

DRAFT
WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF

25 October 2006

held at the Weston Club, Liardet Street, Weston

The meeting was attended by 24 people.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Richard Mulcahy MLA, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Ms Jacqui Burke MLA, Ms Rosemary Drabsch and Mr Brian Weir.

2. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and announced the agenda.

3. “Getting ready for summer” – a presentation by ACT emergency services

The Chairman introduced Mr Trevor Clements the CEO of ACT Emergency Services and stressed that the aim of the presentation was to give attendees an opportunity to ask questions.

Mr Clements said that since Mr Peter Dunne had stepped down from his position the Emergency Services Authority was no longer a separate department. Apart from that nothing has changed administratively and there is no bureaucratic interference. For all operational purposes the Chief of the Emergency Services has access straight to the Minister but for administration purposes he works through the Department.

Emergency Services consists of the ACT Ambulance Service, the ACT Fire Brigade – which has authority to deal with fire outbreaks in city areas – the ACT Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service which, apart from its own responsibilities, also provides support to the fire services. Community Fire Units are administered from within the ACT Fire Brigade. There were 330 professional fire fighters in the ACT.

All the predictions for the coming summer were that it was going to be drier and hotter than in previous years. From that point of view it was going to be a bad season. The fire services are now being assisted by 28 Community Fire Units (CFUs) with 520 volunteers. The target is to have 80 CFUs eventually. The ACT Rural Fire Service has 360 volunteers.

Residents should now be putting their fire strategies in place. The first decision is to decide whether to stay or go. (further information can be found on the web site). This decision depends on the age and health of the people concerned. If your strategy is to go you should be prepared to leave early

The warning systems are (in increasing order of severity) blue – the possibility of some damage, yellow – the likelihood of some damage, orange – strong likelihood of damage and red – the certainty of damage. After the warning colours there would also be a green which would announce that recovery operations from the damage could be begin.

Questions from the floor were about the numbers of CFUs, the suggestion that there should be a regular “clean up” day/s during the early part of the season to reduce the amount of flammable material lying around, compatibility with NSW fire services, whether arrangements had been put in place for emergency announcements to be made on ACT radio and TV stations and relationships with the ACT Police during emergencies.

The responses were that the number of CFUs should be raised with the politicians; the clean up day/s was a valuable suggestion and the WCCC should follow this up; improved contacts had been put in place with the NSW fire authorities and even though some of the ACT emergency radio system still had to be upgraded methods had been put in place to ensure contact for this coming bush fire season; all radio and TV stations in the ACT had undertaken to have staff on stand by during weekends or at times when the stations were taking programs from interstate to broadcast warning messages; and finally a training program for ACT Police had been put in place to have a co-ordinated response to emergency situations.

The Chairman thanked Mr Clements and his team for their presentation.

ACTION write to the ACT Government suggesting that clean up day/s be put in place in Weston Creek prior to each fire season.

4. Presentation by ACT Water

The Chairman then introduced Mr Chris Hare from ACT Water who, in the first part of his presentation, described the present water infrastructure in the ACT and outlined recent and proposed capital works to augment and improve the water infrastructure. He then outlined measures that ACT Water was taking to help reduce water consumption including

- Garden irrigation workshops
- Grass roots and Turf workshops
- Introducing water restrictions and targets for reduction in water usage
- Rebates on the installation of water tanks
- Garden Smart and Home Smart conservation programs

Mr Hare said that the target reduction for personal consumption was to reduce consumption by 12 per cent and then 25 per cent. One of the measures introduced to help meet these targets had been the introduction of permanent water restrictions at the Stage 1 level. As a result the previous six stages of water restrictions had been reduced to five with the new Stage 1 being the equivalent of the old Stage 2. In the new Stage 2 restrictions, for example, only drip irrigation systems would be allowed in gardens.

Questions and suggestions from the floor included some clarification of the Murrumbidgee to Googong Dam project, how many “grey” water programs were there in the ACT, do commercial users of water have to meet the restrictions as well and what was the policy on watering of sports grounds.

The responses were that the water flowing from the Murrumbidgee to the Googong Dam would be treated by UV radiation first in addition to existing treatments; there was very little “grey” water being used in the ACT although the recent sustainable house exhibition had three different systems on display and there were guideline books on the use of grey water; and sporting grounds were being watered so that over-all water consumption on sports grounds would be reduced in line with the targets.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hare for his presentation.

5 Other business

(a) Clean up day/s

An attendee urged that the WCCC write to Mr Hargreaves, MLA, Minister for Urban Services requesting the introduction of clean days in Weston Creek prior to the bush fire season. The Chairman gave an undertaking that this would be done. (see also above)

(b) New signs in Weston Creek asking for development ideas

An attendee said that in recent days there were new signs in Weston Creek announcing that new development ideas were being sought for some vacant land in Weston Creek. In particular the large area adjacent to the Grant Cameron centre. In previous years the Community Council had urged that this area be developed for sports facilities catering for sports which needed one venue for the whole of Canberra. The development of a school on part of this vacant site means that this option is no longer available. One difficulty with the site, and something that was overlooked by the school, is that it is an area that could flood in periods of heavy rain. This means that sporting organizations were the best placed to use the site because a flood could not seriously damage sporting fields. The speaker urged the community to be pro-active again with their suggestions as to what development would be acceptable to them. If people have to react to a proposal, even where there are public consultation provisions, it is too late. Very few development proposals are halted or amended by the public consultation process.

The Chairman closed the meeting at approximately 9:30pm.