

REGULAR MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2025
Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

1. 6:02 p.m. Commencement.

Mayor Julie McMillan (Participating via Zoom from 17 W. 74th Street, Apt. 4B, New York, NY 10023); Mayor Pro Tem Elizabeth Robbins; Council Members Teri Dowling; Bill Kircher, Jr.--absent, 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.

3. Presentation from the Ross School's fifth grade class regarding their Water Testing Project.

Fifth grade Ross School students gave a presentation regarding their water testing project, and a round of applause followed.

Mayor McMillan and Council Members thanked students for their presentation. The Mayor suggested students and the Town Clerk collaborate on a Ross Review article that could be published in the November Ross Review to summarize the data and gently remind residents that they need to clean up after their dogs by the creek.

4. Councilmember Reports on Meetings and Conversations

Council Member Dowling reported working at the Post Office and speaking with residents, which she finds helpful.

Council Member Salter reported on Marin Clean Energy (MCE) and operating losses that occurred last year that has continued into the first quarter.

5. Open Time for Public Expression.

None.

6. Mayor's Report

It's wonderful to see so many Ross residents preparing for emergencies.

On Saturday, September 27 on the Ross Common, ten dedicated Larkspur and Mill Valley first aid volunteers trained nearly 75 Ross residents in basic first aid skills, including stop the bleed, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and Narcan administration. Trainees were provided with stop-the-bleed bags, boxes of Naloxone, Fentanyl test strips and one-way emergency breaths face masks. Volunteers also checked the status of their Alert Marin sign-ups to activate the ringtone "Emergency Bypass ON." Thanks to the Ross Property Owners' Association for organizing and sponsoring this event.

On Monday, September 29, many residents attended the Zone 0 presentation “Science, Resources and Inspiration” at the Marin Art & Garden Center. Creating five feet of non-flammable defensible space, called Zone 0, around our homes and structures greatly improves their chances of surviving a wildfire, and new landscaping designs make it possible to create this protective barrier attractively.

- Mark Brown, Executive Officer of the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, cited a recent UC Berkeley study demonstrating Zone 0’s effectiveness. Data from recent wildfires show that homes with defensible space had a much greater chance of surviving than those left unprotected. You can read about the study here: <https://news.berkeley.edu/2025/08/28/california-communities-can-reduce-wildfire-damage-by-half-heres-how/>
- April Owens, Principal of April Owens Designs, showed several examples of inspiring Zone 0 landscapes featuring plantings mixed with accents of inflammable surfaces including stone slabs, pavers, and gravel in a wide variety of colors and sizes, used to break up a fire’s path. Owens said metal is also helpful for fencing and gates to separate wooden fencing from structures, and also for planters. You can learn more about fire-smart landscaping with California native plants at <http://www.aprilowensdesign.com/>; and at the UC Marin Master Gardeners site: <https://ucanr.edu/site/uc-marin-master-gardeners/maintain-fire-smart-landscape>
- Nicole Marcucci, Ross Valley Fire Department's newly hired Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator, described ongoing efforts to clear vegetation for evacuation routes. She stressed that property owners need to maintain vegetation along roadways to allow residents easy evacuation and firefighters and their equipment good access to our homes and properties.

Thanks to the Barber-Winship Firewise Neighborhood Group for organizing the event, and the Town of Ross and Age Friendly Ross for sponsoring it.

7. Council Committee & Liaison Reports

Council Member Dowling reported on her attendance to the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Transportation Authority of Marin, celebrating the completion of the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reported a Closed Session was held regarding the paramedics lease and comments are now with the Town’s legal team.

Chris Martin, Liaison for Flood Zone 9, provided an update on the status of the Corte Madera Creek Flood Control project in Ross and Kentfield.

8. Staff & Community Reports.

a. Ross Property Owners Association

Mr. Mascaroni (RPOA) wished Mayor McMillan and her family well and shared RPOA updates:

- Events:
 - Oct 10: Pacific Syndicate band at Ross Commons
 - Oct 28, Nov 16, Dec 1: Bingo for All Ages + estate planning event (Marin Art & Garden Center)
 - Nov 15: Turkey Trot (Town of Ross Recreation Dept. with assistance from Ross Auxiliary)
 - Dec 1: Holiday decorations at Ross Commons
 - Dec 6: Winter Fest (Marin Art & Garden Center)
- Other Updates:
 - Membership is down; mailer going out to boost enrollment
 - Hanging flowers are thriving
 - Grass field under review; funding solutions being explored
 - New lights will be installed at the Post Office
 - Electrical upgrades made for holiday lighting reliability

b. Town Manager

Town Manager Johnson gave the following report:

- The Marin County Board of Supervisors approved the Town Council's request to move the Ross Municipal Elections to November, starting next year in 2026. The change extends each of the Council Members' terms during this transition, and now that the Town has received this approval, the Town Clerk will be sending a postcard to all residents informing them of the election change.
- The Town's third annual Turkey Trot race is scheduled for Saturday, November 15th starting on Ross School's blacktop. There will be a 10K, a 5K, a one mile and always fun toddler dash. The event is family-friendly and dressing up is encouraged with awards given. People can register at www.Rossturkeytrot.com.

Council Member Salter asked for the status of the LPRs (license plate readers). Town Manager Johnson said they are still working with the company regarding insurance languages in the draft contract. She is in on-going communications with the Police Chief who is in contact with the vendor and hopefully she will be able to return with a contract in the future when the Town can accept a reasonable amount of risk.

9. Consent Agenda

The following items will be considered in a single motion, unless removed from the Consent Agenda. Council Member Salter requested Item 9.d be removed from the Consent Agenda. 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, and e. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-1; Kircher absent).

a. Minutes:

Special Meeting Closed Session, September 11, 2025

Regular Meeting, September 11, 2025

- b. **Demands: August 2025**
- c. **Town Council consideration to award the construction contract for the Bolinas Avenue Storm Drain Improvements Phase 2 Project and authorize the Town Manager to enter into a construction contract with W.R. FORDE ASSOCIATES, INC. in the amount of \$887,518; and authorize a 5.6% ministerial contingency of up to \$50,000 for potential contract change orders to address unforeseen conditions.**
- e. **Town Council consideration to adopt Resolution No. 2541 for a one-year time extension for the previously adopted Resolution No. 2329, approving the Design Review, Hillside Lot Permit, and a Variance to construct new landscape structures, a new pool/spa, pool equipment and storage enclosure, wood deck, an outdoor BBQ, concrete retaining walls, and new fencing at the existing single-family residence located at 2 Crest Road.**

Items Removed from Consent Agenda:

- d. **Town Council consideration to review and accept the fiscal year 2024-25 fourth quarter, twelve-month Financial Summary Report.**

Council Member Salter emphasized the importance of publicly reviewing the Town's full-year financial results and praised Town staff's performance.

Town Manager Johnson presented the FY 2024/25 year-end report, noting a \$1.4 million surplus from revenues nearly \$1 million over budget and expenses \$500,000 under. This enabled a \$200,000 CalPERS payment and a \$500,000 Facilities Fund contribution. Property taxes came in \$135,000 over budget, and interest income rose by nearly \$200,000. While Planning revenue dipped slightly and Building revenue fell 30% (as expected), Recreation revenue continues recovering post-COVID. Expense savings came largely from unfilled staff positions.

Council Member Salter referred to reduced Planning revenues, and he asked if there is recent building activity. Planning Director Feliciano stated even though the revenue is down, staff has consistently been processing ADU applications.

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

Council Member Dowling moved, and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to approve Item d. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-1; Kircher absent).

End of Consent Agenda.

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

Administrative Agenda.

- 10. **Town Council consideration to introduce Ordinance No. 732 to amend Chapter 14.04 of the Ross Municipal Code and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Fire Code and 2024 International Fire Code with certain local amendments and additions, and schedule a public hearing, second reading, and adoption of the ordinance at the November 13, 2025 Town Council meeting.**

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano provided an introduction of the review of the 2025 Fire Code update, and introduce Chief Mahoney and Rob Bastianon.

Senior Fire Inspector Rob Bastianon provided the staff report and overview of the 2025 edition of the California Fire Code and the 2024 International Fire Code with local amendments which ensures the Town stays compliance with State fire and building standards.

He pointed out a correction in the staff report under bullet point number 2 which should read: "Amend Chapter 5, Section 503.2.1 raising vertical clearance over fire lanes from 13'6" to 15'." This allows for safe travel for fire apparatus during an emergency.

Amendments include: Amend Chapter 5, Section 510 by deleting two exceptions. This provision requires emergency responder radio communication enhancement systems to be installed in all new buildings where radio coverage is weaker inside than outside of the building. The proposed amendment removes two exceptions to this requirement. Exception No. 1: The Building Official and Fire Code Official approve use of wired communication systems, and Exception No. 4 in single-story buildings less than 12,000 square feet. Also new is adoption of Appendix D; Fire Apparatus Access Roads which ensures consistency throughout the county for developments and emergency response.

Council Member Salter asked what impacts would changes have on buildings if the Council adopts these changes. Mr. Bastianon explained that if trees are over-hanging a fire road, they are raising that from 13'6" to 15' to allow safer travel of apparatus. They learned this during the roadside clearance projects they have completed. There is also an exception for a single-story 12,000 square foot building so they can ensure they have radio coverage regardless of height or size of the structure, and this does not apply to single-family homes. Lastly, Appendix D relates to new standards the State came out with which must be adopted locally.

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

In response to a question of Council Member Salter, Town Attorney Ben Stock explained that the vast majority of text in here is the same but the Town must re-adopt it every three years because there are local amendments.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to introduce Ordinance No. 732 to amend Chapter 14.04 of the Ross Municipal Code and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Fire Code and 2024 International Fire Code with certain local amendments and additions, and schedule a public hearing, second reading, and adoption of the ordinance at the November 13, 2025 Town Council meeting. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-1; Kircher absent).

11. **Town Council consideration to introduce Ordinance No.733 to add Chapter 14.16 of the Ross Municipal Code and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code and 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code with certain local amendments and additions, and schedule a public hearing, second reading, and adoption of the ordinance at the November 13, 2025, Town Council meeting.**

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano introduced the item, stating this code is an important part of the fire safety framework. It sets construction and vegetation standards for properties located in areas where homes and wildlands meet, helping reduce wildfire risk, and improve community resilience. She introduced Fire Chief Mahoney and Rob Bastianon.

Senior Fire Inspector Rob Bastianon gave an overview of the request regarding introduction of Ordinance No. 733 to add Chapter 14.16 of the RMC and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code and 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code with amendments and additions, referred to as the "WUI Code." Local agencies have until January 1, 2026 to make these adoptions.

Mr. Bastianon then provided proposed amendments to Chapter 1, Section 110 to require the Fire Code Official and Building Code official to issue final approval prior to issuance of a Certificate of Completion; Amend Chapter 2 defining Code Official and VMP (Vegetation Management Plan); new is to amend Chapter 4, Section 403.1.3 raising imposed fire lane design load from 70,000 lbs. to 75,000 lbs. and this guarantees uniform countywide standards for roadway designs and meeting countywide emergency apparatus requirements; amend Chapter 6 requiring the location of emergency water supplies to be included on fire protection plans; amend Chapter 6, Section 602.3.1 requiring the location of fire protection systems, power sources, meters, and shut-downs to fire protection plans.

Council Member Salter asked, and Mr. Bastianon described, the Vegetation Management Plan.

Council Member Dowling asked and confirmed there is a map already indicating emergency water supplies and they are requesting to add the location of the supplies, whether it is a swimming pool, a hydrant, or another emergency source.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if the VMP requires that there is the 5-foot zone of no plants and confirmed it has nothing to do with this and the State will make those requirements when they publish them as it is not part of this Code. Fire Chief Mahoney added that the Committee met two weeks ago and they are discussing this.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to introduce Ordinance No. 733 to add Chapter 14.16 of the Ross Municipal Code and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code and 2024 International Wildland-Urban

Interface Code with certain local amendments and additions, and schedule a public hearing, second reading, and adoption of the ordinance at the November 13, 2025, Town Council meeting. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-1; Kircher absent).

- 12. Town Council consideration to introduce Ordinance No. 734 on October 9, 2025, and set the public hearing for November 13, 2025 to adopt the 2025 California Building Code, 2025 California Residential Code, the 2025 California Electrical Code, the 2025 California Mechanical Code, the 2025 California Plumbing Code, the 2025 California Green Building Standards Code, the 2025 California Energy Code, the 2025 California Referenced Standards Code, the 2025 California Historical Building Code, the 2025 California Existing Building Code, and the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code, with local amendments.**

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the 2025 Building Code updates which are part of the Statewide triannual code cycle..

Greg McFann, Contract Building Official, CSG, provided an overview of the 2025 Building Code updates, stating there are no new local amendments and they are moving up amendments from the 2022 code up to the 2025 code. He noted the State adopted some amendments such as the new WUI code where amendments were moved forward.

In the California Residential Code is there is an increase fire resistance between units in a duplex. There are stricter flow requirements for showers, faucets and toilets in the Plumbing Code, some grey water alternative re-use systems, high-efficiency water heaters, and some ADU specific requirements around plumbing fixture flow rates, hot water delivery times and separate shut-off's for ADU water supply. There are some changes to minimum efficiencies for heat pumps, increased controls for lighting, and more requirements for photovoltaic systems in the Energy Code. The California Green Building Standard Codes expanded EV charging requirements, a strong emphasis on material re-use and water diversion, and enhanced site development landscaping, vegetation and minimizing heat islands.

Council Member Salter asked and confirmed that every three years the International Code Council adopts a code. The State then makes State amendments, publish it by July 1st every three years, and give local jurisdictions 180 days to make amendments and adopt. Staff is then made aware of changes and implements them on the local level.

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

Council Member Dowling moved, and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to introduce Ordinance No. 734 on October 9, 2025, and set the public hearing for November 13, 2025 to adopt the 2025 California Building Code, 2025 California Residential Code, the 2025 California Electrical Code, the 2025 California Mechanical Code, the 2025 California Plumbing Code, the 2025 California Green Building Standards Code, the 2025 California Energy Code, the 2025

California Referenced Standards Code, the 2025 California Historical Building Code, the 2025 California Existing Building Code, and the 2025 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code, with local amendments. Motion carried unanimously (4-0-1; Kircher absent).

- 13. Town Council to receive a presentation and update on the 2023 GHG Inventory (Attachment 1) and consider directing staff to collaborate with the Marin Climate & Energy Partnership to perform a technical update and refresh of the 2010 Climate Action Plan (Attachment 2).**

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano introduced Christine O'Rourke, Sustainability Coordinator of MCEP.

Christine O'Rourke, Sustainability Coordinator, gave a brief overview of the 2023 community-wide GHG inventory. Ross's emissions are down 22% since 1990. The Statewide goal is for a 40% reduction by 2030, and zero net emissions for 2045.

She then provided sector highlights, noting electricity emissions are down 93%, natural gas emissions down 1%, transportation emissions down 29%, waste emissions down almost 50%, 17 ½% of vehicles registered to Ross residents were zero-emission vehicles at the end of 2023 which compares countywide at 9.3%, and Ross has the highest use of natural gas. The Town's Climate Action Plan should be updated due to new State targets for 2030 and funding is available through MCEP. She can work with staff to update the plan, incorporate new technologies and best practices and bring it to the Council for adoption.

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

Councilmembers posed questions and comments, and confirmed the Plan would be updated to California standards, that the ban on natural gas appliances in 2027 is a regional requirement, CARB is looking to align it with the Bay Area regulation to implement it in 2030, Novato's template that can be used for Ross, the amount of staff time to update the plan, natural gas numbers due to large homes and the number of pools, education of heat pump systems and programs, confirmation there is no downside to updating the plan because there is no cost to the Town, that 75% of natural gas involves hot water heating and space heating and resistance to include gas stoves which are low gas producers, and that wildfires cause great impact to air quality and progress, and a Council subcommittee could be formed.

Town Manager Johnson recommended there be consensus of the Council to direct staff to establish a subcommittee and identify which Council Member(s) participate.

Council Member Dowling suggested setting up a Council subcommittee tonight. Director Feliciano referred to Attachment C; the scope of work and stated working with a Council-appointed subcommittee would be an additional task not covered by the funding source. She would need to determine costs and another funding source but noted all five Council Members can see the updated draft and provide their feedback.

Brief discussion ensued and Director Feliciano received unanimous consensus to direct staff to collaborate with the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership to perform a technical update, present a draft update of the 2010 Climate Action Plan and work with staff to present the update at either a Council meeting or workshop/study session early next year.

End of Administrative Agenda.

14. No Action Items: (Mayor)

- a. **Council correspondence** – None.
- b. **Future Council items** – Council Member Salter asked that the field at the Common be agendized. Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded. Brief discussion ensued, and Town Manager Johnson noted this item will not be on the agenda until 2026.
- c. **Council Member participation at the communication table at the Ross Post Office on the next Council meeting day** – Mayor McMillan volunteered for November.

12. Meeting Evaluation.

Council Members provided good remarks about the meeting.

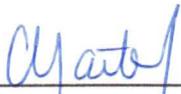
13. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.



Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:



Cyndie Martel, Town Clerk

