

LAUNCESTON RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

MINUTES OF MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING, MONDAY, 17th MARCH, 2008
AT THE BRUCE DAVIDSON COMMUNITY CENTRE, KINGSMEADOWS

Meeting opened at 7.48 pm, Lionel Morrell, Vice President in the chair, and Janet Headlam as Minute Secretary, with 33 people in attendance.

Chairman thanked Mr. Ian Freeburgh for being the inspiration for the holding of the meeting at Kingsmeadows and for his assistance with letterboxing etc., and to Mrs Carol Wolf on behalf of the Bruce Davidson Community Centre Committee for allowing the Association the use of the excellent meeting facilities.

Apologies were received from: Pam Butler, Marjorie Gardiner, Jenny Gill, Carol Fuller, Mr & Mrs Turbin, Justin Curran (The Manor groundsman), Barbara von Stieglitz, Dianne Dick.

Minutes: Minutes of the February 2008 meeting were distributed to members and visitors.

Moved by Max Plummer and seconded by Kelvin Jowett and that the Minutes be accepted as a true record.

Motion passed without dissent.

Business Arising from the Minutes:

Australian Productivity Commission Draft Report – The Chairman reported that the Association's Supplementary Submission is now published on the Commission's website.

Northern Tasmanian Development - No response received to Association's submission made to LCC. Further communication from Mrs. L. Hardina noted. Decision by LCC to continue funding NTD on a limited, reducing basis, as reported in the press, noted. Further point concerning a levy to fund the LCC contribution by Commercial Ratepayers, is yet to be addressed.

LCC assistance with provision of monthly meeting facilities.

Due to the absence of Ald. Norton, there was no update on the possibility indicated at a previous meeting, that he would continue to explore the idea of a LCC provision of meeting facilities for the Association's monthly meetings.

Treasurer's Report:

Financial Report indicating a present balance of \$108.00 was reported to members and visitors.

Moved by M. Plummer and seconded by M. Chugg, that the Report be accepted.

Motion passed without dissent.

Correspondence:

Inwards: Letter from Marjory Gardner, resident of Unit 76, The Manor Gardens, dated 17 March 2008, apologising that she could not be present at the meeting and setting down her concerns regarding Machen's Reserve - dead weeds along the boundary fence area adjoining The Manor Units; uncut grass on the hill above the John Lees pathway which is a fire hazard; drawing attention to a beautiful tree (akin to native cherry), that is being overtaken by a 6-7 ft Banksia she would prefer was removed; and noting the bird population in the Reserve which she enjoys.

Outwards: Letter to Auditor James Gibson regarding returns.

Letter to retired President John Henshaw thanking him for his services as noted at the February Meeting.

Business Arising from the Correspondence:

Mrs. Gardner's letter to be included in the later Agenda item.

General Business:

Machen's Reserve

Chairman tabled a copy of the MACHEN'S RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2007, that had been prepared and presented by LCC.

Noted that the 54 page plan was scheduled to be reviewed in 2012, and that LCC had undertaken community consultation as part of its preparation, (albeit geographically selective, and very limited).

Chairman made a brief précis of the Management Plan, and illustrated where parts of the plan were yet to be implemented.

General discussion ensued, including the points raised by Mrs Gardner in her letter.

Summation of points noted :

- Generally agreed, that it was not expected that the Reserve be developed or maintained to the manicured standard of , say City Park, but that many of the aspects of concern regarding safety, security, maintenance and landscape criteria identified in the Management Plan were acceptable, if the developmental works were to be completed and sufficient maintenance resources allocated.
- Could sensor operated lights be installed over seat locations to discourage poor behaviour (probably solar powered?)
- In view of the relatively low number of ratepayers in Launceston (28,000) and the burgeoning Annual Budget for rates (approx \$58M), should park maintenance be put to tender by private contractors, so that true costings for Machen's Reserve would be evident and strict limitations be put on spending?
- Should a 'Friends of Machen's Reserve' as a volunteer group be investigated, so that the local community could assist and gain some responsibility and "ownership" for the problems? Noting that a small but significant area of native bush be always retained to encourage birdlife to the area.
- Concerns regarding the pond which would be attracting snakes who are attracted by the resident frogs; need to fence off the steep bank behind the pond at both top and bottom levels, so as to keep people away, particularly children; accessibility in that zone needs improvement so that maintenance and mowing operations can be done.
- The stone drains don't run efficiently and harbour weeds, resulting in quagmire areas forming and dampness.

- Much of the Reserve is a fire hazard at times, and could be called a 'fire waiting to happen'.
- A more casual (less structured) bushland setting is envisaged by lifting tree canopies so as to improve vision and safety/scrutiny, and to remove the 'ferral' wattle suckering that is quickly spreading.
- The pond is unsafe, but kids will still be attracted to paddle never-the-less, and frogging is a popular pastime with some. The waterway seems to be littered with dog droppings which adds to the unhealthy state.
- The therapeutic value of the Reserve is much valued as being priceless to the community.
- Suggestion that the Association write to LCC asking that the Reserve be subject to a special cleanup.

Guy Street parking and traffic congestion.

Chairman outlined concerns expressed to him by residents prior to the meeting, and reported that a resident had taken the initiative to directly approach the State traffic authority about the problem, which is caused by poor planning / zoning, and an apparent policy of Meadow Mews Shopping Centre employers, for employees to park outside the allocated car park area.

The general planning issues of the two main supermarket chains having been allowed to develop on opposite sides of Hobart Road, the ribbon shopping strip located along Hobart Road, the congestion at Hobart Road/Innocent Street and Riseley Street intersections that are absent additional 'turn left' lanes, and the gradual intrusion into residential areas/streets, all add up to unreasonable congestion and safety issues evolving.

No Parking/Standing areas are encroaching on residential streets, preventing reasonable access, street parking and residential amenity values being upheld.

Alleged that 2hr parking restrictions in the affected streets are not being policed, and that better planning standards are needed, with improved crossings, underpasses, traffic management procedures and sight lines would assist in ameliorating some concerns. A better public transport system would help alleviate traffic and parking congestion.

RESOLVED that this matter be one for on-going action and debate.

Membership Drive.

Chairman informed the meeting that the Association, although recently re-named the Launceston Ratepayer's Association Inc. it was in fact still an association for residents of Launceston who did not directly pay Municipal Rates as property owners. Accordingly, if residents of Launceston were concerned about Municipal matters, they were encouraged to apply to join the Association (\$10 per year, \$5 for concession members). Without a united voice, residents and ratepayers cannot effectively express opinions and make a difference in a world where there seems to be no constraints for increasing costs and dissatisfaction with the services provided.

In light of press news that Municipal Rates would this year be again increasing above the level of inflation, there is an urgent need for residents to express their concerns as many ratepayers seemed powerless and unable to fund living expenses because of rate demands.

LCC Rating System.

Chairman briefed the meeting on the present system of rating in Launceston and moves in other Tasmanian Municipalities to move to a fairer 'user-pay' system that was much more equitable.

The Association works hard to establish unrefutable facts surrounding rate system comparisons, and how rate levels in other Tasmanian and interstate areas differ.

The Chairman reported that the Association had made some progress in drawing attention to the issues and the level of 'Rate Poverty' being experienced, and that last year, a single sewerage rate was applied. However, the single principle injustice in Launceston, is the AAV method of rating, which leads to unjust disparity for residents and families who can be of seemingly similar situations.

Other General Business

In view of the level of interest in the Kings Meadows area and the issues raised, it was suggested that the Association hold its May monthly meeting at the same venue, and that appropriate officers of Council be invited to address the topics raised.

Mrs. Wolf expressed her appreciation to the Association for holding its meeting at the Bruce Davidson Community Centre, evidenced by the strong attendance.

Meeting Close: 9.15 pm

Next Meeting: 7.30 pm, Monday, 21st April 2008, at Heather Hall, Penquite Road Newstead.