of Item 7g. from the Consent Calendar.

3. Open Time for Public Expression.

Michael Rosenbaum addressed the Council to request that Council Member Salter recuse himself from voting on Agenda Item No. 10 and any future matters related to the Ross Fire Department, citing concerns over Council Member Salter's support for the Friends of Ross, a group he believes may present a conflict of interest. He called for an investigation by the Town Manager and Attorney, an update to Salter's financial disclosure (Form 700), and consultation with the California FPPC. Quoting a legal precedent, Mr. Rosenbaum emphasized the need to maintain public trust and urged Council Member Salter to step aside to preserve the integrity of Council proceedings.

4. Mayor's Report.

Everyone had a great time at the Town of Ross's Fourth of July Parade and festivities! Thanks to those who joined and watched the parade, picnicked on the Common, participated in the Patriotic Pooch competition, braved the mechanical bull, and enjoyed the Shady Ladies Choir and other great music. Heartfelt thanks to Town staff and community volunteers for working tirelessly and cheerfully to create this wonderful annual event for our Town. Thanks to the Ross Police (and their supportive spouses) for generously providing delicious hamburgers, chips, watermelon and lemonade.

After years of public outreach and planning (initially contemplated by the Town Council 20 years ago in 2005, and then restarted in earnest in 2019), the Ross Fire Station closed on July 1, 2025. What does this mean?

- On July 1, firefighters based in Ross relocated to Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) stations in San Anselmo and Fairfax, enhancing safety with three people per engine. The newer Ross fire engine moved to San Anselmo Station 19 as a reserve engine. Tonight, we will provide input on the other engine (Engine 18) owned by the Town of Ross, and at 20 years old the oldest in the fleet.
- RVFD will continue to provide fire services to Ross residents as it has since 2012 (Station 19 is 0.5 miles from the Ross border), dispatched from the County's Emergency Command Center, along with mutual aid services from other fire departments in Kentfield (0.3 miles away), Central Marin, San Rafael, and others.

- Since 1983, Ross has been the location of paramedic ambulance Medic 18, operated by the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority and staffed with two paramedics. Medic 18 will remain stationed at the Ross Civic Center and these services will continue.
- The Ross Police Department provides emergency services to Ross residents which will continue, along with mutual aid services from others.

Councilmembers Dowling and Kircher, Town Manager Johnson and I attended RVFD's Badge Pinning Ceremony. Twelve firefighters were recognized, commemorating their excellent service and dedication to the safety of residents and properties.

Chief Pata and the Ross Police have been encouraging residents to sign up for Alert Marin, the critical tool that notifies us of emergencies and directs us during evacuations. Please make sure you and your family members are signed up for Alert Marin: marin.sircom.org/account?lang=en-US (If you are already signed up, you would have been notified last Tuesday about a prescribed burn on Mt. Tam near Bon Tempe Lake.)

Marin County has more than 80 Firewise communities (the most in the country), encompassing more than 50,000 residents. Ross has one Firewise group, Barber-Winship, and another is forming in the Laurel Grove area. Residents on Woodhaven are also members of the Bald Hill Firewise Community in San Anselmo. It would be terrific if another Ross Firewise group would form on the Lagunitas side of town. Benefits include a potential reduction in property insurance rates, and enhanced safety, preparedness and community. If you're interested, I'm happy to help. Fire Safe Marin has lots of information and resources on its website: firesafemarin.org/programs/firewise-usa/

Finally, the Town, along with Age Friendly Ross and the Barber-Winship Firewise Group, will be hosting an event to explain the science behind Zone 0, the first 5' from homes and structures for defensible space (with Mark Brown, Marin Wildfire Executive Officer), and provide inspiring examples of fire-smart landscaping (with April Owens, a designer from Sonoma). This will be held on Monday, September 29, 5:30-7 pm at the Marin Art & Garden Center, and open to the public. I hope to see you there!

5. Council Committee & Liaison Reports.

Council Member Dowling reported highlights from the June TAM meeting, stating the Commission approved a Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan from Marin County Transportation's System Study, approved the FY 25-26 Budget, and the Commission authorized the Executive Director to execute a contract for Marin County School Access Safety Action Plan.

Council Member Salter reported the Finance Subcommittee met on Monday and they have a recommendation for the Council for a new Town Treasurer. Interviews were conducted with three excellent candidates. They are further working on the recruitment and will report back.

Council Member Kircher reported on the ABAG General Assembly meeting, highlighting an annual \$30 increase in member dues, discussions on budget challenges and unfunded pension liabilities, and an economic forecast. While the economy is currently strong due to stimulus, it is overheated, and future deficit financing is expected to affect government budgets.

6. Staff & Community Reports.**a. Town Manager**

From Recreation Manager Maureen Borthwick, Town Manager Johnson asked the Council to mark their calendars for Friday, September 5th from 5-8 p.m. at the Marin Art and Garden Center because the Ross Town Dinner is back and re-imagined. This will be a free event for Ross residents and it promises an unforgettable evening.

There will be long community tables under the lights, upbeat jazz vibes setting the mood, a full bar, and tasty on-site food options for purchase, lawn games and spaces to chill, chat, and connect, and a super-fun yet silent disco in the garden hosted by Joy Labb. It is all about community, connection, and good vibes, so come ready to relax, dance, and make memories.

Guests are encouraged to either bring food or purchase on-site at the event. Spots are free; however, they are limited so please register in advance at www.rossrecreation.org or call 415-453-6020.

Chief Pata has announced the deployment of a new radar trailer designed to monitor and manage traffic speeds more effectively. It will also help the Ross PD gather accurate data and identify areas where speeding is a persistent issue, allowing the Chief to allocate resources appropriately. Today, the trailer is close-by Town Hall on Sir Francis Drake near MAGIC.

Lastly, a reminder that their revamped monthly e-newsletter which is called the Ross Review launched last month garnering positive feedback. The new publication will be emailed out by Wednesday after the monthly Council meeting. Folks that want to subscribe may send a request to our Town Clerk at cmartel@townofrossca.gov.

b. Ross Property Owners Association

RPOA did not meet in July, and there is no report.

7. Consent Agenda

The following items will be considered in a single motion, unless removed from the Consent Agenda. Items removed were: Item 7g. (Town Manager Johnson) and Item 7i. (Council Member Salter). There were no additional requests to remove an item or public comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved and Council Member Dowling seconded, to approve Consent Agenda Items a, b, c, d, e, f, and h. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

a. Minutes:

Special Meeting, Closed Session, June 12, 2025

Regular Meeting, June 12, 2025

b. Demands for June 2025**c. Town Council consideration to adopt Resolution No. 2528 setting the dates/times for the regular Town Council meetings and annual Special Council meeting in 2026.**

- d. Town Council consideration to review and approve the Town's July 10, 2025 Investment Policy.**
- e. Town Council to consider adopting Resolution No. 2529 approving the Town of Ross and Ross Police Officers Association (RPOA) Memorandum of Understanding for the term July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028.**
- f. Town Council to consider authorizing the Town Manager to negotiate and execute a Revocable License Agreement with Jim Baum for an Organic Farm Stand to be held on the Ross Common every Thursday from July 17, 2025, through October 30, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.**
- h. Town Council to consider authorizing the Town Manager to execute a Consultant Services Agreement with Elizabeth Ford for advisory accounting and bookkeeping services for a one-year term July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 in an amount not to exceed \$25,000. It is also recommended that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to compensate Elizabeth Ford an additional \$2,145 for work completed above the \$80,000 authorized for FYE 25.**

Items Removed from Consent Agenda:

- g. Town Council to consider awarding the construction contract for the Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and Morrison Road Paving Rehabilitation Project and authorize the Town Manager to enter into a construction contract with Maggiora & Ghilotti, Inc. in the amount of \$565,549; and authorize a ministerial contingency of up to \$60,000 for potential change orders to address unforeseen conditions.**

Town Manager provided an overview of the consideration to award a construction contract and to authorize the Town Manager to enter into a construction contract with Maggiora & Ghilotti, Inc. in the amount of \$565,549, and to authorize a ministerial contingency of up to \$60,000 for potential change orders.

The Town received a bid protest this morning and after review and in consultation with the Town Attorney, staff believes it is prudent to recommend the Council reject all bids and direct staff to re-bid the project.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period, and there were no speakers.

Council Member Salter said there was one bid for the project and he asked if the Council would normally move forward.

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch responded and explained that it is not common although it has happened before and the Town has every right to accept a single bid as long as it is responsive and they are a responsible bidder.

Council Member Dowling moved and Council Member Kircher seconded, to reject all bids and direct staff to re-bid the project. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

- i. Town Council to consider adopting Resolution No. 2530 ratifying an Employment Agreement retaining David J. Kelley to serve as Retired Annuitant (Extra Help), a part time limited duration position established to assist with the implementation of the Ross Facilities Master Plan; and amending the Town's salary schedule to reflect the addition of the Retired Annuitant (Extra Help) temporary position.**

Councilmember Salter expressed support for hiring Mr. Kelley to assist with the Town's Facilities Master Plan but raised the question of whether the decision should be delayed due to the recently submitted Friends of Ross Firehouse ballot initiative, which could affect the scope of the project.

Mayor McMillan asked the Town Manager and Town Attorney to clarify the initiative timeline and Mr. Kelley's proposed role.

Town Manager Johnson explained that Mr. Kelley's position is part-time and limited in duration, with compensation based solely on hours worked. His immediate focus would be implementing the Facilities Master Plan, including advancing efforts to develop nine units of low-income housing—an obligation under the Town's Housing Element with strict state deadlines. She emphasized that the Town currently lacks the staff capacity to meet with developers, foundations, or partners, and Mr. Kelley's assistance is crucial to maintaining compliance with housing-related reporting requirements.

Councilmember Salter thanked the Town Manager for her explanation.

Town Attorney Ben Stock outlined the legal process for the ballot initiative. After receiving the ballot title and summary, the proponents have 180 days to collect signatures, extending the deadline to January 2026. Following that, the Town would have 30 days to verify signatures.

If the initiative qualifies, the Council must then choose to adopt the ordinance as written, order a report under Election Code 9212, or submit it to the voters. Once a resolution is passed to submit the ordinance to the voters, the election would occur no sooner than 88 days afterward. Based on these timelines, the earliest likely election date would be June 2026.

In response to Council Member Salter's follow-up question, Mr. Stock confirmed that if signatures are submitted earlier, timelines could shift, depending on the Council's actions at each procedural step.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period, and there were no speakers.

Council Member Dowling moved and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 2530 ratifying an Employment Agreement retaining David J. Kelley to serve as Retired Annuitant (Extra Help), a part time limited duration position established to assist with the implementation of the Ross Facilities Master Plan; and amending the Town's salary schedule to reflect the addition of the Retired Annuitant (Extra Help) temporary position. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

End of Consent Agenda.

There are no Public Hearings on Planning Projects – Part 1.

Administrative Agenda.

8. Town Council to consider an Introduction and first reading of Ordinance 730, waive further reading of the Ordinance and refer to it by title only, an Ordinance of the Town of Ross amending the Town of Ross Municipal Code (RMC) Section 1.12.015 to change the Town of Ross general municipal election from being held on the date of the statewide primary election to the statewide general election date in November.

Town Clerk Cyndie Martel presented Ordinance 730, proposing the alignment of Ross's Municipal Elections with the General November election cycle. Currently, Ross is the last town in Marin County to hold elections in March or June, resulting in several governance and procedural challenges.

Ms. Martel explained that staggered election cycles have led to inconsistencies in Council member onboarding, participation in statewide training, and recognition opportunities. Additionally, appointments to regional boards are misaligned with those of other jurisdictions. She explained that Ross initially moved elections to the statewide primary to increase turnout, but the passage of SB 970 in 2021—shifting non-presidential primaries to June—has created further irregularities, including alternating March and June election dates and uneven term expirations. The Council previously reached consensus to bring forward an ordinance to change the election date.

Council Member Salter raised concerns about the omission of mayoral rotation procedures in the staff report.

Town Manager Johnson clarified that, if adopted, the Council Procedures Manual would be revised accordingly. It was confirmed that the change would extend Council terms by approximately five and eight months.

During the Council's discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Robbins expressed satisfaction with the current system, citing the traditional spring transition and symbolic activities such as introducing the Mayor during the Fourth of July parade.

Mayor McMillan emphasized the importance of aligning with other Marin jurisdictions, enhancing participation in League of California Cities training, and synchronizing regional governance appointments.

Council Member Kircher noted that state-level changes to the primary schedule disrupted the Town's established procedures, and this ordinance would restore consistency in term transitions and committee assignments.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period, and there were no speakers.

Council Member Kircher moved and Council Member Dowling seconded, to introduce and waive further reading of Ordinance 730 and refer to it by title only, an Ordinance of the Town of Ross amending the Town of Ross Municipal Code (RMC) Section 1.12.015 to change the Town of Ross general municipal election from being held on the date of the statewide primary election to the statewide general election date in November. Motion carried (3-1-1; Robbins no; Salter abstained).

9. Town Council consideration to adopt Resolution No. 2516 approving the "Design Guidelines for assessing no net increase in stormwater runoff in Development Permit approvals".

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch gave the staff report and overview of Design Guidelines prepared by staff for reducing the peak runoff that may be introduced in a project that introduces new impervious surfaces. He provided background on the Clean Water Act, and said staff is presenting guidelines for smaller residential projects of less than 5 acres.

The State Regional Water Quality Control Board re-issued a Phase II NPDES permit for small municipal systems to the Town and the Town is required to regulate the stormwater discharge from projects the Town approves. The trigger is over 2500 square feet of impervious surface, so the Town will rarely trigger that requirement; however, the Town did develop design review, planning code, and building code to introduce these requirements into its small development projects and he briefly described methods of storage, design, and guidelines.

Staff recommends the Council consider and adopt Resolution No. 2516 approving the "Design Guidelines for assessing no net increase in stormwater runoff in Development Permit approvals."

Council Member Salter asked if there are cost estimates to create these detention basins and voiced a desire to understand costs ahead of time with applicants.

Mr. Simonitch was unsure of the cost for 74 Baywood, but likely about \$1,500 and could confirm. He then additionally explained the process of reviewing proposed projects in the planning stage and cited an example of the success of the bioretention policy at 1 Shady Lane bio-retention swale.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins agreed these are helpful guidelines and asked and confirmed that applicants go through the assessment when applying for permits when creating impervious surfaces.

Mayor McMillan asked, and Mr. Simonitch explained, the philosophy behind requiring no net increase in runoff.

Council Member Salter referred to people building swimming pools, and asked what happens if there is not space for them to add a retention basin on their property. Mr. Simonitch said in these cases, the policy is structured to take this into account on a case-by-case basis.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins referred to language of “may” and “shall” in reducing peak runoff. She thinks the guidelines stand on their own and are clear. Mr. Simonitch noted he does not require drainage plans unless the projects are very large with intricate storm drain catch basins running storm drains into the basins and then draining in to the local creek. Most often, he will not require a drainage plan.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period, and there were no speakers.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved and Council Member Dowling seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 2516 approving the “Design Guidelines for assessing no net increase in stormwater runoff in Development Permit approvals.” Motion carried (4-0-1; Salter abstained).

- 10. Town Council to receive background information regarding the Ross Valley Fire Department’s Joint Powers Agreement and amendments, the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority Ambulance 18 and the status of Engine 18 and provide input regarding its disposition.**

Town Manager Johnson gave the staff report, stating the item was placed on the agenda at the request of Mayor Pro Tem Robbins and Council Member Salter. She provided background of the matter noting that on March 11, 2021, the Town Council voted unanimously to rebuild the Town’s police, paramedic, and administrative buildings and move forward without a fire station in the Master Plan Town Civic Center. On March 10, 2022, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the Town Manager to execute the third amendment to the RVFD JPA that outlined a plan for closing Station 18 on July 1, 2025. Subsequently, the RVFD Board of Directors approved that amendment.

The RVPA has operated one of its two paramedic ambulances out of the Ross Fire Station since the early 1980’s. Paramedics have operated out of the station for 40 years without problems and RVPA plans to continue its operation out of the Ross Civic Center. Fire Engine 18 is a capital asset that was transferred to the RVFD upon Ross’s membership in the department in 2012. After 20 years of service, the engine is past its useful life and is the oldest engine in the fleet.

On July 1, 2025, the engine was taken out of service and is being prepared to be sold by the RVFD. Past practice with other such equipment that falls within Section 24.5 of the 2012 amended JPA agreement has been for the RVFD to send the vehicle to auction. The full proceeds from the sale are sent to Ross per the JPA agreement.

Two Councilmembers have expressed interest in garaging and maintaining Engine 18 so it might be used in the future. Both the Fire Chief and she recommends against garaging and maintaining Engine 18 for the following reasons:

1. The engine is 20 years old. The RVFD aims to have a first run engine on the line for 12 years and then in reserve status for an additional 5 years, for a total of a 17-year service life. Engine 18 exceeds this service life by 3 years;
2. Due to its age, Engine 18 has required expensive repairs and is anticipated to require additional repairs;
3. Fire engines must be driven regularly by licensed fire apparatus engineers to remain operable. Not doing so can have negative effects on the engine, water pump, and other components. A driver must hold a valid Class B license, including a valid medical clearance certificate and the licensing must also have air break and tank endorsements. No Town of Ross staff member is licensed to operate or drive a fire engine. The Town would need to hire licensed fire apparatus operators to drive Engine 18 on a regular basis and operate the water pump and the foam system. RVFD is not able to provide this service to the Town of Ross;
4. Fire engines, especially those that are antiquated as Engine 18, require extensive daily maintenance to be kept in decent operable condition. The Town does not have staff that can perform such maintenance, and paying licensed mechanics to perform daily house calls because no one, including her, are licensed to drive it to a mechanic, will be cost prohibitive. Providing house calls is not feasible nor affordable. Routine yearly service for a fire engine costs approximately \$12,000. Engine 18's repair costs have increased over the last few years due to its aging engine, its air line system, and foam-pumping capabilities;
5. The idea of garaging Engine 18 to be deployed in the event of a major wildfire is not feasible. If the engine is not associated with a recognized Marin County fire agency, it shall not respond to any incident. During a wildfire, RVFD personnel will be staffing the departments well-maintained fleet of engines out of the other three stations;
6. Garaging even an obsolete antiquated fire engine will increase the Town's property insurance, which increased 12% last year. It is also important to note that taking a fire engine out of service entails removing all of the engine's equipment and emergency radios. RVFD is currently in the process of completing this task as a majority of these items will be repurposed for other in-service equipment as part of the department's fiscally responsible planning process;
7. If Engine 18 were to be placed back into service at a later date, it would need to be upfitted with all of the equipment being removed, including emergency radios. This is estimated to cost \$125,000; and

8. Due to its age and its deteriorating condition, the Town may receive \$20,000 to \$25,000 in proceeds from the RVFD's sale of Engine 18. Garaging and maintaining the engine is estimated to cost upwards of \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually. The cost to upfit the engine with the radio and equipment will cost approximately \$125,000. There is no funding available in the adopted FY ending 2026 budget for this purpose. Therefore, funding would need to be appropriated from the Town's reserve funds.

The action before the Council tonight is to receive this background information provided in the staff report and also available on the Town's website as described in the staff report, and provide input regarding its decision. There are many links on the website to various previous presentations made to the Council, reports, etc.

Council Member Salter initiated a discussion regarding a fire engine previously owned by the RVFD and currently housed at the Ross fire station. Chief Mahoney confirmed that as of June 30, two RVFD engines were located in Ross, including one older engine that has since been rotated into reserve status and relocated to San Anselmo. Originally purchased by RVFD before the Town entered the JPA, the engine was housed in Ross due to a lack of storage elsewhere.

Council Member Salter inquired about the source of increased costs if the engine was already stationed in Ross. Chief Mahoney clarified that while the Town owns the building and insures it, RVFD carries insurance on the building's contents and the engine itself. If RVFD no longer uses the engine, ownership and liability—including insurance—would revert to the Town, increasing its obligations.

Town Manager Johnson noted that the Town's insurance costs have already risen 12% annually. Adding the fire engine would further increase premiums. She emphasized that the more significant cost would be ongoing maintenance, as RVFD staff would no longer service the vehicle. If the Town intended to keep it operable, it would need to fund continuous maintenance despite lacking qualified personnel or mechanics.

Council Member Salter questioned whether paramedics could legally operate the engine. Chief Mahoney responded that while they are certified to drive ambulances, it is unclear if they hold Class B licenses required for fire engines.

Mayor McMillan asked whether a fire department would consider retaining a 20+ year-old fire engine. Chief Mahoney advised against it, noting the engine's declining reliability, including failed emissions-related inspections. He explained that RVFD no longer finds it viable and shared that past surplus engines have been sold for minimal amounts—sometimes as little as \$5,000—or donated for international humanitarian use.

Council Member Kircher estimated the current engine might sell for \$20,000 to \$25,000, though Chief Mahoney was skeptical. He asked whether a future operator could purchase a different engine if needed. Chief Mahoney and Town Manager Johnson confirmed that new, used, or leased engines could be acquired, with new engines costing approximately \$1.3 million. RVFD typically finances such purchases.

Council Member Dowling questioned the engine's utility if a new station is built in five years. Chief Mahoney noted the vehicle would continue to depreciate and reliability would diminish, leaving the Town vulnerable in the event of a breakdown.

Finally, Council Member Salter asked why the engine hadn't been sold earlier. Chief Mahoney explained they retained it to ensure operational coverage through the anticipated service transition, having spent over \$36,000 on repairs in the past year alone.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Stephanie DeMarco highlighted strong community support for the Friends of the Ross Firehouse group, which plans a 2026 ballot initiative to restore local emergency services. She urged the Council to delay selling the existing fire engine to allow the initiative process to continue, warning that demolishing the firehouse would end town fire protection.

Mike Rosenbaum argued that Engine 18 is outdated and costly to maintain, recommending the Town sell it to the Friends group below market value if they wish to keep it symbolically. He emphasized that relying on old equipment is unsafe and financially impractical.

Laura Conrow noted the fire station's closure has reduced regional fire coverage and urged the Council to postpone selling the engine until voters decide on the ballot initiative, stressing fiscal prudence by avoiding premature sale costs.

Diane Ruddin viewed the fire truck's condition as a separate issue, supporting saving funds to purchase a new, reliable engine instead of maintaining the old one.

Town Manager Johnson clarified that the annual maintenance is not \$36,000 but this is what Chief Mahoney has determined as what has been spent on sending it out to a mechanic and repair costs. RVFD personnel conduct regular maintenance on fire engines as well as minor repairs. This is the expertise, time, and resources the Town no longer has.

Mayor McMillan reaffirmed the Town Manager and Fire Chief's strong recommendation to sell Engine 18, citing at least eight reasons detailed in official reports. The engine, over 20 years old and out of service, has surpassed its useful life by at least three years and is the oldest in the fleet. Despite a small group of residents objecting and proposing a ballot initiative to retain Engine 18 and rebuild a closed fire station, the Mayor emphasized that such efforts ignore decades of expert advice, public process, and modern emergency service standards.

The Ross fire station, built in 1927, was closed in 2021 due to structural deficiencies, outdated layout, and operational inefficiencies, including flooding and poor circulation. Reopening or renovating it is considered impractical and costly. Modern emergency response now relies on regional dispatch systems, ensuring Ross remains well-served by nearby fire stations in San Anselmo and Kentfield, as well as mutual aid from across the county and state.

Nearly all emergency calls in Ross are medical, and ambulance and police services will remain fully operational. The Mayor also noted that reinstating a local station would cost residents approximately \$6,000 more per household annually—an unsustainable financial burden.

A brief and superficial assessment submitted by the opposition group's architect was dismissed as lacking professional rigor and contradicted by long-standing expert evaluations, including a recent letter from Dan Winey, a prominent architect and Ross resident, who advised against renovation due to the building's deteriorated condition and noncompliance with safety codes.

The Mayor concluded that keeping Engine 18 serves no practical purpose and delaying its sale only increases costs. If the opposing group wishes to retain it, they are welcome to purchase it at auction.

Council Member Dowling supported selling or donating Engine 18, citing its nonoperational status, ongoing costs, and diminished value. She emphasized that proceeds from a sale could fund future needs if a new fire station is established. While acknowledging the importance of respecting the Friends of Ross Firehouse, she questioned the practicality and safety of retaining a 25-year-old engine and advocated for selling it now and reserving funds for a newer replacement if the initiative succeeds.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins expressed support for retaining a local fire engine with EMTs, reflecting community sentiment. She questioned the Council's confidence in quickly acquiring a new engine given high costs and long wait times, suggesting holding onto Engine 18 temporarily while monitoring developments with the Friends of Ross Firehouse. She emphasized the importance of engaging with this significant community group and advocated for collaborative, open dialogue between the Council, staff, and residents to seek a balanced solution rather than an all-or-nothing stance.

Council Member Salter criticized the Council for overlooking community input, warning this risks division and political backlash given strong support for the Friends of Ross Firehouse initiative, which has over 100 supporters and sufficient signatures to qualify. He urged the Council to engage constructively with residents, noting the group's fundraising success and broad backing. He questioned the urgency of selling Engine 18 soon after the station's closure, suggesting it could serve as a reserve if the station is rebuilt, called for patience to allow the ballot process to unfold, and emphasized the importance of dialogue and collaboration to maintain public trust and avoid repeating past mistakes.

Councilmember Kircher supported selling Engine 18, citing its maintenance demands and obsolescence, especially now that the fire station is closed and the RVFD can no longer manage it. He clarified that the community initiative focuses on a fire station, not the engine itself. He emphasized the direct and indirect costs of retaining the engine, noting future procurement decisions would be made by a future Fire Chief, rejecting claims that selling the engine undermines democracy, highlighting the Council's representative role and available community channels for dissent, and framed the issue as practical governance, supporting a fire station but viewing retention of Engine 18 as fiscally and operationally unjustified.

Mayor McMillan suggested a motion.

Council Member Dowling moved and Council Member Kircher seconded, to direct RVFD to sell Fire Engine 18. Motion carried (3-2-0; Robbins and Salter no).

End of Administrative Agenda.

There are no Public Hearings on Planning Projects – Part II.

11. No Action Items: (Mayor)

- a. **Council correspondence** – None.
- b. **Future Council items** – Council Member Kircher requested and confirmed E-Bikes was on the August 14 agenda. Town Manager Johnson stated Talia Smith from the County of Marin would do the presentation.
- c. **Council Member participation at the communication table at the Ross Post Office on the next Council meeting day** – Council Member Dowling volunteered.

12. Meeting Evaluation.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins requested that future references to agenda items avoid naming specific Council Members who requested the item. She suggested framing such instances more neutrally to reflect differing opinions without singling out individuals.

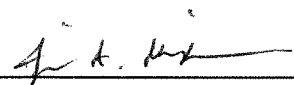
Council Member Salter asked that Council Members avoid bringing prepared statements to meetings. He encouraged maintaining an open mind, noting that perspectives can and sometimes do change, based on information shared during discussions.

Mayor McMillan stated that her approach is to come well-prepared for meetings, especially on pivotal issues, and she does not intend to change that. While she is open to changing her mind when persuaded, being thoroughly prepared is her preferred style.

Council Member Dowling expressed concern that the discussion often blurred the distinction between the fire station and the fire engine, which may have caused confusion. She acknowledged there may be future overlap but recommended staying focused on the specific issue at hand.

13. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.



Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:



Cyndie Martel, Town Clerk

