

Your local voice



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Minutes of General Meeting Wednesday, 31 October 2012

1. Opening of Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7.40pm by Acting Chair Pat McGinn. Pat welcomed members and guests Fay Hug and Julie Garbode from TAMS, and speaker Lesley Pattinson. Approximately twenty-five persons attended the meeting.

2. Presentation: What is Planned for Fetherston Gardens

Fay Hug introduced herself, saying she had studied at the CIT Horticulture College and had also taught there for a while.

She said that a Draft Concept Plan had been drawn up in 2010, and this had now been finalised. It will be uploaded on the TAMS website as soon as possible after the new government has taken office. The only changes from the Draft Concept Plan has been to add notice boards and increase the water capacity.

The listed recommendations of the consultants were costed at an amount around \$1 million, so the government asked for a list of priorities, and has decided that the first three priorities are:

- To make the Gardens safe for the public;
- To fix the irrigation system, so the plants can get water;
- To repair the pergola and paths.

The most urgent problems are: unsafe paths, openings in the fence that kangaroos use; weed infestation; and dead or dying trees. TAMS has started to remove 55 trees, and will need to remove more. TAMS have been consulting with Phil Unger and with Lesley Pattinson about which trees need to be removed. The old gazebo in the "Secret Garden" has been demolished and will be replaced. Ivy has been cleared, and grass mown.

Other factors that will have an impact on the Gardens and the work by TAMS:

- The Development Application for Defence Housing Australia's housing development has been approved, but it is not know when construction will begin. DHA is to build one underground water storage tank, and the location of this is to be finalised;
- ACTEW has given approval for water to be connected;
- TAMS is waiting for ACTPLA to give plumbing approval;
- Construction of a connection for water from the North Weston Ponds has not yet been funded.

Next Steps

1. Prioritise works for this financial year;
2. Engage contractors to undertake the works;

3. Bid for future funding.

It is hoped that at least part of the old irrigation system can be used. When the water is connected, TAMS will turn the water on and see what has to be done to get the irrigation system into working order. The arboretum area (?wooded area closest to DHA development?) has poly pipe everywhere, which is not good if the public is going to have access.

Q: Do the current funds of \$500,000 have to be used within the 2012-13 financial year?

A: Yes. That could be a problem because TAMS will have to call for tenders, and many businesses will close down over the Christmas-New Year period. It may be possible for the money to be rolled over if it is not all used by the end of the financial year.

Q: What about the “community-funded building” indicated in the Concept Plan. The cost is estimated at around \$300,000. Is there any chance of getting funding from the government for that?

A: It is difficult to answer that question. TAMS has put in bids for funding for next financial year, but it is likely all funds available will be needed for the necessary works.

Q: What are the plans for the herb garden area (the raised area above the old glass houses)?

A: We need more consultation with the Friends of Fetherston Gardens (FGF) on that issue, because they are not happy to have the herb garden removed.

Q: How will it be decided what plants to plant?

A: It may not be possible to match the old plantings exactly, but TAMS will consult with FGF experts who know the history of the Gardens.

Q: When is it expected that the Gardens will be ready to open to the public?

A: Our aim is the end of the current financial year, but that may not be possible, depending on how quickly work can be done. The aim is for the Gardens to be Safe and Open, but not necessarily Polished and Open.

Q: How will drainage from the DHA area be managed?

A: DHA need water for their site, and the Gardens need water too. DHA will have a wetlands/rain garden area on the eastern side of Fetherston Gardens and water from there will go into the underground tank, as well as water from the site’s storm-water system (whatever that is). All the water that goes into the tank will be for use in the Gardens. DHA plans to install one tank initially, although the plans include two tanks. It is not yet clear when the second tank will be built, or who will pay for it.

Q: Will there be finding all round the Gardens?

A: So far there are no secure gardens in Canberra. Securing the Gardens with a fence all round would present problems: cost would be very high, and how would locking and unlocking gates be managed?

Q: How long will the current fences remain?

A: TAMS is reassessing the fences now, as they are holding up a lot of vegetation. It is planned to make entry points at three places, including one for disabled people off Heysen St, but it is not likely that will be done this financial year.

Q: When the Gardens are open to the public, will TAMS have a presence in the Gardens?

A: Not a daily presence, but probably weekly or fortnightly.

Q: What about water from the North Weston Ponds?

A: Completion of the Ponds project has been pushed back, due to the discovery of asbestos and the need to remove it. Reticulation of that water along Streeton Drive has not yet been funded.

Lesley Pattinson, who is a member of Fetherston Gardens Friends and a teacher at the Horticulture College both at the Weston campus and the present Bruce campus, spoke about the Gardens from a personal point of view.

She said the CIT had left in 2009, but that the Gardens were already in decline, since the move

to Bruce had been known for some time. Some plants were removed to Bruce, leaving holes, and by September 2010 there was a lot of ivy and other weeds growing. FGF has removed huge amounts of ivy, allowing some trees to survive that might otherwise have been strangled, and has removed blackberry and honeysuckle as well.

Many plants have been lost, but Lesley and other persons who have worked there over the years remember what was there. This garden is quite unique in Canberra, and FGF is keen to keep the style and flavour of the Gardens as they were. The Gardens have many unusual specimen trees, and the plantings were intended to give students access to plants that they might not otherwise ever see. In particular, it is important to preserve plants of any threatened species, especially where there is only one example in Canberra.

Probably there will not be much need for funding for plants, because plants can be propagated at with CIT help and by volunteers. Some plants have come back into flower, which is gratifying. There are photos on the WCCC website.

The aim of FGF is to preserve and restore the Gardens, but also to make it a garden for the future, not just a replica of a 1970s garden.

FGF would like to establish more networks with other community groups, such as Communities at Work, and Mirinjani.

The old propagation area is to be removed because it is unsafe, but there will be a new propagation area.

FGF has concentrated on the woodland area, and at times has had help from TAMS, Corrective Services, and Marist College. Volunteers are always welcome. FGF also works with ParkCare, who have offered for Fetherston Gardens might join ParkCare. However, the Gardens don't quite fit into the categories of ridge, buffer or native garden, so that will have to be worked out. FGF contributes to *Scribbly Gum*, the newsletter of ACT LandCare; participated in the Friends of the Forest Day at the National Arboretum; and keeps in touch with FACTA (Friends of ACT Arboreta).

Ideas for the future

1. Want to develop a logo for the Gardens
2. Trying to research the past history of the gardens and the people who worked and studied there.
3. FGF newsletter publishes some of the history, and would like to produce a booklet about the Gardens.
4. Want to start active fund-raising, and will apply for all sorts of grants, although probably can't do too much until the Gardens are open to the public.
5. Keen to open up the Gardens to bird-watchers, fauna groups, students, because the wildlife and birds are many and various.

Q: What about joining the Open Garden Scheme?

A: FGF has thought of that, and it could be good for raising funds and for spreading news about the Gardens.

A short break followed.

The business meeting began at 8.45.

A motion to approve the minutes of the general meeting held on 25 September as presented was passed.

(Moved: Mal Ferguson; Seconded: Simon Header)

The Treasurer reported that there is \$6972.59 in the bank account. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report was passed. (Moved: Simon Header; Seconded: Mal Ferguson)

General Business

1. It seems the government is moving towards merging Weston Creek with Molonglo. What can be done to stop that?

WCCC has been pushing hard to stop that happening. We have been asking for a number of years for facilities such as a government shop-front and a library for Weston Creek, but it appears the government will put those facilities only into Molonglo, and Weston Creek residents will be expected to use them. The decision to put a swimming pool at Stromlo Forest Park has been criticised as not being on a public transport network. WCCC has also taken up issues such as Duffy Primary School and the Blue Rapid bus route.

WCCC ran a survey via the WCCC website, and was surprised to find that the top issue for respondents was the maintenance of open space and a green environment.

2. Molonglo Stage 2 committee. WCCC was represented at a meeting of this committee, and heard that the site is a difficult one because of its many contours. The architects are keen to make it good for people to use. John Gorton Drive has been reconfigured to pass by the side of the planned group centre. The group centre will have a library and a community centre.

3. DV306. The report of the committee has been finalised and released. It was tabled in the Assembly the week before the break for the election.

4. Cotter Road. Trees have been cut down near the junction of Cotter Rd and Lady Denman Drive, in preparation for the construction of a roundabout there.

Q: Has anyone modelled how people will get out of Weston Creek should there be another bushfire?

Q: What about using the parking area on Hilder Street as a ParkNRide?

Q: Does Molonglo have a community council?

A: Not yet.

The meeting closed at 9.15.