

Notes of the Fairy Bower Precinct Community Forum Meeting held at St Patricks (ICMS) on the 1st March 2017 at 7:00pm.

Attendance as per the written attendance list circulated to all present.

Apologies were received from (as per list).

Welcome

The meeting formally was opened at 7:15pm and the facilitator welcomed everybody present.

As a preliminary it was also advised the meeting would be recorded for production of the meeting minutes.

Future of the Manly Town Hall building

The issue concerning this matter was outlined, concerning possible relocation of the library to the current Council Chambers building. The issues were that :-

- Some of our community with a heritage interest were looking to find a re-use for our Council Chambers to get it a permanent role, assuming the amalgamation stays together
- The developers were still circling the Whistler Street triangle site (currently containing the car parks and the library/offices building) wanting to redevelop the site to include a modern car park with apartments.

This matter was part of the bigger question of what happens to current Council assets under the amalgamation. The plans of moving the Manly Environment Centre into the rear of the Town Hall were noted. The ground floor contains a separable space with a shop front (where the awning is) which was built in 1930 as Manly Council's electricity showroom.

The initial discussions were the building could house the Library and the Art Gallery but it was felt the building was big enough for one or the other, but possibly not both. It was noted the Art Gallery has a large collection in store - its needs are far bigger than just the apparent display space. While the Council Chambers building may be sufficient for display space, it would not meet the storage requirements.

The issue of Council listing buildings as heritage items was then discussed with examples. Council was often slow at adding buildings to the local heritage list, even when some owners desired this. Other owners opposed such listings because they felt it made the properties less valuable in terms of development potential.

It was noted Manly Council Chambers building was a prominent visual landmark right in the centre of its community, projecting Civic pride for both residents and visitors alike, and the comparison was made to the Dee Why Civic Centre not having such a great location nor providing such an impact.

The issue of loss of expansion potential of car parking at Whistler Street for future needs was raised if the site was redeveloped with residential. This raised the issue of local needs in general and it was noted manly had lost a lot of local businesses that served locals. These included the Peterson's home-ware store, hardware store, locksmith etc.

There was concern than any loss of convenient parking would see more local's business lost. The issue of the Corso being mainly for tourists was observed. The National Australia Bank was noted as the only recent reversal of a local business returning from Sydney Road back to the Corso.

The conflicts from mixing residential and licensed commercial premises was outlined, with local examples. Issues included noise from late night licensed premises and odour from restaurant kitchen exhausts. It was noted that the issue of proper separation of use (avoiding mixed use developments) resulted in less compliance issues, due to avoiding conflicts over such nuisances.

In terms of local businesses the issue of the closure of the Manly Twin Cinemas was also raised. This was reported to partially stem from the owner of the space wanting the highest commercial return for the mostly internal fringe retail space (the cinema was only a lessee). The issue of choice of films matching the local audiences taste was also a factor in success or failure of this type of business.

Oceanides

The upcoming launch function on the Friday the 31st March was noted. The Council has generously committed to dollar for dollar matching of our community fundraising up to \$40,000. Any precinct member wishing to attend can request an invitation.

The issue of the delay to the pool works resulting in the works not being completed for summer was raised. The history of the pool and the proposed bottom remediation works were briefly outlined. The budgeted bottom remediation works project has basically been postponed due to the amalgamation, leaving some doubt if the project will actually be completed this financial year.

Many residents have commented that the performance of the new Council on capital works seems erratic. There are constant suggestions the new council has short term budget issues, as it is burning money on amalgamation related activities.

The issue of the apparent politics of the administrator was raised and discussed. A key issue was determining his attitudes towards increased development within the Northern Beaches, and the example of the Mona Vale Place Plan was outlined, noting the strong objections from local residents. The issue of history being apparently forgotten was raised, with the mid-1980s high-rise building in Mona Vale leading to the dismissal of Warringah Council and the formation of Pittwater Council.

LRC Issues

The role of the former-Councillors on the Local Representation Committee (LRC) was outlined. Basically the Councillors are kept informed about major Council, and amalgamation-related projects going on, but are not given any control over the matters presented.

The presentation at the most recent LRC meeting on the Ingleside land release was reported and contrasted with the report at the same meeting on the Frenchs Forest high school redevelopment proposal.

The Ingleside presentation outlined there was to be around 40% open space, most of the sites don't change, with some higher-density townhouses to maximise the open space much as possible. It was a very matter-of-fact type report presentation.

The Frenchs Forest presentation however was more a pushy, gung-ho promotional style of delivery. The new town centre on the existing high school was talked up as to how great it would be, with great opportunities for redevelopment outlined and without question the height limit of the town centre buildings was proposed to be high-rise as tall as the new hospital, with no reflection that the existing suburb is basically bungalows or at most two-three storey buildings. In short they were proposing creating a new Dee Why Town Centre style of place at Frenchs Forest.

The proposed new town centre would also have no public open space area (the school oval was not to be retained at all), and there was apparently not a thought given that the Northern Beaches Council should be supporting the community retain its school, rather than facilitating a State Government windfall land sale of a fully used community asset. Many of us present thought the whole pro-development tone was quite inappropriate and did not bode well for the future.

It was thought the proposal should be a matter for the local Frenchs Forest community and not just be imposed. There was a concern that we have returned to a "development is good" mentality as evident in the 60s and early 70s. The sort of mentality that in Manly produced the National Building and towering beachfront buildings like Trident and Pembroke. Although supported by the Manly Councillors in office at the time, these building produced a backlash in the Manly community that saw the Council political balance changed and our planning rules altered to produce lower-rise buildings. So here we are 30 years later and the new Warringah dominated Northern Beaches Council appears to be pushing town centres full of high-rise yet again.

The case of Manly Council (cross politically) backing the community when the State Government wanted to close the Manly Courthouse, was given as an example, raising the question why the new Council was not supporting retention of the school. In general Manly and Pittwater seemed to be more focussed on controlling development to an appropriate scale, meeting community expectations, than Warringah Council, which appeared to facilitate development (with the odd exception like the Whistler Street triangle site matter).

The Sydney Road and Belgrave Street Post Office Park Redevelopment

This matter was outlined to the residents present, but it was now considered a bit late to act on it, as a development application had been approved for the whole site (which from land title records is currently owned by Telstra (as they have an exchange on part of the site and Telstra was separated from originally being part of the Post Office)).

The new apartment building would cover all the existing open space and be built on top of the remaining existing exchange building. Current and 1943 historical aerial views of the site were shown to the meeting to illustrate where the Post Office building was originally located. After the Manly Post Office was relocated to the National Building around 1973/4 the old Post Office, being not that attractive, was closed and demolished. After this, part of the building footprint was resumed for the widening of Sydney Road.

The remainder of the footprint became a park, with trees planted, grass put down and Manly Council seats installed, although behind a post and rail fence. This area has remained a park for the last 40 years. About 10 years later the old telephone exchange located between the Post Office building site and the current (still standing) new exchange building was also demolished and some of this site was also landscaped and the remainder paved. The park was even shown as such on the initial Manly2015 Sydney Road concept plans.

So despite being a park for over 40 years, Telstra as the owner has decided they now want to sell the site for redevelopment and appear to have given a developer an option for this. Due to the new Council it was felt unlikely that Dick Persson would be prepared to buy half the site to retain the park, and thus the presentation to the meeting of the matter was more of a briefing than an intervention. However the erection of the fencing around the site had provoked quite a few residents to ask questions about the site for a historical briefing.

It was also noted to be a lesson that the public only tends to respond to planning issues, or get involved in development matters, when they see something in front of them is about to happen. It is difficult for people to imagine what something will be like when they are consulted on concepts. It only when a sign goes up, something gets blocked or something comes down, that people ask is this the right thing to be doing. It suggests proposed approaches like producing up front planning schemes and then having no further consultation on actual development proposals will not work as regards satisfying the public's need for engagement in planning decisions.

It was noted that before the amalgamation ex-Councillor Barbara Aird did put up a confidential motion for Manly Council to look at buying the Post Office footprint part of the site but unfortunately no further action seems to have been taken by senior staff on the matter. The original inclusion of this park area in the Manly2015 "Gateway Plaza" was noted.

Marine Parade Amenities Block Update

After investigation it is confirmed the location of the building is to be on the site of the storm demolished building and the replacement is to be a similar scale to the previous building. It has also been confirmed with Council's Architect that the building will be constructed in a re-enforced manner to resist a similar demolition by stormy seas in the future. There was no update on the pool bottom works or Bower Street car park counting signage.

Bower Street Traffic

The one way timed traffic lights seem to work to keep traffic moving in upper Bower Street while the rock stabilisation works were carried out. The residents of upper Bower Street were adamant they did not want to lose any on-street parking as a solution. Enforcement of the often blocked "no parking zone" two-thirds the way up this section was another action requested from Council that would assist this matter.

General Business

A question was raised about the corner of Addison Road and Stuart Street roundabout. It was reportedly considered a dangerous intersection. It was noted in the past that many traffic calming proposals were made, but many of these proposed schemes do not get implemented.

The meeting closed at 8:00 pm.

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday the 5th April 2017.

HB 19/03/2017