

Communication to the Ross Town Council

To: Madam Mayor and Members of the Town Council

From: Michael Rosenbaum, 14 Madrona Ave, Ross, CA

Date: May 18, 2026

Subject: Request for Public Education Campaign Regarding the Financial Implications of the FORF Ballot Initiative

Madam Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the clarity of financial disclosures surrounding the Friends of Ross Firehouse (FORF) ballot initiative. As the November election approaches, it is imperative that the Town of Ross launch a comprehensive educational campaign. Residents deserve a clear understanding of the long-term fiscal responsibilities associated with restoring an independent fire department or maintaining a fire station in Ross—costs that may not be fully reflected in current public discourse.

The Unveiled Financial Burden

Fiscal projections from independent consultants, such as Citygate, suggest significant financial commitments that differ from the current narrative. It is vital for residents to evaluate the following critical implications:

- **Unsustainable Parcel Tax Increases:** While current public safety parcel taxes stand at approximately \$1,229, estimates for an independent Ross Fire Department indicate annual operational costs of approximately \$5.04 million

¹. This would necessitate a **perpetual** annual parcel tax of approximately **\$4,000 to over \$6,000 per household**² just for operations.

- Fire costs increase much faster than the rate of inflation due to firefighters' health care costs, pension costs. RVFD costs for '26-27 are increasing at 6%. So any parcel or Mello-Roos tax approved for additional fire services would need to escalate at a higher level than Ross's current public safety parcel tax, which is currently 2%/year.
- FORF has yet to identify the sources of the start-up costs of approximately \$2MM for equipment and recruiting.
- **Cumulative Tax Obligations:** These operational and start-up costs are distinct from any General Obligation bond financing required for the Civic Center Master Plan. Citizens must be informed of the potential for a combined tax burden, and the projected duration of these financial commitments.
- **The Operating Endowment Requirement:** Alternatively, to sustain a separate fire department without a massive perpetual tax, an operating endowment of approximately **\$50 million** would be required, assuming a 5% return. To date, FORF (CA Secretary of State #B20250107358) has reported raising only \$125,000—a mere fraction of what is necessary and FORF's current financials will remain opaque until May of 2027 when they have to file audited financials with the California Secretary of State.

Addressing Tenability and Procurement

Reports from the Citizens Advisory Committee have raised questions regarding the feasibility of maintaining a fully functional fire department at the Ross Civic Complex. In light of this, the following measures are recommended to ensure transparency and public confidence:

- **Comprehensive Disclosure:** The Town should provide a verified, long-term financial impact (taxes) for citizens well before the November election.

¹ [see the Citygate Elections Code Report from January, pgs. 7-8]

² [amount divided by # of 835 parcels]

- **Mandatory Escrow:** To safeguard public interest and prevent undue donor influence, all pledged contributions for equipment and staffing of a new Ross Fire House should be placed in an escrow account before the initiative is put to a vote.
- **Expert Review:** Any architectural or construction contracts should be subjected to rigorous review for any potential conflict of interest with FORFs existing donors.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The Town Council has a responsibility to ensure that the electorate is provided with substantiated and verifiable financial data. Should the Town not provide this necessary educational platform, I am prepared to establish RISE (Ross Information and Safety Education) to provide a data-driven summary of these costs to our community.

The future of our civic character and our financial solvency depends on expert analysis and honest community input. I urge the Council to prioritize this educational effort immediately.

Sincerely,

Michael Rosenbaum
14 Madrona Ave, Ross, CA

Establishing Standards for Council Communication

Madame Mayor:

I am writing to formally object to the receipt of unsolicited correspondence from Council members late on Sunday evenings. As a resident of 40 years, I recall a time when the Council maintained a tradition of speaking to the community with a single, unified voice.

If these fragmented communications now constitute the norm, I would expect similar weekly dispatches from other members, such as Wednesday morning health updates from Dr. Robbins, given her professional expertise in such matters. I single her out only because she does possess those bona fides.

It is my view that the Town Council must urgently adopt formal protocols for member conduct and discipline. These measures should include clearly defined procedures for reprimand, censure, or expulsion to ensure professional comportment.

With Regards,

Michael Rosenbaum
14 Madrona Ave

Dear Council Member:

The Council hears about potential liability, to the point of saturation. However, with the prospect of creating a gratifying solution to the Fire House quandary, the Council may be of a mind to direct expenditures toward that foreseeable benefit rather than a bottomless fiscal pit. You will have that opportunity May 20 at the MAGC, 6:30 PM "to discuss the future of flood control efforts in Ross Valley along Corte Madera Creek".

The fish resting pools provides substantial environmental credibility to the Corte Madera Creek flood project thereby alleviating some of the flood district's embarrassment at 'pausing' the project, but I caution the Council: potentially unlimited expense rests in those fish pools for Ross. There is in the attached letters (see below) speculation that the channel failure in 1982 might be because the Corps project was not constructed as hydraulically designed.

The CMC FRMP EIR lists "up to 16 new fish pool structures" in the 33 foot wide Unit 3 channel, each requiring an enlarged cutout of 14 x 18 feet in the concrete channel bottom. Just one tiny crack, one pinhole error exposed to repeated flood flows might produce a failure that washes out the adjacent sewer siphon, an adjoining section of SFD Boulevard and area flooding. This alarms me because there are existing, unremedied flaws in the concrete channel even without the new fish resting pools, and beyond any suppositions about the channel construction and stability.

The district description of the Ross section of the channel as "seismically unsafe" is a matter of record. [Subtask 4.3 of the Grant Agreement 4600012423, Prop 1E Round 1 Stormwater Flood Management Grants, California Water Code Section 83002 and Public Resources Code Section 5096.827 *Et Seq.*]

Phillip Williams' letters are a matter of record as are my comments sent to the district and FEMA in 2022 perhaps contributing to FEMA's questioning of the district's 'in-channel flow' claims?

Concern over the height and placement of new flood walls atop or adjacent to 1969-71 walls is real. Any flow pattern disruption created by new fish pools decreases channel performance and increases the need for new walls, which increases the threat to the stability of the current concrete channel base and walls. This appears to be an endless circle of perils that the district has yet to fully study or resolve, and Ross is on the receiving end of the failure.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Garril Page

edited excerpts from April 11, 2022:

Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project

April 11, 2022

“... FEMA has been told there is no-rise up to (Kentfield Rehabilitation) Hospital Bridge. I believe the proposed CMC FRM project will increase flooding that will overtop channel walls.

My concerns are:

- 1.) ... areas of induced flooding identified in USACE documents upon which the CMC FRM relies.
- 2.) The WSE rise that will flood Granton Park and the College of Marin area above College Avenue...
- 3.) Downstream of the Ross fish ladder (Granton Park and COM, Larkspur) are affected by the same channel faults that remain uncorrected:
 - (a.) the Corps did not build in adequate freeboard through COM area above College Ave Bridge, the existing channel walls are too low which contributed to 1982 flooding in that area...
 - (b.) the channel invert (slope change) and S-curve above College Ave Bridge create turbulence and backwater. This hydraulic jump area has never been corrected, remains a sediment sampling site...
 - (c.) with sea rise, the salt water intrusion that increases channel roughness extends through larger area of the channel. Marine intrusion currently extends to the rehabilitation hospital bridge, but can expected to cause intensified effects further up the channel in the future. To the extent marine life and salt water damage channel walls, problems and WSE will increase.

(d.) the new flood walls (approx 2000' long) are beside or on top of existing 1968-1970-era walls in areas of high liquefaction per County maps...

(e.) new walls and wall cuts such as the maintenance ramp, enlarged fish resting polls, new flood walls, marine intrusions, all add to stresses on these same county-defined, "seismically unsafe" channel areas. The description "seismically unsafe" originated in Subtask 4.3 of the Grant Agreement 4600012423, Prop 1E Round 1 Stormwater Flood Management Grants, California Water Code Section 83002 and Public Resources Code Section 5096.827 *Et Seq.*

...*Sacramento* USACE office that was confronted with the failure during the 1982 storm.

Subsequently, the more recent Phoenix Lake/Unit 4 project revivals were the *San Francisco* USACE office...

One recurring theme in engineers' reports is the channel dysfunction as it shifts from super- to sub-critical flow... I have not included a concurring Micheal Love report stating the upper channel in Ross, the "seismically unsafe" section, has a 8100 CFS super-critical capacity...

Yours sincerely,

Garril Page

70 Fawn Drive

San Anselmo CA 94960

obility@comcast.net