

Town of Ross
RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Report Title: "Better Service at Lower Cost — Optimizing Essential Services for the Future of Marin"

Report Date: June 2026

Response by: Town of Ross, Julie McMillan, Mayor

GRAND JURY FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6
- I (we) disagree partially with the findings numbered: F7
- I (we) disagree wholly with the findings numbered: None

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations that have been implemented: None
- Recommendations that will be implemented: None
- Recommendations that require further analysis: None
- Recommendations that will not be implemented because they are not applicable to the Town: R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9

Date:

8/13/26

Signed:


Julie McMillan, Mayor

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS

F1. The current fragmented structure of special districts results in unnecessary duplication of administrative services and operational inefficiencies.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees that a fragmented structure, in which many separate districts each maintain their own administrative functions, tends to duplicate effort in areas such as finance, legal, human resources, insurance, and information technology. The Town agrees that shared services and greater coordination among districts present real opportunities to reduce this duplication and improve efficiency.

F2. Some districts perform competently but lack sufficient scale to support long-term strategic investment in infrastructure, technology, staffing, and resilience.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees. Smaller districts, including some serving the Ross Valley, can face real constraints in funding long-term capital investment, adopting new technology, and building organizational depth. The Town agrees that greater scale, achieved through collaboration or consolidation, can strengthen the capacity for strategic investment.

F3. Smaller districts are disproportionately vulnerable to staffing disruptions and catastrophic events that could rapidly impair service delivery.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees. Districts with very small staffs have limited redundancy, and the loss of even one or two key employees can meaningfully affect service. The Town agrees that larger, more resilient organizations are better positioned to absorb staffing disruptions and respond to emergencies.

F4. Although consolidation is a popular idea among many elected board members, current governance structures, absence of board member term limits, and fear of loss of political influence discourage boards and administrators from initiating consolidation even when they recognize its benefits.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees that structural and political barriers can slow consolidation even where its benefits are recognized, and that a bottom-up approach driven by district boards is the most promising path forward. The Town notes that these dynamics are properly addressed by the

special district boards themselves and encourages the boards on which the Town is represented to engage constructively in that process.

F5. Service and pricing inequities currently exist across Marin and may increase if consolidation and functional collaboration do not accelerate.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees that residents in comparable communities can pay materially different fees for similar services, as illustrated by the sewer and water rate comparisons in the report. The Town agrees that harmonizing fees and service levels, whether through collaboration or consolidation, would promote fairness and that these inequities may grow if reform does not advance.

F6. Performance metrics for essential, mission-specific services exist but they are not readily available and standardized, which prevents meaningful public comparison of district effectiveness and undermines accountability.

Response: Agree

The Town agrees. Standardized, publicly available performance metrics would improve transparency and allow residents to compare districts meaningfully. The Town supports efforts by special districts, with the County's assistance, to develop and publish comparable key performance indicators.

F7. Without proactive reform, future consolidations are more likely to occur through crisis-driven intervention, resulting in greater disruption and higher costs.

Response: Partially Disagree

The Town agrees with the core of this finding: proactive, deliberate reform is preferable to crisis-driven change, and delay increases the risk that consolidation will eventually occur under less favorable conditions.

The Town partially disagrees only to the extent the finding implies that crisis-driven intervention is the likely default outcome across the board. The choice is not limited to proactive reform or eventual crisis. Many districts, including those serving the Ross Valley, continue to deliver reliable service and can pursue collaboration and shared services on a measured timeline without an intervening crisis. The Town agrees that the direction of reform is sound while noting that the pace and sequencing appropriately remain matters of local judgment for each district.

R1. By January 1, 2027, all special district boards should have conducted their first semi-annual consolidation exploration meeting with similar districts and will have established a regular meeting schedule moving forward.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the boards of special districts. The Town of Ross is a general law town, not a special district, and the Town Council has no authority over the agendas or meeting schedules of independently governed districts.

R2. By October 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors should direct the development of comprehensive, cost-efficient shared services (such as IT, legal, finance, HR/payroll, harmonized compensation/benefits package, insurance) for special districts to optimize expenses and secure a Marin-wide acceptable quality standard.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the Marin County Board of Supervisors. The Town does not have authority to direct the development of countywide shared services for special districts.

R3. By January 31, 2027, with the assistance of the County, all districts should develop and publish on their website standardized, comparable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with regard to service pricing, finance, staffing, operations, and customer satisfaction.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to special districts and the County. The Town does not have authority over the content of independently governed districts' websites.

R4. By January 31, 2027, each district should publicly update findings and progress regarding consolidation opportunities, and share those findings with the Board of Supervisors and the public on a semi-annual basis.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to special districts and the Marin County Board of Supervisors.

R5. By January 31, 2027, the Board of Supervisors should oversee compliance with R1–R4 and update the public on the districts' performance.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the Marin County Board of Supervisors. The Town does not have authority to oversee districts' compliance with the Grand Jury's recommendations.

R6. By October 1, 2026, in the process of implementing R1 and R2, districts should prioritize functional consolidation in operations, procurement, training, and administration as a precursor to formal consolidation.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to special districts, over which the Town Council exercises no legal authority.

R7. By October 1, 2026, the district's board compensation, benefits, length of service, date of term end, and expenses related to board work should be clearly and prominently posted on each district's website and updated annually.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the governing boards of special districts. The Town Council does not exercise authority over the websites, compensation disclosures, or administrative operations of independently governed special districts.

R8. By June 1, 2027, special districts should adopt term limits of two consecutive four-year terms for all board members. Staggered implementation of term limits to avoid disruptions is encouraged.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the governing boards of special districts. The Town Council does not possess the authority to establish, modify, or impose term limits on members of independently governed special district boards. Whether to adopt term limits rests with each special district board and its voters.

R9. By June 1, 2027, board compensation structures should be reviewed across districts, and considered for adjustment. All components of board compensation should be posted on their website.

Response: This recommendation is not applicable to the Town of Ross. It is directed to the governing boards of special districts. The Town Council does not possess the authority to establish, review, or adjust compensation structures for directors serving on independently governed special districts.