

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FORM

Report Title: MARIN ON FIRE! Not if, but when.

Report Date: April 1, 2008

Response by: Governing Board, Ross Department of Public Safety

By: Scot Hunter

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F3, F12
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F4-F9.  
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons therefore.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered R1, R2 have been implemented.  
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.  
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ require further analysis.  
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.)
- Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.  
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 5/13/08 Signed: 

Number of pages attached \_\_\_\_\_



May 9, 2008

Roberta Robinson, Foreperson  
Marin County Grand Jury  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275  
San Rafael, CA 94903

RE: Grand Jury Report – MARIN ON FIRE! Not if, but when.  
Report Date: April 1, 2008

Dear Ms. Robinson:

The Ross Town Council has received the Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report titled Marin ON FIRE! Not if, but when and discussed the findings and recommendations in a public meeting on May 8, 2008.

The Grand Jury has requested a response from the Council on Findings F1 through F9 and Finding F12. The Grand Jury has also requested a response on Recommendations R1 and R2.

Response to findings:

**F1. Compliance with vegetation management codes and the threat of wildland fires in Marin are not top-of-mind public concerns.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the general public opinion of vegetation management codes and wildfire threat county-wide.

**F2. Easily identifiable egregious vegetation management code violations exist throughout Marin County.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that vegetation management code violations may exist throughout the county.

**F3. Homeowners can decrease fire risk by increasing defensible space, which reduces fuel.**

The Ross Town Council agrees with this finding.

Roberta Robinson, Foreperson  
May 9, 2008  
Page 2

**F4. A number of municipalities in Marin have made significant changes in building codes for new construction and major remodels. These new Wildland Urban Interface codes have little impact on the vast majority of Marin homeowners.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that other municipalities have made changes to their building code for new construction and major remodels, as well as what impact the WUI codes have made on the vast majority of Marin homeowners.

**F5. There is inconsistency in various vegetation management codes throughout the county.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that inconsistencies may exist in vegetation management codes throughout the county.

**F6. Most vegetation management codes and homeowner educational materials are difficult to interpret and confusing to the layman.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that vegetation management codes and homeowner educational materials in other municipalities may be difficult or confusing to the layman.

**F7. "Best practice" vegetation management policies require fire department access to the whole property in the company of the owner. No jurisdiction has a plan for this.**

The Ross Town Council agrees that a best practice vegetation management policy would include fire department access to the whole property of the owner, however has insufficient information as to what other jurisdictions plan for in this area.

**F8. Not all Marin County fire jurisdictions proactively inspect for vegetation management code compliance without a complaint or owner request.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that other Marin County fire jurisdictions may proactively inspect for vegetation management code compliance without a complaint or owner request.

**F9. Resources for fire jurisdiction inspection and enforcement are limited, and homeowner costs for compliance can be extremely high.**

The Ross Town Council has insufficient information to make a conclusion as to the extent that other Marin County fire jurisdictions are limited in their inspections and how high compliance costs can be for homeowners.

Roberta Robinson, Foreperson  
May 9, 2008  
Page 3

**F12. Significant progress in enforcing vegetation management and defensible space codes will require additional resources and/or a change in direction by governing boards.**

The Ross Town Council agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

**R1. Governing boards of all fire jurisdictions in Marin County review and update current vegetation management and defensible space codes and homeowner educational materials to be certain they are realistic, achievable, enforceable and easily understood by the public-at-large. The boards should target completion by June 30, 2009.**

Our own adoption of Ross Municipal Ordinance 611 will address many concerns locally by establishing a municipal code with WUI compliant provisions throughout. By instituting these revisions, we assure that those projects planned for severe fire hazard areas comply with State law.

Additionally, projects planned for areas of high fire risk (defined as being within Local Hazard Zones 3 & 4, or those with slopes exceeding 30%) will receive recommendations for the same fire-safe construction standards and vegetation management plans during the planning approval process.


Our homeowner educational materials are obtained through FIRESafe Marin and of high quality with an emphasis on ease of understanding. We have a long established policy of working with FIRESafe Marin for the purposes of community education and outreach.

**R2. All fire jurisdictions develop plans with specific goals for compliance and enforcement of vegetation management and defensible space codes by June 30, 2009.**

Our Municipal Code revisions will become effective in June of this year. Our vegetation management policy has been revised to include on-site inspections of all properties pending sale by fire department personnel to detect vegetation management violations, and access issues.

The Ross Town Council thanks the Marin County Grand Jury for their work on this project and their thoughtful observations. Fire safety is a high priority for the Town of Ross and the recent improvements in wildland fire construction standards and vegetation management policies are a step in the right direction. With continued emphasis in this area we can make a difference in the overall fire risk in all of Marin.

Sincerely,



R. Scot Hunter  
Mayor