

Cyndie Martel

From: Robert Herbst <rherbst@jhsproperties.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:24 PM
To: Christa Johnson; Cyndie Martel
Cc: Julie McMillan; C. William Kircher; Mathew Salter; Teri Dowling; Elizabeth Robbins
Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comments to staff report for agenda item 12: Consideration of Formation of an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee
Attachments: Working Group Proposal.pdf

Dear Mayor & Town Council,

Friends of Ross Firehouse has several concerns with the proposed structure and scope of work of the proposed Ad Hoc Advisory Committee.

First, we don't believe it will be productive to have Town Councilmembers involved. The Town Council is clearly fractured on this issue, so their involvement is likely to trigger more infighting and paralysis. We believe, as outlined in our attached proposal, that this should be a Working Group of volunteer Ross real estate professionals with experience in commercial design, development, and construction. Possible list of names: Joey Buckingham, Dan Winey, Bill Poland, Charlie Goodman, Ed Dong, Jeff Koblick, Bob Herbst. Perhaps the Town's new Civic Center project coordinator can chair the group. We want people from both sides of the issue because we believe the only way to move forward is to achieve consensus through collaboration. We believe the first job of this group should be to determine if the state registered historic Ross firehouse can be renovated in a cost effective, code compliant manner that meets Ross' public safety needs.

We are also concerned that the scope of work is too broad by including firehouse operating cost assessments. This is essentially a political decision that will need to be negotiated with partner Towns, Cities, and Fire Districts. We agree that the Town of Ross can and should begin those discussions immediately, but this is not an appropriate task for an ad hoc committee lacking Town authority. One possible first step for the Town would be to hire Stu Gary from Citygate Associates (the Town's public safety consultant) to prepare an assessment of a fair share operating cost if Ross were to re-open our firehouse. Stu stated clearly at the Jan. 8 public hearing that Ross Valley FD is significantly understaffed with only 9 firefighters at 3 stations, so RVFD may welcome a 4th firehouse at Ross. He also said Ross residents should be highly concerned about the fairness of our existing RVFD contract that has Ross paying 21% of RVFD costs while we comprise less than 10% of district population and 7% of district incidents. AND we no longer have our own firehouse. By comparison the Town of Belvedere (who also doesn't have their own firehouse), pays Tiburon FD in exact proportion to the number of structures in the two respective towns. Our cost share to RVFD under this same formula would be less than 10%. Each of 4 firehouses in the Central Marin Fire District will pay \$3.4 million next year. Ross is already paying \$2.7 million to RVFD. This is a solvable financial issue, but it needs political work that should be separate from the construction related issues.

We look forward to a productive discussion on Thursday. I am available to meet and may be reached by cell at 415-505-1470.

Best regards,

Bob Herbst-President
Friends of Ross Firehouse

February 4, 2026

Town of Ross
31 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
Ross, CA 94957
Sent via email

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Friends of Ross Firehouse, for consideration by the Town at their upcoming February 12 Town Council meeting. We understand that the February 12 agenda may include discussions on formation of a Working Group to further explore the feasibility of renovating our state registered historic Public Safety Building.

Friends would like to thank the Town Council and Staff for providing us the opportunity to present our public safety improvement plan to the Town on January 8. There was clear and energetic public support for our plan at that hearing, and we were further encouraged that the Town Council expressed support for creation of a Working Group to further assess the feasibility of the renovation plan.

Attached is our draft proposal for the initial activities of this Working Group. We envision it as an ad hoc group of volunteer Ross real estate professionals with hands on experience in commercial design, development and construction. Members should include professionals on both sides of the issue, as it's important to develop a meaningful consensus on renovation feasibility. The goal is development of a common accepted set of facts, plans and cost estimates which the Working Group reports to the Town Council on an advisory basis only.

We have an opportunity before us to form a Working Group that allows us to work collaboratively together to find mutually agreeable solutions that enhance future public safety in Ross. We sincerely hope the Town Council accepts this partnership offer, and we look forward to rolling up our sleeves together in order to create a safer future for Ross.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Herbst". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Herbst" clearly distinguishable.

Bob Herbst-President
Friends of Ross Firehouse

Public Safety Building Working Group

DRAFT (2.4.26)

Goal: Reach consensus on feasibility and cost to renovate and re-use state registered historic Public Safety Building. The focus of this working group is to evaluate the rehabilitation of the building to house Police, Fire and Paramedics. The goal is to produce a rehabilitation plan that meets the program requirements of each function while following codes and regulations and avoiding a lengthy CEQA review.

Task 1: Building Inspection. Active exploratory building examination by group members, where everyone can evaluate the subfloor crawlspaces, attic spaces, and wall spaces, in order to develop common understanding of actual condition of structure of building. Much focus has been on aesthetic conditions such as mold, leaky windows, old wiring and pipes, etc. Friends plan is to rip that all out down to the studs and build brand new from the inside, while retaining historic exterior.

Task 2: Local Contractor Inspection. As proof of concept, hire local contractor to demolish interior of the shuttered right building wing, stripping it down to the studs and exposing all floor and attic spaces. The wing has been closed for many years due to mold and other issues, and most photos of building degradation come from this area. If this area is free of major structural problems, it is likely the entire firehouse structure can be renovated successfully.

Task 3: Code & Regulation Exploration. Examine codes and regulations governing re-construction of public safety facilities. Issues include flood, seismic, circulation, ESA, ADA, CEQA, along with space functionality for modern police/fire/paramedic services. Focus shall be on achieving the same or better services as historically provided, while staying within the existing Town capital budget of approximately \$12 million and building footprint. Task 3 can be performed simultaneously with Task 2.

Task 4: Schematic Design and Site Improvements. Working group to collaboratively program and progress the building interior space plan using the BRW concept plan as a starting point. Design for access, circulation, egress and program uses of Police, Paramedics, and Fire. Design for a public safety and functional building as determined by the town. Conceptually review architectural, structural, and MEP to seismically rehabilitate the building. Address ESA, ADA, flood control measures, historic preservation and sustainability.

Additionally, assess the proposed site improvements with civil engineering, utilities, infrastructure, geotechnical, landscaping and parking layout in keeping with ADA and flood control requirements. Plans should be consistent with CEQA requirements regarding historic resources.

Conclude with a complete schematic design package to be competitively priced with several mutually selected qualified local general contractors. Create a bid spreadsheet to review various bids. Summarize design and pricing to present to the town council.

Group Members: Ross real estate and construction professionals: Bob Herbst, Ed Dong, Jeff Koblick, Joey Buckingham and others nominated by the Town and mutually agreed upon. All members of this working group must have real estate or construction expertise. No Town Council members on the working group.

The goal is to build consensus among the professionals from both sides of the issue based on mutually observed conditions and mutually agreed facts. Group may engage consultants as needed.

Budget: TBD.