

**DRAFT** SPECIAL MEETING of the ROSS TOWN COUNCIL  
ANNUAL BUDGET WORKSHOP  
THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024

*Held In-Person and Teleconference via Zoom*

*(Council Member Robbins will participate via Zoom from 3475 Padaro Lane, Carpinteria, CA\*)*

**1. 10:25 a.m. Commencement.**

Mayor Bill Kircher, Jr.; Council Members Teri Dowling, Julie McMillan, Elizabeth Robbins (via teleconference\*), Mathew Salter; Town Manager Christa Johnson; Town Attorney Benjamin Stock

**2. Posting of agenda/changes to agenda.**

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

**3. Public Comments for Items on the Agenda**

James Gray, resident, described damage done to the historical rock wall area and street sign on Allen Avenue, cited ancillary issues, and thinks there needs to be a safe way for kids to walk to school and for people to get to the Common.

Jeff Koblick, RPOA, voiced appreciation of their partnership with the Town with events and projects, looked forward to the year ahead, and hoped to arrive at a budget supported by the Council.

**4. Annual Budget Workshop Overview.**

Town Manager Johnson introduced the following individuals who are here to participate in the Budget Workshop: Consulting Accountant Elizabeth Ford, Town Clerk Cyndie Martel, Recreation Manager Maureen Borthwick, Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano, Police Chief Pata, and Public Works Director Rich Simonitch.

She stated the Council will review and confirm Town goals, review recent accomplishments over the fiscal year, review elements of organizational capacity, review a Five-Year financial forecast, show how the Town is addressing pension liabilities, discuss the Draft FY 2024-25 budget, review slides of what needs to be done in the budget for implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element, the Council will discuss two requests received from the RPOA and Age-Friendly Task Force for funding requests, and the Public Works Director will discuss the Five-Year CIP program, take questions, discuss next steps, wrap up, have lunch, and take breaks as needed.

**5. Review and confirm Town goals.**

Town Manager Johnson gave a PowerPoint presentation and displayed the Town goals, as follows:

1. Provide transparency, consistency, and fairness in government
2. Sustain financial responsibility and stability
3. Enhance effectiveness and efficiency of delivery of services
4. Maintain a safe community and improve emergency preparedness
5. Foster and strengthen community involvement
6. Maintain and improve infrastructure and facilities
7. Promote environmental stewardship

She asked for edits or refinements to the goals from the Council, and there were none voiced.

She then described accomplishments of the Town and Town Council, stating the Town is financially healthy and has a proactive budget, and she described examples:

1. A clean audit for FY ending 2023.
2. The Public Safety Parcel Tax was renewed with 78% voter approval in March.
3. GANN limit solutions were brought to the Council last summer.
4. Increased savings for the Civic Center project.
5. The Council has continued to pay down unfunded pension liability.
6. Maintaining a safe community.
7. Recruited and transitioned to new staff over the year.
8. Made significant Housing Element progress.
9. Town staff brought 26 Design Review and CUP projects through the ADR to the Town Council.
10. Held the March Election.
11. Public Works Department brought forward a tree inventory and tree management plan.
12. The Public Works Department processed 66 encroachment permits and 47 tree permits.
13. The Recreation Department implemented a recreation fee assistance program, updated the Town's field facility rentals to include 3 Bear Hut which was requested by the community.
14. The Police Chief, with assistance from a consultant, conducted an evaluation of emergency preparedness plan and identified near and mid-term actions.
15. The Public Works Director asked the Council to adopt the 2023 Storm Drainage Master Plan. Of that, in this fiscal year, staff completed the Shady Lane and El Camino Bueno Project Drainage projects and continued progress on the Bolinas Storm Drain Phase 2 project.
16. Undergrounding Utility District progress occurred this year which is a multi-year process.
17. The Police Department's E-bike initiative called Ride Safe in Ross has been implemented this year with traffic education and enforcement with the Town and school district staff.
18. Increased Police Department outreach and community engagement continues such as Coffee with the Chief and National Night Out.
19. The Town began addressing the status of the paramedic lease in Ross.

20. Increased wildfire prevention education occurred mid to late summer at the request of Councilmembers.
21. Recruited a new Police Officer and obtained Council approval to add a Police Officer position for succession planning.
22. The Recreation Manager accomplished a regrowth of the Kid's Club Afterschool Program.
23. Recreation supported Age-Friendly Task Force, increased community involvement, made partnerships with Ross School and Basage Elementary School.
24. Progress on the Winship Bridge Replacement project.
25. Laurel Grove Safe Pathways project received positive feedback from members of the community.
26. The Council adopted a revised version of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element this past December and another amendment will be brought forward on May 6<sup>th</sup>.
27. Over the holidays and into January, the Council amended the zoning for Branson School to facilitate the development of workforce housing.
28. The Town Clerk brought forward an updated Records Retention Policy to the Council last summer and has been working with staff to implement it.
29. Increased Ross Valley Fire Department staffing and solved their governance topic.
30. The Council adopted a gate safety ordinance.
31. Ross Recreation recently started up their new website and new registration software.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked how the Council will communicate these accomplishments to residents.

Town Manager Johnson stated staff can place something in the Morning After and she will work with the Mayor on this.

She then presented a slide on elements of organizational capacity. A consultant worked with Town Council in Fairfax a couple of years ago and he brought forward the slide, which she described regarding the Town Council and staff capacities.

Town Manager Johnson then presented the five-year financial forecast and said the purpose is to determine whether the Town's level of service is sustainable. It provides the ability to fund alternative programs and services in the short- and longer-term. She described what the five-year financial forecast does, what it includes, revenues and expenses, and predictability of future costs. She then presented a slide showing the Town is sustainable with its current level of services over the five-year forecasted period. Staff is projecting by the end of this June, the Town will end the year with a surplus of \$1.725 million, and she described reasons for this.

She said pension costs can fluctuate with the stock market performance and fire services costs are growing. Opportunities include the Council's decision to rebuild and develop a funding plan with site plans for the Civic Center rebuild, to continue the strategy to reduce retirement costs, work with JPA members to find ways to contain costs, and the renewal of the public safety parcel tax by the voters in March.

Town Manager Johnson then asked for questions or comments before speaking about pension costs.

Council Member Salter said while the Town sees the surplus of building activity which is welcome, they should recognize the importance in increasing property tax revenue and meeting RHNA goals. He advocated for the Town to develop policies that are more beneficial for development which will benefit the Town in the long run.

Mayor Kircher agreed with Council Member Salter's comments. However, he noted there is legislation in Sacramento that would exempt new construction of ADUs from any increased assessment for 15 years, provided these new units were restricted to affordable housing. The League of California Cities is opposing that measure as well as all jurisdictions in Marin, but in the present climate it could pass.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan referred to the projected FYE 2029 and the reduction in the contribution to the pension liability. She is hoping the Town's revenues increase or expenses decrease so they will be able to make a \$200,000 contribution and thinks this should be one of the highest priorities.

Town Manager Johnson then described the Town's pension liability through CalPERS and noted the recent valuation reports show an unfunded accrued liability of \$5.7 million which is an increase of \$4 million from the last report due to a CalPERS performance loss of 7.5% when a gain of 6.8% was expected. However, the Council has been aggressive in addressing this liability which she described through payments of \$3.2 million in discretionary payments to pay down the unfunded actuarial liability.

The Town has also undertaken additional steps to mitigate pension costs. The Council reduced the amortization schedules to pay down the unfunded liability from 30 years to 20 years, resulting in higher costs in the short-term but much lower costs due to significantly less interest paid in the long term. The Town also stopped paying the employee's share for Police Officers which was 7%. Now the employees pay their share and in 2018, the Police Officers agreed to pay 3% of the employer share of the cost which was significant, given police CalPERS costs are higher than the miscellaneous non-public safety employees.

Council Member Salter asked if Town staff looked at creating a fund instead of putting the \$200,000 towards a CalPERS paydown to offset the liability since it is so volatile.

Ms. Johnson stated the Town Council established the fund through PARS but has not put much money into it. She confirmed with Consulting Accountant Elizabeth Ford that the balance is approximately \$70,000. Ms. Ford stated the Town put \$400,000 into it and for a while the former Town Manager felt it would be better to put it into CalPERS so it was transferred out of PARS. The Council can decide what will provide the most benefit, and Council Member Salter suggested the Finance Committee review this and determine if it makes more sense to set the money aside and let it grow for the Town versus paying down CalPERS.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said the way PARS pitched it several years ago was that the other benefit of putting money into PARS is it is not co-mingled with other jurisdictions that put money into the bigger pool, so there are some safety measures and the impression of more control.

Town Manager Johnson said one of the downsides is they could easily take it out whereas once it is in CalPERS it is there. Ms. Ford noted on page 7 there is a chart that speaks to the performance of PARS versus the performance of CalPERS.

**6. Town Council to provide guidance to the Town Manager on the draft Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FYE25) budget beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.**

Town Manager Johnson presented a slide showing that the General Fund consists of three funds: Operating, Facilities and Equipment, and the Emergency Fund. New for the current FY 2024 is the Capital Projects Fund which is the Town's bank for its Civic Center project. There are special revenue funds that can only be spent for specific purposes, which she described.

Revenues are projected to grow at a slower rate and she presented a year over year budget comparison describing each fund and highlights in operating revenues, General Fund increases for each department, the Town's healthy reserves, revenue sources that make up the Town's General Fund, FTE staffing and the addition of one FTE Police Officer, and a .25 FTE to the Recreation Department to create a full-time Recreation Coordinator. The Operating Fund is balanced and ending fund balances are healthy.

She then presented and described priorities for the FY 2025 Budget.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked and confirmed the General Plan expires in 2025, and noted the previous plan update was a three-year process. Town Manager Johnson noted that staff had planned for the update this year but are working on trying to get the Housing Element certified by HCD.

Council Member Salter referred to the capacity slide with the number of meetings, Council, and staff time. What would be helpful for the next Council meeting is understanding their subcommittees and that potentially additional subcommittees might be formed to address

future priorities. He thinks what would be most effective is that they work in more subcommittees with staff and two Councilmembers. This will save the full Council time to be more of a decision-making body with subcommittees to have more substantive discussions and work with staff to hash out many of the issues.

Mayor Kircher stated this could be considered in the future. The Council has had special subcommittees in the past, and these were helpful but sometimes it is duplication of effort.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said she agrees that subcommittees can meet on certain things, but for example, when the Branson School issue was coming up, originally the Council discussed having a subcommittee, but the issue was so important to the Council and the community that they wanted all five Council Members participating.

Council Member Salter suggested it be added to a future Council meeting to identify those that would be less controversial, such as a Software and Technology Committee.

Council Member Dowling asked and confirmed with Mayor Kircher that there are four standing committees but these are not exclusive of other subcommittees that would be shorter term.

Town Manager Johnson said she appreciates Council Member Salter's comments and the intent. However, the Council operates under the Council-Manager form of government, and the Town Manager and her staff come up with recommendations and returns to the Council. She voiced concerns with duplication of work and the standing subcommittees likely will be Brown Act committees which makes them an added workload issue.

Council Member Salter commented that the Design Review Committee created by Mayor Pro Tem McMillan has created enormous efficiencies for the Town Council and his view is they need to find better ways of optimizing their time.

Mayor Kircher agreed with the need for discussion on the topic and to maintain the Council and Town Manager role.

Town Manager Johnson then presented and described the General Government Budget Highlights.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked when the decision was made for Ross Valley Fire to hire a full-time Fire Chief and Battalion Chief.

Town Manager Johnson said over the winter and spring they had a study done of governance options and the Board originally gave direction to start working on a shared services agreement with Central Marin Fire but Central Marin Fire is not interested at this time with sharing services

except for fire prevention services which is the Fire Marshal service. There is still an opportunity to have shared services in the future, but for the time being, the station will close in one year and they must focus on moving the firefighters and apparatus to their other two stations that need to be upgraded and focus on getting the third firefighter on every engine.

So, after this, there are not many options left for them and the Board decided to go with their own department which would require a full-time Chief and Battalion Chief. They were paying for those services in the past through an agreement with Marin County Fire Department.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked if the current Interim Fire Chief will be the new Chief or if a recruitment will be conducted. Town Manager Johnson said they have decided to negotiate with him but have not made the appointment yet. The Battalion Chief likely will be an internal candidate.

Mayor Kircher confirmed the current representative is Council Member Robbins and he is the Alternate, so likely he will move to the Fire Board to replace Council Member Robbins.

Town Manager Johnson then continued with the General Government budget highlights for the Police Department.

Council Member Salter said there was a computer and telecom maintenance cost of \$12,000 per year not included in the Police budget and he asked what occurred. Town Manager Johnson said the Town was dividing charges for their IT contractor, Marin IT between the departments. With the proposed contract, moving forward they realized the funds need to be in one pot, so the amount in the Administrative budget has increased. The net increase is \$35,000 just for on-going work and not for hardware.

Town Manager Johnson then continued with Public Works budget highlights, and Public Works Director Simonitch described the Post Office parklet amenity which is a strip of decomposed granite and a bench.

Council Member Salter asked if the water line item is for all parks or included in the maintenance of each line item. Director Simonitch replied this is the metered water used for the Fire, Public Works building, the Town Chambers and offices, and irrigation, noting that the Common and Frederick Allen Park irrigation is delivered from groundwater wells.

Town Manager Johnson continued with Recreation budget highlights.

Council Member Salter referred to the credit card processing fees for recreation, and asked if there is the possibility to use debit versus credit to save in fees.



Recreation Manager Maureen Borthwick said currently they have an additional fee when a customer registers on-line using a credit card so the Town does not have to pay the extra fees.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan and Mayor Kircher commended Ms. Bothworth and her staff for saving and expanding the Kid's Club Aftercare Program. Town Manager Johnson recognized Ms. Coates as well who donated over \$30,000 to the Town to put in a new program for fee assistance, and Ms. Borthwick described the program as being used by Ross local schools and staff members. She confirmed they are actively accepting contributions and are promoting the program.

Town Manager continued with Planning and Building budget highlights.

Council Member Salter referred to the temporary part-time wages and asked if there is a new position being created. Town Manager Johnson said their intent is to use these funds for graduate students or Grizzly Fellows who are paid as interns to work, as well as paying for urban planning program student interns from Bay Area colleges. Council Member Salter added the availability of student interns from ULI and UC Berkeley.

Planning and Building Director Roberta Feliciano then presented and described the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle Housing Element, and its programs, the Town's RHNA for 111 housing units, fair housing, support of rental assistance programs, ADU trends, and other requirements of the State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD). The Council will hear about the amendments to the Housing Element on May 6, 2024. She then described potential penalties and court-imposed fines the Town could be subject to if the Housing Element is not certified. She then described budget figures to support implementation of action items and technical actions needed for completion of the Housing Element process.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked if there was any grant funding available to pay for mandates of the State. Town Manager Johnson said the Town used grant funds from the LEAP program for work on ADUs and for Housing Element consultants. Ms. Feliciano said she was not aware of any grant funds from the State, but the Town received its reimbursement for the SB 2 grant of \$160,000 and they still have \$65,000 from LEAP funds. However, the costs total more than \$400,000 for the Housing Element work.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said she thinks it is important for residents to understand how expensive it is for the Town to comply with the Housing Element and money is coming directly from the Town's budget which is not being made whole from the State. She thinks this emphasizes how critical the parcel tax is in order to meet the Town's budget and suggested a Morning After article to quantify this stress on the budget from unfunded mandates.

Council Member Salter suggested a specific line item to track expenses related to the Housing Element from last year to date to document how much the initiative costs. Mayor Pro Tem



McMillan also asked that the article include ramifications to the Town for not complying with the State mandates.

Mayor Kircher agreed there are financial penalties as well as the possibility of litigation where the Town would have to defend itself. The Town will do its best to comply, but this is a very expensive and difficult program.

Town Manager Johnson emphasized that future budget years may require additional resources. Fairfax has added a full-time position to deal with housing, and part of that person's time will be spent on the rental housing ordinance and they will receive funds for their registration program. The Town will determine what can be done with existing staff and much will depend on the number of development applications the Town receives and must process.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked about any additional legal work and costs that could be required.

Town Manager Johnson said the Town was required to process zoning amendments and negotiations to facilitate housing at Branson School by the end of January which was discussed at three different Council meetings and this required additional legal expenses. Hopefully, additional zoning amendments will not require as much legal review.

#### **LUNCH BREAK**

Mayor Kircher called for a break at 12:25 p.m. and thereafter, reconvened the Budget Workshop at 12:58 p.m.

#### **7. Town Council consideration of requests for FYE 2025 funding from Age-Friendly Task Force and Ross Property Owners' Association and provide direction to staff regarding the amount of funding to include in the FYE 2025 budget.**

Town Manager Johnson described the funding requests as outlined in her staff report from the Age-Friendly Task Force and RPOA.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said all events are wonderful. Her only suggestion would be clarifying RPOA's request, given that the Town is receiving a \$2,500 credit from last year, perhaps it should be shown that the Town is being asked for \$29,500 but only paying \$27,000 due to the carryover from last year.

Council Member Robbins commented that the RPOA has brought such great events to the Town and she thinks the Town contributing is terrific. Unlike prior years where the Town has just contributed to events like Live on the Common, this year RPOA is asking the Town to fund part of virtually everything. She thinks this is fine but thinks RPOA's messaging should change to include the Town; there is currently no hint that the Town is also playing a role in the events.

Jeff Koblick, RPOA, said much of the marketing states who the co-sponsors are but he is sure they could do a better job. On the Age-Friendly issue, RPOA supports Age-Friendly with contributions for events, as well. So, he does not think all items proposed in the budget are things that RPOA asks the Town to support through funding.

Council Member Dowling referred to the announcement that came out for the Age-Friendly event on the RPOA's website and the task force asked them to do that as a way to get information out, so they help with publicizing Age-Friendly events.

Council Member Salter suggested proposing round numbers of \$30,000 for RPOA and \$10,000 for Age-Friendly, as both are great organizations and he voiced support of additional funding which benefits the Town.

Council Member Robbins said, not to be critical of events, she cautioned against having marketing items at events, noting that at one of the Age-Friendly events there were pens that had real estate information. She added that Age-Friendly has tables at events which is a real benefit, especially for those that do not have children. Mr. Koblick recognized the Public Works Department staff for this.

Town Manager Johnson said for RPOA events they put logos of various agencies on the actual flyers, but she recommended that the Town be mentioned when speakers announce volunteers and other recognition at the events.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan commented that this weekend the events were amazing ("Swiftly" and the Spring Dinner) but in the future, it would be great if both of these events were not scheduled on the same weekend.

Council Member Dowling agreed with comments regarding publicizing the Town as part of all the great events, whether it is RPOA or Age-Friendly.

Town Manager Johnson asked and confirmed the direction from the Council is to fund \$27,000 for RPOA and \$8,000 for the Age-Friendly Task Force, and that any additional funding requests can be brought to the Council and considered separately under public comment at meetings where two Council Members would need to support the request(s).

**8. Town Council discussion and input on the Draft Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document. Based on discussion, an updated final version of the CIP will be included for adoption in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget document.**

Public Works Director Rich Simonitch gave the staff report and overview of the Draft Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document.

Mayor Kircher asked and confirmed with Director Simonitch that the Town needs to complete undergrounding before the Council considers repaving Sir Francis Drake Boulevard giving timing of trench cuts.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said when the Town considered the Branson expansion, the Council talked about having a pathway down to Fernhill from Branson, and Director Simonitch confirmed this is on his presentation under the list of projects which he then proceeded to describe.

Mayor Kircher said when they are repaving, was there any possibility to make both sides of the street safer for pedestrians, particularly the eastern side where there is a blind curve. Director Simonitch said there is interest in a pedestrian crossing or signalization/traffic control on Sir Francis Drake in some locations, and these would fit in great with the paving program.

Mayor Kircher questioned fees that have supported the SAFRR project that will be up for renewal in 2027. Director Simonitch clarified this is the Flood Zone 9 parcel tax fee on tax bills, but the Town does not see any revenue from that. The funding source for the Drainage Fund is the 1% of the valuation of building permits which is approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year, plus anything they draw on the Drainage Fund balance.

Council Member Salter asked and confirmed that all excess reserve funds are invested in LAIF and Ms. Ford briefly spoke about other investment vehicles. Town Manager Johnson said looking at intermediate term or longer-term investments can be something the Finance Committee may want to consider and additionally, staff will be bringing the Investment Policy to the Council in June.

Director Simonitch continued his presentation and described the proposed paving projects.

Town Manager Johnson asked if children use Allen Avenue as a connector from other neighborhoods and asked what makes it a Safe Route to School.

Director Simonitch said it is the last 50 yards of children trying to get into the playground gate. He noted that Allen Avenue is a dead-end street; that many children are dropped off there. The Safe Routes Task Force might look at this for a localized project, but it is a roadway widening project.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said many kids use Allen Avenue to get to the blacktop, and she definitely does not want parents dropping off their children on Allen Avenue. There are also signs posted, but again, it is the last 50 feet kids use on their bikes or walking to get into the back way to the playground. In her mind, this would make it a final safe routes justification to attempt to get the grant, and she did not think the Town should wait to do that project since the area will be paved anyway.

Director Simonitch summarized the project work and said it would include widening of the road from Lagunitas to the gate to keep traffic separated from a one-way in and out pathway into the school, which is a viable capital project and he confirmed the Council's support as a priority.

Council Member Robbins questioned loss of parking for teachers, and Director Simonitch described accommodating traffic, the pedestrian path, and parallel parking.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said she read something about David Rice speaking with the faculty who were willing to park elsewhere to accommodate the pathway, and noted there are only about four or five affected parking spaces. Personally, she would rather have the kids be safe getting from Lagunitas to the blacktop than the parking spaces.

Town Manager Johnson pointed out potential impacts on existing parking, mature trees, as well as a school district generator in the Town's right-of-way where their encroachment permit has expired. She asked and confirmed there was consensus of the Council that they are interested in looking into this, including both impacts and benefits.

Director Simonitch agreed to bring two or three concepts/options to the Council for Allen Drive in the next couple of months, including public outreach and feedback from the school.

He then confirmed there was Council support to pursue the Laurel Grove Phase 3 extension, for which the Town has a local match; that the Council may want to look at the Fernhill pathway for a small project on the next call for projects but can also start looking at the pedestrian crossing or signalization of Sir Francis Drake at Winship.

Council Member Salter voiced support of this in conjunction with the Winship Bridge project slated for 2026.

Director Simonitch said he believes there are several tiers at that intersection from putting in a temporary crosswalk or putting in a crosswalk with lights all the way up to signalization which has regional impacts where buy-in and outreach would need to be done from the County, Kentfield, Larkspur and San Anselmo.

Mayor Kircher said if they decided today to put in a signal, he asked how much time is needed to obtain buy-in. He also asked if the signalization dovetails with resurfacing and repaving Sir Francis Drake, or asked if it could be done independent of repaving.

Director Simonitch said this would be a huge project if they joined the two together and thinks they should be separate. He would estimate that with CEQA and the back and forth, the Council is looking at least two years for this. Something else to consider is that if this is an impacted result

of closing Winship Bridge, HBP might approve some funding to come up with a temporary traffic control solution at that location. He thinks a feasibility study would be the way to go on the whole corridor in that area.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan said she would support trying to figure out how to get people out of Winship Park in a safer way and described personal incidents that required traffic enforcement, noting problems have worsened. She voiced support to look at the various ways to address making that safer for drivers and pedestrians.

Director Simonitch agreed, and confirmed the funding source for a feasibility study would need to come out of the General Fund for approximately \$75,000.

Council Member Dowling asked and confirmed with Director Simonitch that it would take three or four months to bring a feasibility study back to the Council for discussion once he finds a traffic consultant.

Town Manager Johnson said she hears the Council's interests and concerns. She asked and confirmed there was Council consensus to direct staff to move forward with a feasibility study.

Town Manager Johnson noted the Council has now added Allen Avenue, the feasibility study, Winship Bridge which is taking time, and drainage projects. She asked if something else could "give" to ensure Director Simonitch has time to work on all of the many projects.

Director Simonitch asked for six months or so to be able to start talking to consultants and said he thinks it is "doable." He recapped that the Council wished to move ahead with some concepts for the Allen Avenue project, move forward with Laurel Grove Phase 3 for Safe Routes funding for a large project, and start looking at a feasibility study for the Winship Sir Francis Drake intersection. Other smaller projects he can fit into the roadway funding include repaving the Shady Lane pathway and starting to look at the Sir Francis Drake pathway, adding some park and walk lots along the Safe Routes pathway where parents can park and drop their kids off, and to start looking at Fernhill pathway for the small Safe Routes call for projects.

Town Manager Johnson discussed expectations given the amount of work and Council discussion ensued regarding potential use of interns, the need for public works expertise, financial resources, and the potential need to consider hiring someone in the future to assist with the level of capital projects and other work.

Director Simonitch continued the presentation and described facilities challenges.

Council discussion was held regarding ADA compliance, stormwater general permit as an unfunded mandate, funding for removal of the fish ladder which is a Flood Control project in 2026, delayed timelines, and Mayor Pro Tem McMillan and Council Member Robbins voiced support for an update on the fish ladder. Discussion ensued regarding federal grant funding (Inflation Reduction Act) for green building options and rebates, the need to raise funds for Concept B for the Civic Center modernization project, and options to return to the Council for consideration.

Mayor Pro Tem McMillan asked when Ross Valley Fire finalizes their budget, and Town Manager Johnson said she believes it will be early June. She confirmed that a preliminary number will be reflected in the budget the Council approves, but also has a meeting with them and will ask if there will be any expected changes.

Town Manager Johnson confirmed Director Simonitch had sufficient direction, and noted there will be changes to the draft budget based upon discussion and staff will return to the June 13<sup>th</sup> Council meeting for approval.

**9. Next steps and wrap up.**

Council Member Salter and Council Member Dowling thanked staff for their valuable work and assistance as new Council Members, and they both look forward to working with the Council and staff.

Mayor Kircher thanked staff and Council for their participation and comments on the budget.

**10. Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Cyndie Martel, Town Clerk

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C. William Kircher, Jr., Mayor