



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

January 16, 2018

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Garrett Toy, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Discuss FAQ's to address issues raised during the recent election period

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss FAQ's and provide direction to staff.

DISCUSSION

In the weeks leading up to the last election, many questions were raised and comments posted on Nextdoor regarding Town policies and projects in town. At its December 2017 meeting, the Council directed staff to prepare "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ's) for discussion at the January or February 2018 Council meeting. The content of the FAQ's would be based on those questions and comments shared with staff over the past few months. We developed the FAQ's with the goal that the responses would address multiple questions and comments regarding that particular issue. The FAQ's cover such diverse topics as wildfire safety, budget, community outreach, downtown, Town Manager salary, and infrastructure improvements.

Placing the matter on the Town agenda will provide an opportunity for the Council and residents to comment on the FAQ's and suggest additional questions to be answered. It should be noted that much of the information contained in the FAQ responses was derived from staff reports, existing FAQ's, and/or Town newsletters which are all available at www.townoffairfax.org.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

ATTACHMENT

FAQ's

FREQUENCY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

(Prepared 1/16/18)

The "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ's) were developed based on those questions and comments shared with staff during the 2017 Council election period. The FAQ's cover such diverse topics as wildfire safety, budget, community outreach, downtown, Town Manager salary, and infrastructure improvements.

How can I learn more about wildfire safety and prevention and evacuation planning?

At the November 1, 2017 Council meeting, the Ross Valley Fire Department and FIRE Safe MARIN made a presentation on Fire Safety and Prevention in Fairfax. The presentation provides a succinct overview of fire prevention, evacuations, and what residents can do to make their properties more fire safe.

This presentation is available on the Town website under the Town Council meeting archives for November 1, 2017 (approx. 35 minutes into the meeting):

http://www.townoffairfax.org/recordings/2017/council_broadcast_110117.html

Residents can also find out what the experts know about the best way to make your home and neighborhood safer from wildfire. FIRE Safe MARIN offers tips, tools and teachings regarding the basics of defensible space, landscaping techniques, fire resistant construction, and preparing for evacuation. FIRE Safe Marin does work with neighborhoods, such as the Cascade neighborhood, to become a "Firewise" community.

Please visit <http://www.firesafemarin.org/preparedness> or the "Disaster Preparedness" link at the bottom of the Town's website.

Is there a specific evacuation plan in the event of a fire?

As stated above, the Ross Valley Fire Department and FIRE Safe MARIN made a presentation to the Town Council on Fire Safety and Prevention in Fairfax which included what do in the event of a fire. While Fire and Police have evacuation protocols, fires are very dynamic and one plan does not fit all possible situations. In general, residents should evacuate early in their vehicles taking the shortest route out of the neighborhood. Alerts will be issued by public safety agencies informing residents what to do in the event of a fire. Residents should make sure they have signed up for all the available alert systems.

For more information on evacuations and how to sign up for alerts, please visit <http://www.firesafemarin.org/preparedness> or the "Disaster Preparedness" link at the bottom of the Town's website.

How can I learn more about Town finances?

At the Council's October 4th meeting, staff presented a brief graphical overview of the Town's adopted Fiscal Year 2017-18 Operating and Capital Improvement budget (FY17-18). The

presentation can be viewed at:

http://www.townoffairfax.org/recordings/2017/council_broadcast_100417.html

(approx. 36.5 minutes into the meeting).

The budget is available on the Town website under “Frequently Requested Info” or under the Finance department. “Town budget” tab.

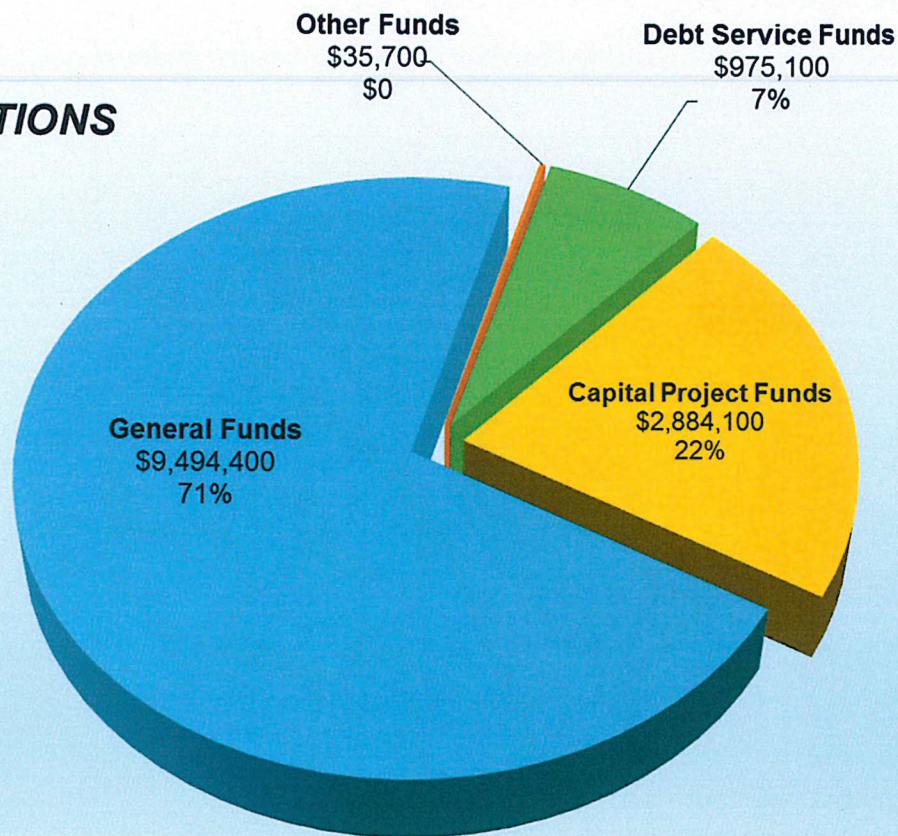
The current budget is approximately \$13.4 million of which \$9.5 million is for general fund operations (e.g., Fire, Police, Public Works), \$2.9 million for capital improvement projects, and \$1.0 M for special fund expenses/debt service.

CHART A3

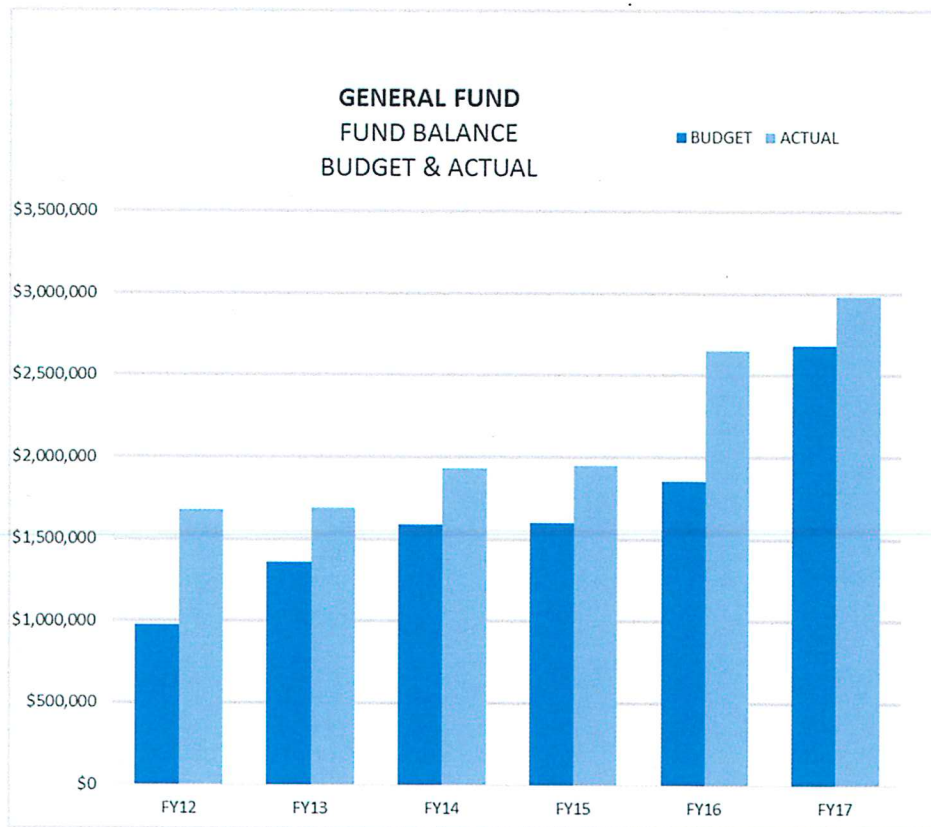
APPROPRIATIONS

FY 2017-18
ALL FUNDS
TOTAL \$ 13,389,300

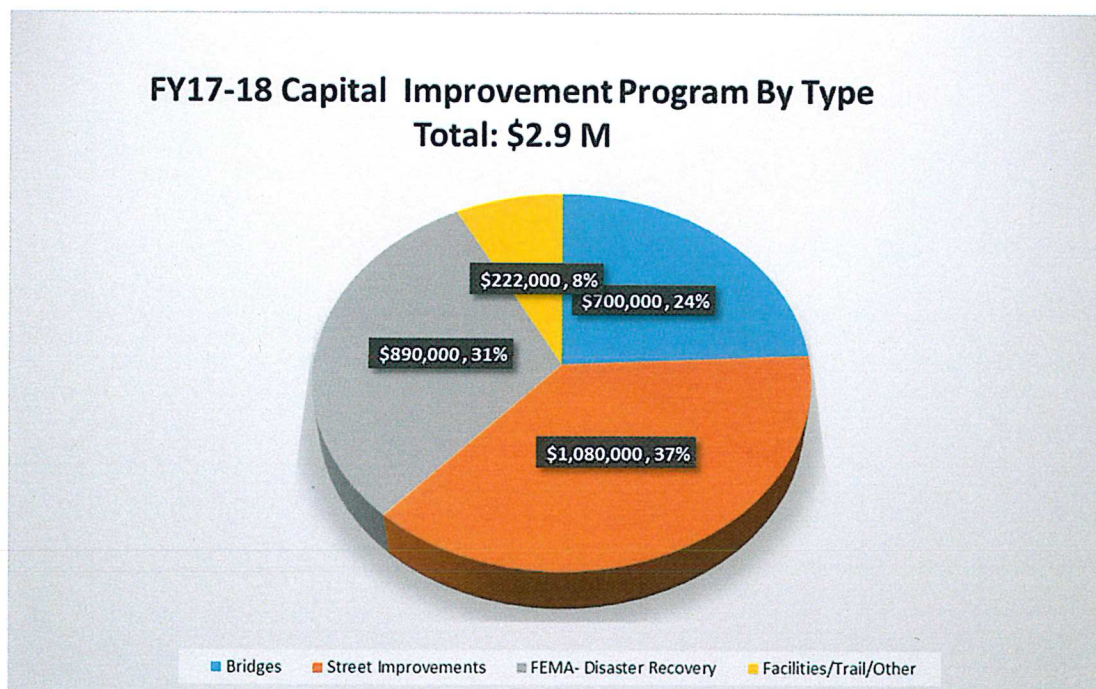
“APPROPRIATIONS”
ARE AUTHORIZED
EXPENDITURES



Overall, the Town continues to be in a healthy, stable financial position. Since FY11-12, the Town has added approximately \$1.3M to General Fund (GF) Reserves. These reserves are the Town’s “rainy day” funds for emergencies and unforeseen costs. The chart below shows the increases in GF reserves since FY11-12. Beginning in FY13-14, the Town’s GF reserves met or exceeded the Town’s policy to maintain reserves that are a minimum of 25% of GF expenditures.



With regard to the \$2.9 M Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget, approximately \$900,000 (1/3) of the \$2.9 M CIP budget is for road repair for damage caused by the winter storms. Another 1/3 (over \$1,000,000) is allocated for street and sidewalk improvements. The remaining 1/3 is for various bridge projects and other projects such as pedestrian trail improvements.

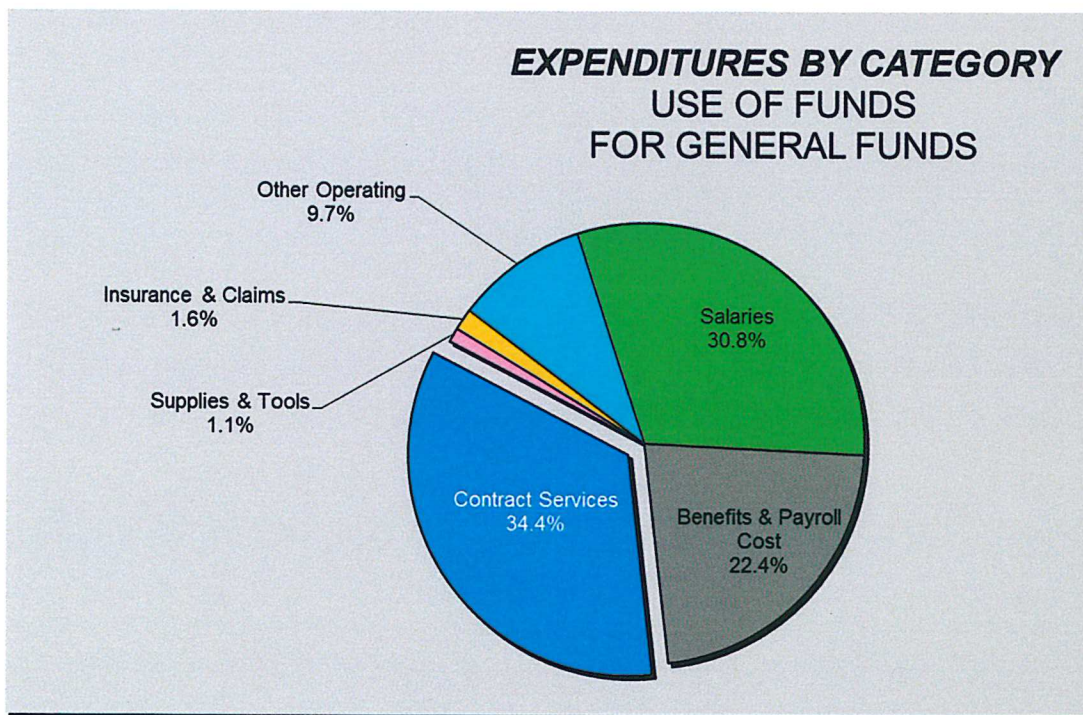


The funding for CIP projects primarily comes from State/Federal grants, Measure A transportation funding, local sales tax (Measure C), and local special municipal tax (Measure J). This year, a portion of the funding will come from a short-term, 5-year loan of \$500,000 from the County of Marin to finance the repair and maintenance of various roads in Town. (Note: the Town is not borrowing to pay for its operations.) Similar to a home improvement loan, this will allow the Town to undertake the projects and enjoy the improvements now as opposed to spreading the projects out over a 5-year period.

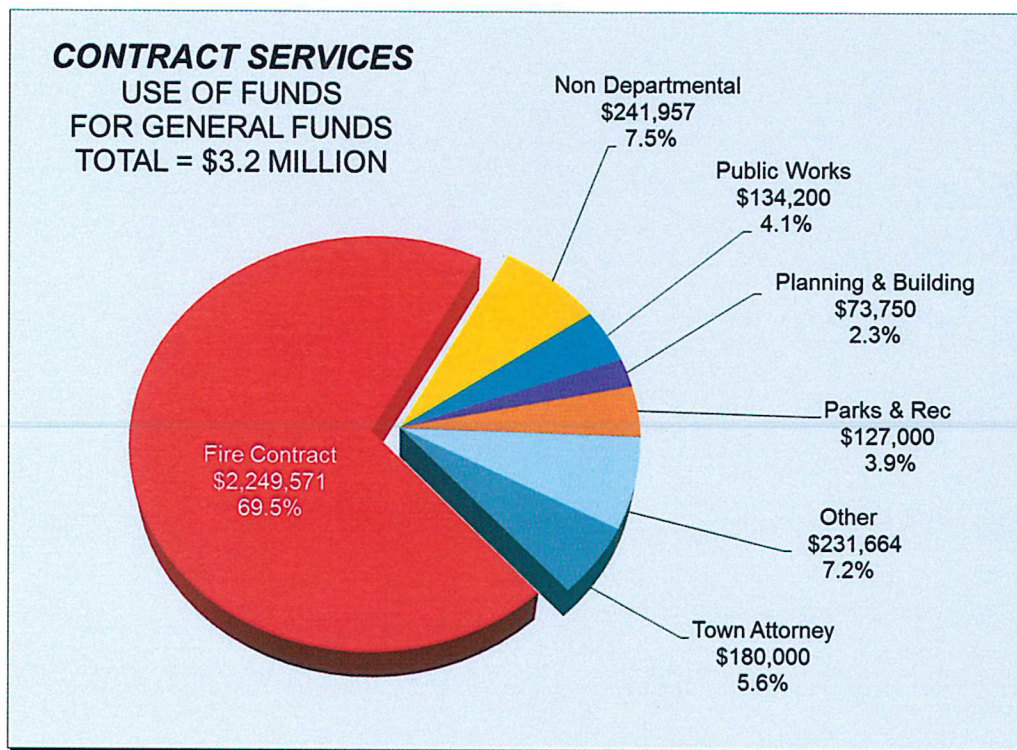
Why does the Town spend money on consultants?

The Town runs a fairly lean staff. Many staff serve multiple roles in the organization. For example, the Town Manager serves as the Public Works Director and Human Resources Manager. The Building Official does inspections and plan checks and serves as the Public Works Manager. As a result, the Town does contract out for technical, professional, and vendor services (e.g., tree trimming) that we do not have the time or expertise to perform in-house.

A cursory look at the budget would show that Town allocates approximately 34% of its general fund budget toward contractual services.

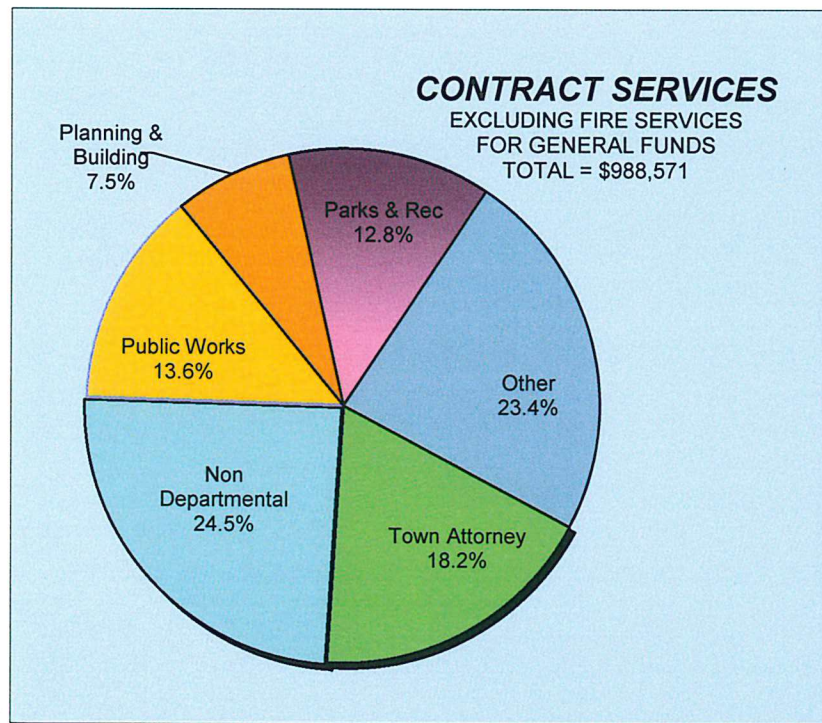


While this may sound like a lot, if you take a closer look at the chart below which breakdowns the expenses you will see that over 2/3rds (\$2.2M of \$3.2M) of the cost is for Fire services.



Of the remaining 1/3rd (approx. \$1M), it breaks down as follows (see pie chart):

- 18% is for contractual Town Attorney services.
- 24% is for non-departmental expenses such as Humane Society animal control services, IT services, services from other governmental services (e.g., LAFCO), website maintenance, and broadcast of Council meetings.
- 14% is for Public Works consulting services such as tree trimming, traffic signal and street light maintenance, and civil and geotechnical engineers.
- 13% is for Community Services and Recreation which is for class instructors, summer camp staff, and building/park maintenance.
- 23% is for other which includes such costs for elections, Police vendors, Finance software, Town audit, and human resources.
- 7% is for Planning and Building Services which includes outside plan check and inspection services.



Why is the Town spending money on consultants to “make over” downtown?

The development of a Town Center Plan is a policy of the Town’s adopted General Plan. In 2016, the Town retained a design firm to develop concepts for the Town Center Plan workshops, since staff has limited resources to develop the concepts in-house. Following the second Town Center workshop, the Town Council decided to take a more measured

approach toward downtown and focus primarily on the renovation of the Parkade, partly because of the grant funding received for that project.

In 2017, the Council discussed possible design options for the Parkade including short term and long term solutions for traffic circulation as discussed in the General Plan. At its September 2017 meeting, the Council indicated it wanted more information on the priority and type/cost of improvements which only focus on the Parkade's accessibility issues. We anticipate the Council will continue these discussions in spring 2018. For more detail on the Parkade, go to the Town website and refer to the September 7, 2017 Council meeting, item #12.

In general, the Town has strived to limit the cost of exploring options for downtown and the Parkade. The Planning and Building budget allocates about \$45,000 for such planning activities. This amount is less than 2% of the Town's total contractual services budget or less than 5% of total contractual services not including Fire services.

Is the Town still considering the closure of Bolinas Road?

NO, the Town is not considering the closure of Bolinas Road. The Council made this decision at the October 2016 workshop regarding the Town Center Plan and restated it at the Council's December 2016 meeting. The Council reiterated this position at its September 2017 meeting to discuss the improvements for the Parkade. The Council adopted a resolution at their November 1st meeting reconfirming the Town is **NOT** considering the closure of Bolinas Road.

Will the consideration of improvements to the Parkade result in the closure of Bolinas Road?

NO, during the Town Council's September 2017 discussion of "near-term" improvements for the Parkade, the *Council reiterated the Town was **NOT** considering the closure of Bolinas Road* (also see the above response).

What is the status of the development of the "Wall" property?

Applications for the "Marinda Heights" 10-lot subdivision and residential design review project have been submitted by the owner of the 100-acre property referred to as the "Wall property" (Marinda Oaks neighborhood). At this time, the project application is incomplete and the applicant is in the process of submitting revised materials. The Town is working to develop a webpage for this project which will allow residents to access all the application materials and project updates. We plan to have the page available on the Town website in January 2018.

Has the Town already approved the development application for the Wall property?

No, while a development application has been submitted, it still needs to go through an extensive public review and approval process (also see response to previous question). It should be noted that the owners' representative participated in study sessions with the Planning Commission over the past two years and indicated his intent to submit an

application consistent with the existing zoning. The owners' rep has also committed to preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed project.

Please remember that a property owner is allowed to submit an application to develop his/her property, but that doesn't mean it will be approved as submitted.

Why is the Town considering changing the zoning from CH (Highway Commercial) to CC (Central Commercial)? How has the community been able to participate in the process?

Over five years ago, in April 2012, the Town Council adopted the 2010-2030 General Plan. In the land use chapter of the General Plan, the Town determined that it would "rezone all commercial highway (CH) zone to central commercial (CC) zone and revise the CC zone as appropriate." The rezoning of the CH properties to CC is a key component of the Town's strategy to plan for its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) as required by the State.

In early 2014, the Town considered the rezoning of parcels from CH to CC, as well as other zoning text amendments. However, due to community concerns, the Council decided to "restart" the rezoning process beginning with two Town Forums in 2014 on the General Plan and Housing Element and amendments to the General Plan and Housing Element to correct and clarify issues of concern raised by the community.

In October 2015, the Council conducted a third Town Forum to discuss the conversion of Highway Commercial (CH) zoned properties to Central Commercial (CC). As a result of this Forum, the Council requested that the Planning Commission (PC) further study the issues within the parameters established by the Council.

In 2016, the Planning Commission held a series of public meetings to consider how to implement this rezoning action, including proposed text revisions, through the preparation and adoption of a zoning ordinance amendment. On July 21, 2016, the Planning Commission recommended a draft ordinance to the Town Council that proposed to rezone all parcels currently zoned CH to CC as well as other various associated amendments.

On September 7, 2016, the Town Council held a study session to review the draft ordinance. At that meeting, the Council requested the PC to discuss additional issues identified by the Town Council regarding the draft ordinance rezoning parcels from CH to CC. In December 2016, the Council considered the additional recommendations from the PC. However, the Council determined that a joint meeting with the PC would be beneficial for the Council and community. This joint meeting was held in January 2017.

Since that January meeting, no other meetings or actions regarding CH to CC has been conducted by the PC or Council. All the PC and Council meetings were noticed as public meetings and were broadcast live on TV and on-line. Videos of the meetings are available on the Town website.

For a more information about the CH to CC review process, please go the Town website and select the Sept. 7, 2016 Council meeting, and go to item #13.

What impact does changing CH to CC mean for the downtown area and community as a whole?

As stated above, the proposed ordinance recommended by the Planning Commission is to rezone Highway Commercial (CH) to Central Commercial (CC) consistent with policies in the adopted General Plan. The Council and PC did discuss revisions that would minimize the effect on existing businesses. In any case, no existing businesses will be displaced by the recommended zoning revisions.

By rezoning CH to CC, housing would be allowed on the second story without the conditional use permit which is currently required in the CH zone. An item to note is that the current CC zone allows second story residential units without a conditional use permit which is required for residential in the CH zone. However, the proposed ordinance does include a maximum density (of 4.5 units/acre) in the CC zone where none exists now. In contrast, the existing CH zone does not have a maximum density limit.

For a more comprehensive analysis of CH to CC, please go the Town website and refer to the Sept. 7, 2016 Council meeting and select item #13.

Would the proposed CH to CC rezoning allow developers using the State Density Bonus Law to develop 4 story buildings?

Currently the town has a two story limit. The State Density Bonus Law currently applies to projects in the existing CC and CH zones. If a residential project can meet the State Density Bonus Law requirements, the project proponent may seek land use concession(s) from the Town. While one concession could be height, there are other concessions the Town could offer in-lieu of relaxing the 2-story height requirement. It should be noted that State Density Bonus Law requires projects to have long term affordability restrictions. In essence, changing CH to CC will not make a difference with regard to the application of State Density Bonus Law.

What is the Town Manager's salary?

The Town's Manager's base salary is \$183,000 per year, which is the lowest among Marin Town/City Managers. The Town Manager receives health and retirement benefits similar to other management staff. For more information on the Town Manager's salary history and compensation go the www.townoffairfax and click on government/department tab.

What is the difference between a Town Administrator and Town Manager?

In Fairfax, the primary difference is that under the Town Administrator structure of government the Town Council ratified all appointments and removals of department heads by the Town Administrator. Under the Town Manager, the Town Council may vest that power in the Town Manager by resolution. The duties for the Town Administrator and Town Manager are relatively the same in that both are responsible for the daily operations of the town.

Who sets the policies for the Town?

The Town Council establishes and approves Town policies which includes the Town's municipal and zoning codes as well as the General Plan. Town staff, including the Town Manager and Town Attorney, implement the policies as well as make recommendations to the Council regarding amendments and revisions to policies

How can the public be better informed about Town projects and activities?

While staff is always striving to enhance its communication efforts, we primarily use Nextdoor, Nixle, emails, and the Town newsletter to get information out to residents. In some instances, we also use banners across Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and place A-frame signs around town. For more significant projects such as Fairfax bridges, we created a separate webpage for project information where interested parties can also sign up to receive electronic project updates. We will be creating a similar webpage for the "Marinda Heights" project application.

That being said, residents should consider the following to ensure you receive all the Town notices and information:

- Sign up to receive the Town newsletter at www.townoffairfax.org.
- Sign up to receive Council and/or Planning Commission meeting agendas should email the Town Clerk at mgardner@townoffairfax.org.
- Sign up for Nextdoor.
- For emergency and traffic alerts, sign up for Nixle by texting your zip code to 888777 to receive any future Nixle alerts from Fairfax. The Town uses Nixle to send out emergency alerts as well as general notifications messages such as road closures, police activity, and other warnings or notifications.
- Periodically, check the Town website for project/policy updates.

The Town has been using the above media to better inform residents of road closures. However, we have found the most effective method to inform residents is to require contractors to post signs a few days prior to detours and road closures.

How can the Town ensure there is proper community vetting and input regarding projects and policies?

As stated above, the Town uses a variety of methods to inform the public. That being said, controversial project or policies typically receive a lot of community input. For example, the Town used an on-line community forum to survey the community on specific issues such as cannabis and short term rentals.

Highly controversial projects and policies will take numerous months and sometimes years to go through the review or community input process. For example, the affordable senior

housing project took almost a year to approve after the submittal of the application, with numerous PC and Town Council meetings to discuss the project. The rezoning of CH to CC discussion started in 2014 with numerous PC meetings in 2016 to develop a proposed ordinance for Council consideration in 2017, and the process is still on-going.

This in-depth community discussion and review process allows more residents to learn about particular issues and to participate if they desire. Hot button issues will make their way onto social media, where “new comers” to the issue may state they never heard about a project or policy, and that the Town needs to better inform the community to obtain more vetting. That being said, the Town is always striving to enhance its communications with the community to maximize input on issues.

What is the Town doing to improve its road infrastructure?

The Town has been diligently working to repair the roads damaged by the 2017 winter storms. Specifically, we recently completed the repair of 300 Tamalpais Rd. (approximate location), 345 Forrest Ave, and are almost finished with 92 Madrone Road. At these locations, the roads were either closed or had restricted vehicle traffic until these repairs were completed.

With regard to general road improvements, the Town recently completed the repaving of Tamalpais Road from Mountain View to Scenic Road and Mountain View Road from Manzanita Road to Tamalpais Road and replaced the lighted crosswalk system at the Sir Francis Drake and Oak Tree Lane with a rectangular rapid flashing beacon systems (RRFBs) similar to the ones installed on Center and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

Some other projects in the pipeline are:

- Repair of selected areas on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The proposed scope of work will “dig out” the worst portions of the pavement (e.g. pot holes, severe cracking) and repave that portion of the road. The work will be on Sir Francis Drake between Marin Road and Oak Manor Drive including the intersection.
- Repairs to portions of the sidewalks downtown to ensure more ADA accessibility. For more details, go to www.townoffairfax.org and select the Oct. 4th Council agenda (see item #14).
- General maintenance on various roads in town.

What is the Town doing to improve pedestrian trails?

Over the past several years, the Town has allocated Measure J (Special Municipal Services Tax) and Measure A Park funds towards pedestrian trail maintenance and repair. Past work includes the improvements to the Cypress Trail, Tamalpais to Tamalpais Trail, and Power Lane steps. In FY17-18, the Town has budgeted \$90,000 for pedestrian trails. Conservation Corp. North Bay, who specializes in trail work, has almost completed the improvements to the Tamalpais to Scenic trail and has begun working on other trails in town.