

Northbridge Progress Association Inc

Minutes of the General Meeting held at St Marks Hall, Malacoota Rd, Northbridge on Wednesday 24 September 2008 at 8.00pm

Present: 30 members and visitors.

Welcome:

President John Becroft opened the meeting and welcomed the visitors, who included guest speakers Steven Head and Greg Woodhams. He welcomed and congratulated recently elected Ward Councillors Trevor Morgan and John Hooper.

Apologies: Ron Hicks, Michael Conder, Peter McNair, Bruce Wilson (Castlecrag PA), Michael Bartok, Janet France, Grant Sheldon. The secretary noted that there was no apology from Cr Adrian Cox.

Previous minutes: The President summarised the minutes from the previous meeting. **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the General Meeting held on July 23 2008 be confirmed and signed by the chair.

Correspondence

- The secretary read the text of the resolution about Shore School passed by members at the last general meeting, which had been included in a letter to Shore. He read the response from the Shore headmaster and noted that the Association took exception to a number of his comments. Greg Woodhams told the meeting that the Land & Environment Court hearing had been held on the previous three days and that a decision may be made in about one month.
- The secretary advised the meeting that a membership application had been received from Joe Hockey and that a resolution of members was required to accept the application because he lived outside Northbridge. **RESOLVED** that the application for membership from Joe Hockey is accepted.

“How Council spends your rates on capital works and the environment”

Using maps of Willoughby projected on a screen, guest speaker Steven Head, Infrastructure Services Director, WCC, summarized Council’s spending plans for the current year for pedestrians, cycleways, roadworks, drainage and stormwater, bushland and aboriginal sites, parks, sportsgrounds and community facilities. In regard to local projects, he noted that Northbridge Oval and surrounding areas would be connected to the new golf course irrigation scheme; a new junior soccer field and a car park would be developed at Warners Park; substantial maintenance would be carried out on Flat Rock Gully reserve; the new practice nets and synthetic surface at Northbridge Oval would be completed; and a Masterplan would be commenced for the Northbridge Park precinct (including the golf course, car park and pavilion area).

“Changes to the NSW planning legislation”

Guest speaker Greg Woodhams, Environmental Services Director, WCC, made a Powerpoint presentation about the major changes to the planning processes. He said that NSW Government is trying to “de-clutter” the planning system and speed up re-zoning. The approval and appeal system is now far more complex. Generally, the community and Council will have less involvement in some planning approvals. There are now several new approval bodies, including Planning Arbitrators who can review a Council decision at the request of an applicant, at Council’s cost. There are firm time limits for DA approvals – 50 days in the case of most. The Minister or a Council can appoint Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels. Councils will have more powers in the case of unauthorized building work and there will be bigger fines. “Complying developments” will be extended to new single storey and two-storey houses, where new State (not Council) codes will apply. Neighbours need not be notified about a proposed complying development. The new codes are likely to be in place in the first half of 2009. They will be simple codes with no regard for views or streetscape or the opinions of neighbours.

Northbridge Plaza Masterplan

Mark Monk told the meeting that the Masterplan Technical Working Group had completed its technical reports and had a good basis for further work. TWG was currently looking at possible development options for the site, none of which would exceed the approximately 10% retail expansion limit imposed by Council. He noted that AMP had the right to present options greater than 10% retail expansion to Council and expected that they would. However, he believes that AMP now understands the limitations of the site and community views and would be presenting more modest expansion proposals than they originally contemplated. He said that he thought the overall process would take 3 to 4 years and the first year had recently passed.

Cr Hooper noted that the Masterplan process and the two committees need to be re-affirmed by the new Council in early October. The Reference Committee has been suspended for several weeks.

Cr Morgan said that the old Council had confirmed the 10% retail limit and it was “cast in concrete”. In answer to a question, it was noted by Malcolm Lye and Greg Woodhams that Council’s (and the Association’s) 10% limit did not apply to residential development and we could expect low rise apartments along Eastern Valley Way and, longer term, above the Plaza itself.

Northbridge Hotel

Greg Woodhams advised that the owners of Northbridge Hotel have not responded to Council’s requests for changes to the alterations already completed. He expected that a report would go to Ward Councillors in early October but did not know what recommendation would be made. Cr Morgan said that a Ward Councillors’ meeting on site could be expected during the second half of October.

Next general meeting

The Annual General Meeting of NPA will be at 8pm on Wednesday December 10 at St Marks Hall.

The chairman closed the meeting at 9.50pm. Refreshments were provided.

Chairman

Date