



RPOA news

A publication of the Ross Property Owners' Association, representing Ross Residents since 1961.

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Mission

The Ross Property Owners' Association (RPOA) has represented Ross Residents since

1961. The organization's mission as it appears in the By-laws is "to provide funds and services for the benefit of the general community of the Town of Ross." Through the financial support of its members, the RPOA has worked to inform residents of important issues and to contribute to the continual improvement of the community.

The Association holds monthly meetings at 7:15 pm at the Town Hall on the Monday immediately preceding the Town Council meeting. RPOA members are encouraged to participate in our monthly meetings. Issues pertaining to Town matters are discussed, particularly those currently before the Council.

www.RPOAross.org

RPOA OVERVIEW

The Ross Property Owners Association (RPOA) presently has 326 Ross households as members and a Board of seven Ross citizens. The RPOA's charter is to help the Town of Ross by improving Town property and by sponsoring community improvement events to continue to make Ross a great place to live.



The RPOA membership contributions have been used for projects and events as follows:

- Purchase of two light poles for the Ross Common.
- Contribution to remodeling the Post Office.
- Contribution to landscaping the area in front of Town Hall.
- Procurement, installation and ongoing placement of colorful banners along Ross Common.
- Construction and placement of new Bulletin Board kiosks.
- Purchase and installation of bike racks in front of Post Office.
- Christmas decorations on the bridge and wreaths throughout Town.
- 4th of July parade contribution and decorations throughout the Town.
- Tree trimming of Kittle Park area (at Sir Francis Drake & Lagunitas).
- Planting and maintenance of "Eddie's Tree" in front of Post Office.
- Installation and ongoing replacement of "doggie bags" at Town Common.
- Sponsoring "Candidate Nights" for Town Council elections.
- Sponsoring First Aid preparedness classes at Ross School.
- Assisting in Disaster Preparedness.



In the year ahead, RPOA will focus energy and funding on:

1. Ross Downtown beautification.
2. Kittle Park improvement (the lot at Sir Francis Drake & Lagunitas).
3. Natalie Coffin Park renovation by contributing to new picnic tables and benches.



We thank all of our RPOA Members for your ongoing support and look forward to your help and suggestions as to how the RPOA can best continue to make Ross a great place to live!



Puppies thank the RPOA for supplying "doggie bags" at Ross Common



On Monday October 1, 2018 a free 2-hour seminar was presented at the Marin Art and Garden Center.

FIRE Safe MARIN is a 501(c)3 organization that is dedicated to reducing wildfire hazards and improving fire-safety awareness in Marin County. Their web site www.FIRESafeMARIN.org has valuable information and you can sign up for their newsletter.

Residents should sign up for ALERT MARIN www.alertmarin.org which gives you alerts on your phone about current emergencies.

Sign up for Nixle. <https://local.nixle.com/county/ca/marin> This is used by fire, law, and schools to provide information about nearby incidents and emergencies by ZIP Code.

Ross' Disaster Preparedness Council (DISCO) volunteer coordinator is Gil Fleitas 415-425-2300 fleitas@mac.com Please call him for more information on DISCO. Ross needs to be prepared to be 100% self-sufficient for 3-10 days when an emergency hits us. Find out what you can do for your family and neighbors in Ross.

There are too many great articles on the Fire Safe Marin website to list here. Here are just two:

PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

Have an Evacuation Plan

PLAN BEFORE THE EMERGENCY for all household members

~ Human and animals

~ Water/food/clothing/medication

PREPARE YOUR HOME

Steps to creating an effective defensible space:

#1. Effective defensible space.

#2. Remove dead vegetation.

#3. Create a separation between trees and shrubs.

#4. Create a separation between tree branches and lower growing plants.

#5. Create lean, clean and green area extending if possible 30 feet from house.

#6. Maintain the defensible space zone.



Corte Madera Creek Flood Risk Management Project

On October 12th, the Joint Draft EIS/EIR was released by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Marin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The Army Corps has acted as the lead agency in the preparation of the report with support from the District. The report with exhibits and appendices is in excess of 500 pages and examines five different alternatives that would mitigate the flood risk, as well as the option of not taking any actions. October 12th was the start date for a 45-day comment period by the public and the various government entities that are involved. At the end of the 45-day comment period, the Army Corps will consider all the written comments that are submitted and will develop a final EIS/EIR for presentation in the Fall of 2019.

Each of the alternatives has been studied over a broad range of potential environmental impacts, as well as a cost/benefit analysis of each alternative. Only one of the five alternatives, 'J', meets the preliminary cost/benefit analysis. Several public meetings have been scheduled and held since October 12th.

All of the information on Ross Valley Flood Protection can be found at www.rossvalleywatershed.org. This website has a wealth of information on the plans for the next 10 years.

Ross Disaster Preparedness (DISCO) - Be a Block Captain!

In the event of a natural disaster, our beautiful Town may well be left to fend for itself for a period of 3 – 10 **days**.

In a worst-case scenario, roads will be clogged or impassable, the electric grid nonfunctioning, communication systems down or overwhelmed, and water and food supplies severely compromised.

We'll be on our own -- **to be our own "first responders."** Neighbors helping neighbors.

DISCO, which stands for *Disaster Preparedness Council*, is the Town's initiative to help us all become individually and collectively ready to respond when a disaster strikes. It has a local "Incident Command" protocol, which ties into the county, state, and federal resources that will be available, but which, unfortunately, at their very best still require time to become fully mobilized to assist local communities in need.

As the heart of our community's self-help and resiliency program, DISCO is staffed by our Town's government officials and workers, our police and fire chiefs, and most importantly by many of our neighbors who have each volunteered to help in small and big ways to protect the Town's 2,400+ residents.

One of the most important, and some would say most meaningful, parts of DISCO is the **Block Captain Program**. Block Captains are residents who help pull together and organize their immediate neighborhood, becoming a major conduit for getting critical and timely information from and to the Incident Command that will pop up in the event of a disaster. At most, it's a time commitment of ½ hr. – 1 hr. per month, but its impact can't be overstated.

To properly cover the Town, we will need about 30 – 40 Block Captains (including some alternatives to serve as backups). Block Captains will be fully supported by Marian Mancini, a long-time resident who has graciously agreed to head the program as the Lead Block Captain, as well as the whole DISCO structure. It's truly a team effort.

We hope you will consider being a Block Captain, or volunteering in the many other ways available to contribute to our collective safety and preparedness efforts. If we all do just a little bit, our beautiful Town will become safer, more resilient, and more deeply blessed by the neighborhood spirit that binds us together.

Please contact me (Fleitas@mac.com, [415-425-2300](tel:415-425-2300)) or Marian Mancini (morn@comcast.net) if you'd like to learn more about DISCO and the many ways you can contribute to this important program. Many thanks!

Gilbert Fleitas, 86 Glenwood Avenue, DISCO, Coordinator



New RPOA Website Coming Soon

Two of our board members, Marcia Skall and Diana Hammer, volunteered to work on a much needed updating of rpoaross.com. Marcia and Diana enlisted the help of Branson School's computer science teacher, Anthony Pound, who found a willing Branson student volunteer, Andrew Fisher, to take on the responsibility of updating the RPOA website. Andrew, also a Ross resident, is an aspiring Senior and has managed to bring our content current while working on his college applications and school work! We are grateful for Andrew's help and Branson's willingness to be a resource for our computer needs. Andrew has a new design in mind for RPOA's website, and will present his ideas to us in January. The RPOA gets to enjoy the free computer skills of Branson students, who, in turn, get to practice pitching their ideas in a real-world setting. Please take a look at your convenience at: rpoaross.com.

BRANSON SCHOOL Student Enrollment

A representative of "Safe Ross" spoke at a public RPOA meeting on September 10, 2018 about its concern over Branson's stated desire to increase student enrollment. Below is a letter from "Safe Ross" summarizing their points.

Please note that the RPOA does not take a position on issues that come before the Town Council or the Town residents. The following letter is from "Safe Ross:"



"In the June RPOA newsletter, the Branson School wrote that they are 'asking the Town's residents for approval to grow our enrollment over the coming years. A modest increase of 80 to 120 students over time will allow our school to keep pace . . .'. Safe Ross, a group of Ross residents who love the serenity and safety of our town and hope to preserve it for future generations, has serious concerns about the impact of a large student increase at the Branson School.

"In 1978, when the Town agreed to let Branson, then a girls' boarding school, become a co-ed commuter day school, there were specific stipulations in the use permit to ensure that the change wouldn't adversely affect the town in terms of noise, parking, traffic, and use of the facilities. One of these stipulations was an enrollment cap of 320 students. To increase enrollment above 320, the Branson School is required to circulate a petition to qualify for a vote by Town residents.

"While Branson strives to be a good neighbor, traffic and parking remain a challenge even with the current enrollment of 320 students. We are concerned that a large increase in student enrollment, with a possible increase in teachers and staff, likely will result in a significant increase in traffic on the surrounding streets. We are concerned about the safety of our children who walk, scooter and bike to and from Ross School on streets that do not have controlled crosswalks and sidewalks.

"We are also concerned about additional parking requirements from an increase in the enrollment. Branson presently supplements its on-site parking with a temporary agreement to use a parking lot at St. Anselm's Church. A long term plan for parking is necessary so that the Town's streets don't become overflow parking for the school. We think that Branson's proposed increase of 25% to 37.5% in enrollment may detrimentally affect the quality of life in Ross." Contact 'Safe Ross,' at safross4all@gmail.com should you have any questions or suggestions.

Beautification Plans for Downtown Ross by Ross Merchants and RPOA

Sally Newson of Mind Tank Work Club has done some excellent work uniting the merchants and bringing awareness to the Ross downtown area. She walked through the downtown with Mara Snipes, Owner of Ross Studio Petitbo Shop, looking at possible changes to be made. Sally created a proposal she presented to the RPOA in response to an offer from the RPOA to assist her where they can.

In looking at the light standards, it was noted that some needed repair and in many cases tree trimming to make the light visible. It was suggested that flower baskets be hung from the poles (in the spring, of course). Painting existing flower boxes and adding benches and lighting in front of the stores were other improvement ideas.

They also suggested several things individual shop owners could do to improve the look of their buildings. Several have been responsive to those suggestions.

There have been two meetings of the merchants, the last one including Joe Chinn, Town Manager and Heidi Scoble of Planning. There was some discussion of the little park between the Ross Garage and Sam the Butcher's which would make a nice gathering place in the downtown if it weren't in such poor condition. Apparently it is privately owned so neither the Town nor the merchants can do anything to improve the landscaping or replace the benches.

Iris Winey of the RPOA has spoken with Robert Maccario of the Town regarding the items for which the Town is responsible and he has been wonderfully accommodating. The trees will be trimmed -- though this is difficult as many were there before the light poles! DC Electric will be contacted to improve the appearance and functioning of the poles and provide an estimate for replacing the poles which don't conform, possibly adding another pole if the Town finds it feasible.

Every season, RPOA changes out the banners for the fall and then again for the winter. RPOA works with Idie Weinsoff of the Ross School Art Department where the children design the banners which grace Ross Common.

RPOA looks forward to working with Sally, Ross Merchants and the Town in making the Ross downtown more attractive. We welcome any help or suggestions from the townspeople who would also like to see a more vibrant center to our town.

Undergrounding Utilities in Ross

In the past 4 months, a group of homeowners in the neighborhood of Glenwood, Fernhill, Norwood, Lagunitas, and Shady Lane have initiated an effort to underground their utilities. The motivation is two-fold. The first is **fire safety**. Knowing that the devastating Camp Fire, 2017 Sonoma fires, a fire in Samuel P. Taylor Park this summer, and a recent incident on Glenwood Ave. all resulted from utility lines, we decided to get pro-active about fire protection. In the process, we have discovered that although spared our own disaster, the Ross Fire Department nevertheless responds to over 25 power line issues every year. Power lines remain a high risk to the community and need to be undergrounded. We are living in a new world where weather patterns are exacerbating the fire danger.

The second motivation was aesthetic. Look up on almost any street in Ross and you'll understand why. By undergrounding, we rid our community of the unsightly power lines and poles, while allowing the trees and foliage to grow naturally. The graceful trees that are a hallmark of our community are being hacked back to avoid the high voltage lines. It's a Sisyphean effort that won't prevent utility-related disasters.

The reality is PG&E will not pay to underground utilities. Fortunately, there are constructs whereby the homeowners can amortize the costs over 30 years through a municipal bond. As such, the annual cost is much more manageable. We think of it as additional insurance to protect our homes! We have received an overwhelming response to the project and now have sufficient support in the neighborhood to proceed with discussions with the Town.

Ross has never had one of these undergrounding districts so we are working together with the Town Engineer and the Town Manager to plan the way forward. Both Tiburon and Belvedere have successfully completed undergrounding projects and have several in the works. Belvedere has buried 90% of their power lines. It's time to do the same in Ross.

For more information, you can contact Stephanie DiMarco at stephaniegdimarco@gmail.com or Kristine Kelley at kakelley@me.com.

Before



After





The RPOA Thanks our 326 Member Households!

The Ross Property Owners’ Association meets once a month (typically the Monday preceding the Town Council Meetings at the Town Hall). RPOA was established in 1961 with a mission of “providing funds and services for the benefit of the general community of the Town of Ross.”

The RPOA Board wants to say “Thank You” to all of the 326 members whose financial support through membership dues and contributions has allowed the RPOA to inform the Ross community residents of important issues and to help with Town improvements.

Membership is open to ALL residents in the Ross community, including those living in Kentfield within the Ross School District. There are three categories of membership:

<u>Membership</u>	<u>Dues Amount</u>	<u># Community Members</u>
General Membership	\$ 35	177
Friends of the Ross Bear	\$100	108
Best Friends of the Ross Bear	\$200+	41

This year, thanks to our generous members, we raised \$27,735 in dues to be used toward community projects. We would love to have more members join the RPOA. To learn more about the organization, come to a meeting!

To become a member of the Association, please send a check payable to Ross Property Owners’ Association, to RPOA, P.O. Box 747, Ross, CA 94957. Your donation is tax deductible. In January, we will be sending Membership Invitations to the entire community. Please join us!

IN APPRECIATION

The **ROSS BEARS** provide the funds for the projects that the Association undertakes every year. In addition, we are able to accomplish more because of the people who donate their time for the projects. We want to thank the following people and businesses who have helped us with projects during 2018.

Janell Hobart and **Cynthia Zak Livermore**, Landscape Architects for Kittle Park restoration design.

Eric Wagner of Beaver Tree Services and Treemasters for landscape cleanup at Kittle Park.

Joe Chinn and **Heidi Scoble**, Town Staff for advice on Kittle Park, and most every RPOA project.

Robert Maccario and **Anthony Alcozer**, Ross Public Works for installation and removal of holiday decorations and banners on light poles. Plus anything else we need a hand for.

Andrew Fisher, Branson senior/Ross School graduate and **Anthony Pound**, Branson faculty advisor for helping with the technical aspect of RPOA web site.



2018 RPOA MEMBERS
(\$100 to \$199 contribution indicated in caps)
(\$200 or more contribution indicated in caps**)

Table listing 2018 RPOA members with their names and contribution levels. The table is organized into four columns. Contributions of \$100 to \$199 are indicated by caps, and contributions of \$200 or more are indicated by double asterisks (**).



ROSS PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 747
ROSS, CA 94957

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**OUR ANNUAL MEETING NEXT
YEAR IS FEBRUARY 11, 2019**

Please join us at 7:15 PM

Ross Town Hall

ROSS PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to ALL RESIDENTS of the Ross community, including those living in Kentfield within the Ross School border. We encourage all to attend the once-a-month meeting to voice your opinion on Town matters.

We hope you will support the Association this year and help to insure that the RPOA continues its great tradition of service to the community.

General Membership Dues: \$35; Friends of the Ross Bear: \$100-\$199; Best Friends of the Ross Bear: \$200 and more.

Please make your check payable to: Ross Property Owners' Association and mail to:
RPOA, P.O. Box 747, Ross, CA 94957.



Please visit RPOA's website to view this newsletter and for more information about our organization:
www.RPOAross.org



2018 RPOA BOARD

(Left to right)

Mike Gillfillan, Marcia Skall,
Jeff Koblick, Diana Hammer,
John Kieckhefer, Iris Winey
[Not pictured is Anne Hickey]

REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

Held the 2nd Thursday of the month in the Town Hall

RPOA MEETINGS

Held at 7:15 pm on the Monday preceding the Town Council Meeting in the Town Hall

TOWN'S EMAIL

To join the Town's email list and receive Town notices, Contact Linda Lopez: llopez@townofross.org



ROSS PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSN.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2018**

JEFF KOBICK
President, Box 776

ANNE HICKEY
Vice-President, Box 216

IRIS WINEY
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JOHN KIECKHEFER
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DIANA HAMMER
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Board Member, Box 521

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