

REGULAR MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026
Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

1. 6:00 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 Where the Town Council Acts in an Adjudicatory or Quasi-Judicial Capacity

None.

4. Open Time for Public Expression.

None.

5. Presentation of Proclamation to retiring Town Clerk Cyndie Martel

Mayor McMillan read and presented the Proclamation recognizing Town Clerk Cyndie Martel upon her retirement from the Town and provided an overview of her career highlights. A round of applause followed, and Council Members wished her well in her retirement.

6. Presentation of Proclamation to Anabella Serrano, retired Post Mistress, Town of Ross

Mayor McMillan read and presented the Proclamation recognizing Anabella Serrano, retired Post Mistress for the Town of Ross, and recognized her career highlights. A round of applause followed, and Council Members wished her well. Ms. Serrano then introduced those in attendance.

7. Presentation of 5-year service award to Chief Raffaello Pata. (Johnson)

Town Manager Johnson read and presented a 5-year Service Award to Police Chief Raffaello Pata. A round of applause followed, and Chief Pata provided brief remarks, noting his retirement celebration will be held at the end of April.

8. Mayor's Report.

In late February, Town Manager Johnson released additional reports providing further analysis of FORF's reports and Slide Deck presented at the January 8 Council meeting. (The Town's Elections Code Report analyzing the fiscal impacts of FORF's initiative was made available in early January.)

Key conclusions are:

- The FORF Slide Deck is appropriate for illustrative and advocacy purposes.
- It does not constitute a technical demonstration of feasibility or compliance.
- It should not be relied upon as evidence that the initiative can be implemented:
 - At the stated cost (it does not identify a viable funding source for capital costs and on-going (into perpetuity) operational expenses),

- On the implied timeline,
- Without significant displacement,
- Without material CEQA and permitting risk.
- Further technical work would be required.

I encourage you to review these detailed reports: https://www.townofrossca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/town_council/page/4537/forf_submittal_package.pdf.

At the February Council meeting, Ross Treasurer Jeff Kuhn (as a private citizen) and Friends of the Ross Firehouse (FORF) President Bob Herbst offered to form a Citizens Advisory Committee to address the Ross Fire Station, including fire operating services, and the other facilities at the Civic Center (Police, Paramedics, Administrative and Public Works staff). The Citizens Advisory Committee has been meeting frequently; thanks to Jeff, Bob, and Committee members Ed Dong, Jeff Koblick, Joey Buckingham, Tom Gaffney (replacing Bill Cahill), Bill Poland and Dan Winey. The Council looks forward to receiving their report soon.

Ross Town Council members belong to the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers (MCCMC), with ten other jurisdictions, to promote cooperation and good working relationships. Last month MCCMC met at College of Marin's (COM) new state of the art Center for Student Success in Kentfield. This year marks COM's 100th Anniversary, which Marin residents supported in 1926 with a 15¢ parcel tax. Today COM serves 7,000 students each semester and has the highest UC transfer acceptance rate in Northern California. Assemblyman Damon Connolly outlined proposed legislation, and CEO Omar Carrera discussed Canal Alliance's work to help break the generational cycle of poverty for Latino immigrants and their families.

Finally, tonight the Town celebrated two dedicated Ross community members' retirements: US Postmistress Anabella Serrano and Town Clerk Cyndie Martel. We presented proclamations to recognize, thank and wish Ana and Cyndie well in their next chapters.

9. Council Committee & Liaison Report:

Council Member Dowling gave the following report:

- The Transportation Authority of Marin is finalizing a 5% adjustment to the Measure AA ½-cent Transportation Sales Tax Expenditure Plan. The tax generated about \$35 million for transportation projects in Marin.
- The public comment period for this adjustment just closed and she and the Ross Town Manager submitted a letter to TAM supporting the increase in the Crossing Guard Program but had questions about the reduction in the Local Transportation Infrastructure funding which would fund a new category called Reimagined Roadways.
- The reduction in the Local Transportation Infrastructure funds would reduce funding to all Marin cities and towns. The Town of Ross currently only receives about \$66,000 annually so any decrease will be impactful. This funding is for sidewalks and local streets and roads. These are non-competitive funds, so we count on them every year. Discussions are currently ongoing with the TAM staff about this issue.

- This amended Expenditure Plan will require a majority vote of 50+% of Marin cities and towns as well as a majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. In early Summer, TAM will present this Expenditure Plan to the Town of Ross for a vote.

10. Staff & Community Reports

a. Ross Property Owners Association

None.

b. Town Manager

Town Manager Johnson introduced Chief Pata to provide the Council with updates.

Police Chief Pata reported that the department is now fully staffed, enabling improved coverage, including simultaneous school monitoring, traffic enforcement, and timely response to calls. Progress is underway in selecting the next Police Chief, with updates expected soon.

He highlighted a significant elder abuse case involving financial theft, noting extensive investigative efforts and collaboration, including support from a forensic accounting volunteer team. Enforcement efforts have increased, with a focus on speeding reduction, parking violations, and unregistered vehicles, contributing to improved safety outcomes.

Additionally, the department assisted a neighboring jurisdiction with a school bomb threat, successfully resolving the situation, and took precautionary measures regarding a registered sex offender visiting the area by coordinating with schools and relevant authorities.

Council Member Salter asked for an update on the License Plate Readers.

Town Manager Johnson stated staff has still not been able to resolve insurance issues with the company, and they are refusing to provide insurance for the Town. She then explained insurance requirements, her work with the Town Attorney, and privacy issues Flock has had.

Chief Pata confirmed that while alternative vendors exist, the County primarily operates on the Flock system, meaning use of another provider would limit interoperability and access to shared data with neighboring jurisdictions. He also noted differences in leasing terms. Positively, agencies using the system have successfully shared information that has aided local tracking efforts.

Council Member Dowling thanked the Chief and his staff for working on the elder abuse incident and suggested having the FAST team hold a presentation on elder abuse. Chief Pata agreed and said to have had three cases in the last year for such a small town was surprising and disappointing.

Council Member Salter asked and confirmed that the Town Manager will soon be able to email a list of on-going agenda items to the Council.

11. Consent Agenda

The following items will be considered in a single motion, unless removed from the Consent Agenda. Council Member Salter requested Item 11c. be pulled, and there were no other 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 Closed Session, February 12, 2026
Regular Meeting, February 12, 2026**
- b. Demands: January 2026**
- d. Town Council to consider adopting Resolution No. 2612 re-appointing Laura Dewar to serve another two-year term on the Town of Ross Advisory Design Review Group (term to end August 13, 2027).**
- e. Town Council to consider authorizing the Town Manager to renew the 2020 Professional Services Agreement with Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth for Bond Counsel services.**
- f. Town Council to review the project plans and consider authorizing the Public Works Director to advertise for public construction bids for the Shady Lane Safe Routes to School Project.**

Item Removed from Consent Agenda:

- c. Town Council to review the information provided in the 6th Cycle Housing Element Update, Annual Progress Report and General Plan Annual Progress Report for 2025 and authorize its submittal to the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and to the State Department of Housing and Community Development with respect to the Housing Element Annual Progress Report.**

Council Member Salter asked for an update, noting that a public comment email was received.

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano presented an overview of the 2025 Annual Progress Report for the 6th Cycle Housing Element, noting it will be submitted to HCD by April 1. She reported that the Town issued permits for 7 housing units in 2025 (all ADUs) and is slightly ahead of its target of 8 units per year. She also highlighted an increase in vacant lots and outlined upcoming implementation efforts.

In response to Council Member Salter, she explained that a few ADUs are deed-restricted, while most are considered affordable based on State-provided criteria tied to unit size, which the Town uses for tracking affordability.

Council Member Salter requested that future reports include AMI-based affordability categories for ADUs, noting smaller units may qualify as affordable. Ms. Feliciano confirmed that such categories are included in the Annual Progress Report and agreed to incorporate this detail into future staff reports.

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

Council Member Salter suggested work to achieve the lower AMI numbers, and Mayor McMillan confirmed that the 9 affordable units proposed at the Civic Center will help dramatically with these lower affordability numbers.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins 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.

- 12. Town Council to receive an update regarding the implementation of the adopted Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and discuss any desired changes or additions to the CIP for the upcoming fiscal year. Based on the discussion, a final draft version of the CIP will be included for consideration in the fiscal year 2026-2027 (FYE27) budget discussions.**

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch gave the staff report and update regarding the implementation of the adopted Five-Year CIP. Before the budget process, the Council can discuss some alternative projects to see how they can fit into the CIP and how funding looks for upcoming budget discussions.

He then presented the purpose and goals of the CIP, projects underway and completed, the 5-year look ahead which was discussed in June 2025, the 5-year to 2031 CIP funding sources and fund balances, challenges with facilities and funding, and options and alternatives for CIP projects and funding of them.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins emphasized that dogs are already prohibited on the field and questioned tying field restoration to dog restrictions. Staff clarified that while dogs are not the only issue, restricting access would help protect maintenance investments. She also raised concerns about the safety of infiltration systems, while staff explained they are a common stormwater management approach and not considered a significant health risk.

Discussion clarified that the proposed interim restoration would cover about 20% of the Common. Staff assessed the field's current condition as improved (now a B-) but still in need of restoration due to underlying structural issues. The Common was identified as the most-used public space after major roads.

Council Member Salter stressed the field's importance to residents and questioned broader infrastructure priorities, including undergrounding costs. Staff noted that undergrounding remains tied to overall planning decisions and public safety needs.

Council Member Dowling asked about delaying major work; staff indicated the field could remain functional short-term but requires eventual restoration. Broader priorities were emphasized, particularly the Civic Center and public safety facilities, which staff described as critical due to poor conditions and long-term operational impacts.

Mayor McMillan highlighted financial constraints, noting reduced future surpluses and reliance on careful budgeting. Staff added that funding outlooks are tightening, with fewer excess revenues expected. Potential stormwater grant funding remains uncertain and long-term, with project implementation likely several years away.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Ross School Superintendent David Rice stated the school can accommodate any field closure scenario and will support the Town's decision, noting their existing contribution toward maintenance but remaining neutral on project options.

Patrick Quigney, Ross Valley Little League Board Member, highlighted significant public backing, available organizational and financial support, and argued that concerns about dogs and e-bikes should not delay the Common project. He also cited a faster and lower-cost comparable project in San Anselmo and noted community members have expressed strong support for field improvements.

Tony Sisano, representing Ross Valley Little League, emphasized that current field conditions negatively impact play and do not reflect the community's standards, underscoring the benefits of a well-maintained field for youth development and overall experience.

Mayor McMillan closed the public comment period and cited the two issues for discussion as the Ross Common and the Age Friendly Sports Court at Frederick Allen Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if the Council was voting on whether to renovate the field or not.

Town Manager Johnson stated staff is asking the Council to discuss any desired changes or additions to the CIP for the upcoming fiscal year. Based on the discussion, a final draft version of the CIP will be included for consideration in the 2026/27 budget discussions.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins opposed the infiltration field due to uncertain grant funding and supported advancing the Common improvement concurrently with other projects. She argued it could build community support for future funding and emphasized safety concerns as a reason to prioritize repairs.

Council Member Salter opposed tying the project to Civic Center funding, emphasizing that funds should directly benefit residents. He supported immediate improvements to the Common, citing safety, community use, and strong public backing, and noted that available savings are insufficient for the larger Civic Center project.

Council Member Kircher highlighted limited Town resources and competing priorities, supporting field restoration in principle but preferring input from the Advisory Committee first. He suggested exploring cost-effective approaches, consulting other jurisdictions on issues like dogs and e-bikes, and considering private funding, while cautioning against compromising other essential services.

Council Member Dowling supported retaining the Ross Common project on the CIP but recommended delaying action until adequate funding is available, prioritizing other Town needs in the meantime.

Mayor McMillan said she wants input from the Committee before making a decision on the Ross Common, emphasizing the need to understand scope, costs, and bonding capacity. She noted visible improvements since December but stressed that public safety facilities and staff workspaces are higher priorities. While supportive of baseball and community contributions—such as potential Little League donations—she highlighted the Town’s limited revenue and the need for careful spending.

Council Member Salter noted that a new plan would trigger a lengthy environmental review, delaying the project 1–2 years. He emphasized strong resident support and suggested completing the field project could help secure public approval for a future Civic Center bond measure, cautioning that ignoring community priorities could harm funding prospects.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins argued that both the Common renovation and Civic Center projects could proceed concurrently, noting the \$1 million cost is small compared to the \$25–30 million Civic Center project and that the Common could be renovated quickly to meet community priorities.

Mayor McMillan suggested waiting for the Committee’s recommendation in April or May to better assess the Civic Center scope before making final budget decisions. Mayor Pro Tem Robbins agreed that waiting for Committee input is reasonable as long as it does not delay moving forward with the Common renovation if the Council concurs.

Town Manager Johnson said the budget is a living document and the consensus she is hearing on the item was that there was not support for looking into the infiltration idea from Mayor Pro Tem Robbins, but she did not hear the other Council members, so she asked for direction on this.

Mayor McMillan said she thinks the Town should always be exploring grants for anything and it sounded like from Mr. Simonitch that it was a vague concept so there is not a lot of confidence. However, sometimes pennies from heaven happen so possibly that could happen.

Town Manager Johnson said staff will keep track of grant opportunities. She cited consensus from the Council to eventually complete a whole project for the Common instead of partial projects and that three Council Members are interested in waiting to hear what the Citizens Advisory Committee comes back with before adding a complete renovation project into the CIP. She stated that during the April 23 budget workshop staff will bring a draft budget forward however the Council will not take final action until the June meeting, noting that the Council may also make a budget amendment at any time.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said when looking at uses of the Common several years ago, they heard from residents that they liked the Common the way it was and to keep it that way, and an infiltration system is a drastic change.

Mayor McMillan said the infiltration system might be much more subtle and she suggested continuing to look for grants, and Council Member Dowling agreed.

Council Member Kircher suggested some outreach to San Anselmo about what they paid for their Memorial Park Turf project which was about \$450,000. Town Manager Johnson said staff has already done outreach to them, but she does not believe staff asked them about the E-bike issue.

Mr. Simonich stated that e-bikes have not been an issue at their field, largely because they are not used there due to the fact the field is fenced. He noted that the Memorial Park project experienced design delays and initial turf problems due to soil chemistry, which required additional costs to resolve. While the field reopened within 5–6 months due to community demand, he indicated it would have benefited from a longer closure period to allow proper root establishment. He cautioned that, despite useful insights, the project faced challenges.

Council Member Kircher said he would be interested in finding out if that project was materially different, such as less grading, less removal of concrete and asphalt, etc. that could drive up costs. Mr. Simonich said it is a similar restoration project, but he did not think they had to do the deep excavation for mediation to get it to drain well and could look into this further.

Council Member Dowling supported exploring a full renovation once clearer cost estimates are available, noting potential private funding could offset Town expenses. Mayor McMillan concurred with this approach.

Mayor McMillan moved onto the Age Friendly Sports facility at Frederick Allen Park.

Council Member Dowling said she would love to see a bocce ball court there, but it is not as important as the Common. Therefore, she would suggest putting it off until the Common is done. Mayor Pro Tem Robbins agreed.

Council Member Salter agreed and said he also liked locating it on the side of the tennis courts. On a different note, he has received comments from people who walk on the path to the tennis courts; bikes and E-bikes are there as well as pedestrians, and he wondered if signage or expansion of the pathway could also be considered as part of the bocce ball court.

Council Member Kircher agreed the bocce ball court is a nice project, but it should not be done until they know what will be done with the Common. Mayor McMillan agreed and thought there are some residents who may help build a pollinator garden in Frederick Allen Park who are called "Refugia," based in Corte Madera, and this would be cost-neutral to the Town.

Council Member Salter questioned why undergrounding was not included in the Civic Center project.

Mr. Simonich explained that undergrounding is funded through the same source and tied to the Civic Center project, including \$300,000 in Rule 20A credits. He noted that advancing or separating it would require plan amendments. He added that coordination with PG&E is ongoing, and a timely decision is needed to proceed to bid this year. While emphasizing its importance, he also clarified that undergrounding is not directly tied to Concept B of the Civic Center plan.

Mayor McMillan asked if there were further CIP projects staff need direction on, and there were none.

End of Administrative Agenda.

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

13. No Action Items: (Mayor)

- a. **Council correspondence** – None.
- b. **Future Council items** – Mayor Pro Tem Robbins requested agendaizing the upcoming November paramedic parcel tax renewal and to discuss how to run the campaign. Town Attorney Stock stated the Council cannot discuss how to run the campaign.

Mayor McMillan noted that the Citizens Advisory Committee may present in May, but Council Member Kircher will be unavailable, and asked staff and the Council to consider rescheduling the May meeting to earlier in the month or the last week of April.

Council Member Salter requested an item to provide funding for the Committee to obtain expert opinions. Mayor McMillan and Town Manager Johnson clarified that the Town Manager can authorize up to \$50,000, and any amount above that would require Council approval as a separate agenda item.


- c. **Council Member participation at the communication table at the Ross Post Office on the next Council meeting day** – Mayor Pro Tem Robbins and Council Member Dowling volunteered for April 2.

19. Meeting Evaluation.

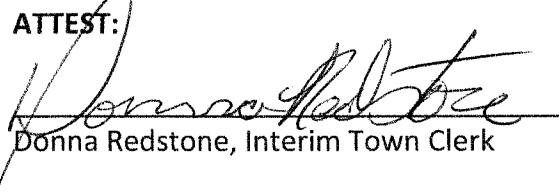
Council Members reflected positively on the meeting's efficiency.

20. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.



Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:


Donna Redstone, Interim Town Clerk