

## Cyndie Martel

**From:** Olivier Bouan <obdcdb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:33 PM  
**To:** CouncilAll; Cyndie Martel  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Fire House

Hi there,

I'm re-forwarding some thoughts I shared from another email address, in case they didn't get through. I haven't seen them uploaded to the town website yet.

Please see below, thanks.

Olivier Bouan  
Owner of 1 Hill Road

Dear Town Council,

I have reviewed the Elections Code Section 9212 Fiscal Impact Report and the materials provided by the Friends of Ross Firehouse (FORF) regarding the upcoming decision on the historic fire station. I wanted to share a summary of my thoughts.

**1. The FORF Proposal** The FORF plan is compelling and ideal if feasible: cost savings, preservation, and the restoration of emergency services. A functional fire station would also provide the Town with stronger leverage in future negotiations with the Ross Valley Fire Department (RVFD) or other JPA partners to right-size our financial contributions. However, the project's technical feasibility remains ambiguous after reading both reports, with competing claims between the Town's staff report and FORF's consultants regarding Essential Services Act (ESA) compliance and site constraints. What would it take to bring this to ground?

Additionally, on a much more minor note, the FORF proposal appears to lack adequate parking for staff and visitors. Might this be solved with an agreement with MAGC?

**2. Recommendations for the Town Facilities Master Plan** Should the FORF proposal prove infeasible, leaving the Town Plan (Concept B) as the remaining option, I believe more work is needed to secure public support for a bond measure:

- **Visualization:** I strongly urge the Council to commission and release architectural renderings—even conceptual ones—of the proposed Civic Center. Visualizing the end result might assuage some hesitation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** I would like to see the Town pursue opportunities to reduce costs and generate revenue through private capital. Specifically, regarding the housing units required on-site (or on other Town properties), are there developers willing to build and manage these units to offset the Town's capital outlay?

**3. The Ballot Initiative** Despite my interest in the FORF plan, I am opposed to the idea of a Ballot Initiative. I don't like the idea of inscribing an unfunded liability into the town code in this manner and would prefer a responsible, thoughtful, humble Town Council and staff come to the most reasonable decision in the best interest of the town. Furthermore, I would strongly encourage all town residents to "disagree and commit" once we have clarity on the feasibility of the FORF plan. Legal battles (CEQA or otherwise) to defend the firehouse to the bitter end will be the least productive use of taxpayer funds out of either option discussed.

**4. Stepping back:** Finally, I ask that the Council continue to consider a few adjacent thoughts:

- **Wildfire Resilience:** We've established that the fire station offers marginal benefit to wildfire resilience. However, we can't lose focus on the proven steps we can take as a town to improve resilience. Please continue prioritizing "Zone 0" defensible space, home hardening, and (to a lesser degree, but important for other reasons as well) utilities undergrounding.

- **Senior Living:** As we look at town planning, I encourage the Council to facilitate the development of attractive, accessible residences in the downtown area. Optimizing for senior living near the town center allows older residents to age in place with immediate proximity to amenities and emergency response, since medical emergencies represent a large portion of our response calls. Attractive senior living options would also free up existing housing stock for younger families.
- **Lobbying for Improved Regulations:** It's clear from both presentations that Ross is constrained by regulations and mandates that seem unnecessary. I'd love to see the town push the state or other authorities update these regulations to give towns like Ross more options. For example, authorizing and encouraging the provision of smaller, more nimble fire trucks, similar to those in Europe, that could reduce the space required for a fire station, reduce turn radii, increase response times, etc.

Thank you for your time and your service to Ross. And thank you to FORF for leaving no stone unturned to ensure we build the best Ross we can.

Sincerely,  
Olivier Bouan