

REGULAR MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025
Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

1. 6:02 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.

3. Disclosure of Ex Parte Communications on Items on this Agenda

None.

4. Open Time for Public Expression.

Dr. Howard Ortman, an angel investor for the eco-friendly fire retardant, Neuro-Shield, proposed that the Town consider a smaller, Type 5 wildfire truck, carrying 400 gallons of the product instead of a Type 1 fire engine. He said Neuro-Shield is seven times more effective than water and could put out fires quickly without water damage, and he asked the Council to indicate its interest.

Mayor McMillan remarked that Chief Dan Mahoney is the Fire Chief of RVFD and he is present in the audience.

Mark Goldstein of 125 Winding Way told the Council that despite his request 8–10 months ago for additional stop signs on Canyon Road and Winding Way, vehicles still speed and ignore existing signs. With kids riding electric bikes in the area, he believes installing more stop signs is necessary and worth the cost.

Mayor McMillan asked Mr. Goldstein to speak with Police Chief Pata who is in the audience.

Robert Archer, a resident and economist with decades of international electricity-sector experience, urged the Council to support creating an independent standing Finance Committee to oversee MCE. Citing a recent Marin IJ investigation, he highlighted five concerns: rising electricity rates despite falling renewable costs, ongoing financial losses and potential fiduciary issues, limited information provided to the Board and public, management dominance over the Board, and insufficient explanations from MCE leadership.

Council Member Salter commented that the MCE Board meeting is November 20th and encouraged Mr. Archer to attend and share his comments.

Barbara Call of 8 Redwood Drive expressed strong opposition to eliminating Ross's Fire Department and warned that slower emergency response times would endanger residents, especially the town's large senior population. She argued Ross can afford its own department, with its high median income and compared it to Sleepy Hollow who has its own station. She also urged preserving and refurbishing the historic firehouse rather than demolishing it. Citing major fires such as the Palisades and Camp fires—events few expected—she said this is not the time to reduce fire protection or emergency response capacity.

Mayor McMillan mentioned that on December 11th at the next Council meeting, Chief Mahoney will be here presenting response time information since the fire station closed on July 1st, and she encouraged Ms. Call to attend that meeting.

5. Town Council to receive presentation of the AARP plaque for Age Friendly Ross.

Dianne Doodha announced the completion of Ross's AARP Age Friendly cycle, commemorated with a plaque recognizing the Town's designation—first earned in 2018 and formalized in 2019—as part of the WHO Age Friendly Cities and Communities Program. She summarized findings from a 2019 survey of Ross residents over age 60, which identified needs such as more senior activities, better emergency preparedness, accessible public spaces, improved transportation, and easier access to health resources. These priorities informed the 2024 Action Plan and the creation of the Age Friendly Task Force in 2020.

She highlighted accomplishments including senior-friendly upgrades to Ross Common, expanded social and wellness programming, enhanced outreach through newsletters and informational materials, and strengthened emergency preparedness through contributions to Town plans and community drills. She noted the task force's collaboration with local organizations and its ongoing review of Town initiatives through an Age Friendly lens.

With over a quarter of Ross residents now over 60, these efforts foster safety, connection, and inclusion. Looking ahead, the task force plans a new needs assessment, expanded intergenerational programming, continued events, and ongoing work to maintain accessible public spaces and emergency readiness. She congratulated the Town on this achievement and its continued commitment to supporting older adults.

Council Member Dowling recognized the numerous Age Friendly Task Force members present and she asked them to stand up.

Mayor McMillan and Council Members provided a round of applause and thanked Ms. Doodha for her presentation.

6. Mayor's Report

I want to update residents about recent developments in Town facilities issues and let everyone know about related upcoming agenda items, which will be heard during our January 8 regular Council meeting.

- On October 2, Friends of the Ross Firehouse ("FORF") submitted signatures to support its Ballot Initiative, triggering a 30-day period for the Town to verify the signatures.
- On October 6, the Town Council authorized the Town Manager to prepare an Elections Code Report to provide the Town Council and voters with independent and objective information on the potential impacts of the Ballot Initiative, including
 - The fiscal impacts (short-term and long-term);
 - Land use consistency with the Town's General Plan, Housing Element, and Civic Center Facilities Master Plan; and
 - Service delivery and operational feasibility. [link to Resolution 2542]
- On October 8, the Town's attorney wrote to FORF's attorney identifying grounds that call into question whether the Ballot Initiative is beyond the voters' power of initiative, and that there may be bases for
 - A potential determination that the Ballot Initiative does not belong on a ballot, or
 - A potential determination that the Ballot Initiative is unenforceable and invalid, if ultimately the signatures were verified and the Ballot Initiative passed. [link to Oct 8 letter]
- On October 14, the Town and FORF
 - Agreed to toll the 30-day signature verification period until February 3, 2026; and
 - With the goal of enhancing public participation and informed decision making, agreed to hold a meeting to hear presentations about the Town's Elections Code Report and FORF's proposals related to its Initiative, e.g., potential rehabilitation of the Town's fire station and construction of a new Town civic center, including capital, maintenance and/or operational costs, with or without a fire station. [link to Oct 14 Stipulation]

The Town will circulate the Town's Elections Code Report and FORF's materials before the January 8 meeting.

Ross School was recently ranked in the *top 10 public elementary and middle schools in all of California* -- out of more than 7,000 schools! Ross School was the *only* elementary school in northern California on the list (there was only one other middle school in northern California on the list). Ross School earned an overall grade of A+, reflecting excellence in academics, resources, extracurriculars and more. Congratulations to dedicated Ross School Superintendent David Rice, Principals, teachers, staff, Trustees, the PTO, parents and students. This exceptional achievement is also due in part to our community's continued generous support of Ross School's facilities bond and parcel tax, which residents overwhelmingly renewed in 2022. We can all take pride in this outstanding accomplishment.

Halloween was another huge success for trick o' treaters, thanks to so many creative and spirited residents throughout Town who festively decorated their homes and gave out tons of candy. On Shady Lane alone, the Town welcomed hundreds of kids and their parents. Special thanks to Ross Police Chief Pata, Officers and Town Manager Johnson for assisting children and their parents, continuing this wonderful Ross tradition.

I hope you and your family will participate in the Town's annual Turkey Trot Saturday morning, November 15. I look forward to cheering everyone on! And that afternoon, more than a dozen Ross merchants will participate in the "Autumn Showcase" from 3:00 – 5:00 pm, organized and sponsored by the Ross Property Owners' Association. This is a perfect time to start your holiday shopping, and please consider shopping and dining in downtown Ross throughout the entire year!

Finally, I sincerely wish you and your families a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving!

7. Council Committee & Liaison Reports

Council Member Kircher reported on the November 20 MCE meeting and said he will provide a fuller update after the Council discusses whether to form an independent Finance Committee or instead expand the Executive Committee into an Executive and Finance Committee that would review financial issues quarterly. He noted that the September meeting was lengthy and focused on complex financial results, including concerns about gaps between budgeted and actual performance and some losses. A more detailed report will be presented at the December meeting.

Council Member Dowling reported on the TAM meeting, noting significant concerns about long traffic delays on Highway 101 in the Marin-Sonoma Narrows. TAM, along with the Sonoma County Transportation and Climate Authorities, sent a joint letter urging Caltrans to accelerate changes, rather than waiting six months or more; shorten the HOV lane hours to a more reasonable window—such as 6–9 a.m. instead of 5 a.m., and 3–6:30 p.m.; and ensure that any mitigation efforts do not worsen impacts on local streets, which are already seeing increased congestion.

8. Staff & Community Reports.

- a. Ross Property Owners Association – No report.**
- b. Town Manager**

Town Manager Johnson gave the following report:

The Town's third annual Turkey Trot Race is scheduled for Saturday. Starting on Ross School's blacktop, there will be a 10-K, a 5-K, a one mile and the always fun toddler dash. Please register at www.rossturkeytrot.com. The event is family-friendly and dressing up is encouraged with awards given. She and her sister won an award last year for their costumes, and they are geared up to win again, and have 'upped' their game in a big way.

She reported Ross weathered the morning storm well largely due to prevention and response efforts of Anthony Alcozer and Zach Baker in the Public Works Department. The Public Works Director also sent out an e-blast to Ross residents in the last couple of weeks to remind residents of the importance of preparing their properties for storms and resources for sandbags.

Lastly, she thanked Police Chief Pata who represented the Town at last week's Winter Preparedness Workshop, held at the County Office of Emergency Management last week.

Council Member Salter noted he emailed the Town Manager about outstanding items needing to be agendized and asked for a running list.

Town Manager Johnson said she had been out earlier in the week and currently keeps an informal list, but will work with the Town Clerk to provide regular updates to the Council. With the Election Code report no longer scheduled for December 11, she is coordinating with the Public Works Director to bring forward an item on the Ross Common, as requested by Mayor Pro Tem Robbins and Council Member Salter. She also confirmed that response-time data requested by Council Member Dowling will be presented on December 11, along with an update on staff's progress implementing the Facilities Master Plan. The January meeting will focus on the FORF presentation and the Council's 9212 report.

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.c 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, d, e and f. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

a. Minutes:

**Special Meeting and Closed Session, October 6, 2025
Regular Meeting, October 9, 2025**

b. Demands: September and October 2025

d. Town Council consideration to adopt Resolution No. 2543 accepting the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025 Annual Report on Development Impact Fees (AB 1600 Report).

e. Town Council consideration to authorize the Town Manager to execute a Professional Consulting Services Agreement with Area West Environmental, Inc. for the time and materials not-to-exceed fee of \$149,852 to provide construction-phase environmental support, monitoring, and reporting services for the Bolinas Storm Drain Improvements Phase 2 project.

- f. Town Council consideration to approve and authorize the Town Manager to execute a Certificate of Acceptance pursuant to Government Code Section 27281, accepting an irrevocable Offer of Dedication (IOD) from William and Jenny Reilly (Reilly) for a 772 square feet portion of APN 073-052-38 for public right of way purposes on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and authorize the recordation of said IOD with the Marin County Recorder.

Items Removed from Consent Agenda:

- c. Town Council to review and consider accepting the fiscal year 2025-26 first quarter, three-month, Financial Summary Report.

Council Member Salter suggested bringing the Financial Statements up in public session, especially now that they have a new Town Treasurer, so staff can present highlights.

Town Manager Johnson presented the FY 2025-26 first-quarter Financial Summary Report covering July through September. Operating revenues are \$19,000 above the year-to-date budget, and expenses are \$178,000 below budget, creating a positive variance of \$197,000. She noted this early variance is not predictive of year-end results due to uneven timing of building and planning activity and other expenditures.

The minor revenue increase is not significant, but expenses are lower largely because the Senior Building Inspector position has been vacant since May, with inspections handled by a contractor and other tasks absorbed by staff. Police Department expenses are also slightly under budget, though it is still early in the fiscal year to identify trends.

Council Member Salter asked about anticipated Fire Department savings. Town Manager Johnson confirmed the savings are on track, reflected in lower monthly payments tied to the Town's share of total costs.

Town Manager Johnson added that this coming year, the Fire Chief will work with the Fire Board to look at adjusting the shares, but this would need Board action which will happen this spring. Council Member Salter suggested the January Council meeting provide an explanation of some of these dynamics for the public's information, citing the lower service level and lower cost.

Mayor McMillan disagreed and said she agrees there are lower costs, but she would argue the service levels are the same or better.

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

Council Member Dowling moved, and Council Member Kircher seconded, to approve Consent Agenda Item c. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

End of Consent Agenda.

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

Administrative Agenda.

10. Town Council consideration to accept the investment report for the three-month period ended September 30, 2025.

Town Manager Johnson gave the staff report and overview of the item, stating the Council is asked to review and accept the report. Town Treasurer Jeff Kuhn is present to answer questions, and the Town's new Investment Broker, Aaron Bonck is also participating via Zoom. At the Town Treasurer's suggestion, she distributed a summary of holdings in US Bank investment account which was not included in the agenda packet and which will be included in future quarterly investment reports.

Mayor McMillan also requested and confirmed the report will also be posted on the Town's website.

Jeff Kuhn said what the Council received shows each positions in the US Bank portfolio. He explained it is ranked in order of their maturity date and the latest maturity is in September of 2030. Any variances disappear because they all mature at par, so the Town is doing quite well. In summary, the Town is sitting on \$22.5 million or so in its investments.

Council Member Salter suggested having a quarterly investment report generated that shows trailing performance for the year and the quarter, and asked if there is a benchmark associated with the portfolio being managed.

Aaron Bonck, Vice President, Time Value Investments, Inc., stated he could put together a quarterly investment report for the Town for the next quarterly investment presentation. The Council may want to have a discussion on the benchmark topic to figure out what will make sense because, by nature, public entity portfolios tend to be a bit trickier to benchmark because they vary a bit.

Mayor McMillan suggested and Town Manager Johnson agreed that staff can reach out to Mr. Bonck and the Town Treasurer for the matter to be discussed by the Finance Committee.

Mr. Bonck explained that market value fluctuations in the Town's investment portfolio are expected, but gains or losses remain unrealized as long as the Town holds securities to maturity. The portfolio is structured to minimize the risk of needing to sell early by using a laddered approach with maturities every six months, providing flexibility if funds are needed unexpectedly. This longer-term portfolio provides greater stability and predictability, reducing the Town's exposure to economic and market volatility.

Mayor McMillan and Council Members thanked Mr. Bonck and Mr. Kuhn for their report.

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

Council Member Kircher moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to accept the investment report for the three-month period ended September 30, 2025. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

11. Town Council consideration of the introduction and first reading of Ordinance No. 735, waive further reading of the Ordinance and refer to it by title only, an Ordinance of the Town of Ross amending Chapter 6.18 Smoking Regulations, Sections 6.18.020, 6.18.030, 6.18.065 and 618.070 of the Ross Municipal Code (RMC) to ban the sale of all tobacco products in the Town of Ross.

Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the ordinance which proposes amendments to Chapter 6.18.020, 030, 065, and 070 of the RMC to ban the sale of all tobacco products in the Town of Ross.

Council Member Salter said the Town already has regulations and also prohibits the sale to minors of any tobacco-related products. He asked and Ms. Feliciano reviewed what the Town has that currently exists per the redlined documents, and she noted the revised ordinance prohibits the sale and licensing of any and all tobacco products.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Daniela, high school senior and resident of Marin County, shared her complete support for approval of a local policy in Ross that will prevent the sale of tobacco and nicotine products. This policy's goal will protect the health and well-being of residents when it comes to Big Tobacco-targeted communities, which she described and asked the Council to adopt the ordinance.

Andrew, student at Redwood High School, said he has seen first-hand how common vaping has become among teens in the community, spoke about addiction, and voiced his support of the proposal to ban all commercial tobacco and nicotine products in Ross.

Isaac, a high school student in Marin County, spoke about nicotine harming youth in schools and requested the Council support the ordinance that would prevent the sale of tobacco and nicotine products.

Jeremiah Moth, a UCSF professor who has spent 30 years studying the tobacco industry, urged action to prevent a tobacco retailer from opening in Ross. He warned that despite flavor bans, many retailers still illegally sell addictive flavored products, as seen in nearby Marin communities and in Del Mar, where a new retailer was found selling banned items. He emphasized the public-health and environmental dangers of nicotine—an EPA-regulated neurotoxin—citing widespread litter from cigarette butts, the high nicotine load of modern vapes, rising use of nicotine pouches, and the fire risks associated with these products.

Pamela Granger, Co-chair of Tobacco-Free Sonoma County, praised the Council and said they have an opportunity to advance the vision of a world without the tobacco industry. She emphasized that reducing reliance on an addiction-based industry would benefit both public health and the environment.

Speaking for the National Association of Tobacco Outlets via Zoom, Sol Sico argued that a tobacco retailer ban in Ross is unnecessary because the Town currently has no such stores. She said adopting a ban now discourages future entrepreneurs, removes potential revenue for small businesses, and restricts lawful products based on hypothetical concerns. Ms. Sico added that youth issues center more on vaping, which is already addressed by strong state laws, and suggested the Town focus on education, parent involvement, and enforcing existing regulations if a retailer ever opens.

Council Member Dowling thanked all students and their supporters and emails the Council received for asking the Town to ban the sale of tobacco products in town. It is a well-organized effort and sends a strong message about the importance of the health of young people and residents of Ross, and fully supports Ordinance 735.

Council Member Salter emphasized that banning any legal product is a serious decision and the Council must consider the rights of all residents. He noted that Ross already requires retailers to obtain a tobacco license, which the Town can deny if needed. He cautioned against a complete ban, saying a future business—such as a cigar or humidor shop serving older adults—might reasonably seek a license. He urged the Council to consider the long-term implications of restricting future generations' choices.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins praised the students' activism and agreed that tobacco is harmful, but noted that banning sales in Ross—where no retailers currently exist—has limited practical impact. She supports the ordinance as a symbolic statement but cautioned against overstating its effect, noting tobacco will still be accessible elsewhere and only a cigar shop might ever consider opening locally. She encouraged students to focus on education efforts to discourage tobacco, alcohol, and drug use, which she said would have a far greater impact than the ban alone.

Council Member Kircher said he had not considered the point Council Member Salter made, but while acknowledging the validity of his comments, he will come down on the side of voting for the ordinance. He thinks it is a symbolic gesture, but it is an important gesture to youth. He thinks these tobacco products are very harmful and so he will support it.

Mayor McMillan said she agrees and also thanked the youth that brought this issue to the Town Council. It is symbolic and important to move forward and make this as difficult as possible for youth to rely on these products and get "sucked in." She thinks the Council can be proud and join with Tiburon and other jurisdictions across the state and be a leader and move forward. She then suggested a motion.

Council Member Dowling moved, and Council Member Kircher seconded, to introduce first reading of Ordinance No. 735, waive further reading of the Ordinance and refer to it by title only, an Ordinance of the Town of Ross amending Chapter 6.18 Smoking Regulations, Sections 6.18.020, 6.18.030, 6.18.065 and 618.070 of the Ross Municipal Code (RMC) to ban the sale of all tobacco products in the Town of Ross. Motion carried 4-1 (Salter no).

12. Town Council to receive a presentation from the Floodplain Administrator regarding the National Flood Insurance Program assessment of flood risk, and the resources and measures to reduce flood risk, for properties within the 100-year Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) in the Town of Ross.

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch gave the staff report and presentation regarding the National Flood Insurance Program assessment of flood risk and measures to reduce flood risk within the Town. He noted there will be an article in the Ross Review early next week to include information available to residents that the Flood Plain Administrator can offer to them for free as they try to assess flood risk within their property in the town.

Council Member Salter referred to the drainage project on Bolinas Avenue and asked and confirmed the Bolinas Drainage Improvements and upcoming Phase 2 project will help to alleviate flooding during major events.

Council Member Kircher asked how these dynamics change if Building Bridge #2 is removed. Director Simonitch said the highest flood risk to northern Ross is from the overflow overbank at Building Bridge #2. It will come down Shady Lane, cross over and hit the front yards of those houses that are fronting along the creek.

Council Member Salter raised concerns about development in flood-prone areas and suggested the Town explore limiting future development in vulnerable areas and consider restoring creeks to their natural function to reduce flood impacts.

Director Simonitch explained that while federal regulations prohibit new construction in regulatory floodways, Ross currently allows new and substantial remodel building in special flood hazard areas if structures are elevated one foot above base flood elevation. FEMA and the National Flood Insurance Program permit communities to adopt stricter standards such as higher elevation requirements or limits on expanding building footprints. He said the intent of presenting this information is to give the Council better tools for evaluating future projects based on the Town's priorities.

Town Manager Johnson confirmed that reducing impervious surfaces in development applications aligns with the Town's broader flood-mitigation goals. She also noted that the Drainage Master Plan identifies infrastructure needs that must be addressed to manage nuisance flooding and future storm events.

Council Member Kircher recalled earlier debates about creating a more natural channel in Frederick Allen Park, noting skepticism over whether the County or Flood District would act, and pointed out that the long-anticipated fish ladder remains unchanged.

Council Member Dowling, whose home flooded in 2005, expressed appreciation for the discussion. She observed that many homes along Poplar have since been elevated, and while a more natural landscape would be ideal, existing development limits what can realistically be restored.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Garyl Page, a longtime Shady Lane resident, recounted past flood events affecting her property, including severe flooding in 1986, which she believes should be included in Ross's historical flood record. She raised concerns about the Winship Bridge replacement, stating that the Town is responsible for mitigating any increased water-surface elevations caused by the project. She asked whether a no-rise certification had been filed for the replacement, whether it had been rescinded, and which modeling approach—FEMA's 1D model or a hybrid 1D/2D model—it applies to.

She also referenced a January 2024 inquiry from the Town's Floodplain Administrator regarding a potential 3.9-foot rise in water levels, significantly higher than the 3-foot discrepancy currently discussed between models. She requested clarification on whether the 46.8-inch figure was validated and, if not, what the highest confirmed difference is between the hybrid model and FEMA's 1D model, noting that she is asking about overall water-surface elevations across multiple flood event categories—not only the Base Flood Elevation.

Charles Goodman of 20 Sylvan Lane highlighted discrepancies between FEMA's 1D flood modeling and more accurate 2D models that show higher water elevations, questioning why the Town is not pressing FEMA to reconcile this difference, and raised concerns about the Bolinas bypass project, asking whether the pipe installed beneath the Winship Bridge would redirect additional water toward his property and increase flood risk on the Shady Lane side. He explained that the historic railroad right-of-way—elevated several feet above surrounding areas—now functions as a barrier dividing two floodways. Because water cannot easily flow back into the creek from the Shady Lane side, it travels down Poplar instead, rejoining the creek only farther downstream in Kentfield. He urged the Council to recognize how this legacy infrastructure shapes current flooding patterns.

Director Simonitch responded to Mr. Goodman's concerns regarding the Winship Bridge replacement and local flooding. He explained that a conditional "no rise" certification was prepared to ensure that the bridge and upstream channel design would not increase downstream flood risk. Final design is expected in 2026, after which the Town will submit the full certification to FEMA for review and approval.

Regarding the Bolinas bypass, the new 42-inch storm drain on Sir Francis Drake will supplement the existing outfall under the bridge, directing additional floodwaters to Corte Madera Creek

without diverting watersheds. He noted that Bolinas Avenue should drain before the main floodway passes, so the project will not increase flooding, and a Mitigated Negative Declaration confirmed no adverse impacts.

On the railroad right-of-way, Director Simonitch clarified that it largely separates the main channel from the Shady Lane floodway. However, near St. Anselm's Church parking lot and Sir Francis Drake, the grade levels converge, allowing some floodwaters to cross over, affecting a few properties. He emphasized that topography and flow dynamics have been carefully reviewed, encouraging the public to consider these technical details when evaluating flood risk in the area.

Council Member Salter referred to the 1D versus 2D maps and asked Director Simonitch to comment on this.

Director Simonitch addressed differences between the FEMA 1D flood model and a 2D model used in the SAFRR EIR, noting that the 2D model predicts water levels 1.5 to 3.5 feet higher between Barber Avenue and the Winship Bridge due to backwater effects, while downstream differences fluctuate, with the 2D model sometimes lower than FEMA's. He explained that the 1D model does not capture the dynamic "sloshing" of water between watersheds, making precise predictions difficult, especially when accounting for storm timing and intensity. Despite these discrepancies, FEMA's 1D models are sufficient for the Town's flood insurance and risk management purposes. The Town's primary goal and interest is in people who are building in Ross making sound choices as far as flood plain management and flood insurance and the Town needs to stick with what it has and let the process develop.

Council Member Kircher asked for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and Director Simonitch said he will distribute this to the Council. Council Member Salter recommended the Town encourage the County to create more of a forum for this information to share and educate the public. Mayor McMillan commented she believes there is a Flood Zone 9 meeting on November 20th at the County Board of Supervisors and suggested Council attendance and comment.

Town Manager Johnson cited the presentation as fantastic and she will determine how to put a video of the presentation with Director Simonitch's comments on the Town's website.

Mayor McMillan and Council Members thanked Director Simonitch for his presentation and supported the information be put forward to the public.

- 13. Town Council consideration to hold a public hearing, second reading and adopt 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. This Ordinance was introduced at a regular Council meeting on October 9, 2025.**

Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of Ordinance No. 732 which proposes adoption of the 2025 Edition of the California Fire Code and 2024 International Fire Code with specific local amendments and additions, which she described. Staff recommends the Council hold the public hearing, conduct the second reading, and adopt Ordinance No. 732, and Chief Mahoney and Senior Fire Inspector Rob Bastianon with RVFD are present to answer questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said in explaining the specific local amendments for Ross and asked what Item D refers to. Senior Fire Inspector Bastianon stated Item D is the fire apparatus access roads in Appendix D. It defines and lays out the dimensions of turn-arounds, widths of roads and other information, most of which has been in place for many years and apply to everybody in Marin County.

Council Member Salter referred to the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP), asked if this is something a homeowner would hire a consultant to help them adhere to and asked how this works in practice.

Senior Fire Inspector Bastianon said VMPs are not in the Fire Code but in the WUI code. If they are not capable of doing it, they would hire a professional just like any design or construction of a residence and can always hire professionals as needed. They have a standard on their website with samples and diagrams on how to build these, and the department can work with people to adhere to requirements.

Director Feliciano added that when applicants apply for planning projects they are referred to the VMP website that RVFD already has and this provides requirements for submission and examples of what the VMP should include.

Town Manager Johnson referred to website duplication noting that the Town is a member of the Ross Valley Fire Department and the Town depends upon them to provide this information on the RVFD website and the Town links to the RVFD website as a best practice.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to adopt 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. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

14. **Town Council consideration to hold a public hearing, second reading and adopt 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. This Ordinance was introduced at a regular Council meeting on October 9, 2025.**

Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the consideration to adopt Ordinance No. 733 to add Chapter 14.16 to the RMC and adopt the 2025 Edition of the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code (WUI) and 2024 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code with certain local amendments and additions. The adoption of the WUI Code will consolidate fire safety provisions previously scattered across the fire, building, and residential codes and puts them into one WUI code. Staff recommends the Council hold a public hearing, conduct the second reading, and adopt Ordinance No. 733, and Chief Mahoney and Senior Fire Inspector Rob Bastianon with RVFD are present to answer questions.

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

Council Member Dowling moved, and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to adopt 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. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

15. **Town Council consideration to hold a public hearing, second reading and adopt Ordinance No. 734 to update 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. This Ordinance was introduced at a regular Council meeting on October 9, 2025.**

Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the Council's consideration to adopt Ordinance No. 734 to update 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.

Council Member Salter said he sent staff an email from a resident who brought up the sprinkler system requirements—that all systems have to be electronically supervised by a listed fire control unit, and asked for an explanation of this.

Director Feliciano said she spoke with Senior Fire Inspector Rob Bastianon about this. When the sprinklers go off, it alerts Ross Valley Fire Department. This could occur when no one is there which alerts the Fire Department about the fire and/or issues no one would otherwise know about.

Council Member Salter said the resident also noted concerns with added work when things would trigger the over 50% construction. Director Feliciano said she also spoke with Senior Fire Inspector Bastianon about this and this has been a County standard for several years now, which is part of the "substantial remodel" definition.

Town Manager Johnson asked and confirmed that Council Member Salter's suggestion is to lower fire code standards, and she confirmed with staff that these requirements are in alignment with other Marin County jurisdictions.

Director Feliciano added that the best way to protect lives and property from fire is to have sprinklers installed, and there is always the opportunity for homeowners to do less than the 50% remodel which would not require them to install sprinklers.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if there were associated water costs for a large valve from the Water District because of the sprinklers. Director Feliciano said part of the fire plan review process is to determine whether there is enough water capacity for sprinklers and if improvements are needed, the Fire Department includes this in their comments.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Greg McFann via Zoom, CSG Contract Building Official, said he was available for questions.

Council Member Salter raised concerns about the difficulty and cost of renovating older homes, citing a resident whose tear-down property was red-tagged for proceeding without permits. He suggested the Town consider ways to make the permitting process quicker, simpler, and more affordable to encourage property improvements.

Council Members emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent standards and working with residents to ensure code compliance, agreed remodeling in Ross is complex, the need to be informed of requirements and costs in advance, and examples of projects undertaken which experienced extensive processes.

Council Member Dowling moved, and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to adopt Ordinance No. 734 to update 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 (5-0).

End of Administrative Agenda.

There are no Public Hearings on Planning Projects – Part 2.

16. No Action Items: (Mayor)

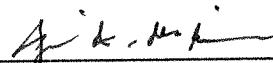
- a. **Council correspondence** – Mayor McMillan reported receiving a thank you card from 100-year-old Alice Reeves' family for recognizing her in the Ross Review.
- b. **Future Council items** – Council Member Salter asked that the issues with MCE be agendized. There was no second.
Council Member Salter asked that the changes in the Council Procedures Manual be agendized to approve changes from moving the election for November. Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded.
- c. **Council Member participation at the communication table at the Ross Post Office on the next Council meeting day** – Mayor McMillan volunteered for December.

17. Meeting Evaluation.

Council Member Dowling asked Council Members to be thoughtful about using provocative, biased, or disparaging language during meetings.

18. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.



Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:



Cyndie Martel, Town Clerk