

Please note: These minutes are yet to be confirmed as a true record of proceedings

CITY OF BUSSELTON

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2023

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MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD IN THE UNDALUP ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, SOUTHERN DRIVE, BUSSELTON, ON 30 JANUARY 2023 AT 5.30PM.

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Presiding Member opened the meeting at 5:34pm.

The Presiding Member acknowledged the Wadandi and Bibbulmun people as the traditional custodians of this region, and paid respects to Elders past and present.

2. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES & LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Presiding Member:

Cr Grant Henley Mayor

Members:

Cr Paul Carter Deputy Mayor

Cr Sue Riccelli

Cr Ross Paine

Cr Kate Cox

Cr Anne Ryan

Cr Mikayla Love

Cr Phill Cronin (*from 5:57pm*)

Officers:

Mr Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Paul Needham, Director, Planning and Development Services

Mr Daniell Abrahamse, Acting Director, Engineering and Works Services

Mr Dave Goodwin, Acting Director, Community and Commercial Services

Ms Sarah Pierson, Acting Director, Finance and Corporate Services

Mrs Emma Heys, Governance Coordinator

Apologies:

Cr Jodie Richards

Approved Leave of Absence:

Nil

Public:

16

3. CONFIRMATION AND RECEIPT OF MINUTES

Mrs Jill Walsh

Question

At the last Annual General Meeting of Electors, there was a conversation about the Lower Vasse River project and a conversation between Dr Andrew Dickie and Mr Paul Needham about Solair not submitting a tender. Why was this not documented in the minutes of that meeting?

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

The minutes of a meeting are not a verbatim transcript, they note outcomes and matters raised.

RESOLUTION

C2301/014 Moved Mr Brian O'Connor, seconded Councillor Paul Carter

That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Electors meeting held 31 January 2022 be received by Electors.

CARRIED

4. ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022**4.1 Mayors Presentation**

The Mayor presented an overview of the City's achievements in the 2021/2022 financial year.

4.2 Receipt of the 2021-2022 Annual Report, including the 2021-2022 Financial Report**RESOLUTION**

C2301/015 Moved Mr John Cutbush, seconded Mr Ron Hingston

That the City of Busselton 2021-2022 Annual Report and the 2021-2022 Financial Report be received by Electors.

CARRIED

5. OTHER GENERAL BUSINESS

Mr Stuart Anderson

Question

Why is the Council still pushing for a new War Memorial, and who will be responsible for maintenance of the new War Memorial? Will there be a reserve account set up for this Memorial? How many of the relatives of the soldiers of the ANZAC Memorial have been contacted?

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

The City has undertaken consultation over the last few months, including a YourSay survey, public open days at the RSL displaying the information, and pop-up stalls at the Signal Park markets that were very well attended. Staff are currently analysing the YourSay survey submissions with a report to be presented to Council in March.

Dr Andrew Dickie

Question

In an email to members of the Lower Vasse River Management Advisory Group written by Mr Needham on the 23rd December last year, it was stated that: *'Outcomes of sediment removal will be continuously reviewed and evaluated prior to progressing to other stages of the Living Streams concept'*. Estimates of the proportion of sediment actually removed from the Stage 1 dredging area vary from a low of 30% by one community member of the Advisory Group to a high of 70% as claimed by Mathilde Breton at an Advisory Group meeting. In response to concerns raised by three community members of the Advisory Group it was promised that Stage 1 would be surveyed to measure the actual amount of sediment remaining after dredging. Has this survey been done and if so, what are the results of the survey?

Response

(Mr Paul Needham, Director Planning and Development Services)

The City has not yet undertaken the bathymetric survey, however we have some transect work that has been commissioned by the Department of Water. We are still in the winding up phase of Stage 1, and we can certainly provide that information in due course.

Question

Apex EnviroCare who have done part of Stage 1, have stated they cannot dredge from 50m above the Strelly Street bridge up to the bypass because of overhanging branches, which will not allow their microdredge to run along its line. There are also difficulties with siting geotextile bags in the area because there are limited places to put them. In light of this, does the Council have any idea what can be done other than removing all the riverside trees to get rid of the overhanging branches?

Response

(Mr Paul Needham, Director Planning and Development Services)

The City has secured external funding for Stage 3, which at this point is intended to be from Strelly Street bridge up to and around the bend in the river. It has been informally discussed with the Lower Vasse River Management Advisory Group, that Stage 4 may be further upriver from there.

The City is looking to go out for tender for Stage 3 in coming months. The technique of dredging will not be fixed, however we will need to ensure that the tenders we receive will be able to receive environmental approvals.

There are a number of different options for management of the material that is removed from the river, and there are a number of different options in terms of where the geotextile bags may be located, which we are exploring. At the moment we are in the process of drafting the tender documents.

Question

Will any of the potential companies be excluded [from the tendering process]?

Response

(Mr Paul Needham, Director Planning and Development Services)

The City will undertake an open tender process, and staff are regularly talking to potential contractors and are always looking at new ideas that might be in the market.

Mrs Jill Walsh

Question

I have been told that there are rules that prevent waterways specialists, such as Griffiths University, from coming and speaking to the Lower Vasse River Management Advisory Group. Can you please tell me what rules and regulations prevent this?

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

The only exclusion would be if a company were a participant in an active tender process. Specialist waterways companies are able to speak with the Lower Vasse River Management Advisory Group and advise them how they would handle the project if they are not actively tendering for the job.

Question

Has it occurred to the Council that they may have only received one tender response from Apex EnviroCare because other specialist companies found the tender design and limitations would not achieve much, and that they prefer to protect their companies reputations?

Response

(Cr Sue Riccelli)

I don't agree with that, and all tenders will be looked at. All stages are very different. There will need to be some creativity used to be able to dredge some parts of the river.

Question

How is the recent dredging of the 180m stretch down to the Butter Factory going to help with the cyanobacterial blooms?

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

The City is looking at the total nutrient load in the whole river body, and if you remove 70% from one section and more from other sections, the cumulative effect is to reduce the total nutrient load from the river.

Question

Following on from Dr Andrew Dickie's question, it was agreed that the information would be made available to the Lower Vasse River Management Advisory Group. Will that information be made public to the ratepayers as well?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

Yes, as there is nothing commercially confident in any of that information.

Mrs Jill Walsh (on behalf of Mr Vern Bussell)

Question

How is the installation of a weather station in the Busselton CBD progressing?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

The weather station is located on top of this [Administration] building, and a weather station for Dunsborough has been installed at the Naturaliste Community Centre.

Response**(Sarah Pierson, Acting Director Finance and Corporate Services)**

We are working through some technical difficulties in regards to getting the data to the website, however the readings will be forthcoming.

Mr Brian O'Connor

Question

The statement on page two of the Auditors Report doesn't seem to reflect the responsibilities of the CEO as listed on page 44 of the Independent Auditors Report. Would that be a fair statement?

Response**(Mr Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer)**

This is a fair statement, and it does appear this way. The City uses a template for reports like these, and we are happy to review and investigate both the report and the templates used further.

Question

Could you please consider the suggestions I have in relation to the Financial Reports in general?

There are three parts – first, the financial sustainability report on page 40 of the annual report makes a statement that this City has continued to improve on its financial performance, however this is not backed up by the text that follows; second, would the City include key outcomes of the external audit including any findings rated as significant or moderate in the next annual report, and finally, would the City consider a brief statement on the risk management plan, especially any residual risks that are deemed important in the next annual report?

Response**(Mr Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer)**

Thank you, these are great suggestions and is certainly something we will consider and investigate further.

Question

Could you please provide a brief update on the progress of the proposed model of financial statements and clarify whether they will include financial ratios enabling comparisons across local Governments?

Response**(Mr Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer)**

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, through the Minister, has enacted amendments that have essentially removed the ratios that were topical in the last few years.

The City and the local government industry bodies lobbied for more appropriate ratios and the purpose of them. We also requested how the ratios are calculated to be included in the Financial Statements to ensure they gave the public a better understanding of the financial performance of the City.

We understand further amendments will include drawing information from the financials to provide comparisons on the MyCouncil website and remove the requirement for the Office of the Auditor General to provide comment on any adverse trends in relation to the ratios specifically. We understand there may be a requirement to include some ratios in the annual report.

Mr Rob Mildwaters

Question

When the Council were considering the cost of the Performing Arts Centre, the public were told that our rates would go up by the cost of a cup of coffee. Is that correct?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

The overall rate increase was 3.5%, which includes the 1% for the Performing Arts Centre. For some people their rates will increase, for some their rates will decrease and for others, their rates will remain the same.

Mr Stuart Anderson

Question

Is the Performing Arts Centre tracking on time and on budget?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

The project is running approximately 6 months behind schedule, which is not uncommon given the industry shortages.

Question

Has the contractor come forward and asked for more money?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

We are on a fixed price contract and have not had any significant variations to that. If the contractor seeks a variation there is a process that would need to be undertaken.

Mr Kevin Strapp

Question

Is the construction contract for the Performing Arts Centre a fixed price contract or a lump sum contract?

Response**(Mayor Grant Henley)**

We signed a fixed price contract.

Dr Andrew Dickie

Question

I would like to point out that the rates for our property here in Bussleton were not that different from the rates we paid in the City of Melville where our property was more expensive. The rates are calculated on the Gross Rental Value that Landgate recalculates every few years, but it is also based on the index that Council decides to charge based on it's budget. So when the City undertakes projects that are expensive, such as the Performing Arts Centre or the Foreshore redevelopment, the index gets high. I would just like to point out that when you undertake projects such as these and borrow a lot of money, the rate index has to go up.

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

It would be a fairer comparison to benchmark against other regional Councils of similar sizes. The City of Busselton manages 1500km², which includes country roads, bush fire brigades, nature reserves and we also contribute to main roads. Melville is around 30km², with development mostly being in-fill with already existing infrastructure, and their distributor road network is administered by Main Roads.

Response

(Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer)

The City benchmarks against other regional local governments such as Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Broome, Esperance, Albany, Karratha and Bunbury. Kalgoorlie and Karratha also have airports that bring in a significant amount of revenue. Local governments such as Kwinana and other southern suburbs have low rate increases due to the majority of their infrastructure already built.

We do have more subdivisions coming along, and need to build infrastructure before these developments are fully populated. For example, a new oval can cost between two and five million, depending on the surrounding infrastructure.

Council decide on the priorities that the community would like to see going forward. There may be some challenging projects that Council are divided on, however these decisions end up directing what revenue is to be raised for.

Question

When the costs of the Performing Arts Centre start to come in, in terms of repayments and interest payments, will the [rates] go up again?

Response

(Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer)

The modeling for [Saltwater Busselton] was undertaken in the Long Term Financial Plan and is reviewed each year. The Long Term Financial Plan shows the years of increased costs in relation to projects, with several long term loans coming to a close, which will assist in smoothing out the impacts.

Mrs Deb Christophersen

Question

In regards to the 12 month e-scooter trial, is there something the Council have put in place for parking of the e-scooters?

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

Neuron [the e-scooter company] have been receptive to feedback from both the community and the Council.

There is anecdotally over 1000 e-scooters within the City, with people using them on our road and footpath networks. They are certainly a visible presence. There have been objections to having an aggregation point for the e-scooters. In instances where a business owner or adjacent resident have asked for the e-scooters not to be there, Neuron have shifted them. Through the app you cannot finish the ride until it is within 5m of a point, otherwise it keeps ticking over on your credit card. If we were to elongate the service we could consider a circle that people have to put the scooters within after the ride.

Response

(Dave Goodwin, Acting Director Community and Commercial Services)

This is a trial, and by very nature of a trial we want feedback. In the first week we had 85 complaints, which is now down to about 10 per week. People have had concerns, some of which have been resolved, and all of which have been passed on to Neuron. It is their duty to align with their service level agreements and their contract with the City. At the end of the trial a decision will be made as to whether the e-scooters continue and for how long.

Response

(Deputy Mayor Paul Carter)

The important thing is to provide feedback to Neuron. I would like to see designated parking areas for the e-scooters.

Response

(Mayor Grant Henley)

When the City evaluates the trial, we will consider a large range of factors. The City will also look to see what has worked in other locations.

6. CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 7:01pm

THESE MINUTES CONSISTING OF PAGES 1 TO 10 WERE CONFIRMED AS A TRUE AND CORRECT
RECORD ON 29 Jan. 2024.
DATE: 29.1.2024 PRESIDING MEMBER: 