

*Your local voice*

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## **Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting Wednesday, 30 April 2008, 7.45pm**

1. Tim Dalton opened the meeting at 7.45, and asked people to move their chairs forward about half a metre so more could be accommodated. (About 160 people attended the meeting, although not everyone could fit in the room, and some left. The attendance lists were signed by 134 people.)

Tim welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially those groups with a particular stake in the development of North Weston—Weston Creek residents, and people connected with Orana School, the Bahai community, and the Sikh community.

Tim mentioned that the press had picked up on the issue of North Weston, but that WCCC had had no response from ACTPLA.

### **1. North Weston: The Issue**

Tim said the issue was that in its submission, WCCC had asked for green buffer zones to be preserved when the new developments were being planned, but there had been no response or feedback from ACTPLA. He said it looked like ACTPLA recommendations had already gone to the Minister, and that it might be too late for any changes to be made.

Tim noted that there will be an election for the ACT House of Assembly on 18 October this year. He asked local candidates to make themselves known to the meeting. The following candidates were present:

Jeremy Hansen—Liberal Party

Mike Hettinger—ALP

Richard Mulcahy—Independent

A representative of Deb Foskey—Greens

Clinton White—

Jacqui Burke—Liberal Party

Ric Hingee—Community Alliance

### **2. Suggestions for action by residents**

Eddie Irvine said residents want to be heard, and it was frustrating for the WCCC because although the ACT Government had said it wanted to consult with local residents, and had asked for submissions, it did not seem to listen to what residents were saying, and did not show any sign of changing its plans.

Eddie suggested several actions residents could take to try to influence the Government.

- Come to meet the Chief Minister and members of the ACT cabinet when they came to the Weston Creek Community Centre on Monday, 12 May, from 3.30 to 4.30.
- Write letters to politicians. Form letters were on the WCCC website, and residents could use those and modify them as they wished. Mention matters such as the width of verges, which should be big enough for trees, especially as some blocks were apparently to be quite small in area.
- Petition

- Get the addresses of Members of Parliament from the ACT Assembly website, and write to all the MPs telling them what you would like to see in North Weston and asking for feedback. Make sure that what you write is factual and not just emotional.
- Volunteer to help with getting people to sign a petition.
- Call the Minister's office about the issue
- Phone in to AM666 on Friday mornings, for the Chief Minister's Call-in.

Jacqui Burke said she would be happy to table the petition when the Assembly sat in June. To have best chance of being successfully tabled, the petition would need to be in the correct format.

Tim Dalton said that the ABC's Stateline program would have an item about North Weston on Friday, 2 May, from 7.30pm.

### **3. Various Points Raised by Participants**

- Seems as if ACTPLA said it would have a "consultation", but that happened *before* submissions were given to ACTPLA, and ACTPLA seems to be ignoring the submissions.
- Residents could complain formally to the Ombudsman, and ask why residents are not getting answers and feedback.
- Residents should ring ACTPLA and ask that planning should ensure environmentally-friendly features such as houses facing north, streets be laid out to maximise energy efficiency, etc.
- ACTPLA's plans had a four-lane highway going right through what used to be Deek's Forest.
- Look at the whole of the plans and think about *all* the implications, including the impact on local flora and fauna.
- WCCC should take notes of all these suggestions, and put a list on the WCCC website.
- Has the Defence Staff College made any comment? What impact will it have if houses are built all around the College?
- What will happen with the Police College? Tim Dalton said that site is marked for retirement-style housing, and that construction might start in the next financial year.
- Will there be any employment centres in Molonglo Valley? If not, everyone will have to travel to get to work, and there will be an impact on traffic flows. Has this impact been properly taken into account in ACTPLA's plans?
- It was suggested that planning has been carried out without reference to the government's own guidelines.
- It was noted that in late 2003, the Spatial Plan had envisaged 12,000 dwellings and 20,000 people in the Molonglo Valley; by mid-2005, an ACTPLA brochure had referred to 20,000 dwellings and 40,000 people; in 2007, the Government planned for 33,000 dwellings and over 70,000 people in the area. This gave rise to the feeling that the Government and ACTPLA had been deliberately trying to deceive Canberra residents in order to pursue their plans. One person pointed out that North Weston did not appear in the Spatial Plan, and that the first time it had been mentioned was during the information session at Regatta Point in 2007.
- Several residents reiterated that Canberrans do not want the mistakes made in Gunghalin to be repeated in the Molonglo Valley—there must be verges wide enough for trees to be planted, roads must be wide enough for rubbish trucks to get through easily and safely, and houses should have adequate set-backs.

### **4. Speeches by North Weston Stakeholders**

The president of the Sikh community said that they moved to Weston because they had not been welcomed in Mawson. He said they were told when they moved to Weston that the land around

was designated for religious purposes only, which suited the Sikhs, as they need quiet for meditation. He said they would be spending around \$3 million to build their temple, and if they had known that residential housing would be permitted around their temple, they would not have moved to Weston.

The representative of the Bahai community said Bahai is an independent world religion. They have 8.5 acres and want to build gardens, plus a big temple, which would in time become a tourist attraction. The garden would be open to the public, and the views are magnificent. If ACTPLA allows dense residential building, the views will be gone and the amenity of the area will be destroyed.

A representative of Orana School said that ACTPLA's current plans shoed houses all around the school boundaries, including on the ridge above the school and the Bahai site.

Tim Dalton said that he had taken a representative of the National Capital Authority (NCA) to the North Weston ridge the week before this meeting.

### **5. What Course of Action to Pursue?**

Tim Dalton asked the meeting if it wanted the WCCC to continue to pursue its course of seeking adequate buffer zones in North Weston and the Molonglo Valley. The meeting resoundingly endorsed this action.

The meeting decided that public action of some kind should be taken.

- It was agreed that residents would mount a public demonstration outside the Assembly to bring the issue to the attention of Canberra's politicians. For greatest effect, any demonstration should be held on a sitting day. In May, the Assembly would sit on 6, 7 and 8 May. After that, the Assembly would not sit until 17, 18, and 19 June, then 24, 25, and 26 June. It was decided to demonstrate outside the Assembly on Wednesday, 7 May, at 12.15.
- It was decided to mount a phone campaign on 1 and 2 May (non-sitting days when the Minister would be in his office).
- It was decided to make a petition and get as many people as possible to sign it. Petition forms could be downloaded from the WCCC website. Signed petitions should be mailed to the WCCC mail box.

The meeting was closed at 9.00.