

MINUTES

Minutes for the Special Electors Meeting of the Merredin Shire Council held in the Council Chambers, Cnr King/Barrack Streets, Merredin on Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 7.30pm.

ATTENDANCE: Cr KA Hooper – Shire President
Cr RM Crees – Deputy Shire President
Crs S Elliott; P Forbes; M Hayden; M Morris; J Townrow; W Wallace.

Messrs FB Ludovico, Chief Executive Officer; J Garrett, Executive Manager of Engineering Services; V Green, Executive Assistant; E Hooper, Executive Manager of Finance and Administration; J Mitchell, Executive Manager of Development Services and D Morris, Executive Manager of Community Services

Mr Eddy Johnston OAM JP, Mrs Margaret Johnston, Mr Dennis Lane, Mrs Bev Drakeford, Mrs Gloria Banks, Mrs Michelle Hooper, Mrs Lillian Armstrong

1.0 OFFICIAL OPENING

The Presiding Member declared the meeting open at 7.48pm.

2.0 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Cr J Simmonds has been granted Leave of Absence for this meeting (**CMRef 29789**), Cr A Hooper, Cr M Young, Ms Sally Robson-Thomas, Mr Roger Drakeford

3.0 REVIEW OF COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATION

The meeting was advised that due to the announcement made by Minister Castrilli in relation to Local Government Reform, the results of the Review may not be able to be implemented as the Shire of Westonia had their recent Review rejected.

Points emerging from the ensuing discussion were:

1. A Local Government is required under the Local Government Act 1995 to review its representation every 8 years;
2. The last Review was conducted in November 2002 so it needs to be conducted by 2010, however Council decided to conduct a Review for implementation prior to the October 2009 Local Government Elections;

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3. The process for the Review is Council resolves to undertake a Review, the Review is advertised for a public submission period of 6 weeks, Council considers all submissions, adopts a position and forwards a recommendation to the Local Government Advisory Board. The Local Government Advisory Board conducts its own investigation and makes a recommendation to the Minister who considers the proposal and forwards a recommendation to the Governor;
4. This meeting is part of consultation process with the public submission period closing on 9 April 2009. Council will then consider any submissions and make a decision;
5. The decision to abolish wards within the Shire of Merredin has proven successful;
6. The Minister has released Guidelines for Local Governments to consider as part of the Reform process detailing that Councils are to have between 6 and 9 Councillors;
7. Pressures placed on Councillors to attend meetings, training sessions, Committee meetings have not eased with most Councillors being elected to an average of 6 or 7 different Committees;
8. There would be a saving to Council in relation to Councillor remuneration and possibly training costs if the number of Councillors were reduced;
9. Members of the public were encouraged to make a written submission to Council in relation to the number of Councillors required for the Shire of Merredin;
10. The Shire would continue to advertise the process through the normal channels of print and radio advertising

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4.0 REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN / PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The purpose of the Review is so Council can obtain feedback on what projects the community believe should be occurring within the Shire and which are important for the future of our district.

Points emerging from the ensuing discussion were:

1. Aged housing has risen in importance in the last few years. It was hoped that the application for funding through the Federal Governments Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for additional housing at Merrittville would be successful;
2. This was a large investment in aged housing for the Shire of Merredin, to a value of approximately \$2.2 million;
3. The additional housing would be outside the current Department of Housing and Works (DHW) Guidelines making it available to a larger range of people within the community;
4. New compliance regulations from DHW mean that Merrittville would not be eligible for future funding as there were less than 100+ units and the Village was not managed by the Local Government;
5. There are currently 37 people on the waiting list for Merrittville;
6. The land surrounding the Village is vested in Council for the purpose of aged care housing and the area is large enough for extra housing;
7. The Constitution of Merrittville lists criteria for the Committee to achieve and these criteria work against current DHW Guidelines;
8. There was a large community effort and energy that went into the development of Merrittville and so the Committee wants to fulfil what the community desires in the way of housing in the Village;
9. There is an area of land opposite Merrittville (on Hockey Fields) which is currently being rezoned to make it possible for this area of land to be used as an extension to Merrittville or to provide other similar types of accommodation for seniors and the aged;
10. The Shire of Merredin is continuing to lobby State and Federal Governments for funding for all types of seniors and aged care housing;

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11. There is a need within Merredin for a secure care facility as too many people are having to leave town due to the lack of facilities for people needing secure care;
12. Cr Pam Forbes is the Chairperson of the Local Health Advisory Group (LHAG) which is a Committee designed to voice and act upon these concerns. The Committee has a direct line to the Hospital and the Minister for Health. Cr Forbes would welcome any written requests from the public and can take these requests to the LHAG, District Health Advisory Group and the Minister.

5.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Burning of Vacant Land

Due to the nature and timing of the season, burning of vacant land in the townsite was hindered prior to the restricted and prohibited burning periods. Infringement notices had been issued to the owners of offending lots and these would be followed through. The restricted and prohibited burning periods had since expired and so burning could commence on these lots.

5.2 Public Transport Authority (PTA) Houses on Great Eastern Highway

An update was provided on the status of the PTA Houses fronting Gt Eastern Hwy. Council wish to have the fence removed immediately, the houses fronting Gt Eastern Hwy demolished and the land given freehold to the Shire of Merredin. The PTA have invested a significant amount of money in the subdivision and the Treasury Department require a return of this investment, bringing the issue to a stalemate.

Council would continue to lobby the PTA, the Local Member and the State Government to have the situation rectified.

5.3 Merredin Golf Club Building

Council is currently investigating possible future uses for the Merredin Golf Club premises upon the Club's relocation to the Merredin Regional Community and Leisure Centre. Whilst the golfers wish to retain the use of the ablutions, discussions are underway with Tourism WA for a potential partnership resulting in the land being marketed to a developer for the purpose of building quality short term tourism accommodation

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5.4 Old Civic Bowling Club Buildings and Old Lutheran Church

The meeting was advised that the Old Civic Bowling Club Buildings and Basketball Courts had been leased to a number of community groups who were using the premises' on a regular basis for Home Schooling and Church Youth Groups.

In relation to the Old Lutheran Church, this premises is currently being rezoned from Civic and Cultural to Residential in an attempt to progress the sale of the land

5.5 New Tennis and Hockey Fields

The Recreation Centre Manager is working with a Committee comprising of Tennis and Hockey Club members to help progress this matter. Meetings will be held shortly to discuss funding options, the types of material available for use and improved lighting for the Fields. The Department of Sport and Recreation funding round is opening in July/August 2009 with possible further funding available through the Wheatbelt Development Commission and the Committee were working hard to advance the project.

5.6 Old Scout Hall

The Old Scout Hall is currently being leased to a Baptist Church Group who are attempting to establish a youth group with an Indigenous focus.

5.7 No. 42 Barrack Street, Merredin

The meeting was advised that while the building may look unsightly due to the windows being boarded, however Council has little power to deal with the matter as the building was not creating a health or fire hazard or was not structurally unsound. Council needed to be careful in how it exercised its power throughout the community.

The owner had been contacted in relation to the state of the building and to date had been unable to locate a tradesperson to repair the damage caused to the windows.

The matter had been discussed at the recent CBD Plan Public Meeting where a number of options for the building were discussed and these had been passed onto the owner for their information.

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5.8 Merredin Footpath Program

The Footpath Program for the Merredin Townsite was being considered at the Engineering Services Committee Meeting due to occur on 26 March 2009. \$75,000.00 has been spent on footpaths within the townsite during the financial year.

6.0 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Presiding Member thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 8.53pm.