

Northbridge Progress Association Inc

Minutes of the General Meeting held at St Marks Hall, Malacoota Rd, Northbridge on Wednesday February 25 2009 at 8.10pm

Present: 60 members and 47 visitors.

Apologies: Gladys Berejiklian MP, Cr John Hooper, Dr Ruth Ratner

Welcome

The chairman, president Peter McNair, welcomed visitors, including:

- Councillors Adrian Cox, Judith Rutherford, Barry Thompson, Kate Lamb, Wendy Norton and Stewart Coppock;
- Members of Castlecrag, Naremburn, Castle Cove and Middle Harbour-Willoughby Progress Associations;
- The guest panel of Greg Woodhams (Council), Helen Deegan (AMPCSC), Tim Blythe (consultant to AMPCSC), Mark Monk (Harden Ave resident) and Russell Hand (consultant to NPA).

The chairman introduced NPA's new Committee member John Lightfoot and new Public Officer Peter McLachlan.

He reminded attendees that only members of the Association who were financial prior to the meeting could vote at the meeting.

Previous minutes

The chairman noted that the minutes from the general meeting held on September 24 2009 had been posted on the Internet for several months. **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the general meeting held on September 24 2008 be confirmed and signed by the chair.

Awards

The chairman congratulated former NPA president John Becroft on his 2008 North Sydney Community Award and the 2009 Willoughby Citizen of the Year Award (the latter jointly). He noted that Northbridge Progress Association had received a 2008 North Sydney Community Award in recognition of outstanding service.

Northbridge Plaza and Council car park Masterplan

The president introduced the guest panel and asked Greg Woodhams to update the meeting on the Masterplan progress, explain the sketch plan (called Consolidated Framework Plan, CFP) distributed to attendees and talk about the next steps.

Masterplan summary:

Greg Woodhams said that, after 18 months of research and information-gathering work, the Masterplan process was near the end of Stage 1 of three stages. He said that the two main drivers for the project were the need to upgrade the

shopping centre and to improve the condition and safety of the car park. He said that the work also needed to take into consideration the existing Masterplan for Northbridge Town Centre.

- Using a digital projector, Greg Woodhams described the CFP concepts for residential developments on the Plaza site and on the Council car park land. He said that profits from the sale of residential units were required to fund the approximate \$10 million cost of redeveloping the car park. He also described potential traffic arrangements whereby the only access to residential units could be from Harden Ave and the only access to retail facilities from Eastern Valley Way. Greg Woodhams noted that there were unlikely to be any changes to the existing Plaza shopping centre until the Woolworths lease expired in 2025. However, a lift and travelators were planned to improve access. He noted that retail expansion was limited to about 10% (or 800 sq m) by Council's resolution.
- The next steps in the process would be to present Council with the outcome of Stage 1 work before proceeding to Stage 2, during which there would be detailed work, such as traffic studies, and research into land zoning, the covenants, the Statutory Trust and land ownership on the site.

Questions/comments from residents to the panel:

- Several residents commented on traffic congestion. Some expressed opposition to closing off access to the Council car park from Harden Ave. Russell Hand noted that Harden Ave already exceeded RTA standards for a residential street. A resident said that Tenilba Rd and Kameruka Rd were already very dangerous and substantial additional traffic would be unacceptable. A resident noted that it would be unfair to transfer more traffic into Eastern Valley Way, which was already jammed at times. Cr Rutherford said that she did not expect a slip lane on Eastern Valley Way into the Plaza to be workable. One resident said that Northbridge already had "horrific traffic problems" and a Plaza redevelopment wouldn't solve them. A resident said that adding residential development would generate significant traffic. Tim Blythe responded that different uses have different traffic patterns.
- Many residents expressed opposition to residential developments on the Council car park land. Several emphasised the convenience of the present open car park. In response to a question, Greg Woodhams said that the sketch plan contemplates about 140 residential units requiring about 225 car parking spaces and that this would generate more traffic. He said that residential development would help to ensure that any expansion of the Plaza would be viable. Mark Monk said that, as a Harden Ave resident, he was concerned that a long term, not piecemeal, approach be taken to the Plaza redevelopment. He noted that residential heights would be the same as the Northbridge Town Centre Masterplan and that residential developments were preferred because they generated about one-quarter of the traffic volumes of the same retail space. One resident noted that, in its size category, the Plaza was financially the most efficient in Australia and questioned "What's wrong with the Plaza as it is?"

- A resident questioned how anything could be built on community land with the covenants over it. Greg Woodhams explained that there were complex processes that would allow the land to be reclassified and the covenants removed. In response to a question, he explained that the Plaza owner is the beneficiary of the covenant that requires public car parking to be provided. A resident noted that a Statutory Trust in favour of the public exists over the car park and that Council has responsibilities as the trustee.
- A resident expressed concerns with the economic impacts of any retail expansion of the Plaza on existing retailers in other commercial centres in Willoughby. Tim Blythe and Russell Hand separately explained that detailed economic impact advice would be required in Stage 2 of the Masterplan.
- A resident asked whether there was consideration of green space in any redevelopment. Tim Blythe responded that, because of the hard surfaces of the site, there were limited opportunities for greenery. He mentioned Harden Park and areas around residential developments as opportunities.
- A resident said that the Council car park was “worth millions” and was concerned that the State Government may intervene to approve the redevelopment. Greg Woodhams responded that Council’s legal advice was that the State could not intervene against Council’s wishes whilst Council owned the car park land because Council would need to consent to any development over the land. To intervene, the State would need to acquire compulsorily the car park land and this was unlikely because it was not part of a major infrastructure project.

Consideration of the July 18 2007 resolution:

- Copies of suggested modifications to the resolution passed by members in July 2007 were distributed to members as a basis for discussion.
- The secretary explained that a majority (but not all) of NPA’s committee is persuaded that residential buildings on the car park land would help to “sterilise” the land from further retail developments. The committee feels that any residential developments should be on a separate stratum so that Council will be able to own and control the car park around and under any development. The committee also proposed that that café and restaurant space be specifically included in the definition of retail space so that they would not be excluded from the maximum 10% retail expansion limit imposed by Council, which might allow AMP to expand by a further 10% or 20% retail space. The committee also suggested that approximately 20% (or 4800 sq m) of the site should be preserved as community space and “quarantined” against any further development.
- Several members opposed the modifications that would have allowed residential development on the Council car park. The chairman called for a show of hands and a large majority of members (approximately 50 versus 5) present voted against any development on Council-owned land. In response to suggestions from members and because of the complexity of the issues, the chairman deferred further discussion of the proposed modifications and agreed to consider sending a survey to members to obtain their opinions about the issues.
- The chairman thanked the panel for its participation.

By-election for Sailors Bay Ward councillor

The chairman noted that the by-election would be held on May 2. He said that NPA committee member John Lightfoot would be a candidate. He invited other candidates to stand up but none did.

Next general meeting

The next general meeting of NPA will be at 8pm on Wednesday May 13 at St Marks Hall.

The chairman closed the meeting at 10.10pm. Refreshments were provided.

Chairman

Date