

Northbridge Progress Association Inc

Minutes of General Meeting held at St Marks Hall, Malacoota Rd
on Thursday May 5 2011 commencing at 8.00pm

Attendance: 38 members and guests

Quorum: The President noted that a quorum was present.

Apologies: Pam Clifford, Jenny Roxburgh, Grant Sheldon, Ron Hicks, John Lightfoot

Welcome: The President welcomed Cr Gail Giles-Gidney and Cr John Hooper, guest speakers Nick Tobin, Steven Head and Jeff Ellis from Willoughby City Council, and other members and visitors.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on February 24 2011 were tabled by the President who noted that they had also been available on NPA's website for more than two months. **RESOLVED** that the minutes are confirmed.

The Concourse and other Willoughby developments

Guest speaker Nick Tobin, General Manager, Willoughby City Council, gave a slide presentation. He said The Concourse complex comprised 5000 sq metres of public space, with a 1000-seat concert hall, 500-seat theatre, 500 sq metre exhibition hall, an outdoor amphitheatre and screen, and cafes and shops. The building had architectural merit with large foyer spaces, grassed outdoor areas and a water feature. It would have good accessibility for people with disabilities. The new Willoughby Library will be one of the largest in NSW, with natural light through a water court. The complex would hold an Open Day in September during the Spring Fair with an opening later in September. In regard to other developments, he said that the restored Willoughby Incinerator was open, Northbridge Oval re-surfacing had been completed, Chatswood Mall was complete, a new Artarmon Library was being developed and Bales Park would be upgraded. Nick said: "We should all be quite proud of what has been achieved."

In response to questions, Nick said that The Concourse project had received \$4.5 million in State and Federal funding. The final construction cost would be \$171 million compared with the original estimate of \$115 million. Loans totalling \$55 million had been required. The cost over-run was due to changes of scope and time delays, but would not impact on residential ratepayers.

Council's review of Northbridge Baths

Guest speaker Steven Head, Director Infrastructure Services, Willoughby City Council, gave a slide presentation. He said that Council was not closing the Baths. The management contract had expired after five years and "it is an opportune time to look at future management of the project." There were two main options: the first would be a new tender for management services, with a charge to Baths patrons; the second would be an unsupervised facility with free access. In the latter case, it is possible that

community groups could run the Baths canteen for fundraising. In the next two months, Council plans to hold a meeting with the main stakeholders, including Northbridge Swimming Club and NPA. Longer term issues include water safety, both supervision and water quality; the ageing infrastructure, particularly the stormwater pipes; and a Masterplan and long term funding.

In response to questions, Steven and Jeff Ellis said that the MSB lease does not permit a kayak business on the site; a restaurant was unlikely to be viable at the Baths; demand for use of the Baths is high; and that the next stage was community consultation. Steven said that if a Baths Committee is re-established it should be “more strategic”, with high level members.

One resident remarked that the rumours about the Baths closure demonstrated a lack of trust between the community and Council and that there was an opportunity to re-build trust through greater involvement of the community.

Other issues raised by residents:

- A resident of Sailors Bay Rd noted that, since the re-surfacing of **Northbridge Oval**, the oval had been very busy with football events and had attracted large crowds. There were major problems parking in Sailors Bay Rd and Narooma Rd. The crowds on Good Friday were “horrendous”. He said the environment is stressful for residents and Council needs to examine additional parking at the oval. Steven Head responded that there were 2000 members of Northbridge Football Club and that sports grounds were inadequate to cope with demand in Willoughby. He said residents should accept that the oval will be popular but undertook to examine parking restrictions in the area and would ask Rangers to be alert to irregular parking around the oval. Steven said: “We will work hard to try to resolve the traffic issues around the oval.”
- A resident asked the status of the proposed **traffic study in Northbridge**. Steven said that Council needs the RTA’s cooperation to help fund and carry out the study but there had been no commitment from RTA. He urged NPA to write again to the local Member to seek RTA cooperation.
- A resident commented on the traffic problems likely to be caused in Sailors Bay Rd during the **demolition and construction stages of the proposed 116-bed nursing home**. He said that heavy vehicles should not be permitted during school drop-off and pick-up hours. Steven Head said Council had no power to change the construction working hours conditions of the JRPP approval for the nursing home. He said the developer had not yet received a Construction Certificate nor negotiated a traffic management plan for the project.

Ward Councillors’ reports

Cr John Hooper:

- He reported that a construction Certificate has been issued for the new car wash and construction has commenced.
- He said that the draft WLEP has been submitted to State Government for approval and Council is waiting for its return.
- He summarised a paper he had tabled at the meeting which noted that a Councillor’s role was on a “razor’s edge”. On one hand, Councillors needed to

take decisions without any influence from the community and should not accept gifts. On the other, the role was to represent individual members of the community which sometimes meant meeting them over refreshments or a meal. He asked residents to write to him with their comments.

Cr Gail Giles-Gidney:

- She reported that two debates had been held in Council about the gifts and benefits policy without any resolution.
- She noted that the naming of the Suspension Bridge by RTA was rightfully a major issue for Northbridge residents.
- Gail said that the change in State government should bring changes to the planning laws and that Part 3A was currently under review. However, the JRPP decision on the 116-bed nursing home was unlikely to be overturned. The owners have a legally binding decision to proceed. A resident asked whether Council should have the right to vary conditions, similar to the S96 right of a developer but Council officers present did not support the concept.

General business

- In response to a question, the President said that the Rotary Fireworks display on the following Saturday would have much stronger security arrangements and an increased Police presence.
- The coordinator of Northbridge Neighbourhood Watch, Janet France, reported that crime in Northbridge remained low and mainly comprised car stealing. She said that she had applied for two grants to fund Neighbourhood Watch fridge magnets for distribution to residents. She thanked NPA for sponsoring Earth Hour in Northbridge.
- In response to a question, Steven Head reported that thieves had attempted to steal the copper wire in the new floodlight towers at Northbridge Oval but had only succeeded in cutting them.
- Nick Tobin responded to a question by summarising the recent ICAC enquiry into a Council officer's actions in relation to development approvals. Council is awaiting ICAC's recommendations and findings, which are likely to result in changes to Councils' processes. The Council officer involved has been fired.

Next meeting

- The next NPA general meeting will be held on Thursday July 21 at 8pm in St Marks Hall. The speaker will be advised in *The 202* newsletter.

The President closed the meeting at 10.05pm and members joined in refreshments.

Chairman: Date: