



Agenda Item No. 12.

Staff Report

Date: September 11, 2014

To: Mayor Elizabeth Brekhus and Councilmembers

From: Rob Braulik, Town Manager

Subject: Ross Common grounds maintenance verbal presentation from Marizco Management Company (MMC)

Recommendation

Informational presentation only. Staff has asked MMC to come to the Council meeting to make verbal presentation on condition of the Common.

Background and discussion

MMC has provided grounds maintenance services for several years at the Common. MMC staff has a good working rapport with Town Public Works staff and also with the Ross School in which MMC provides ground maintenance landscape services on the school property. MMC has been responsive to Public Works maintenance requests and communicates regularly with Town staff about Common grounds conditions and issues. There are also regular quarterly meetings held with MMC. Attending these meetings are representatives of Ross School and the Town. The current issues with the Common grounds including the overall appearance have gone beyond day-to-day maintenance matters. There are both short and long term system issues impacting the conditions. These include the drought in the short term and an overdue major renovation of the grounds over the long term. Also please reference the attached staff report dated October 22nd, 2013 previously provided to the Council which addressed issues with the Commons grounds.

MMC was invited by staff to provide the Council and the community with a brief verbal report on these conditions, the reasons and issues behind the conditions, potential alternative remedies and to answer Council questions.

Over the past year the Council has received complaints about the Common grounds. The principal complaint has been the condition of the Common grass, the poor appearance of the Common grounds as compared to similar properties in neighboring communities and the overall lack of proper maintenance and capital investment in the Common. For example, one area in front of the stage is in very poor condition where there is a large brown area in the lawn. There are several factors impacting the condition of the Common grounds:

1. One of the Town wells went dry very early this year due to the extreme water drought in California this year.
2. The Marin Municipal Water Agency (MMWD) has asked all agencies and residents to abide by a voluntary water restriction to reduce water usage 25%. With the early loss of well water we would be going over our past usage not decreasing it.
3. The part of the Common that gets the most significant use due to recreation sports has not been renovated since 1990. In 1990 the entire common was stripped down, the sprinkler system redone and soil reconditioned with all new sod. Athletic fields require major renovation every 15 to 20 years if they are to stay in good quality condition.
4. The cost to use regular non-well water is prohibitively expensive. It can cost approximately \$300/day to use regular water.
5. Over the years usage of the Common has increased with the increased participation in community recreation programs. This usage has impacted already stressed Common grounds.
6. Some users of the Commons are not adhering to the ban on dogs in certain areas.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

There are funds in the Facilities Fund that could be used to complete a full renovation of the Common grounds where the sports activities are held. Staff would need to do additional research and analysis of the actual renovation fiscal impacts and the ongoing costs for maintenance post renovation. Currently this project is not in the FY15 workplan. Staff would suggest if the Council wants to move in this direction staff would work to get more information for the Council to consider at the October Council workshop. The Ross School participates in paying for up to 1/3rd of the cost of the Commons maintenance and thus would need to be involved in future discussions of ongoing maintenance costs.

Alternative action(s)

- Informational item only

Environmental review (if applicable)

N/A

Attachment

- October 22, 2013 Council Workshop Discussion of potential renovation and alternative improvements to the Ross Common report



Agenda Item No. 5d.

Staff Report

Date: October 22, 2013
To: Mayor Beach Kuhl and Council Members
From: Town Manager Rob Braulik
Subject: Discussion of potential renovation and alternative improvements to the Ross Common

Recommendation

Council discussion and consideration of potential capital improvements to the Ross Common athletic fields and other alternative improvements. Council is asked to discuss this item at the workshop and following the discussion provide staff with future policy direction.

Background and discussion

Based on information provided by the Public Works Department, the current athletic fields at the Common (i.e., the area where baseball and soccer is played) has not had a significant renovation since 1992, over twenty-one (21) years ago. During this time this area of the Common has seen increasing athletic activities and usage. As the Council reviews this item you may want to consider these sample questions:

- Is the Council satisfied with the current condition of the Ross Common athletic fields both during the athletic season and off-season?
- Do the fields meet the needs of the community and those who use the fields?
- What is the proper amount of use for the Common athletic fields?
- Would the Council agree there could be better methods put in place to manage field usage?
- In terms of budget resource allocations; is the priority on performance of the fields, aesthetics, both or some other criteria?
- What is the long-term vision for use and appearance of the Common (i.e., status quo, incremental improvements, periodic major renovations)?
- Are there any priority uses and priority users for the Common?

Public Works Department staff has indicated the minimum improvement needed at the Common to help improve the field performance and maintenance includes investment in a new water well. Currently there are three water wells with one producing 20 gallons per minute and the other two 10 gallons per minute. There is not enough well capacity from the existing wells to keep the water tank full to provide well water to the fields particularly in the late spring and summer months. Well water is much cheaper to use than Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) water which if used, can cost upwards of five thousand (\$5K) per month. Public Works recommends the Town also invest in a back-up pump or at a minimum have funds available to replace a pump should one go out as these pumps run 24 hours a day when the fields are in use. The cost of a new water well, pump, and related improvements is approximately twenty-five thousand (\$25K).

The Town currently contracts with an outside firm to provide Common landscape maintenance. This cost is split three ways between the Town, the Ross School and Ross Parks and Recreation. For FY13 the Town paid just over \$9K as our one-third share of the costs for Ross Common maintenance. The Town budgeted in FY14 fifteen thousand (\$15K) for Ross Common maintenance.

Staff asked the current contract maintenance provider to provide a rough estimate of what it would cost to renovate the field including leveling the fields, fixing the irrigation so the water is hitting the fields properly and re-seeding the field area. The estimated capital cost is approximately one-hundred twenty-five thousand (\$125K). This estimate does not include necessary professional services such as retaining a design professional (i.e., architect) to design and create the necessary project plans, project engineering management assistance (i.e., project advertising, construction management etc.), contingency costs etc. A rough estimate to complete this project is:

<u>Project costs</u>	
Design costs	\$ 20,000
Capital construction costs	\$125,000
Project engineering management	\$ 20,000
Contingency	<u>\$ 20,000</u>
Total	\$185,000

Annual maintenance costs would also increase. There would need to be additional top dressing and over seeding of the fields to keep them in good condition once the fields were renovated. The estimated annual additional maintenance costs would be fifteen thousand (\$15K) plus an additional five to ten thousand (\$5K to \$10K) in potential annual capital costs or a total annual increase in operating costs of \$20 - \$25K. The contract landscape firm estimates once the field is renovated; and assuming the Town committed to the additional maintenance costs; the newly renovated Common field area would last ten to fifteen years before another renovation would be required.

Another potential facility improvement for discussion purposes is to remove the worn out hedge that runs the length of the Common. This hedge is in poor condition and is difficult to maintain and keep up. It is also a place where rodents and other vermin “reside” which is an issue particularly during the early morning hours and at night. To remove the hedge and replace it with a three and a half foot black clad fence (just one among many potential alternatives) would cost approximately twenty thousand (\$20K) for the hedge removal and forty thousand (\$40K) to install a fence the entire length.

The above information is provided simply as potential ideas for Council consideration. Staff would recommend if nothing else, Council consider installation of a new water well next year. If the Council agrees, we can incorporate this for consideration in the FY15 budget for further review at that time. If the Council decides it wants staff to further consider a major capital renovation of the field, staff would do additional research to try and refine the numbers and add this for consideration in the FY15 capital budget review as well.

Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts

The Common athletic field improvements could be funded from the Ross School bond proceeds provided last year. The current remaining balance is approximately ninety-four thousand (\$94,000). This would cover approximately 50% of the estimated total project cost. The remaining funds could come from Facility Fund reserves or from a transfer of funds from the General Fund to the Facilities fund. The well and hedge/fence capital costs would come from the Facilities Fund.

Capital replacement

As part of the Council discussion of this project, staff would recommend if the Council supports the field renovation project and adds this to the FY15 workplan; an annual field renovation capital replacement dollar amount is set-aside each year to replace the fields in fifteen years. Assuming a renovation project would cost two-hundred fifty thousand (\$250K) in fifteen years; the annual set aside would be just shy of \$17K/year.

Also staff would suggest the athletic fields users (baseball, soccer and any other leagues, sports and recreation users) be charged not only the costs to provide proper maintenance for the fields during their use but there be some capital replacement charge built into the costs for future renovation of the facilities. The alternative is to continue the current practice in which the General Fund subsidizes use of the Common.

Alternative actions

There are many alternative actions including:

1. Status quo
2. Complete the well project only
3. Complete the well and field renovation projects
4. Complete the well, field renovation project, hedge removal/fence installation projects
5. Some other combination of projects

Environmental review (if applicable)

N/A