

# WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

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*Established 1991*

(Weston Creek Citizens Council Inc. – Reg. No. A2637)

## **Record of Proceedings**

### **Regular Monthly Meeting**

**Wednesday 26 April 2006**

**at The Weston Club, Liardet Street, Weston.**

#### **1. Welcome:**

In the absence of the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) Chairperson (Mr Jeff Carl) and Deputy Chairperson (Ms Pat McGinn), Mr Allan Synfield, a member of the WCCC Committee, presided over the meeting and welcomed all present.

#### **2. Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Mr Jeff Carl, Ms Pat McGinn, Ms Karen McDonald MLA, Mr McMahan; Mr John Lowe, Dr Deb Foskey MLA, and Ms Jacqui Burke MLA.

#### **3. Land Valuation in the ACT:**

The meeting Chair, Mr Synfield, introduced Mr Brendan Smyth MLA, Leader of the Opposition, to talk about Land Valuation in the ACT.

Mr Smyth said that Mr Richard Mulcahy MLA was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Land Valuation.

Mr Smyth went on to say that people are now comparing small blocks with larger blocks and in some instances were finding that small blocks were supposedly worth more than larger blocks. In New South Wales they wanted a 15 per cent variation in values across suburbs but found later that 35 per cent of blocks had values outside valuation guidelines. This was the finding of the NSW Ombudsman.

In the ACT some reassessments of land values went in favour of the Government but in the majority of the cases the reassessment favoured the owner of the lease. As people pay their rates on the assessment of their block's value this is a serious issue and this reassessment result may mean that values are more than they should be.

Land valuations involve technical and fiscal issues and there are 12 criteria used for determining the value of particular blocks of land. These criteria can be found on the web site (<http://www.revenue.act.gov.au/rates.html>).

As well as the impact of land values on the rates that people pay the imposition of land tax on commercial properties has an impact on the rents that people pay. It is important that valuations be as accurate as possible.

In the ACT the Government uses the Federal Valuation Office and Mr Smyth understood that the Office tenders for the contract to do this work. People in the Valuation Office were very skilled people.

The revaluation process has led to a backlog and Mr Smyth wants people to examine the current valuation process in the ACT and pass on criticisms and comments on to the Inquiry being run by the Public Accounts Committee.

The meeting Chair then called for questions from the floor and the first question was "when is the Committee undertaking the review and when will it report". Mr Smyth replied that the Committee would probably aim to report within three months after the final public submission but there was no formal closing date.

In reply to a question about the Federal Valuation Office, Mr Smyth said that one of the points in favour of the Office was that it had a reputation for being an impartial and unbiased organization.

Mr Smyth said that people do appear to be aware of the system and that the Office took notice of recent sales to help with valuations. The Office did not go over every block every year. On the question of valuation the politicians did try to work together but this hasn't always worked. Input from the public was vital.

In responding to a question about the effects of the recent bushfire Mr Smyth said that it appeared that inequities were worse after a major catastrophe.

An attendee criticised the fact that to appeal against a valuation you had to lodge a deposit which was not refundable even when you were right. Mr Smyth said that we need to look into special circumstances where things were different after major events.

Mr Smyth said that there had been a strong stream of letters expressing unhappiness with land valuation and the Government's answer was not a good answer.

Turning to other issues Mr Smyth said that the new development on the Cotter Road Uriarra Road turnoff was a recreational path for mountain bikers, orienteering and running.

Questioned about the lack of a public library in Weston Creek, Mr Smyth said that he had a lot of sympathy for a library in this district.

Another comment from the floor was that there should be a twice yearly collection of rubbish and if this was introduced it might do something to deter illegal dumping. Mr Smyth said that such a program should be as compatible with the “No waste by 2010” program as possible.

Another person raised the issue of the large number of vacant blocks, particularly in Duffy, and wanted to know what was being done. Mr Smyth said that people who held leases on vacant blocks had 12 months to start and five years to finish construction. A spokesperson for the Phoenix Association said that costs of rebuilding had doubled since the bushfire due to higher building costs and greater environmental requirements.

Another comment was that vacant blocks should be tidied up.

A further comment from the floor was that the Inquiry into the Bushfires had taken too long and the Inquiry didn’t have the depth needed to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

In response to a question about whether there should be a “super school” in Weston Creek, Mr Smyth said that the Opposition’s position was that at least one public school should remain on the north side of Hindmarsh Drive. The problem with the schools issue is that the Government has refused to make the functional review, on which it is basing some of its decisions, public. The functional review should be made public and the response to the problems of the future of public education in the ACT should not be a “knee jerk” one.

As there were no further questions or comments forthcoming, the meeting Chair thanked Mr Smyth for his attendance and participation in our meeting.

#### **4. Duffy Petrol Station Re-development Proposal:**

Mr Synfield then introduced Mr Peter Byfield to the meeting. Mr Byfield was speaking on behalf of the owners of the petrol station lease site in Duffy about their plans to redevelop the site following the destruction of the petrol station in the January 2003 bushfire.

Mr Byfield said that the developers wanted to get the community’s reaction to the proposal. The re-development was confined to the old petrol station site and there was no proposal to develop the unleased vacant site immediately to the north. The old petrol station site was zoned commercial and the proposal the developers were putting forward was in conformity to this zoning. The only constraint was the re-development had to retain or improve the environmental amenity of the site.

Under the commercial zoning high density residential use was an approved use.

Mr Byfield said the site's plot ratio/height would allow the developers to build up to 3,000m<sup>2</sup> but the proposal being put forward would only be 1,500m<sup>2</sup>. The draft concept plan was to upgrade and re-invigorate the local centre and we may improve the function

and aesthetics of the service area behind the shops. There may be associated traffic calming measures and the bus stop may have to be re-located. This would be raised with ACTION.

Under the proposal there would be 15 dwellings facing Glenmaggie Street and two to face Burrinjuck Crescent. It would be a two-storey development and there will be a basement. The proposed development could be entirely residential but there was the possibility that the one bedroom apartments could be used for business purposes such as physiotherapists' rooms.

The development will be a totally sustainable development with "green" building techniques being used and storm water would be retained on the site for use in flushing toilets and for watering some of the open area. The built form of the development will contrast severely with surrounding developments. The upper floor cladding will be light weight and the units have been designed to allow for cross-ventilation. All going well the Development Application will be submitted in the next six weeks.

The proposed design drew some criticism from the meeting with one comment that the proposed buildings looked like "demountables on sticks" and "hover" over the small shopping centre.

Another criticism was that there did not seem to be adequate provision for car parks. Mr Byfield replied that there would be 29 secure car spaces in the basement and some unsecured places for visitors.

In a response to a question from the floor, Mr Byfield said that there was no architect for the proposal and that he was the designer. He said that the drawing did not do the development justice. If people wanted to see what the final result would look like they were welcome to see a similar development already completed in Grant Crescent, Griffith.

An attendee queried whether, in a few years, it would start looking shabby and Mr Byfield said it would not. The cladding would be fibrous cement sheet.

There was no contamination on the site resulting from its former use as a petrol station.

Another comment from the floor was that re-developments had to be in harmony with surrounding development and "I did not see this in your plans".

In response to a question about people with special needs Mr Byfield said that the plans complied with the requirements for people with special needs even though some were two storey developments. The smaller apartments will be from 56m<sup>2</sup> to 95m<sup>2</sup> and the larger from 110m<sup>2</sup> to 114m<sup>2</sup>.

All the cars visiting or staying at the site would enter from Glenmaggie Street.

In summary, many people had questions about the aesthetics of the proposed development but they were happy that the site is being re-developed.

## GENERAL BUSINESS:

### **5. The Future of Public Schooling in Weston Creek:**

The meeting Chair drew attention to recent publicity about the threatened closure of some public schools in Weston Creek and said part of the next monthly meeting would be devoted to this topic. In the meantime the WCCC is anxious to receive as many comments as it can on this topic.

### **6. Police Attendance at the Next WCCC Meeting**

The meeting Chair advised the meeting that representatives from the ACT Police would attend the next meeting and asked that people raise issues such as the adequacy of patrols and response times and more broadly “what are your concerns?”

### **7. Need for More Volunteers:**

Mr Synfield called on Mrs Barbara Brinton, a member of the Committee of the WCCC, to talk about the Community Council’s need for more volunteers. Mrs Brinton said that at the moment people on the Committee were performing double duty and some of them had been members for a long time. The meeting was advised that two WCCC members had attended a recent Committee meeting and one of the members, Mr Onko Kingma, had agreed to be co-opted onto the Committee. Despite this expansion of the Committee, there was still an urgent need for more volunteers. If you value the work of the WCCC please consider volunteering.

Mrs Brinton also advised the meeting that she had prepared posters to advertise the need for volunteers and the final posters would be distributed to the next meeting for people to place in shop windows, doctors’ surgeries and the like. Mrs Brinton also outlined some of the things that needed to be done including maintaining the Community Council’s membership list, becoming a web master for the WCCC’s web page and help in preparing submissions. If we don’t get this help, the WCCC will fold.

### **8. Other Matters:**

In reply to a question from the floor about inviting the new Minister for Education, Mr Andrew Barr MLA, to the next meeting, the meeting Chair said that this would be considered.

There being no additional comments from the floor, the meeting Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9:30 pm.

### **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the WCCC will be held on 24 May 2006.