

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- *Your Local Voice* -

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Minutes

September Monthly Meeting

7.45pm 24th September 2003

Welcome

Mr Carl, Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) Chairperson, welcomed the Committee, residents and guest speakers to the meeting. Mr Carl introduced John Macknamara from New Creation Ministries (NCM) who would talk on the interest of NCM in the block of land opposite the Police Complex at the corner of Cotter Road and Streeton Drive.

Mr John Stenhouse, a/g Principal of *The Canberra College* was also introduced. Mr Stenhouse will speak on the review of the management of the Stirling site of *The Canberra College*. Following on from these there would be a discussion on Oakey Hill, which was asked to be an agenda item this evening.

Given the size of the audience and the fact that there were many new attendees Mr Carl gave an overview of the WCCC. The Council is a voluntary non-party political lobby group for residents. The WCCC has been established since 1991 and lobbies the Government and Ministers for facilities and services for Weston Creek residents. The Council meets on the 4th Wednesday and details of the WCCC are on our website at www.wccc.com.au

Apologies

Jacqui Burke MLA, Steve Pratt MLA, Helen Cross MLA

New Creation Ministries

John Macknamara advised that there were 7 buildings on the site in Dixon Drive Holder. Traffic on a good Sunday was everywhere and overflowed the car park with many vehicles parking along Dixon Drive which was creating problems. He indicated that they had set up a 'vision' committee six months prior to the fires to look at alternatives and options for their Holder site. The buildings were 26 years old and were built with voluntary labour.

Mr Macknamara continued and provided a detailed overview of history and his personal background and then a video was shown. He provided an indication of the numbers using the previous facility with the example of 1000 people per night for 4 consecutive nights in November.

He indicated that there were 14 full time staff and 4 staff members in the arts department which involved 200 young people each week. He also advised that 12 members had lost their houses in the January fires.

Fred Kasparek, the NCM's architect, then addressed the meeting. He indicated that a design brief was put together after the fires to look at the functions carried out and what facilities would be needed. Carparking was found to be a major issue. The current design brief considered a building of stage 1 of 1,400sq m costing \$4.5M which includes live in accommodation and 250 to 350 car parking spaces on site.

They did look at other sites around Weston Creek as suggested by the WCCC but considered the Cotter Road site the only viable option. Mr Kasparek held up several thick documents which he said was the written submission to the ACT Government for a direct sale of the block of land on the corner of Cotter Road and Streeton Drive. This submission was filed in March of this year and Mr Kasparek did not discuss its contents. After Mr Kasparek finished speaking he asked the audience if Mr Peter Johns [from ACT Land Development Authority] was in the audience. Mr Johns courteously identified himself. Mr Kasparek said the process really started for them in March 2003 and it is not known where the process currently stands.

Q&A

Mr Carl asked for questions:

- A member of NCM in the audience asked of Mr Johns how long the process would take? [Although Mr Johns was not an invited speaker and the meeting was focused on NCM advising the community, Mr Johns agreed to answer that question] - The length of time of the process is not known as the Broadacre Estate Study for Weston is to start shortly and will have an impact on a number of blocks in that vicinity.
- Another member of the audience repeated the question stating that they had been waiting seven months since the fires and they need to start rebuilding now – when will we know? – Mr Johns again indicated that the timelines were not known as the outcomes of the Broadacre Estate Study which the WCCC had lobbied for need to be considered before other subsequent decisions were to be made.

Mr Carl advised the meeting that Peter Johns was a member of the audience and not obligated to answer questions, his answers were appreciated. Mr Carl also advised the meeting that the WCCC has been lobbying for 2 years for a study of the blocks on the former ACT Forests' site at the corner of Cotter Road and Streeton Drive and had met with current lessees. In addition aged care was an option for blocks in that area of Unwin Street / Hickey Court, however traffic movements were major concerns of a number of lessees in the area including the Orana School, the Baha'i community and the owners of the AFP lease. The Sikh community are also proceeding with plans to build on a block in this area. Both the Baha'i community and Orana school plan to increase the size of their facilities in the near-to-medium term. ACT Forests had also expressed interest in a block as the site for their new headquarters and depot. New Creation Ministries are only the most recent entry into a long-standing debate.

A member of NCM commented that there was no peak hour clash of traffic, it was out of peak hours and on Sundays

- A resident asked of the use of the land for aged care – Mr Carl replied that the known proposal was to have continuing care units with high and low levels of care and self care units. The expectation was that there were clusters of 25 to 30 self care units in perhaps 6 or 7 clusters reaching 150 units in total. In addition approximately 70 beds containing Dementia specific and respite care could be included. The clusters could be considered medium density. How much land is available depends on the community's interest and the receptiveness of government to new ideas on the use of the land.
- A resident asked of the zoning of the land – Mr Carl indicated that although it is currently ACT Forests' land, it is zoned 'Broadacre', which does not explicitly exclude aged care facilities but may require a change of land use for these facilities. It may appear to be 'green space' or 'urban open space' but technically it is not. The types of activities which are approved are numerous and include special care establishments and special care hostels. It is accepted that NCM's plans are consistent with the existing land use policy for the block. [Included for completeness, Broadacre land uses include: agriculture, animal care facility, animal husbandry, caravan park/camping ground, cemetery, communications facility, community activity centre, corrections facility, defence installation, educational establishment, emergency services facility, veterinary hospital, land management facility, municipal depot, nature conservation area, outdoor recreation facility, parkland, place of worship, road, scientific establishment, special care establishment, special care hostel, tourist facility, transport depot, health facility, or woodlot].
- A resident advised that he was aware that the Baha'i community wished to increase their building size which would impact on traffic. Mr Carl indicated that he was aware that the Baha'i community did wish to expand and that perhaps this had been slowed through waiting for the much anticipated Broadacre Estate Study.

The meeting was advised that the WCCC had been active in a Broadacre Estate Study for all the blocks in that particular section in Weston for over 2 years and many of the lessees have been actively pursuing vehicular and pedestrian access issues for over 2 1/2 years and NCM have only been interested for 5 months. There were issues with a public road going through a school site, insufficient parking, a road that was too narrow for the volume of traffic, and an intersection with Streeon Drive which caused gridlock each morning and afternoon. NCM was just learning the problems associated with this area of Weston.

- A resident asked if aged care could go on the block at the end of Hindmarsh Drive? Mr Carl responded indicating that several aged care providers had looked at a range of blocks in Weston Creek, including at the end of Hindmarsh Drive and they were considered commercially unviable because of the small size at approx 4ha.
- It was asked if the land between Cotter Road and Dixon Drive was available? – Mr Carl indicated that Minister Corbell had advised that that land would not be built on. There were also proposals that showed this block of land being part of the bushfire buffer as recommended by the McLeod Inquiry report.
- An attendee asked of the land on the opposite side of Cotter Road? – There was some debate but it was generally considered that the land was controlled by the National Capital Authority (NCA). The timeline to achieve a land swap to the ACT Government for community use or aged care was not known.

- A member of NCM advised the meeting that 200 families visited Weston Creek each Sunday and many spent money at Coolemon Court while in Weston Creek - another attendee asked why this had changed since there was still a meeting on a Sunday at Stromlo High School.
- A NCM member advised she ran the dance and drama classes and 80% of the children were from Weston Creek as this was the only after school support for children - another attendee interjected informing the meeting that there was a Community Service Youth Centre at Coolemon Court each afternoon run by Communities@Work.
- A resident very familiar with the Orana school advised that the traffic issue was a major concern and it appeared that New Creations was trying to down play it; hopefully the Estate Study would really help.
- An attendee commented that aged care units were not really needed, as there were already so many in Weston Creek. Mr Carl advised that the Mirinjani waiting list was 8 to 11 years and there were long waiting lists at Araluen Village in Fisher as well. The population is aging and there are an increasing number of "empty nest" households of just two older residents. These households would like to "downsize" and stay in Weston Creek.
- A resident asked of the current New Creations block, what would happen with it, would it be sold? The reply was that it would be given back to the ACT Government.
- A NCM member informed the meeting that the youth facilities were helping to provide a safe haven for children in a learning environment and it was very safe and was active after schools hours with hundreds attending.
- A resident asked what was the purpose of the Broadacre Study? Mr Carl replied that he believed that the Study would provide the Land Development Authority with information on the problems and issues with the blocks of land and perhaps present options for their development.
- An attendee asked why there were no MLA's. Mr Carl advised that WCCC usually attracted 4 sometimes 8 or 9 MLA's but today was a sitting day for the ACT Legislative Assembly and the Assembly could still be sitting.
- A NCM member postulated that aged care was cyclical and people would die. It would be a passing cycle in Weston Creek. Mr Carl said that in over 30 years the Weston Creek population was aging and this trend would continue and probably accelerate and people wanted to stay in Weston Creek but not in a house which was too large for them.
- A resident asked why NCM wanted more land when they already had a large enough block.
- A NCM member indicated that there were 960 active people in weekly activities in NCM.

- A resident accurately pointed out that there were severe inconsistencies in answers to traffic impacts by a number of members of NCM in the audience tonight. Some statements had indicated that traffic would only really occur on Sunday mornings, but other statements indicated that there would be continual traffic movements throughout the week with lady's meetings, men's meetings, youth group meetings and other events occurring.
- A number of NCM members jumped to the response to indicate various reasons for the differing answers to the question of traffic volume and times during the day.
- A frustrated NCM member said why are we here waiting and they [the aged] are not. Mr Carl calmly replied that the aged are here but not as vocal – they are in their larger than necessary home which they would like to consider changing for an aged care unit. Also he commented whether that was a valid reason to force a pre-emptive decision by the ACT Government or a Minister?
- A resident asked of the traffic chaos in 10 years since NCM were looking to have about 5,000 members by 2010 compared to the 900 or so at present. Who was looking to the future, it appeared not many here tonight.
- A concerned member of the NCM contemplatively considered that if traffic was such a major issue perhaps there is consideration to rebuilding on the existing block with a more considered design plan?

Mr Carl indicated the questions would continue to come and there was a second guest speaker this evening. People were welcome to remain after the meeting for informal questions. Mr Carl thanked John Macknamara and Fred Kasperek.

John Stenhouse – The Canberra College

Mr Stenhouse thanked the WCCC for inviting staff of *The Canberra College* to address the community. *The Canberra College* had been to the February and March 2003 meetings of the WCCC and appreciated the submission the WCCC had prepared for the College Board.

The College Board has a preferred position that the Stirling site be used for the ECLISPE and STAY programs which are for students at risk. In addition the Brain Gym will remain and there will be the capacity for the Brain Gym to have more students as they will be able to run daytime classes.

At present the total College enrolment is 900-950 students in Years 11 and 12 with stable enrolments. The mainstream enrolments total 850-900 at Phillip. There is an issue of economy of scale and not to split between campuses. *The Canberra College* is competing with other southside Colleges for students. The Executive of the WCCC has accepted an invitation to the College Board meeting on 22nd October.

The Stirling site will have a Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology which teaches IT to teachers. It will be relocating from the O'Connell Centre in Griffith. There will be 4 new IT laboratories and these will be available for the special students and the Brain Gym.

It is raised in the WCCC submission that perhaps there needs to be a 'centre of excellence' for gifted and talented students. In the period 1999 to 2001 Mr Stenhouse advised that staff had tried to persevere with top level science, maths, economics, Asian studies and a sports academy. These were all at the Stirling site and not at Phillip. In 2001 the enrolments started to drop off. Mr Stenhouse said there were high Weston Creek enrolments but *The Canberra College* needed to consider Tuggeranong, Woden Valley and NSW students, not just Weston Creek students.

The Brain Gym is a service to Weston Creek and does attract students from Woden Valley and elsewhere. The WCCC does address the issue of the Brain Gym's 'substantial profit' being used to purchase equipment for the College. It must be noted that there is the need to factor in space, heating and lighting which the College provides to the Brain Gym.

The topic raised of a 'community library' in the WCCC submission has not been actively pursued by the College but it does not have a closed mind to possible options to see what could be achieved.

In summary Mr Stenhouse reiterated the current position; the Brain Gym would stay, a Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology would open, there would be special needs programs for some students; there was agreement that non-compatible uses would not be introduced into the site; a library could be pursued and there was little or no interest in re-visiting a centre of excellence at Stirling.

Mr Carl reminded the meeting that a myriad of questions were asked at previous meetings which discussed *The Canberra College* and many of these issues were canvassed in the WCCC submission, copies of which are available at tonight's meeting. Were there any questions not already visited?

An attendee asked of the extent of Brain Gym advertising to attract people to the College? Mr Stenhouse advised that the Canberra College Association, which was like a P&C Association managed the Brain Gym and undertook advertising, mostly in the form of a letterbox delivery and in local press adverts.

It was suggested that perhaps community television might be another avenue of advertising.

Mr Carl thanked John Stenhouse and advised that the WCCC would indeed attend the College Board meeting.

Oakey Hill

Mr Carl advised the meeting that it was recently requested that Oakey Hill be an agenda item for the next regular monthly meeting of the WCCC. The issue of concern is the clearing of Blue Gum trees on Oakey Hill.

Mr Carl advised that meeting that the Community and Expert Reference Group, of which he is a member and which is assisting the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce, has been briefed on the clearing of fire buffers in 20 to 30 critical urban areas in Canberra. The Blue Gum is known for heavy bark shedding, fast growth and high leaf litter. In addition fires on the ground travel quickly up the trunk of Blue Gums and into the crown. In high winds embers from such trees have been recorded as travelling many kilometres.

It was also noted that the Blue Gums are not endemic to the Canberra region but are normally found much further south in the NSW alpine areas and further south into southern Victoria. They were introduced to Canberra as they are fast growing.

The fire buffers are clearing a minimum of 30 m from residences as well as removing high-risk vegetation and dead vegetation. Environment ACT are doing the work and Mt Taylor and Cooleman Ridge are also being looked at. Work was already underway around Mt Ainslie and O'Connor Ridge.

Q&A

Mr Carl opened the discussion and asked for questions.

- An attendee, who identified himself as a recent Canberra person, asked where is Oakey Hill? Mr Carl explained that it was in Lyons, near the Tuggeranong Parkway.
- A resident asked if Lyons had lost houses in the January fire? Yes there were 6 houses lost.
- It was asked when the trees were planted? Mr Carl estimated 20 to 25 years ago when the Parkway was built. The trees probably gave some visual amenity at the time but no noise reduction.

Any other Business

Mr Carl called for other business.

Canberra Spatial Plan

Mr Carl advised that the WCCC had put in a submission by the closing date, which was last Friday 19th September, based on issues and comments raised by Weston Creek residents at meetings held over the last six months which addressed Canberra planning issues. The submission questioned speculative population projections which appeared to be a fundamental flaw in the logic in some of the options presented for comment. The submission is available on the WCCC website.

Non Urban ACT Study

Mr Carl advised that the WCCC had put in a submission by the closing date, which was yesterday Tuesday 23rd September, based on issues and comments raised by Weston Creek residents at meetings held over the last six months which addressed non-urban ACT issues. In addition issues raised at the meeting which discussed the ACT Forests' Business case were also included. The submission is also available on the WCCC website.

Greenhouse Strategy

The WCCC Executive were working on the Greenhouse Strategy submission due with the ACT Government shortly. There are some very important issues in this strategy, which appear not to be taken as seriously as other issues. The extensive loss of trees 11,000ha is going to cause a major rethink on how the ACT can meet its greenhouse targets given that no extensive replanting has commenced nor is planned. If residential development proceeds the ACT will have a significant imbalance in meeting agreed 2008 targets.

Arawang Netball Association

The WCCC has been advised that the Arawang Netball Association has applied to renew their lease on the netball courts in Stretton Drive Stirling. The ACT Land Development Authority has asked for comments. The WCCC will be preparing a submission and interested residents are encouraged to make comments as well. The details are on the ACTPLA website (formerly PALM www.actpla.act.gov.au under development applications).

A resident asked if there were problems with traffic issues like New Creations? Yes, the meeting was advised that the WCCC has been lobbying the ACT Government before the Defence Housing Complex was built to deal with the on-street parking problems. The ACT Government response was that no action would be taken until after the construction was completed. In that development there was no off-street parking provided. The WCCC budget submissions are for capital works to double the size of the bitumen carpark and these negotiations are continuing with the ACT Treasurer Ted Quinlan and Planning Minister Simon Corbell to achieve a workable traffic management solution.

Mr Carl again called for other business;

A resident asked of speculation of another dam in the ACT to deliver water to new suburbs in the Stromlo area? Mr Carl replied that he had heard that Tennant Creek Dam had been planned for 20-25 years. Also another option was to build a pipeline from Tantagara Reservoir through the Namadgai National Park to supply water. The possibility of this happening was very speculative. Other possibilities were in the Coree area near the Cotter Dam.

A resident asked if there appeared to be any preferred option that the ACT Government was pursuing? Mr Carl advised that conservative ACT Treasury numbers are a windfall for the ACT Government from land sales of \$700M to \$1,000M from the sale of residential land in the Stromlo area.

A resident asked if the Spatial Plan options really needed so many houses as 3,000 to 4,000 a year? - Mr Carl advised that WCCC information was that in a good year Canberra needs 1,500 to 3,000 so that 3,000 to 4,000 each year for 20 years was at the very high to extreme end of what would really be needed.

Kerstin Webber of Communities@Work advised the meeting that there would be a “Celebration of Families 2003” near the Scout Hall in Dillon Close Weston on Sunday 19th October and all families were welcome from 11am to 3pm.

Barbara Brinton reminded the meeting that the Canberra Social Plan was released and comments and submissions are welcome. Mr Carl indicated that it was the next submission that the Executive would be working on and also WCCC submissions are available on the website at www.wccc.com.au for people to read.

Corri Hakaraia sincerely expressed appreciation and thanks on behalf of the hundreds of residents who had attended meetings over the last six months, for the work of the WCCC in representing the residents and continually ensuring their views are expressed in submissions to Government.

Mr Carl thanked her for the compliment and encouragement and acknowledged the numerous residents who had assisted. The WCCC Executive spent many, many hours developing and refining the submissions based on the concerns of our residents.

Mr Carl gave a final call for any other business, as there was none he closed the meeting and invited people who had informal questions to talk to the speakers after the meeting.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm

Next meeting Wednesday 22nd October 2003