

January 7, 2026

To Mayor McMillan, Council Member Kircher and Council Member Dowling,

Thank you for the time and consideration you have dedicated to the Town Council. Town governance is a process not a project. The majority of Ross residents appreciate the accountability and responsibility required to sit in an elected Council seat, face the public and engage in the actual process of governing a Town. Thank you for that accountability.

You have the unenviable task to consider blowing up all the work you and the Town staff have done for more than two years and negotiate the outcome of the Town's Master Plan with an unelected citizen group. FORF supporters who say they have the upmost respect for your hard work and do not want to contribute to divisiveness in the Town have not walked a mile in your shoes. Residents like me are on the wrong side of the "us/them" divide in our community because we suspect the long term issues are more complex and expensive than FORF presents.

Jenson Hughes framed this debate accurately: ***"The community must determine their risk tolerance and how much they are willing to pay for that."*** Let's agree that we do not all agree on our risk tolerance and how much we are willing to pay for it. FORF's tagline should read: *"We are 400+ Ross residents who want to see essential public safety services restored to Ross (and we have no idea what the actual long term costs will be, we have no leadership credibility to negotiate with local fire partners, and we don't include our police and paramedics as emergency services)."*

With that said, we are in this position because the Town's plan has taken too long to materialize as costs have escalated dramatically. Frustration is widespread about this, and FORF deserves some credit for putting forward an alternative with cost estimates from Alten Construction. I've argued that new construction for public safety buildings is better than rehabilitating, and a private cost estimate is not the same as a public bid. But I agree that the cost and time escalations for the

Town Master Plan may have changed the calculus, and this is a possible alternative that deserves consideration. I encourage you to study the plan, ensure it complies with the Essential Services Act and meets the site and circulation constraints, housing element and flood issues, and consider rebuilding the Town's Civic Center in two phases.

Do the majority of Ross residents want to pay to operate a fire station? This is where FORF and I disagree on the economics, logistics, leadership and long term consequences of this decision, which boils down to: **"You break it, you fix it."** Citygate's start up and operating cost estimates—significantly higher than Jenson Hughes—should be the last and universally trusted word on potential costs. A three firefighter model is non-negotiable. The assumption that the JPA can be magically re-negotiated with all the goodwill Council Members Salter and Robbins have accrued with the RVFD and Marin County fire community is laughable. The cavalier assumption that Ross is one of the richest towns in the country and therefore the residents are willing to pay more taxes and philanthropically fund emergency public services is tone deaf. The inconvenient fact is that many residents haven't spoken up because they are quietly questioning the megaphone message that the alternatives are simple and won't cost extra money.

I hope the Town Council, FORF leadership and their vociferous supporters are ready step out of their silos and have a pragmatic, two-way conversation about the complexity and economic commitment of a small number of residents committing long term to the operating costs of a fire station. In my 50+ years of being a Ross resident, it feels these days more like Mar-a-Lago than Mayberry. I may have to move to Belvedere, an equal super zip code, who figured out the economics of a small town fire station a long time ago.

Sincerely,

Molly Gamble

