REGULAR MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL
THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2026
Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

1. 6:03 p.m. Commencement.

Mayor Julie McMillan; Mayor Pro Tem Elizabeth Robbins; Council Members Teri Dowling, Bill Kircher, Jr., and Mathew Salter; Town Manager Christa Johnson; Town Attorney Ben Stock; Town Clerk Zach Koblick de León.

2. Posting of agenda/changes to agenda.

Town Manager Johnson confirmed the agenda was posted according to government requirements, and she requested Item 10.c be removed from the agenda which will return on June 11, 2026.

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.

Diane Rudden said she did not realize that Bloom Delights started in 1981, then have been in Ross at their current location, and she loves that they are in downtown Ross.

Randy DeVoto, Kentfield, member of St. Anselms Parish at 987 Shady Lane, said restoration of their bell tower project construction has begun and will run through the middle of November and they have made provisions for alternate parking, noise compliance, and adherence to all Ross requirements for construction.

5. Presentation of Proclamation for retiring Police Chief, Raffaello Pata

Mayor McMillan read and presented the Proclamation recognizing Police Chief Raffaello Pata for his service to the Town of Ross. She said a party will be held tomorrow from 9-10:30 a.m. at Marin Art and Garden Center.

Chief Pata said this would not have been possible without his wife, Syd, without the team at Ross Police Department, as well as the Town Manager’s and the Council’s support.

6. Swearing in and badge pinning of new Town of Ross Police Chief, Raul Aguilar

Town Clerk Koblick de León administered the Oath of Office and swore in new Chief Raul Aguilar.

Police Chief Aguilar thanked his many mentors in the Chambers, members of the San Rafael Police Department, his family in attendance, and the Town Manager and Town Council.

7. Mayor's Report.

May Is Wildfire Preparedness Month: Fire experts are concerned about March's record-breaking heat that dried out fuel, months ahead of schedule, in Marin and across the western US. On March 20th, San Rafael's temperature reached **92°F**, shattering the previous 82°F record in 1960. Thankfully, we received more rain in April, but our extremely early and severe heatwave means we need to continue to be prepared for wildfires. Here are four easy steps:

1. **AlertMarin – Is Your Household Signed Up?** AlertMarin notifies residents during emergencies (like wildfires, flooding or evacuations) with timely, clear, and accurate information on what to do and where to go. But more than 40% of Ross households are not signed up for AlertMarin! It only takes a couple of minutes. Please go to **https://emergency.marincounty.gov/sign-alertmarin**.

2. **The Chipper Day Program** from Marin Wildfire is now open (through November), with free curbside pick-up and disposal of your yard's excess vegetation. Take advantage of this popular service by registering here: **https://www.chipperday.com/marin**

3. **Marin's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** will be presented to the public at a free **Wildfire Preparedness Forum** this **Saturday, May 2nd, 9:30 am - noon at the Embassy Suites in San Rafael**. Join Marin Wildfire, wildfire safety leaders, local fire agencies, and community partners to learn how Marin is safer. For more information, go to **https://firesafemarin.org/articles/cwpp-event/**

4. **Defensible Space Home Inspections**, free from Marin Wildfire, are done every other year in Ross. This year, the inspections will be in the Winship Park neighborhood (dates coming soon). Walk with your inspector to learn more and then open your report and follow the recommended steps to prepare your home and garden. If your home was inspected last year, please continue to address the issues in your report.

Marin Master Gardener (MMG) Resources Shared With Age-Friendly Ross: I became a MMG in 2016, after 50+ hours of training over a 5-month period and passing a final exam. This year, MMGs celebrate its 40th Anniversary, growing from eight MMGs in 1986 to more than 350 today. Each year, MMGs provide more than $1.6M in economic value to Marin County through our voluntary services. Earlier this month I spoke at the Age-Friendly Ross meeting, sharing many of the free resources MMGs offer to Marin home gardeners. Please take advantage of these by clicking here: **MMG Resource Guide**

St. Anselm Church Is Rebuilding Its Bell Tower: Earlier this month, St. Anselm began rebuilding its 1911 bell tower. The project involves replacing the bell tower's foundation, a seismic upgrade, weatherproofing, and replacing the roof and exterior siding. It should be completed by November 2026, with no anticipated road closures or traffic delays.

<u>Citizens' Advisory Committee Presents Recommendations On Town Facilities</u>: Tonight the Council will receive the Committee's recommendations on our nearly 100-year-old Town facilities. We thank the eight dedicated and talented members for working nearly nonstop since mid-February to help address these complex issues: Jeff Kuhn, Dan Winey, Bob Herbst, Ed Dong, Bill Poland, Jeff Koblick, Tom Gaffney, and Joey Buckingham. I am hopeful that the Committee's close collaboration and stunning vision will allow the Town to turn the corner on these issues, and bring residents together in support of our community, Town staff, Ross Police, and the Ross Valley Paramedics.

8. Council Committee & Liaison Report:

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reported on the Ross Valley Paramedic Board meeting and said the proposed guidelines will be brought to each Council for consideration and approval. Since there are many elements of amending and/or terminating the lease agreement between the 8 agencies, the decisions must be unanimous depending on the Board. She suggested the Town review the voting process and said this will be discussed at their next meeting. Not discussed was the lease which may not be aligned with Ross's plans.

Council Member Salter reported there have been serious problems with MCE and misappropriation of $60,000 of funds.

Council Member Kircher added to the MCE report, stating he could not divulge more information given the confidentiality of the matter. He can verify the funds went into the CEO's salary and not correctly calculated.

Mayor McMillan reported on her Sunday attendance to the Youth Town Hall and participated as a panel member with the 10 other Mayors from Marin County.

9. Staff & Community Reports

a. Ross Property Owners Association

Jeff Koblick, RPOA President, thanked the Town Council, Town Manager and community for funding and successful events, reported on a terrific Spring Fling, Live on the Common with 2,000 in attendance, changing of the 50-year-old fluorescent lights at the Post Office and replacement with beautiful hanging antique pendant lights costing $1,200 each.

b. Town Manager

Town Manager Johnson gave the following report:

- We're starting to see the impact of the war with Iran. Higher oil prices is negatively impacting bids on recent paving projects. We're also spending more on gas for police patrol cars and RVFD is spending more to fuel its fire engines.
- In more positive news, staff learned that the three new pedestrian bridges in NCG Park should be installed by summer.

- The Sir Francis drake paving project between Bolinas Avenue and El Camino Bueno is scheduled to start after Ross School gets out for the Summer, and will require one-lane traffic control for approximately 2 weeks so please mark your calendars and plan accordingly!
- I'm happy to report that our new Building Inspector II, Matt Tahja, starts on May 18th. It's taken a full year to recruit for this position.
- The Marin County Flood Control District is holding two upcoming community meetings to discuss the future of flood control efforts in Ross Valley along Corte Madera Creek.
    - Thursday, May 7th, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM at Marin Catholic
    - Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM MAGC
- And finally, I'd like to say that it has been a pleasure to work with our talented Chief Pata over these past four and a half years. On behalf of Town staff, you will be missed and we wish you the very best in your well-deserved retirement!

10. Consent Agenda

The following items will be considered in a single motion, unless removed from the Consent Agenda. Council Member Salter requested removal of Item 10.g.

Council Member Dowling moved, and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins seconded, to approve Consent Agenda Items a, b, d, e, f, and g. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

a. **Minutes:**
   Regular Meeting, April 2, 2026

b. **Demands: March 2026**

c. ~~**Town Council to consider authorizing the Town Manager to execute an agreement with Marin IT in the amount of $134,140 for cybersecurity implementation and information technology managed services for the period July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027**~~. [Item Removed from Agenda]

d. **Town Council to award the construction contract for the Sir Francis Drake Blvd Paving Rehabilitation Project and authorize the Town Manager to enter into a construction contract with Spektren Engineering, Inc. in the amount of $263,213; and authorize a ministerial contingency of up to $26,000 for potential change orders to address unforeseen conditions.**

e. **Town Council to award the construction contract for the Town of Ross Drainage Improvements Project and authorize the Town Manager to enter into a construction contract with Maggiora & Ghilotti, Inc., in the amount of $140,420 and authorize an approximate 10% ministerial contingency of up to $14,000 for potential change orders to address unforeseen conditions.**

f. Town Council to adopt Resolution 2620 appointing the Town Manager and Senior Accountant as Administrators for the Town of Ross Wells Fargo credit card accounts.

Item Removed from Consent Calendar:

g. Town Council to review and accept the fiscal year 2025-26 third quarter, nine - month Financial Summary Report.

Council Member Salter pointed out that the Town has almost $1 million positive variance, noting last year the Town ended the year with a $1.4 million surplus and recognized the Town Manager for doing an excellent job managing the budget. He recommended reviewing this in the audit prior to it coming to the Council and placing it on the Consent Agenda.

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

Council Member Salter moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to approve Consent Agenda Item g. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

End of Consent Agenda.

11. Public Hearing on Planning Projects – Part 1.

a. Town Council to consider 12 Garden Road, Demolition Permit and adoption of Resolution No. 2621 approving the project, subject to conditions.

Michael and Margot Edde, 12 Garden Road, A.P. No. 072-153-05, Zoning: R-1:B-10, General Plan: ML (Medium Low Density), Flood Zone: X (Moderate Risk)

Project Summary: The applicant requests Town Council consideration of a Demolition Permit for a previously approved residential project (approved April 4, 2024, by Resolution No. 2408) to construct a 703 square-foot second-story addition and a 1,200 square-foot rent-restricted Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). During construction, it was determined that more than 25 percent of the exterior walls of the existing residence were removed, which constitutes a demolition pursuant to Section 18.50 of the Town Code. No changes to the previously approved project are proposed.

Recused: Council Member Salter recused himself from participating in the matter, stating his residence is 500 feet of the project and left the Chambers.

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the request to consider a Demolition Permit at 12 Garden Road. On April 24, 2024, the Council approved a project for this residence which was a remodel and expansion of the existing single-family residence, including a second story addition, and an attached rent-restricted ADU. There are no changes to this project, and this is before the Council because the demolition permit was not requested or approved in 2024.

Staff is asking the Council to consider adoption of Resolution No. 2621 approving the project for a Demolition Permit at 12 Garden Road, subject to conditions. Staff is available to answer questions and the applicant is also present.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 2621 approving the project for a Demolition Permit at 12 Garden Road, subject to conditions. Motion carried by a vote of 4-0-1; Salter recused.

Noted as Present: Council Member Salter returned to the dais to participate in the remainder of the meeting.

b. Town Council to consider 230 Wellington Avenue Design Review, Demolition Permit, Hillside Lot Permit, Nonconformity Permit, Variance, and adoption of Resolution No. 2622 approving the project, subject to conditions.

Piers & Nina Barry, 230 Wellington Avenue, A.P. No. 072-121-29, Zoning: R-1:B-10, General Plan: ML (Medium Low Density), Flood Zone: X (Moderate Risk)

Project Summary: The applicant requests Town Council consideration for Design Review, Demolition Permit, Hillside Lot Permit, Nonconformity Permit, and a Variance. The project includes the demolition of an existing single-family residence, and the construction of a new two-story single-family residence with a detached 2-car garage and parking pad. The project also includes new landscaping with pool, patios, retaining walls, trash enclosure, walkways, decks, an arbor, an outdoor kitchen and a pool. A Variance is required to exceed the allowable floor area by 520 square feet, to construct the outdoor kitchen, arbor, patio, and pool in the rear and side yard setbacks, and to construct a 2-car garage and trash enclosure in the front and side yard setback.

Planning Director Roberta Feliciano gave the staff report and overview of the request to consider a Demolition Permit, Hillside Lot Permit, Nonconformity Permit, and Variance at 230 Wellington Avenue and adoption of Resolution No. 2622 approving the project subject to conditions.

The project was reviewed by Planning staff for zoning consistency and the ADR reviewed the project three times last year and during their last meeting in March, for consistency with the Town's design review guidelines, key considerations included neighborhood compatibility, building mass and scale and privacy for adjacent properties.

Staff drafted the required findings for all requested entitlements, subject to conditional approval. The project qualifies for CEQA exemption as outlined in the staff report, and staff recommends that the Council consider the approval of Design Review, the Demolition Permit, Hillside Lot Permit, Nonconformity Permit, and Variance, and adopt Resolution No. 2622 making the required findings, and approve the project at 230 Wellington Avenue, subject to conditions. The applicant is present to answer questions of the Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said there was a similar elevated parking pad built on a hillside on Upper Toyon and she asked if that also requested a variance for additional FAR. Ms. Feliciano said that one did not request an FAR variance; they requested a variance for the location because the parking pad was within the setbacks. In this case, the variance is for the two-car garage and the setbacks.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if the garage or pad were elevated, and Ms. Feliciano said the way the topography of the lot sits, it would actually meet the front of the road on Wellington. But, the lot slopes down, so one would see it elevated from the home but not necessarily from the street.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if the garage is being rebuilt in the same location or on stilts. Ms. Feliciano said it will be elevated and roughly in the same location, but what is there now is a carport and this would be a 2-car enclosed garage.

Mayor McMillan asked if there is precedent to allow 520 extra square feet per the hillside lot ordinance on a project like this. Ms. Feliciano said she believes there was one on Allen and they had an entry that required going upstairs and they were allowed FAR so their entryway could be made safer. In this case, they are looking for the Variance because the parking on Wellington is so constrained. Also, the way the topography of the way the lot is sitting they are wanting to absorb the parking they would need and not have it on the street.

Mayor McMillan asked if the garage, which is the extra square feet, is helping to move vehicles off of the private road and making the access safer for emergency vehicles, and Ms. Feliciano confirmed. She noted the ADR did discuss this and came to the conclusion that they would support the garage for those reasons.

Council Member Kircher asked if the garage is larger than the carport was, and Ms. Feliciano said the carport is a one-car garage so it may be about 200 square feet and the garage would be for two cars and some storage which is 520 square feet.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period, and there were no speakers. She confirmed the applicant and their architect did not wish to comment.

Council Member Salter noted that the hillside lot ordinance is tricky but whenever they were trying to take parking off of the street and leave access for vehicles, they all agree this is a worthy goal, which he supports and in trying to keep the roads clear. He knows the Town seeks to have vehicles off of the road and wondered if this could be approved without a variance.

Council Member Kircher said he has this same inclination; if it is a parking issue and keeping vehicles off the street which is a safety measure especially for difficult streets. It is not as if the resident is building a huge mansion and he would support the project.

Town Clerk Koblick de León announced there were public speakers wishing to comment, and Mayor McMillan reopened the public comment period.

Charles Goodman stated his only comment is he would want to ensure the garage is used for parking and is not converted to another use, and asked if this could be included in conditions.

Carla Buchannan, 210 Wellington, voiced support of the project, as well as three other neighbors. She noted the parking situation, especially for emergency vehicles, is difficult on this cul-de-sac.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked if a restriction not to use the garage other than for parking could be added. Ms. Feliciano said there would be no way to enforce this. She said included in what they are proposing is a 2-car garage and a parking pad, so there is always going to be a space or driveway for the owners to park there and hopefully they will use the 2-car garage.

Town Attorney Ben Stock said right now there is a condition that incorporates their design for a garage, so this already requires it be a garage. If they violate that condition, an enforcement action could be brought forward if they are not using it as a garage for parking. The reason they cannot have a direct condition to park in the garage all the time, there may be instances where, if a future ADU was constructed, there are certain state laws where the Town would be unable to enforce that condition.

Council Member Dowling moved, and Council Member Salter seconded, to adopt Resolution No. 2622 approving the project for a Demolition Permit, Hillside Lot Permit, Nonconformity Permit, and Variance at 230 Wellington Avenue, subject to conditions. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

End of Public Hearing on Planning Project Part 1.

<u>Administrative Agenda.</u>

12. Town Council to receive a presentation from citizen's advisory committee regarding revising the Facility Master Plan and provide direction to staff regarding information Council needs to proceed with considering any amendments to the Facility Master Plan.

Town Manager Johnson said this presentation will be given by the Citizen's Advisory Committee.

BREAK
Mayor McMillan called for a brief break to set up the presentation and, thereafter, reconvened the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Jeff Kuhn reported that since early February the committee has met frequently—at least a dozen times, often twice weekly—to develop a comprehensive Town Center plan. The eight-member committee, representing diverse perspectives (including both supporters and opponents of the Ross Firehouse closure), conducted extensive research spanning bond financing, environmental compliance (ESA), historic preservation, and emergency services. Their work aligns closely with the existing Town Center Master Plan to ensure all identified programmatic needs are addressed.

The proposed design, developed in collaboration with Dan Winey of Gensler and Joey Buckingham, reflects a consensus-driven vision. The committee unanimously supports the plan, which emphasizes preservation of historic architecture, environmental responsibility, and cost-effectiveness while accommodating all municipal functions, including police, fire, paramedic, and administrative services. If approved, the committee is prepared to support full implementation, including public advocacy for a bond measure targeted for the November 2026 ballot.

Winey and Buckingham outlined guiding principles focused on adaptability, sustainability, and community integration. Their concept—titled the "Ross Community and Town Center"—centers on adaptive reuse of existing structures, particularly preserving the original 1927 Spanish Colonial Revival design by John White. Key elements include adding a second story, consolidating functions into a single two-story building, and enhancing public accessibility while minimizing environmental impact.

The conceptual design incorporates flexible interior and exterior spaces, including elevated courtyards for natural light and outdoor access, and renovated emergency service areas. The plan prioritizes resilience to major emergencies and long-term operational efficiency. Additional features include improved accessibility, sensitive landscaping, and flood mitigation measures. Overall, the proposal aims to create a central civic hub that honors the Town's history while meeting evolving community needs.

The design team proposed repurposing the original truck bay areas into a central lobby and community meeting space, incorporating vertical circulation elements such as elevators and stairs to access the second floor. One recommended option is to construct the addition using a mass timber structural system, enabling exposed beams, sloped ceilings, increased natural light, and enhanced sustainability. The team also suggested pursuing LEED Platinum certification to maximize environmental performance.

Mr. Winey emphasized that the current proposal remains conceptual, without a finalized site plan. Existing site access points would be retained, and the reduced building footprint allows flexibility to evaluate program fit. The design can be expanded if necessary, including the potential addition of ancillary structures such as a Public Works facility.

Ms. Buckingham reiterated that the plan is based on preliminary assumptions, using prior square footage requirements (Concept B) supplemented with fire service needs. Their analysis indicates that all required space can be accommodated within the proposed layout.

The conceptual scheme includes strategic building expansion at the rear to increase first-floor capacity, along with flexibility to adjust the second-floor footprint and roofline. Currently, the plan exceeds required space by approximately 2,000 square feet, providing a buffer to refine departmental layouts. The team identified opportunities to improve efficiency by consolidating shared amenities such as restrooms, locker rooms, kitchen areas, and fitness spaces.

Importantly, the design maintains flexibility: it can accommodate a fire station if deemed feasible, but can also be adapted for alternative community uses if priorities shift. The team highlighted the opportunity to create a versatile civic hub—potentially including community gathering spaces or a senior center—encouraging stakeholders to consider a broad range of future uses that best serve the Town's evolving needs.

Mr. Winery concluded the presentation, stating there are many advantages in the plan of doing one building that basically becomes their Town Center. Ms. Buckingham brought up the word 'stewardship' with the move and to imagine many people have been able to raise their children here and have wonderful amenities. It might be time to pay that forward and to create something beautiful for the next generation. Mr. Winey then played the video the Gensler team put together for the Council and described the previous design considerations of the building in 2000.

Mr. Kuhn said their agenda is to introduce the Council to the conceptual plan, a preliminary cost analysis and review a timeline and schedule, review permanent financing for this, review next steps which include an RFP for architectural, engineering, and consulting services, funding for a site survey, as-builts, and selective investigations, appoint a public/private working group, and if the Council agrees this is something they want to do the Friends of the Ross Firehouse will immediately withdraw their ballot initiative for this June. He then introduced Ed Dong.

Ed Dong presented a comparative cost analysis between the committee's proposed Civic and Community Concept and the earlier KPA Concept B budget (2023). After applying escalation factors, the KPA plan is projected to cost approximately $24.7 million by 2026 for 11,700 square feet, at roughly $2,015 per square foot, and notably did not include a fire station component.

In contrast, the committee's proposal is estimated at $22.7 million—approximately $2 million less—while delivering an additional 2,000 square feet of program space and incorporating a fire station. This results in a lower estimated cost of $1,680 per square foot. Dong emphasized that the team will continue refining costs through progressive budgeting to ensure real-time accuracy as the project advances.

The projected savings are primarily attributed to an adaptive reuse strategy, which minimizes demolition and new construction. By preserving key structural elements—including the roof, façade, and existing apparatus bays—the plan reduces both construction and site development costs. Unlike the KPA approach, which proposed full demolition and site regrading, this concept maintains much of the existing site, limiting the need for extensive improvements.

Additionally, retaining the existing apparatus bays provides long-term flexibility, allowing the Town to incorporate a fire station in the future without incurring significant reconstruction costs. To validate pricing assumptions, the team consulted two established local general contractors, Swinerton Builders and Build Group, both of which have significant experience in large-scale projects, historic restoration, and adaptive reuse. Their input supports the feasibility of delivering the project within the proposed budget range.

They have selected Build Group who toured the building and he provided a comprehensive presentation and explanation of Build Group's proposal which meets significant and high quality standards of construction and in summary, they believe they can deliver this building on the maintained site for $22.7 million.

Mayor McMillan suggested finishing the presentation, will have Council questions, staff questions, public comment and then bring it back for discussion and further steps.

Bob Herbst, Committee member and President of the Friends of Ross Firehouse, outlined a preliminary project timeline aligned with the Town's operational needs—specifically targeting completion in time to relocate paramedic services by January 2029 in accordance with the existing RVPA lease.

The timeline incorporates key phases, including environmental review (CEQA), permitting, architectural and engineering design, and an estimated 15-month construction period. The proposed design schedule includes approximately three months for schematic design and cost estimation, followed by four months to complete construction drawings.

The committee recommends that the Town Council initiate the process immediately by issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in May to engage a schematic design architect. Under this approach, initial design work could begin within two months, followed by a three-month period of contractor-based cost validation. This sequence would position the Town to present a fully developed and costed plan to voters as part of a bond measure as early as November 2026.

If the Council determines that timeline is too ambitious, Herbst noted the schedule could shift to a later ballot (e.g., June), while continuing progress on detailed design and CEQA review to maintain overall project momentum.

Mr. Kuhn said financing a project is complicated. The only realistic and feasible source of financing is a G.O. Bond. The only permitted use of funds from a G.O. Bond are brick and mortar construction. You cannot use it for operations, salaries, etc., and it requires a 2/3 vote. He then described a G.O. Bond which is different from a parcel tax which is the same amount for everybody. He is using a $10 million bond at 4% interest over 30 years and would require annual payments of about $580,000 a year.

He reviewed numbers with Un Chu Reardon with Fieldman Rolapp and Associates from last month's presentation. In Ross, the assessed value tax for the G.O. Bond is about $20/$100,000 of assessed value. This increases about 2% to 4% annually and happens everywhere and is limited by Prop 13. Those who make the decision to increase it is the Marin County Assessor. When doing this, the effective tax goes down because the assessed value of the entire Town is going up. He the provided examples for a home in Ross which is about $400 a year.

Lastly, Mr. Kuhn said the assessed value of all homes in Ross as of last November comes to $2.95 billion. The market value is likely three times that. He said a median home is $2.5 million and he presented a pie chart which divides homes into 10 segments; each is 83 homes, which he described, noting 20% of the homes in Ross account for $1.5 billion of assessed value.

Dan Winey outlined key next steps required to advance the project from concept to implementation. These include preparation of an amended master plan, completion of a detailed site survey (to document building locations, topography, and existing conditions), development of as-built drawings for Town Hall, and structural analysis through selective intrusive investigation. He noted that while engaging a single architectural firm for the full scope is ideal, firms may include significant contingencies in early bids due to unknown conditions.

The schematic design phase will be critical and is expected to include floor plans, building elevations, and detailed coordination with department leaders to define operational needs across functions such as administration, police, and public works. This phase will also produce outline specifications and sufficient detail to establish a reliable, defensible project budget. Winey indicated this work can be completed in approximately three months, enabling the Town to obtain accurate cost estimates to support a potential bond measure decision.

Following schematic approval, preparation of construction documents and contract administration becomes more streamlined, with greater cost certainty. Advancing to this stage will require an upfront investment in design, estimated at roughly 15% of total architectural and engineering fees.

Mr. Winey also recommended engaging a historic preservation consultant early in the process and initiating required environmental review under CEQA. To maintain momentum, the team emphasized the value of forming a public-private working group to collaborate with the Town Manager, leveraging committee expertise and community resources to efficiently guide the project through subsequent phases.

Jeff Koblick said in terms of next steps for the bond approval, some of the Council Members have a lot of experience with parcel tax and school bonds. The group feels they can help generate support and get this bond passed. They all came together in 30 minutes over Mr. Winey's first iteration of this plan and they think they can bring the whole town together. They appreciate all of the efforts and time the Council has put into this and they are here to help. The RPOA, Friends of the Firehouse, Ross Auxiliary, Age Friendly, and others can unify as one community and get this passed.

Tom Gaffney asked not to forget the Ross Historical Society, stating it is difficult to pass a 2/3 bond election, but one of the key elements is to avoid controversy and to have a proactive bond outreach committee. He provided an example of something going south with the school board for the Ross School, and the bond election committee was not ready to answer questions. However, in the end, the measure passed. What they need is a plan acceptable to diverse groups and need to get the 2/3 threshold vote.

The plan presented is a beautiful structure and what the Town needs to move forward is a unanimous vote from the Council on their plan. He believes with this and an active bond outreach committee, they have an excellent chance to pass the bond issue. If they pass the bond issue, they can build an excellent Civic Center building just like Ross School did when they built their fabulous school.

Mr. Kuhn summarized that the project minimizes operational disruption and construction time by allowing the whole project to move forward at once as opposed to multiple phases. Vertical spaces are less expensive than single story and adding a second story is much less expensive than additional ground area, it allows for two means of financing; one for the Town Center and optionality for future firehouse operations should they desire it. It requires less site coverage and environmental disruption, minimizing hardscape and prompting other mitigation work, and allows Planning, Building, and Public Works to remain in place until the new facilities are ready for occupancy which will minimize costs and operation disruptions.

Mayor McMillan thanked the committee for their presentation, voiced appreciation in time, effort, collaboration and creativity. She asked for questions from the Council to the committee and then will have questions to staff, then public comment and then bring it back and determine next steps.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins and Town staff discussed election timing and governance considerations for advancing the proposed bond measure. Town Manager Johnson confirmed that while a November 2026 ballot is a potential target, a G.O. bond could alternatively be placed on a 2027 special election ballot. Available dates include March 2, May 4, August 31, and November 2, with May and August conducted as vote-by-mail only. She noted the tight timeline for a March election, requiring submission of materials by early December—approximately four months in advance.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins also sought clarification on site circulation, specifically access for emergency vehicles. Dan Winey responded that maintaining both entry and exit points—consistent with current conditions—is essential to the design intent. He noted that earlier conceptual plans were updated to reflect this, while also preserving key landscape elements such as existing redwood trees.

She then referenced the proposal to establish a public-private working group led by the Town Manager and questioned whether this should supplement or replace the existing committee. Winey and Jeff Kuhn expressed strong support for continued collaboration, emphasizing that the current committee is willing to remain actively involved. They highlighted the value of combining committee expertise with Town staff leadership and expanding participation as needed to bring in additional resources and perspectives. Overall, there was alignment around maintaining continuity with the existing committee while formalizing a collaborative structure to efficiently guide the project through design, financing, and implementation phases.

Council Member Kircher raised concerns about the feasibility of the proposed timeline, citing both professional experience in real estate development and local constraints, particularly the limited availability of surveyors, which could delay site analysis by six months to a year. He questioned whether the project could realistically achieve key milestones—especially development of a site plan—within the proposed schedule.

Dan Winey acknowledged these constraints, noting that while resource availability is a valid concern, the project team’s scale and industry relationships may help expedite certain processes. He described the timeline as ambitious but potentially achievable with coordinated effort and prioritization. He also highlighted strategic considerations tied to the bond measure timeline. If the Town targets a June election instead of November, the sequencing of design and engineering work becomes critical. Advancing full design and engineering prior to voter approval introduces financial risk—particularly if the bond measure does not pass. As a result, the team may need to phase work carefully to balance progress with fiscal prudence.

Additionally, he noted that the project must account for existing contractual obligations related to emergency medical services (EMS), which may require renegotiation. He suggested that integrating EMS into a modernized, centralized facility could provide operational and functional benefits compared to maintaining separate arrangements. Overall, he recognized what is an aggressive schedule but it remains viable.

Council Member Kircher said in terms of the list of things that should move forward right away, he asked if thought was given whether they should have some geotechnical study given this is near a creek and in a known liquefaction zone.

Mr. Winey said yes, they would likely do a limited number of soil borings and if they were doing more work closer to the creek, he would be much more concerned, but if they open up buildings and look at foundations underneath for settling, this will give them a good idea of the work. The only question is whether the location of the buildings will have an impact on where they do the borings. They can do preliminary borings without spending the money on complete borings.

Council Member Dowling said she loves the conceptual design and plan. Regarding parking and circulation and asked if it is adequate within the space. Mr. Winey said, based on the plan that has been approved, the plan they are bringing forward would have the ability for more parking because there is less site work and it is more open, but detailed planning would be needed.

Council Member Dowling said if the back bay area is for community events or a community center, there likely would be more people coming in than staff working here. She also knows the committee did not talk with the police or public works staff about space needs and asked if they had thought about this. Mr. Winey said yes, they saw a number of things in the program that should not be in that larger structure for public works, the shop area and storage of equipment. The fact that they are condensing it into one building, they have the ability to do a small public works maintenance and shop area but they need to sit down with everybody. There is also a lot of clarification work that needs to be done, but detailed layouts are the next step to make sure everything works. So, the idea needs to be built upon.

Mr. Kuhn referred to the Police Station issue, he has had multiple conversations with Chief Pata and the new Chief does not know the building so he has asked Chief Pata to be available, which he agreed to, but it may come with a cost.

Former Chief Pata noted there are rules for police departments and he has not heard that in the conversation tonight. There is the International Association for Chiefs of Police which outlines what police departments need to look like and have, the Peace Officers Standards of Training, and when he hears about the site, he asked to be prepared for the budget to go up given expensive equipment and needs. The Department of Justice also regulates who comes and goes and where they come and where they go, and while it is a beautiful building, he worries it will not function for the items police need to do their job. Most importantly, if there is a housing element here, you cannot have an escaped prisoner running through the development and need a secured area to get them in and out of the building. Police officers also need secure ways to get in and out and a discreet place for victims of crimes. They are also worried about flooding and parking of their vehicles which takes them away from their responsibilities. He also has lived through a rehabilitation of the San Rafael Police Station, along with Chief Aguilar which is a lot of work. He suggested the numbers and size of buildings to go up.

Mr. Kuhn said they blocked out 3,000 square feet and functional need is defined in the program. It is a secure and clean 3,000 square foot area, but they do not have all of the answers yet but he thinks their needs can be met. They have to sit down and work through these things.

Council Member Dowling asked when they would have an idea of true costs for a G.O. Bond. Mr. Kuhn said if the question is whether it is more difficult to go above $10 million than $20 million, it is not difficult. The Town has $12 million and the project is at $22 to $25 million so they would need another $12.5 million.

Mr. Winey said in answering that from a different perspective, when projects go for financing they must stick to the budget, but in order to do that, they must have enough information. So, if they were to get a good architect on board by June and cost out the project that would include every aspect of the project, the Town Manager would have a month to conduct interviews, RFPs, etc. and realistically, it could be June but he questioned how much work can be done by June and how much money do they spend within that three month timeframe to get a number. They would then look at the bond situation. If they are comfortable with getting it passed, they could then continue with the drawings at that time.

Mayor McMillan said in the project timeline, the costing is not done until September 2026 and the Town would need to file that information in early August for the G.O. Bond to give the amount they are seeking. So, it seems a March of 2027 might be more realistic. If the Council endorses this plan, the Friends of the Ross Firehouse will withdraw their Initiative, but it seems there are many moving parts and things that still need to get done, which she described. So, she is wondering how firmly do they need to endorse this plan. She thinks they are all in favor of the concept and design, but she wondered about the direction of the Council.

Mr. Herbst said August 8th is the deadline to withdraw the ballot Initiative, and the Council needs to adopt their plan by that time as a new Master Plan. This gives 3 months to schematics, costing, etc.

Mayor McMillan asked staff how realistic this is. In the plan, there is space for fire and she wondered if they are intending for the Town to spend money for facilities for fire, or is this space that could be used later if funding to operate the fire station is somehow secured down the road. She confirmed it would be the latter.

Mr. Winey said when they go back and look at the program, they need to bring back certain elements and it is whether some of those elements can be shared such as men and women locker rooms, toilet areas, and everything they have looked at on the fire side, it is primarily the bonds. So, they would be doing the planning but not spending any money until they know exactly where they are going. If the bond does not pass, it could be designed as something else. Where it is located and how it is organized makes a big difference so they can use it for one thing and then also for another.

Council Member Salter thanked the committee for putting forth a beautiful plan. Being on the Council, he was told to trust the experts and he asked if Mr. Winey could share his experience on how they got to the point of having the project work as an adaptive use project.

Mr. Winey said he can see how some misunderstanding might have occurred. When they did the study in 2000, they were going to move the building out of the flood plain. The cost associated with a new building was cheaper than doing a renovation. Any building can be renovated and he thinks this building will cost the same as a new building and there are compelling reasons to keep portions of it, but ultimately, it will cost the same as a new building.

Council Member Salter said there had been criticisms that the foundation could not support the Essential Services Act. The Council was told repeatedly that this envelope had to be completely raised because there was no capability that it could support a modern firehouse and police, etc. Mr. Winey said seismically it is nowhere near up to code, so this type of mitigation work they will have to do, but at times there are alternatives to be considered. Their position was to reuse portions of this building so it has the integrity of what was there before. The existing structural system does not meet code, but they can reinforce it to meet code.

Council Member Salter said their plan states they can completely build a modern working fire and paramedic facility in the correct square footage, and Mr. Winey confirmed and they have 2,000 square feet more. He believes the next three month effort of schematic design will tell them a lot and to design a working fire, police and paramedic facility, with modern offices. They will have to talk about all operations but they can do this. The goal is to support all these functions which can be done.

Council Member Salter brought the 2020 Town of Ross flyer that went out to residents on why they could not have a fire station, which he presented. The plan here is $23 million which is less than the Town flyer from 2020 said. Mr. Winey said he thinks in all conversations they have had, the criteria they were looking at in terms of a fire station, number of people, staff, functions is different than what they have talked about over the last few months. It is not a full blown fire station. He has heard the Town cannot afford to build a fire station, but this plan is reasonable, and he would like Mr. Winey to explain that.

Mr. Winey said he thinks people take things out of context. The answer to the question is to do the next stage of planning, do all of the layouts to ensure they meet the goals outlined. Right now they are blocks of space without full details. He is confident based on the information they were given.

Mr. Dong said the two contractors are renown and he described their work and they have confidence in these contractors and the conceptual number.

Council Member Dowling said if the Town were to vote for an operating fire station, she asked if flooding will be an issue. Mr. Winey said potentially, because the lower portion of the bays would still be in the flood zone. In a severe situation, it would make sense to move the truck and equipment to higher ground. There are other mitigation techniques that would provide an extra foot to reach 2 feet. The question is whether they are willing to compromise, and he thinks there are risk mitigation efforts to solve those situations, but they are not perfect.

Council Member Dowling said the Chief is present and she said to be part of the RVFD and asked how important is flood control for a fire station.

The Fire Chief said if you looked at the addendum from Town Manager Johnson, all of their fire station engine rooms are in the flood zone. They have a plan to move engines to specific areas; however, it is not recommended. There is a significant amount of rehab that needs to be done even when an engine room is flooded.

Council Member Salter said Sleepy Hollow is completing its remodel and their bays were not raised. He confirmed with the Fire Chief that it was because it was not functionally possible. There was a decision made that those engine bays would stay in the flood zone and the remainder of the building would be raised.

Council Member Salter asked and confirmed the Fairfax station is not a model to compare. The one in San Anselmo was a remodel funded through FEMA to recuperate from the flooding that the station incurred. Unless there were other funds, they could not raise the entire station. So, basically while not ideal, all other fire stations are within the flood zone.

Mayor McMillan asked Mr. Simonitch to elaborate on the flood issue.

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch said to correct Chief Mahoney's statement that all four stations are the same with a flood zone, that is not correct. Sleepy Hollow, Butterfield Road is in a 100-year flood plain. San Anselmo Avenue in downtown San Anselmo has a high velocity river during a flood. The fire station in Fairfax on Park Road is also a 100-year flood plain. The difference with Ross is Sir Francis Drake Blvd. is out of the flood plain so if they design a fire station on the site, why wouldn't they have equipment bays raised out of the flood plain to access a roadway out of a flood plain? This is the difference. To evaluate the flood situation here in Ross, there are three entities to consider—FEMA, building code and flood plain ordinance, and the essential service requirements. FEMA is more concerned with public safety and building integrity during a flood. They want living spaces built one foot above the flood plain to minimize insurance claims. The building code and ordinance require that the equipment bays be raised 2 feet if there is no other alternative available. In Ross, staff will look at findings as to why it is not feasible to build a new fire station or renovate a station where there are equipment bays out of the flood plain accessing a major roadway that is also out of the flood plain. So, staff would need to see reasons why this is not feasible if they want to leave the equipment bays were they are in the flood plain.

Council Member Salter said the bays were built in 1995 and they were $3.5 million. He asked why they were not built like that back then. Mr. Simonitch said he was unsure. They had an opportunity then to do it right and did not. Now there is another opportunity to do it right.

Mayor McMillan asked when staff would make the decision to raise it 3 feet or not. Mr. Simonitch said it remains a ministerial decision. While not familiar with the design process, findings need to be evaluated at some point and this is where the Council would hear they cannot do it because of certain reasons. Then this would be evaluated for the planning permit and this is the process they would go through.

Mr. Winey said it is a light frame construction so it would be a cost consideration, so getting out of the flood plain by 2 feet, the bigger question would be environmental, bringing in fill, handling landscaping, etc. because the trucks must get out and they would need to raise the parking lot, and there may be ways to ramp the site so parking areas could be lower. It is just a cost issue.

Council Member Salter asked if being the lead agency, he asked if they would have the authority on the project. Mr. Simonitch said it comes back to feasibility. If not feasible, there is not so much of an issue. But he sees the permitting part of the process and so it might be a question for planning. It is a Town project so the Town would need to develop findings for the Council as something they want to do. The Town is also lead agency in the CEQA process, would need to determine if an EIR is needed, a negative declaration, and these things need to be addressed by the town.

Council Member Dowling said she thinks education for the bond measure is important. One of the issues is they are going to keep the bays in the back for potentially a fire station. So, there may or may not be a fire station and she asked how do they make people understand when voting on the measure—that it is for the building and not the staffing, and that space could be used for many things.

Mr. Winey said there will have to be an aggressive strategy for the Town and do it multiple times. Council Member Dowling said if they build the facility there is room for staff and trucks, but that is a completely separate financial issue. She would want to be sure people are voting on the building and not a working fire station. Mr. Winey agreed. Council Member Dowling asked if the Town has the cost of it, and Mr. Winey said yes. At the January Council meeting, the fire consultants for both sides came up with almost identical numbers, which he described which would start around $3.5 million a year. It will be an expensive process on year one of about $5 million, and then $3.5 million going forward. It is a lot of money.

Council Member Dowling asked what it would cost each resident, and Mr. Winey said it depends on how it is financed. They could raise the public safety parcel tax, but would have to triple that or more. So, it is a puzzle about how to finance this thing and there is no easy way.

Mayor McMillan said it sounds like bond counsel would need to be hired, and she asked where that would be on the timeline. Mr. Winey said the actual timing was that once the vote has been taken it will take three months before the bonds are issued. There must be bond counsel, an underwriter, an investment bank, and rating by S&P. The language for the ballot would be written by the Town Attorney.

Mayor McMillan suggested taking a break and return, take public comment, and having a Council discussion.

Town Manager Johnson said she understands the cost estimates include space for a fire station and costs related to the building out of the shell, tenant requirements that fire stations need such as diesel exhaust systems, etc. Mr. Dong said yes; all exhaust, IT, communications, appliances, and the whole fit-out. The CAC’s cost estimates include all of these elements for a fire station.

BREAK

Mayor McMillan called for a break at 9:03 p.m. and, thereafter, reconvened the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Council Member Salter said the Town Manager sent an email at 4:00 p.m. and unfortunately, it is not enough time for him to digest so much information. He appreciates she was trying to relay some of her thoughts, but this is a concept with many details to work out. It might be helpful to get them working with staff and answer some of the outstanding questions. He would prefer moving forward and see if the Council supports this first and then work out questions afterwards.

Mayor McMillan suggested the Town Manager hit the high notes and indicate recommended next steps, try to appease the FORF people to drop the initiative, and concrete steps they can take.

Town Manager Johnson said she is very excited with what she saw tonight and tightening up the site and building up. That was one of the options the architectural firm, KPA brought forward during the development of the 2023 Facilities Master Plan and the feedback from the Town Council at the time was that it was too expensive. She is encouraged by the commitment made by the CAC to advocate for any financing measure going to the community. Once this goes on a ballot, however, the Town staff cannot advocate for it. The community group has proven how skilled they are when it comes to advocacy.

In looking at timelines, the date the Council would have to take action on ballot measures in November is August 7th. Also, she reminded the Council that the information on staffing costs was provided and the $3.5 million figure is in addition to what they already pay. So, on an ongoing basis, they must pay that in addition to what they have committed to RVPA. Staff did not have much time to provide its initial evaluations, similar to when FORF provided staff with information to put into the agenda packet at 4:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve and staff had to get out the agenda packet on January 2nd for the January 8th meeting. So, they did not have much time to put together information for the Council in advance but provided information at the Council meeting and more afterwards. For this time, they received the information last week and it was sent late this afternoon. She identified a series of issues or concerns that the Council needs to review before considering amending the Facilities Master Plan. So, this is not an action item tonight and she is available for any clarifications or questions.

She clarified that they are willing to work with this committee. Sometimes Councils set up a subcommittee of their own members to help work with various items and sometimes they choose to establish groups like the CAC for a specific purpose. She also clarified that Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked tonight why would this need to go to staff and why not have the CAC handle the project? There are many reasons why, given the Town of Ross operates under a Council/Town Manager form of government and it is not allowed to abdicate its duties also under State law, which she described. The Town welcomes this group's input but the project will be run by staff and staff must go to the Council to approve any contract over $50,000.

What she sees as next steps is that the Council approved the RFQ for architectural and engineering firms and an affordable housing partner to work with. The Town received 10 submittals for the architectural engineering and 2 for the affordable housing partners, and those names were forwarded to the Council a few weeks ago. Staff has been evaluating them, is in the process of hiring a firm that will serve as an owner's representative for the project with the priority being to help the Town evaluate the submittals and narrow them down to bring forward to the Council. The architectural contract will be approximately $1.5 to $2 million, the cost of which has been verified with Mr. Winey.

She also noted not much public input has been received and this is needed to amend the Facilities Master Plan. She is confident that things can be worked out, but in order to get to the 30% schematic design drawings, what is needed in order to get a more specific cost estimate and then work with the Town Attorney on language for a ballot measure. At the same time, they need to be working on getting an environmental consultant on board and working with local consultants, bond counsel, and the Town Attorney working on crafting a Measure that the Council needs to take action on in order for it to be on the ballot and it will not be in time to be on the November ballot. She learned today that a special election can be held and there are four next year. The plan needs to also meet the operational and service objectives of Town departments because significant public funds will be used to build the project.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Michael Rosenbaum said he is very dissatisfied with FORF and its methods. He asserted FORF has disseminated false information and has wasted public funds, demanded FORF reimburse Town for staff time and delays, and asked that FORF and Council Member Salter and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins formally express regret for enabling actions that disregarded previous Council mandates and for their association with dissemination of unreliable information that drew out this process.

Mayor McMillan said there is no action to be taken here, but she asked for individual comments from Councilmembers about whether they like this concept or a different concept and secondly, whether the next steps the Town Manager outlined make sense.

Mayor McMillan said she loves the concept, thinks it is beautiful, is a legacy building, and she is confident that many of the issues unresolved can be resolved by staff working collaboratively. In terms of next steps, she would like an architect hired as soon as possible and the Town could hold a special meeting in early June. She does not unfortunately see how they can make the November ballot and wants to do it once and do it well.

Council Member Dowling echoed comments of the Mayor, said she loves the conceptual design and one, two-story building. By having staff work with some citizens to work through some of the problems, they will get through them. She also thinks the steps the Town Manager outlined are important, as well as a discussion with the paramedics so they are part of this, as well.

Council Member Kircher agreed with these comments and thinks it makes sense. He is supportive of the concept and thinks if they have issues they can be worked out. He is skeptical about the timeframe and hopes he can have a Measure on the November ballot which he thinks has a better chance of passing, but if they cannot, they can schedule it for next year. He supports next steps as outlined by the Town Manager as well.

Council Member Salter thanked the committee for coming together and making the impossible possible. There has been a lot of discussion about the fire station and the first piece was whether it is possible to rebuild and they can. He also thanked FORF and members on the committee for bringing forth the notion that this is possible. Lastly, there is a shell of a building and he supported the ballot measure and have the Town vote and decide whether they want the fire station or not.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said she thinks the proposal is wonderful, meets everyone's needs, and is hopeful there will be widespread support from the community. She thinks this is much better than Concept B and supported moving forward quickly. She thinks RPOA could also hold a meeting regarding the proposal and outreach can be done quickly on-line and via email, as through the Ross Review. Regarding next steps, she thinks they should move quickly to make this happen, try for the November ballot and have March as an option. She recognizes the Council/Town Manager form of government, but she would hope the committee could remain front and center with decisions given their experience. Next steps should be to hire an architect and keep the committee front and center for steps moving forward.

Mayor McMillan asked if Council Member Salter was proposing a parcel tax on the November ballot asking residents to tax themselves to have fire services in Ross. Council Member Salter said the ballot initiative FORF approved is on the November ballot. All it says is, "Should the Town have facilities to support a working fire station?" In terms of moving forward, the Town would then have an answer in terms of what they should be building in "the box" because people will have answered that.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins noted that FORF said if the Council committed to the plan, they would remove the ballot initiative. She thinks this is a decision FORF should make, and Council Member Salter said FORF members are under the impression that the committee is committing to a fire station, but this is not what they heard today. Everyone who signed the petition wants to be able to vote for a fire station, and he did not think they were pulling this back given they are committing to a concept that is "a box" but we do not know what is inside it.

Mayor McMillan said she agrees that they signed the petition, but it seems they do not know what it means to have a fire station and pay for the operations of a fire station. To her, the initiative is a hypothetical because the Town does not have the money to pay for fire services. She thought possibly an off-line conversation was needed with Bob Herbst to see how committed he feels they are. She thinks there is still an opportunity to talk about FORF pulling its initiative. She would prefer this because otherwise, who would vote "no." If there is no concept of the cost, she asked why would someone vote "no." Therefore, she is optimistic they can talk off-line with FORF and explore that.

Council Member Kircher said he hopes that is not on the ballot because that will be completely at cross purposes to what the Council is trying to do—get everybody to come together. The ballot initiative is mandatory and the Town knows it does not have the money to do it. So, there would have to be some opposition pointing that out and this will cut against trying to come together and get this passed.

Council Member Salter said this is on the ballot. It is not a hypothetical. It was voted on by the people through a petition and it has the support of the community. All the initiative asks is for the community to vote "yes" or "no" and in a campaign, all issues regarding cost is where people can vote "no." So, he does not know why everybody is worried about this initiative, as he thinks it will help them make their decision, and again, it is on the ballot.

Town Attorney Stock interjected and said the agenda item tonight is not about pulling or not pulling the initiative. It is next steps moving forward with the concept that has been brought to the Council. It is implicated and some Council Members are hoping it would be pulled. They cannot go back and forth on the merits of the initiative.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said the best next steps in bringing people together is to move as quickly as they can with this plan, which she thinks will be very well received.

Council Member Dowling agrees the committee has been phenomenal. If they are moving forward, it is the Town Manager working with some of the citizens, committee and others to deal with the issues, but it is in the hands of staff now to move forward with the help of the citizens committee or others that may be included. She would trust the Town Manager to work with people to make it happen.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said what she likes in working with the committee is they have gone beyond all of the politics and personalities of it. They will be working with the Town Manager, Project Manager, and she did not think this can be pulled off without the committee.

Council Member Dowling said she thinks it is staff and citizens working together.

Mayor McMillan thanked the committee and concluded the item.

13. Town Council to consider approval of the Town of Ross Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2025, with no findings.

Town Manager Johnson gave the staff report and said each year the Town engages the services of an independent auditor to prepare an audit of the Town's financial statements. Nathan Eddleman was the partner in charge of the audit who will provide a presentation.

Nathan Edelman, Eide Bailly, Independent External Auditor, gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Town's Annual Financial Report, scope of work, and results of the audit and was available for questions.

Council Member Salter asked if Mr. Edelman looked at any of the internal controls, and Mr. Edelman said yes; and if there were deficiencies or material weaknesses, those would be reported as part of the results of the audit, and there were none.

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

Council Members recognized the accomplishments of Town financial staff and the Town Manager for a flawless audit, suggested a Ross Review article to announce the positive results, and thanked all involved.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins moved, and Council Member Dowling seconded, to approve the Town of Ross Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2025, with no findings. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

14. Town Council to discuss and provide direction to the Town Manager regarding the language to include in the "Respectful Dialogue" section of the Town Council meeting agenda template.

Town Clerk/Senior Management Analyst Zach Koblick de León gave the staff report and overview of the item. Mayor Pro Tem Robbins has suggested the section be revisited and the purpose of the disclaimers are that they serve as a proactive statement of expectations for everyone participating in the meeting with the goal to encourage meaningful civic participation, protect the inclusion of diverse perspectives, and minimize the kind of disruption that can derail proceedings or cause community members to hold back from speaking. The Town's current language is the same used by the Marin County Board of Supervisors which he read into the record. He provided comparable city guidance, and said he was available to answer questions.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said she thought it seemed insulting to members of the public using words like, "Please don't be threatening" and "Don't use profanity" and "Be respectful." For the most part, public members are very respectful at Council meetings, and there are times Council Members are not respectful, which should be addressed amongst themselves. She noted many towns cited by the Town Clerk do not have a section on this. She suggested leaving the helpful information about when the public can speak on an item but would remove the respectful dialogue section completely.

Council Member Dowling said she does not see it as disrespectful, knows the County has this included on their agendas and it serves as a reminder that when at a public meeting to have respectful dialogue.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins disagreed and said she would do nothing or state to "please be respectful."

Mayor McMillan suggested Mayor Pro Tem Robbins and Council Member Dowling come up with something they both accept and this can be discussed at another meeting.

Council Member Salter said he thinks this disclaimer was added to the agenda because of meeting outbursts from the audience and he thinks there have been none since being on the Council. He actually suggested paring it down because it is very long, to "encourage respectful dialogue." If it gets bad and they have to change things to be more prescriptive, and then could change it.

Council Member Dowling and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins agreed to work together to pare down the language, work on a new version, and present it to the Town Manager without discussion again by the Council. Council Members agreed.

End of Administrative Agenda.

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

15. No Action Items: (Mayor)

a. **Council correspondence** – None.
b. **Future Council items** – Council Member Kircher requested adoption of a rule to vote to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. unless a majority of the Council agrees to go beyond 10:00 p.m., stating that meetings have gone on too long. Town Attorney Stock noted the current adjournment time is 12 midnight and the Council must take a vote at 11:00 p.m. Council Members then proposed a 10:00 p.m. vote to either continue the meeting or to adjourn and Council Members agreed to agendize the matter.
c. **Council Member participation at the communication table at the Ross Post Office on the next Council meeting day** – Council Member Dowling and Mayor Pro Tem Robbins volunteered for June 11th.

16. Meeting Evaluation.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins requested the Town Manager Johnson submit last-minute information ahead of time or alert the Council that there will be last-minute information coming a few days prior to the meeting.

19. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 p.m.

Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:

Zachary Koblick de León
Town Clerk/Senior Management Analyst