

Michael F Rosenbaum
14 Madrona Ave
Ross, CA 94957

Madam Mayor and Members of the Town Council:

My name is Michael Rosenbaum, and I have resided at 14 Madrona Ave since 1987. I am addressing you today to present my significant objections to the proposed Ross Fire Department (FORF) initiative.

My concerns are organized around three critical areas: Financial Sustainability, Funding Integrity, and Project Procurement.

I. Financial Sustainability and Full Disclosure

The fiscal estimates for an independent Ross Fire Department raise serious red flags concerning long-term financial viability:

- **Unsustainable Parcel Tax Burden:** Estimates from FORF (via Jensen Hughes) put the annual operational cost at nearly \$3 million. With approximately 835 parcels in Ross, this necessitates a perpetual annual parcel tax of almost \$3,600 per parcel. Furthermore, Citygate Associates suggests average annual operations are closer to \$4.2 million, which would inflate the required parcel tax to over \$5,000 per household.
- **Cumulative Tax Obligation:** This perpetual operating tax of \$5,000 would be *in addition* to any separate parcel tax required to finance the construction of the new Ross FD facility (bond financing).
- **Requirement for Overt Disclosure:** A recurring annual tax increase of this magnitude is highly unlikely to pass a voter referendum. The Town must overtly disclose and rigorously verify the full, long-term financial commitment that Ross property owners will bear, well in advance of the election.
- **Long-Term Solvency Concerns:** I have profound doubts about FORF's ability to secure the necessary capital for both construction and sustainable, ongoing operations, especially without public evidence of unequivocal financial pledges from ultra-high-net-worth individuals such as Ellison, Musk, Zuckerberg, or Benioff relocating to Ross or formally committing funds.

II. Funding Integrity and Mitigating Donor Influence

To safeguard the public interest, mandatory financial transparency measures must be established:

- **Mandatory Escrow Requirement:** All pledged FORF contributions intended for the Fire Department's construction must be placed into an escrow account *before* the initiative is put before the public for a vote.
- **Risk of Undue Influence:** Without this fundamental financial protection, major donors could leverage their contributions to seek undue influence or preferential treatment from the Town Council. This might manifest as demands—such as the construction of private amenities like a pickleball court—as a condition of their donation, potentially obligating the Town to agree to unreasonable stipulations.

III. Procurement and Contracting Methodology Concerns

The Town must adopt a sound and clearly defined strategy for this significant capital project:

- **Bidding Strategy Definition:** The Town of Ross (TOR) must clearly define its bidding strategy. Will it employ a design-build model (selecting an integrated architect/contractor team based on a verified price), or will competitive bidding be launched *after* the architect completes the Schematic Design phase?
- **Flawed Contracting Approach:** A Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) or fixed-bid contract is procedurally premature. Establishing a credible GMP requires the architect (BRW) to finalize the FD design to a complete set of Schematic Design (SD) or Design Development (DD) level plans, followed by a competitive bidding process among pre-qualified contractors.
- **Risk of Sub-Optimum Bidding:** Proceeding with incomplete architectural drawings, as FORF has done with BRW and Alten Construction, is highly likely to solicit a low-ball bid from the selected contractor. This methodology allows the contractor to subsequently attribute any cost overruns or construction defects to inadequate architectural plans, thereby shifting the responsibility for unforeseen costs onto the Town.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael F Rosenbaum