

SPECIAL MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2026

Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom

Council Member Salter participated from 1 Market Street, San Francisco, CA

1. 2:00 p.m. Commencement.

Mayor Julie McMillan; Mayor Pro Tem Elizabeth Robbins; Council Members Teri Dowling; Bill Kircher, Jr., Mathew Salter (remote participation); Town Manager Christa Johnson

2. Posting of agenda/changes to agenda.

Town Manager Johnson confirmed the agenda was posted according to government requirements, and there are no changes to the agenda.

3. Public Comments for Special Meeting Agenda Items

Mayor McMillan announced that public comment will be taken after going through the agenda under Item 4. She will also allow additional time from the public, as needed.

4. Town Council to receive a report from the Town Council Subcommittee formed on May 6, 2026 ("Architectural and Engineering Services RFQ Subcommittee") and consider the following actions:

- A) Consider rescinding Resolution 2623, and consider supporting the Citizens' Advisory Committee ("CAC") concept presented to the Town Council on May 6, 2026, rather than the Concept B from the June 2023 Facilities Master Plan and direct staff to continue to work collaboratively with the CAC and other stakeholders, including Ross Valley Fire Department and Ross Valley Paramedic Authority, to implement the CAC's concept as expeditiously as possible;
- B) Consider directing staff to withdraw the Town's Request for Proposals to architects to amend the Facilities Master Plan that was authorized on June 11, 2026;
- C) Consider directing staff, with the Architectural and Engineering Services RFQ Subcommittee input, to negotiate a professional services agreement for Town Council approval no later than August 6, 2026, with an architect to serve as the Civic Center project architect selected from the responses to the Request for Qualifications (RFQs) received pursuant to the February 12, 2026 RFQs, and develop a scope of work for the professional services agreement that includes detailed cost information; reconciliation of program and operational needs presented by the CAC concept as compared to Concept B approved by the Town (including but not limited to parking, secured parking for police vehicles, circulation, elevating engine bays out of the flood plain, corporation yard for Public Works); and implementation recommendations and phasing strategies.

Mayor McMillan explained that she called the Special Meeting following a June 19 meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), during which the CAC expressed concern that momentum behind its April 29 facilities proposal was being lost. The CAC urged the subcommittee to proceed immediately with hiring an architect to begin design work, stating that updating the FMP was unnecessary because project details could be addressed during the design process.

The CAC also advised postponing decisions on the project delivery method and recommended rescinding the current RFPs for the FMP update. Members expressed concern that delays and shifting focus away from the CAC's proposal could weaken public support and jeopardize the success of a future bond measure.

Mayor McMillan stated that she felt obligated to present these concerns to the full Town Council so it could discuss the issues and determine the appropriate path forward, then invited comments from Mayor Pro Tem Robbins.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins emphasized that the matter is time-sensitive, noting that delays could jeopardize the Town's ability to complete the paramedic facility by the January 2029 deadline. She stated that the CAC shared this concern, expressing that the current pace of the project was insufficient to meet that obligation and reinforcing its recommendation to move forward promptly with implementation.

Mayor McMillan asked Town Manager Johnson to provide the staff report and asked her to briefly address some concerns she raised in the report.

Town Manager Johnson clarified that the purpose of the Special Meeting was not to reconsider the Town Council's May 6 decision, through Resolution No. 2623, selecting the CAC concept as the preferred civic center design. Rather, the meeting was intended to determine the most appropriate process for implementing that approved concept. She explained that the current RFP for FMP amendment services was designed to advance and validate the CAC concept—not replace or delay it.

She stated that staff had evaluated the recommendations from the CAC and FORF and presented two implementation options: (1) continue with the FMP amendment and concept validation process authorized by the Council on June 11, or (2) terminate the current RFP process and proceed directly into negotiations with a single architectural firm. She recommended Option 1, citing principles of sound project management, fiscal responsibility, procurement integrity, and risk reduction. According to Johnson, the FMP amendment process would refine and validate the approved concept, resolve outstanding technical and operational issues, develop reliable cost estimates, and establish a solid foundation for future design, financing, and implementation decisions.

She noted that several critical issues remain unresolved, including future fire service planning, police operational requirements, public works' needs, site circulation and parking, floodplain compliance, historic preservation, project phasing, cost validation, financing strategy, and project delivery methodology. She stated that addressing these matters before entering into a long-term architectural services agreement would reduce project risk and improve decision-making.

She also emphasized that continuing the current RFP process would preserve the integrity of the competitive procurement process authorized by the Council on June 11, noting that ten qualified firms had been invited to submit proposals by the July 2 deadline, providing the Town with independent expertise, competitive pricing, and valuable information on project scope, methodology, and cost.

Town Manager Johnson stated that, in contrast, Option 2 would require the Town to terminate the active competitive procurement process and enter into direct negotiations with a single architectural firm before key project assumptions had been resolved. She explained that the Town had not yet established a validated project scope, construction budget, implementation strategy, or policy direction on several significant issues, including future fire service planning. Without this foundational information, staff would be negotiating architectural services without the ability to effectively assess project scope, fees, or overall value. Johnson further cautioned that unresolved project issues could continue to evolve during the design phase, increasing the risk of contract amendments, redesign efforts, cost overruns, and schedule delays.

Town Manager Johnson further stated that future financing is an important consideration. She explained that if the Town ultimately pursues a General Obligation Bond or another funding mechanism, both voters and decision-makers will need a clearly defined project scope, reliable cost estimates, and a realistic implementation plan. She said that completing the FMP amendment and concept validation process would provide this essential information. She also emphasized that continuing the current process was not expected to result in a significant delay and could ultimately save time. Based on the proposed schedule, staff estimated that the amendment and validation process could be completed in approximately four months, allowing the Council to consider a potential funding measure while positioning the Town to begin financing evaluations in late 2026 and early 2027 with substantially reduced project risk.

In closing, Town Manager Johnson reiterated that the Council had already selected its preferred project concept and that the focus should now be on validating that concept, confirming project requirements, developing reliable cost estimates, evaluating financing options, and establishing a clear implementation strategy before entering into a long-term architectural services agreement. For these reasons, she recommended that the Council maintain its current direction, allow the FMP amendment RFP process to proceed, and continue implementation of the CAC concept through the structured planning process previously authorized by the Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins noted that the staff report inaccurately characterized the June 19 meeting as a discussion of "demands" made by CAC and FORF. She clarified that the meeting had been requested by the CAC, not FORF, and that the committee presented recommendations—not demands—to the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem regarding implementation of the approved project concept. She emphasized that the purpose of the Special Meeting was to discuss those recommendations and described her comments as a clarification rather than a question.

Council Member Dowling asked whether the implementation process could be accelerated by conducting certain tasks concurrently rather than sequentially, with the goal of advancing the project timeline.

Town Manager Johnson responded that the proposed four-month FMP amendment and concept validation process was already an expedited schedule, noting that similar efforts often take more than a year. She explained that the CAC concept involves reusing an existing building, which requires additional evaluations such as hazardous materials studies, as well as Council policy direction on several key issues. She suggested that the Council consider scheduling regular meetings every two weeks to maintain project momentum, with the option to cancel meetings if they proved unnecessary. This approach would allow the Town to receive ongoing Council and community input while advancing the work of the selected consultant.

She further explained that multiple project components could proceed in parallel, including financing evaluations, coordination with an affordable housing partner, negotiations regarding telecommunications lease agreements, and ongoing discussions with the Paramedic Authority. As the Council provides policy direction on major issues, staff can begin preparing the RFP for the comprehensive architectural services contract rather than waiting until the FMP amendment is complete. She stated that staff would work closely with the Town's consultants, including the owner's representative from Griffin Structures, to move the project forward as efficiently as possible.

She concluded by emphasizing that Town staff share the Council's goal of delivering new facilities, particularly the paramedic station required under the Town's contractual obligations. While she could not guarantee completion within a specific timeframe due to the complexity of the process, she stated that timely Council direction and a structured public engagement process would help keep the project moving forward as efficiently as possible.

Council Member Dowling summarized that one way to accelerate the project timeline would be for the Town Council to meet more frequently and asked whether doing so would place a significant burden on staff in addition to their existing workload. Town Manager Johnson responded that while preparing additional agenda reports and coordinating with the Town Attorney would require additional effort, she had previously worked with councils that met twice monthly or more. She stated that the primary challenge would be coordinating schedules among Council Members, the Town Attorney, and other participants. Johnson suggested that the Council establish a series of meeting dates in advance, with the understanding that meetings could be canceled if they proved unnecessary, as an effective way to maintain project momentum.

Council Member Dowling then observed that if the Council did not meet more frequently, it would itself become a factor slowing the project. Town Manager Johnson agreed, stating that the Council's meeting schedule is one component affecting the overall pace of the project's progress.

Council Member Kircher asked what deliverables the Town could expect by the end of the proposed initial planning phase under Option 1, specifically whether the process would produce only a conceptual site plan or include more detailed floor plans. Town Manager Johnson responded that the detailed design work would be performed by the architect.

Council Member Kircher explained that, based on his professional experience, projects typically begin with a conceptual plan developed by a team with technical expertise before being refined by architects into detailed plans. He noted that the Town lacks that in-house expertise and therefore relies on outside consultants. He observed that the original planning effort produced a conceptual design, identified as Concept B, which addressed the Town's space needs but did not include detailed architectural plans. He questioned whether engaging one firm for planning and another for architectural design could create duplication of effort, resulting in additional time and expense.

Town Manager Johnson clarified that Concept B had been prepared by KPA, an architectural firm, but was intended as a planning document rather than construction documents. She noted that the Town's part-time Project Manager, David Kelley, could provide additional technical information regarding the process. She further stated that, while the decision ultimately rests with the Council, a substantial amount of planning work has already been completed, and transitioning between different firms at this stage could present challenges.

Project Manager David Kelley explained that the FMP amendment would not necessarily include detailed floor plans. Instead, it would further develop the CAC concept by validating and refining the proposed square footage allocations for each civic center use. He noted that detailed floor plans and equipment layouts are typically developed during the schematic design phase and therefore would not ordinarily be part of the FMP amendment process.

Mr. Kelley also discussed alternative project delivery methods, including the progressive design-build approach, which has been adopted by several Marin County jurisdictions. Under that model, the contractor and architect are selected together as a single project team. He stated that elements of this procurement process could begin while the FMP amendment is underway, although the Council had not yet determined whether to pursue that delivery method. He explained that this flexibility was one of the primary reasons staff recommended Option 1, noting that proceeding directly to negotiate with a single architect under Option 2 could limit the Town's ability to consider alternative procurement methods. He added that a progressive design-build approach could reduce project risk and improve cost certainty through a guaranteed maximum price while shifting greater responsibility to the design-build team.

He further explained that staff could advance other critical work during the FMP amendment process, including refining the project description needed to initiate environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). He noted that environmental review and the associated technical studies could proceed concurrently with later stages of project development, helping to maintain project momentum.

Council Member Kircher asked what work would need to be completed before the Town could pursue a design-build procurement process. Mr. Kelley responded that a well-defined project description is essential to issue a solicitation for a combined contractor-architect team. He stated that this approach allows design and construction professionals to collaborate early, improving constructability, reducing ambiguity in the design process, and providing opportunities for concurrent value engineering to control costs. He added that staff, with assistance from Griffin Structures and the Town Attorney, had already begun developing an implementation strategy for Council consideration and that this work could move forward under Option 1.

Council Member Salter questioned the staff report's characterization that FORF had made "demands," asking who had provided that information to staff. Mayor McMillan responded that she had conveyed concerns from the June 19 meeting to the Town Manager and noted that a FORF representative was present alongside the CAC, though she did not view the issue as central to the Council's discussion.

Council Member Salter expressed concern about the accuracy of the staff report and stated that the record should clearly reflect what occurred at the meeting. He emphasized that if FORF was not present or did not make demands, the report should be corrected and should not imply that Council decisions were based on demands from a group that had not made any.

Town Manager Johnson responded that Council Member Salter's concerns would be reflected in the official meeting minutes but stated she would not be revising the staff report.

Mayor McMillan said she wanted to point out that the agenda does not have the word FORF in it and they are not here to discuss FORF today, so she asked to focus on the CAC recommendation.

Council Member Salter raised concerns about statements in the staff report, including references to a "promise" made by FORF and questioned their relevance to the agenda item. He argued that the report's characterization of events was inaccurate and stated that it was inappropriate to suggest Council decisions were based on such a promise.

Town Manager Johnson explained that staff reports are prepared to provide context, history, and options for Council consideration, and that the information included reflected what she had been told regarding the reasons for the Special Meeting. She had limited time to prepare an extensive report and had sought additional supporting documentation, but none was provided. She added that Council members' concerns regarding the report could be addressed through formal review processes, including her performance evaluation.

Council Member Salter reiterated that he was troubled by both the accuracy and framing of the staff report, as well as the need for a Special Meeting shortly after the Council had already taken action. He expressed concern that inaccurate or misleading information could become part of the permanent record and questioned the necessity of reconvening the Council so soon after its prior decision.

Mayor McMillan suggested that Council Member Salter focus on the agenda item at hand.

Council Member Salter responded by questioning the rationale for convening the Special Meeting given the Council's recent vote and requested clarification on why staff believed the meeting was necessary.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins said she thinks Mayor McMillan made it clear that the CAC met with herself and the Mayor, made some recommendations that they agreed with, and thought should be shared with Council Member so they could consider them. This is why they are here.

Town Attorney Stock added that the Municipal Code and the Brown Act allow the Mayor to call a special meeting. It was not up to the Town Manager, so this is somewhat irrelevant and he asked that the Council move on.

Council Member Salter asked if the Town Manager was still standing by the original decision made less than two weeks ago to continue along that path. Town Manager Johnson confirmed, as stated in her staff report and in her verbal report she made at the beginning of this meeting, as Option 1.

Mayor McMillan asked whether the FMP must be fully amended before the Town can proceed to schematic design and floor planning, noting the need to accelerate timelines due to the January 2029 paramedic facility obligation and the March 2027 General Obligation (GO) Bond schedule. She asked whether it would be possible to proceed more directly into schematic work, utilize existing as-builts, and later amend the FMP while still developing cost estimates in time for the bond process.

Town Manager Johnson responded that while she understood the desire to move quickly, she believed the Council was already operating under significant time and policy constraints. She reiterated her fiduciary responsibility to ensure the Town follows sound procurement and project management practices, particularly for a project potentially exceeding \$25 million (and higher if a fire station is included). She strongly recommended completing a validated FMP that reflects the Council's selected CAC concept before entering into a major architectural agreement, emphasizing the importance of having a clear scope and reliable cost basis.

She emphasized that proceeding without a competitive procurement process would significantly reduce the Town's negotiating leverage in securing a multi-million-dollar architectural services contract, explained that RFPs are standard industry practice, allowing jurisdictions to compare qualifications, pricing, staffing levels, and project approaches, which helps control costs and reduce change orders. Without this process, she cautioned, the Town risked effectively committing to a "blank check" agreement with a single firm.

In response to a question from Mayor McMillan, Town Manager Johnson confirmed that the pending RFP is based on a fixed-fee structure, not time and materials, but noted it applies only to the FMP amendment phase. She further explained that major architectural contracts are typically tied to construction costs as a percentage, meaning that any expansion in scope—such as adding a fire station—could significantly increase costs through contract amendments and change orders if not properly defined at the outset.

She further emphasized that establishing a tight, well-defined project scope and realistic budget upfront is essential for voter confidence if a bond measure is pursued, and to avoid later requests for additional funding. She concluded that while the process was complex and time-sensitive, following an industry-standard procurement and planning approach was necessary to manage financial risk and ensure successful project delivery, while affirming that staff remained committed to implementing the CAC concept.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins stated that she remained unclear about how the process shifted from the Council's May 6 decision to proceed with the CAC concept and form a subcommittee to select an architect, to a subsequent shift toward updating the FMP instead of moving directly into architectural selection. She explained that although she had reservations about prioritizing the FMP update, she supported it to maintain Council unity and avoid perceptions of dysfunction, but still did not understand the change in direction.

Town Manager Johnson responded that the process had been complicated by extremely short timelines and frequent requests for rapid turnaround on complex proposals, which she said placed significant strain on staff. She described the May 6 Council action as initiating a subcommittee process that included herself, the project manager, and a consultant, and said staff had expected a longer, iterative selection process. Johnson stated that after reviewing multiple proposals and conducting the initial subcommittee work, it became apparent that there were still unresolved policy and project uncertainties, including fire service planning, that made it difficult to responsibly proceed directly into a major architectural contract.

She further explained that the accumulation of outstanding decisions led staff to recommend first completing a FMP amendment to establish clearer scope and direction before entering into a multi-million-dollar agreement. She emphasized that ongoing scheduling of multiple special meetings and evolving expectations contributed to shifting project requirements and made it difficult to finalize procurement steps. She requested that the Council allow staff to move forward with the structured process to resolve key unknowns.

Council Member Salter questioned the cost figures referenced by the Town Manager, asking for clarification on the basis of estimates suggesting \$25 million plus additional costs for a fire station.

Town Manager Johnson responded that the figures were drawn from prior Council-accepted cost estimates included in an earlier Election Code report, which projected costs for implementing Concept B and included escalation scenarios. She added that more recent professional input from fire service and architectural experts suggested that standalone fire station costs could approach \$19–20 million, and clarified that final cost estimates would ultimately be developed through the FMP process with professional cost estimators rather than informal estimates.

Council Member Salter referenced the April 29 CAC proposal, noting that it listed Concept B without a fire station at approximately \$25 million and a combined Civic Center/Town Center concept with a fire station at approximately \$22.7 million, which he stated was based on a contractor's bid. He emphasized the importance of using consistent, "apples-to-apples" comparisons and argued that Concept B should no longer be the basis for discussion, pointing instead to the CAC's \$22.7 million estimate.

Town Manager Johnson responded that the figures provided by the CAC required validation and reiterated that this was precisely the purpose of the FMP amendment and validation process. She noted that the estimate cited by Council Member Salter originated from a citizen-led proposal rather than a staff-verified cost analysis.

Council Member Salter reiterated that the Council should rely on the most current available figures. Town Manager Johnson responded that the figures still needed to be professionally reviewed and confirmed through the structured planning process.

Mayor McMillan added that there remained uncertainty regarding the scope of the proposed fire station, including how much of the facility would be fully built out versus left as shell space. She then suggested moving on to public comment and offered additional time if needed for speakers.

Mayor McMillan opened the public comment period.

Michael Rosenbaum of Madrone Avenue expressed concerns about the influence of the FORF initiative and questioned the clarity of leadership and decision-making direction within the organization. He stated that residents need transparency regarding who is guiding FORF's agenda and criticized what he characterized as external pressure influencing Town policy and reversals of prior Council actions.

He also objected to the potential cancellation or alteration of a previously authorized architect RFP, arguing that bypassing a competitive procurement process in favor of a non-competitive approach could undermine municipal procurement standards and fiscal accountability. He further stated that the CAC proposal lacked a clear financial strategy and called for greater transparency regarding funding sources and commitments associated with the project. He urged FORF representatives to disclose financial backing and suggested that any future ballot measure should be accompanied by validated funding information and tax implications.

Lastly, he referenced the Marin Grand Jury report, asserting that it characterized prior civic engagement efforts related to a fire station project as problematic, and warned that disregarding such findings could expose the Town to legal and financial risk. He concluded by urging the Council to maintain established processes, adhere to prior commitments, and avoid allowing external influence to drive policy decisions that could impact the Town's fiscal and legal stability.

Dan Winey stated that the Council, staff, and community ultimately share the same goals but may be “talking past one another” due to differences in terminology and process. He expressed general agreement with the staff report but offered a different interpretation of how the planning process should proceed, particularly regarding the scope and role of the FMP update versus schematic design. He argued that many of the tasks described in the FMP scope of work are typically addressed during schematic design, which in his experience includes floor plans, space planning, elevations, and related architectural development. He cautioned against proceeding without more detailed design information, noting that current cost figures being discussed are uncertain and potentially unreliable without further technical development.

He recommended expanding the current planning effort by engaging department heads, conducting building assessments, completing as-built documentation, and refining departmental layouts to establish clearer program requirements. These steps should be incorporated into an expanded schematic-level planning effort that would also support more accurate cost estimation and concurrent environmental review activities. He emphasized the importance of clearly defining functional needs for each department, including detailed operational requirements such as police facility layouts, while still allowing flexibility regarding the final inclusion or phasing of a fire station. He suggested that space for a potential fire station could be reserved and evaluated separately, depending on future voter approval and funding decisions.

He further noted that it is common practice for architects to be engaged for limited phases such as feasibility studies or schematic design, and that the Town could later pursue a separate procurement process for full design and construction services. He also stated that architectural fees are typically structured as lump sums rather than strictly as a percentage of construction costs, though they are often benchmarked against project size to ensure alignment with scope. He then described multiple viable project delivery methods, including design-bid-build, design-build, and hybrid approaches, and emphasized that the Town need not decide on a final delivery method immediately. He highlighted the importance of flexibility, early definition of project scope, and maintaining options for future procurement phases.

Mr. Winey concluded that time is a critical factor given obligations related to the paramedic facility and cautioned against delays that could limit future options. He recommended advancing the planning effort quickly with clearer deliverables, while preserving flexibility in procurement and design approach as the project moves forward.

Jeffrey Kuhn stated that, while he is not an architect but a finance professional, the Town faces a compressed timeline to meet the March General Obligation bond filing deadline, with a critical submission date of December 4. He emphasized the urgency of accelerating the planning process, noting that the goal is to avoid missing the November ballot cycle. He argued that the Town has access to highly experienced architectural expertise through Gensler, which he described as a leading global firm, and suggested that leveraging such expertise would allow the project to move more quickly and effectively than starting with a more traditional procurement sequence.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked whether Mr. Kuhn was recommending hiring Gensler to lead the full design process or to conduct the FMP update. Mr. Kuhn responded that, in his view, the distinction was not critical at this stage, as the immediate need is to advance schematic design-level work to establish reliable cost estimates for the ballot process. He suggested that architect selection could be revisited later, and reiterated his preference for engaging Gensler based on perceived readiness and prior work.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins noted that the Town already had an active RFQ process for architects underway and asked whether that was sufficient to proceed. Mr. Kuhn reiterated that the priority should be obtaining schematic design information as quickly as possible, regardless of which firm provides it, to support timely financial planning for a potential ballot measure.

Dan Winey clarified that his recommendations are intended to serve the Town's best interests rather than any specific firm, emphasizing that multiple delivery approaches and architectural teams could be appropriate depending on Council direction. He stated that the shared objective is to move the project forward efficiently and collaboratively, acknowledging that large civic projects often evolve as decisions are made over time. He reiterated that the ultimate goal is to deliver a successful project that meets community needs and can be supported by stakeholders at completion.

Mayor McMillan asked whether, given that the RFPs were due in eight days, it would be reasonable to allow the process to proceed, review the submissions, identify leading candidates, and then negotiate a scope that includes schematic design work sufficient to meet the December 4 General Obligation (GO) bond filing deadline.

Dan Winey responded that this approach would be reasonable if the Council chose to proceed in that manner. He noted that the short timeframe meant prospective architects would likely have many questions and would require clear direction regarding deliverables. He emphasized that a well-defined scope would improve pricing accuracy by reducing contingencies. He also reiterated the importance of maintaining momentum, stating that if the process proceeded without delays, a comprehensive schematic-level package and cost estimate could be completed within approximately 12 weeks, especially if supported by a concurrent cost estimator. He cautioned that extended negotiation phases could jeopardize the project timeline and put the Town at risk of missing key deadlines early the following year.

Jeffrey Kuhn urged the Council to proceed without delay, emphasizing that even a one-week delay was significant given the compressed schedule. He reiterated that leveraging an experienced architectural team already familiar with the project, such as Gensler, could help accelerate progress toward the bond filing requirements.

Mr. Winey added that, regardless of which firm is selected, the Town should prioritize obtaining reliable pricing and comparable proposals. He emphasized that selection should focus on qualifications and suitability rather than lowest cost alone, and reiterated that the ultimate goal is to obtain accurate cost information and a viable schematic-level plan within the available timeframe.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins expressed concern that, under the current schedule, the Council may not have sufficient meeting availability to keep the process on track. She noted that while RFP responses for the FMP update were expected soon, the proposed review timeline—set for July 8 with the subcommittee and Mayor—would occur too late to allow Council consideration at the July 9 meeting. As a result, she stated this timing could delay any potential selection until August due to limited available meeting dates in July. She emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum and suggested that the Council aim to have an architect selected by July 9, whether for the FMP update or to begin broader project work, to avoid further schedule delays.

Mayor McMillan returned to public comments.

Richard Hannum, an architect and developer, stated that the Town is currently lacking essential project definition elements such as scope, validated budget, and financing feasibility, all of which are typically required before proceeding to meet tight funding deadlines. He emphasized that establishing this foundation through multiple iterative public processes would take more time than is currently available given the Council's stated election-related deadlines.

Mr. Hannum supported the perspectives previously shared by Dan Winey, describing the "critical path" as requiring rapid development of scope, budget, and financial certainty to ensure the project can be successfully delivered and supported in a public financing context. He cautioned that proceeding without sufficient clarity risks producing inaccurate cost assumptions that could undermine future ballot efforts and necessitate project revisions. He noted that in similar large-scale development projects, firms such as Gensler are often engaged specifically because of their ability to provide schedule certainty and reliable cost and scope definition under compressed timelines. He emphasized that achieving a credible, defensible set of numbers is essential for voter approval and project viability.

He concluded that the Town's immediate priority should be to accelerate the path to a defined scope and budget, even if that requires compressing the planning timeline. He stated that once these foundational elements are established, the Council would retain flexibility to make further policy and design decisions, but that delay at the current stage could jeopardize the ability to meet critical financing deadlines.

Laura Conrow stated that FORF supports hiring an architect to develop schematic designs for the civic center that include a fire station. She emphasized that many residents strongly support restoring a fire station and expressed frustration that this objective, in her view, is not being adequately reflected in the current discussion. She argued that the Town benefits from having residents with professional expertise in architecture and construction who have contributed to the CAC process and demonstrated that a fire station could be incorporated in a cost-effective manner. She urged the Council to place greater trust in the work of these volunteer experts and the CAC proposal, stating that their analysis has shown feasibility for including a fire station within the project scope.

She further stated that relying on outside consultants without local ties or perceived commitment to the project could undermine progress toward achieving a cost-effective fire station solution, referencing another municipal projects for a school project in Piedmont, as examples of successful use of local expertise and collaboration. She concluded by urging the Council to embrace the CAC and resident-led efforts, stating that continued skepticism of the proposed fire station concept and its feasibility was discouraging and not reflective of the contributions made by community members involved in the process.

Tom Gaffney, resident, strongly encouraged the Council to adopt a speed-up action on proceeding with this project. He thinks the FMP will get redone if they hire the correct architect. He asked to consider the fact they are not paying for the architects or final consideration and it is time for the town to get together to approve a bond measure. Once they get good cost estimates and a design, then they can proceed with a lot of confidence.

Bill Poland, resident, said having worked on the CAC for these past months and have known Mr. Winey for many years, what he has offered is extraordinary. He is the most altruistic person he has been around in many years. The Town has the benefit of going slowly in one fashion but in the meantime he can get the Town on the right track out of the gates so they can meet the various deadlines that have been discussed.

Molly Gamble of Norwood urged the Council and staff to follow the direction outlined by Dan Winey and expressed concern that the project process has become overly protracted and ineffective. She stated that, from her perspective as a long-time resident, the civic center effort has been delayed for years, resulting in rising cost estimates, diminished public trust, and declining confidence in the Town's ability to deliver the project. She emphasized that while the process is complex, the current approach is no longer working and has contributed to delays and uncertainty since the initial decision-making period began in 2019. She argued that continued procedural steps and shifting plans have undermined momentum and credibility.

She concluded by urging the Council to adopt a more expedited approach aligned with the recent direction discussed in May, stating that the project plan has already changed and should now focus on implementation as quickly as possible to restore public confidence and move the project forward.

Stephanie Demarco stated that FORF remains supportive of restoring a fully operational fire station in Ross and reiterated that this has consistently been their sole objective. She noted that FORF was initially encouraged by the CAC concept and the Council's earlier unanimous support in April, and said the group has indicated a willingness to withdraw its ballot initiative if the Town makes a clear and binding commitment to achieving that goal. She expressed concern that since April there has been limited progress toward moving directly into architectural schematic design for a fire station aligned with the CAC proposal. Instead, she noted that the Council chose to pursue an updated FMP process, which she said would extend timelines beyond key decision points related to the ballot initiative.

She also addressed the staff report's reference to "demands" made by FORF, stating that the organization has not made demands of the Council or staff and requested that the record reflect this clarification. She argued that delays and shifting approaches—rather than the initiative itself—have contributed to project uncertainty over time. She concluded by urging the Council to move forward by adopting the CAC concept, committing to the inclusion of a fire station, and proceeding with hiring an architect to begin schematic design work. She stated that doing so would provide a path toward resolving community division and advancing a long-supported goal of restoring fire and emergency medical services in Ross.

Council Member Kircher sought clarification on the project timeline, stating that the Council generally agrees time is critical and that the goal is to complete schematic design and obtain reliable cost estimates by late November or earlier. He asked whether the Town could bypass the full RFP review process and instead move directly toward selecting and negotiating with a preferred architectural candidate, or whether it would be necessary to wait for all proposals before proceeding. He also questioned whether a contract could realistically be negotiated and approved by the August meeting given the procedural steps involved.

Dan Winey responded that, working backward from the desired timeline, schematic design would likely require approximately 12 to 14 weeks once initiated. He noted that initial steps—including clarifying the scope through the FMP update and defining schematic-level deliverables—would take some time before an architect could be fully engaged. He suggested that if the process moved efficiently, an architect could potentially be selected and under contract within three to four weeks, targeting a late July start. From there, he outlined a schedule that could extend through August, September, and October, with completion in early November, assuming no significant delays.

Jeffrey Kuhn added that the success of a potential bond measure would depend heavily on how clearly and effectively it is described on the ballot. He emphasized that developing a strong ballot measure would require at least one to two weeks of preparation before finalization.

Mr. Winey concluded by reiterating that a key outstanding question is how quickly the Town can move from receiving proposals to negotiating and executing a contract with an architect in order to meet the proposed schedule.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins noted that, based on the Town Manager's indicated Council availability, there may be insufficient meeting opportunities in late July to meet key deadlines. She expressed concern that without action at the July 9 meeting, selection and onboarding of an architect could be delayed until August 13, which she believed would jeopardize the schedule needed to meet the November/December financing timeline. She asked how the process could be fast-tracked to allow an architect to be engaged by July 9 to begin schematic design and budget development.

Dan Winey responded that the current RFPs could be used as the basis for accelerating the process, with additional clarification added regarding deliverables and scope. He suggested that, once responses are received, the Town could move quickly to select an architect and issue a letter of intent, allowing work to begin before a final contract is fully executed. He emphasized that a clearly defined scope would support a lump-sum proposal and reduce uncertainty in pricing. He also noted that final contract terms could be completed after work has commenced, provided there is agreement on the essential scope and expectations.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins asked the Town Attorney whether it would be permissible for the Council to select an architect at the July 9 meeting based on the RFQ process or whether they must wait for the July 2 RFP submissions.

Town Attorney Stock responded that the Council should wait for the July 2 RFP responses and then negotiate with the preferred respondent based on those submissions and any revised scope. Winey added that many of the elements being discussed were already part of the current FMP amendment scope and reiterated that receiving the RFP responses would allow for a more informed negotiation process. He suggested that, while July 9 was likely too soon, a special meeting in mid to late July could be feasible for approval of a negotiated agreement.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reiterated concern about limited meeting availability between July 9 and August 7.

Mayor McMillan responded that the Council would need to remain flexible to meet critical deadlines, noting that members could participate remotely or adjust schedules as needed to support the timeline. She then summarized that the emerging direction was to wait for the RFP submissions due July 2, convene promptly thereafter, and select an architect to advance schematic design and cost development necessary for the December 4 filing deadline. She characterized the effort as intensive but achievable with coordinated work by the Council, staff, consultants, and the CAC, and asked for additional input.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins suggested proactively scheduling additional meetings in early July to review the RFPs before the July 9 Council meeting. Mayor McMillan responded that she was confident the Town Manager, staff, and Council leadership could prepare in advance of July 9 and preferred not to establish additional meeting dates during the discussion, emphasizing the shared commitment to meeting the project deadlines.

Council Member Salter referenced the June 11 meeting, noting he had been the only Council Member to vote against the current process. He expressed frustration with what he described as repeated delays and characterized the ongoing process as a failure of leadership. He advocated for bypassing additional procurement steps and directly engaging Gensler and Dan Winey, along with the CAC, to lead the project, citing their local involvement and prior unpaid contributions. He argued that continued procedural steps, including additional RFP processes, were unnecessary and risk further eroding public confidence and delaying project delivery.

He further stated that, in his view, the Town had experienced prolonged delays over many years and that immediate action was needed to move the project forward. He urged the Council to delegate responsibility to subject-matter experts and proceed without further process-related delays.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins voiced agreement with Council Member Salter's general position and asked the Town Attorney whether the Council had the authority to appoint an architectural firm during the meeting.

Town Attorney Stock responded that the Council could not appoint an architect at this time because it was not an agendaized action item and doing so would violate the Brown Act. He clarified that while the Council could direct staff to negotiate with a preferred vendor, formal selection and approval of a contract would need to return to a future meeting.

Council Member Salter disagreed, asserting that the agenda allowed the Council to direct staff to negotiate with a selected vendor. He requested that staff be directed to negotiate a contract with Gensler to advance the project. Town Attorney Stock reiterated that the Council could not select a specific architect at the current meeting and that any resulting agreement would need to be brought back for formal Council approval at a later date.

Council Member Dowling voiced her support for continuing with the existing RFP process, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a competitive and transparent selection process. She expressed concern that bypassing competition could undermine the Town's credibility and noted that even perceived conflicts of interest could negatively affect public trust. She acknowledged the significant workload ahead, including refining the project description, initiating environmental review, evaluating delivery methods, updating the master plan, selecting an architect, and advancing schematic design, but stated she believed the Council was prepared to proceed quickly and remain actively engaged.

Council Member Kircher similarly supported proceeding with the RFP process, noting agreement with the Town Manager's concerns about maintaining best practices, while acknowledging the need to balance those standards with time constraints. He emphasized the importance of transparency and fairness, stating that all submitted proposals should be reviewed before making a selection. While he acknowledged urgency, he did not support immediately selecting a single firm such as Gensler without completing the process.

In addressing concerns about potential duplication of effort and delays, he believed the schematic design phase could be clearly separated from later stages of detailed design work. He suggested that the Town could structure the forthcoming contract with defined milestones and deliverables tied to specific policy and design questions, allowing issues such as department placement and fire facility considerations to be resolved incrementally. He concluded that, while the timeline is tight, the Council should proceed deliberately and use the remaining time efficiently to develop a complete and defensible package for a potential ballot measure.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reiterated her concern that waiting for the RFP process would create delays that could jeopardize the project timeline. She questioned why the Council could not rely on the earlier RFQ, which had already been received and were originally intended to help identify a preferred architect. She stated that, in her view, the Council could move more quickly by selecting from that existing pool rather than waiting for the July 2 RFP submissions. She added that she would prefer the Council either make a selection at the July 9 meeting or schedule a special meeting shortly thereafter, emphasizing that any longer delay would be unacceptable given the project deadlines.

Mayor McMillan responded that Council Members are all aligned in their desire to move the project forward as quickly as possible, but emphasized that the RFP submissions would provide critical cost and scope information that the RFQ do not contain. She noted that while the Council has extensive experience with the facilities process, the complexity and history of the project require careful and structured decision-making. She stressed the importance of doing the work thoroughly and correctly, rather than rushing solely to meet deadlines, and referenced the long history of planning efforts dating back many years.

Council Member Salter questioned whether the RFQ alone might provide sufficient information to proceed with selecting an architect. Mayor McMillan responded that the RFQ does not include cost proposals or detailed scope information and therefore are insufficient for making a final selection.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reiterated that the RFQ had originally been intended as the basis for selecting an architect before the process shifted toward RFPs and subsequent procedural changes. She expressed that the Council could still return to that approach if it chose to do so, but acknowledged she may be in the minority position.

Mayor McMillan stated that the Town Manager had appropriately prepared the RFQ to position the Council for flexibility and future action, and emphasized that the Council now had multiple procedural options to consider. She concluded by indicating that the discussion had reached its limit and invited any final input from the Town Attorney.

Town Attorney Stock stated that the Council-adopted resolution required the RFP to include the key scope elements needed to advance toward schematic design. He explained that the RFP responses would provide more relevant and actionable information than the earlier RFQ, which primarily contains general firm experience and rate information. He noted that the RFP process would better position the Council to refine scope and move toward cost estimation for the next phase.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins requested that staff commit to a selection meeting during the week of July 15. Town Manager Johnson responded that a subcommittee meeting was already scheduled for July 9 with the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, with a special Council meeting date of August 4. She emphasized that Council availability and the requirement for a quorum physically present in Ross created scheduling constraints, noting that at least three Council Members must be physically present to conduct business.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins suggested the week of July 13 as an alternative if quorum availability could be secured. Town Manager Johnson indicated that Council Member travel schedules and contract preparation requirements—including legal review and coordination with the selected firm—made scheduling challenging, though she would attempt to identify a viable date, potentially July 14, if feasible.

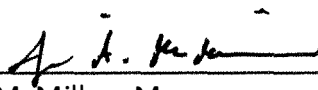
Council Member Salter proposed an alternative approach of directly engaging and retaining Dan Winey and Gensler on an interim basis to continue advancing the project and avoid further delays, citing their prior involvement with the CAC concept.

Mayor Pro Tem Robbins reiterated preference for holding a selection or action meeting on July 13 or 14 if possible.

Mayor McMillan concluded the discussion by stating that a majority of the Council supported proceeding with receipt of the RFPs and moving forward as expeditiously as possible thereafter, and concluded the meeting.

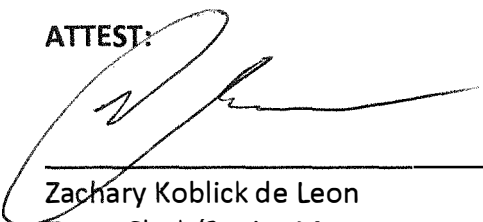
5. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.



Julie McMillan, Mayor

ATTEST:



Zachary Koblick de Leon
Town Clerk/Senior Management Analyst