

WAVERTON PRECINCT MEETING

Tuesday May 7, 2024

MINUTES

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES:

The meeting commenced at 7.36pm.

Chair: IG

Minutes: DL

Attendance: 15

Apologies: None.

CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

The Chair reminded residents to add their email addresses neatly onto the attendance form to ensure we can re-establish our database as quickly as possible. Minutes from April were extensive and detailed as they included the presentation regarding the Western Harbour Tunnel, and should any person wish to receive a copy who did not, they are welcome to approach the Committee and those will be sent to them directly.

The April 2024 Minutes

It was moved by KA and seconded by VY

"That the April 2024 Minutes be accepted".

Carried unanimously.

GUEST SPEAKER:

The Chair introduced our guest speaker, local resident Mr. CC, who will address the Precinct meeting regarding a possible new swimming facility.

Introduction of the idea

C.C began by pointing out that we are living in a wonderful area with nature and that "urban swimming" is becoming very popular. New places are being established regularly including on the Parramatta River, Bayview Park, Chiswick Baths (which was closed for many years), Cabarita, and Penrith. Balmain and Blackwattle Bay are both touted for future projects in the coming years. So - what about Waverton?

Berry Island Reserve could be an ideal spot, said CC It's never had an industrial past like other parts of this area so it may be less contaminated. We've got swimming just around the corner in Greenwich. Badangi Reserve was also recently recognised as a State Heritage listing which means that the area being used for recreation is enhanced. The strip of sand at Badangi is probably the largest in the Council area.

Merits of this location for a possible urban swimming location

From the Council's point of view, it makes sense as well because most of the infrastructure is already there. It services the nearby Berry Island reserve.

CC pointed out that people can drive right to the end of Shirley Road where there are swings, toilets and BBQ facilities, rubbish collecting, and seating. The work to be done is repairing some of the negligence, cleaning, and generally making it safe.

CC discussed the levels of support he has had for this project. Nobody has said it is not a good idea and he has experienced considerable support for it on social media, with the Council including the Mayor, from the State member, and Sydney Water are keen to assist.

Addressing possible issues

One issue that is raised and needs to be explored is the state of the area in terms of pollution. Sydney Water has an "Urban Plunge" program which is all about this. The director of that program is setting up a meeting with Council's Director of Parks and Recreation, to commence the process of testing water and soil for contamination and discussing the issue of stormwater runoff into this area.

Another issue is access. There's good road access to the reserve via Shirley Road but a small pathway would be needed between the footpath and down onto the beach from the western direction to allow access to anyone with mobility issues. CC suggested improving existing landscaping that was recently completed in the area where footpaths are carved and landscaped with indigenous plants as they are sympathetic to the heritage aspect of the area. A walkway could be built similar to what features at Narrabeen Lake to maintain safety with easy access.

Oyster beds would need to be diminished and shark netting installed to make the swimming zone safe.

Kayak storage could be included, as outlined CC For a small fee, people can lock up and keep their kayak safe and neatly stowed (currently there is no system, and kayaks are just placed where the owner wants).

The Chairman at this point encouraged residents to walk down to the area if they are not familiar with it. It would try to be the opposite of the Greenwich Baths concept, and possibly more like Clifton Garden - local, small footprint, entry free of charge. No traffic, child friendly, no chaos, no food outlet, blending into the environment very naturally, maintaining the existing feel.

Questions

A resident pointed out that while he was generally supportive of the idea, we have had public swimming areas located in Waverton in the past but had been removed by Council due to insurance concerns, but his main concern was around water, storm runoff, sea bed contamination and swimmer safety. There are Naval ships nearby. Mr Crowley said these issues were important and the necessary tests will be undertaken. Sydney Water will be doing six sample tests as a first phase of this. Thereafter there are many more tests that are undertaken.

CC reminded the meeting of the new swimming places that have recently opened and are to be opened in the near future. His fingers are crossed that the testing will come back with a response that favours moving onto the next phase of the project. Storm contamination and water quality in the harbour is constantly monitored with information available on a website so residents can be assured that if the testing is positive and the swimming location is created, then there is a facility to ensure that people can swim in safety.

A resident asked if there was a date set for the water testing to take place. Mr Crowley said not at the moment, he understands Sydney Water's 'Urban Plunge' team will be contacting Gary Parsons to commence this process.

They take these tests in different conditions so that all needs to take place over time.

A resident said that she went to the area a few years ago to test her new wetsuit and she came out covered in oil and the sea bed felt like sludge. Mr Crowley said that this idea could lead to environmental improvements and fixing up past industrial mistakes.

Oyster beds are close to the surface in this area, pointed out one resident. This could be dangerous for swimmers and small vessels like kayaks, particularly inflatable kayaks. Mr Crowley said these could be removed or made safe. He said these are the very issues that other areas around the harbour have encountered and are addressing to make swimming spots a reality.

A resident said that he was generally in support of the idea and further supported some kind of structure children can possibly jump off. He said he can assist Mr Crowley with ways to visualise the project. Mr Crowley accepted this offer with thanks to the resident.

The meeting agreed that they generally like the idea, there are some questions around traffic and safety but would wait for Council to conduct their tests and keep an interest in the concept as it develops. The Chairman thanked Mr Crowley for his presentation to the meeting.

EXISTING BUSINESS:

Location of meetings

Precinct meetings will remain at the Bay St. Uniting Church Hall rather than move, as this was the overwhelming view of residents.

Merritts Playground upgrade

NSC are still maintaining that the upgrade to Merritts playground will commence in first half of 2024, even though we are in May already. We have asked if that could be more specific and they will respond this week, so we should have a response for residents by next meeting.

Western Harbour Tunnel and Berrys Bay Park delays

Western Harbour Tunnel have confirmed they will commence the next phase of the design of Berrys Bay Park later this year.

There is no reason for any delay to the new Berrys Bay Park and we do not understand why Transport for NSW (TfNSW) needs to be involved. The Precinct has made a formal representation that Woodleys Shed be transferred to the care and control of Council for them to fix it and be given the funds to do so. We would like NSC to approach TfNSW and any other relevant parties to remove the Dolphin Wharf in Berrys Bay, remove all the dilapidated piers, marina piles and any related items and “orphaned assets” and relocate the vessels as part of the delivery of the new park.

Further we have requested that Council ask for the funding that was provided to TfNSW from BP to be provided to NSC for this purpose.

A resident asked if we can make a request to the NSW Auditor General to find out what happened to those funds? Chairman said we would make formal representations to TfNSW and follow this up, but noted the transfer supposedly occurred 20 years ago.

The current Masterplan will guide the State Design Review Panel which is the next phase of the process. The Chairman has checked and this is indeed the correct process. TfNSW says that all the orphaned assets have been inspected by Maritime and are not deemed to be of any danger and while they accept that the removal will improve visual amenity in the area, TfNSW is currently prioritising projects that improve safety, accessibility and facilitate a better experience for public transport customers only. The Chairman said this has now become a cycle where we get the same response and to get any change will require a different approach. A resident suggested that the matter be brought to the attention of the State Design Review Panel to consider this as part of the overall park approval. This was accepted as a possible avenue to pursue.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Guest Speaker in June

Councillor Zoë Baker Mayor of North Sydney, will be presenting at the June meeting to catch us up on the latest information on the changes to zoning and density around major hubs. The situation is fluid, so

we are doing all we can to make sure we are always up-to-date. Further to this, we have requested that the Council let us know of any new DAs in Waverton so we can detect patterns and quickly act if necessary.

Future traffic chaos in North Sydney -presentation by JD

Resident Mr JD presented to the Precinct meeting a position he would like residents to consider, perhaps leading to a future Motion.

The NSW Upper House inquiry and subsequent "Rozelle 2.0" publicity this week has brought the future chaos of North Sydney traffic which will surely affect Waverton residents.

There are three threats, said JD: 1) Local planning controls have been dismantled - LEPS don't seem to matter any more. 2) is the threat to local communities, undoing community harmony just because they are near a hub and 3) The general livability of our communities is under threat.

JD addressed the residents that Council is not speaking for us and said that former Mayor Ted Mack would have taken a leadership position on this and would like the Precinct to call on the Council to take a leadership role in NSW for pushing back on the NSW State government position. We cannot let developers plan our city, destroying communities and small businesses.

JD pointed out to the meeting that we were told that the Western Harbour Tunnel was absolutely set and could not be changed, yet we have seen that it can be changed when they feel they want to change it. So we should not accept that the system is fixed and cannot change.

A resident commented that Council could demonstrate leadership by creating a regional strategy - an overall plan for development that would include amenities and public space and thus developers would know up front what is required of them if they were to develop in North Sydney Local Government Area rather than asking builders for whatever they are prepared to provide the public.

A resident commented that she thought that Council call a meeting where all the Precincts could have their input as to what we should do about these pressures, but JD responded that we need to do something and not wait for others.

JD asked that the Precinct Committee consider these points with the view of possibly crafting a motion for the next meeting if the residents were in general agreement as to what we think North Sydney's basic principles should be.

The Chairman asked the meeting if anyone had a fundamental issue with any points raised. Residents discussed and broadly agreed that there will be issues with overdevelopment and the

pressures that will be brought to bear on traffic, particularly with the funneling of traffic in narrow areas.

A resident asked if we could frame it in terms of the Rozelle problems. This was rejected by JD by saying that the Rozelle situation was planned to congest traffic and force them onto the toll roads – that it was designed to produce that effect and that is also the plan with this situation, and thus far Council needs to be pressured to act as they have not done so.

The meeting decided by consensus that, using JD's presentation as a basis, and adding in comments from residents at the meeting, the Executive Committee is tasked to develop a more cohesive version of this discussion as a motion or motions to be voted upon at the next meeting - and to present this argument to Council in a more formal way.

DAs

Nil

OTHER MATTERS:

Waverton Former Bowling Club Update

The Waverton Peninsula Steering Committee reported on a meeting they had with the Councillor Zoë Baker Mayor of North Sydney, regarding the former Bowling Club site. We do not know much more than before. Feeling that the Council is very committed to keeping the site as recreation- it was once public but is now privately owned so the next zoning phase will be private recreation. The issue remains that the Aboriginal Metropolitan Land Corporation is not communicating. The expectation is that they will try to re-zone the land, which the Council will object to. In this case, it would go to the Planning Minister or the Land and Environment Court (but this will cost residents money). We just don't know the timing direction or end goals at this point. The Committee would like to distribute a pamphlet to residents around the former bowling club and other Precinct Committees when it comes time to put submissions together. Larkin Street and Woolcott Street a natural boundaries to the parkland so housing is viewed as an unreasonable rezoning request on this site. Any building intended for the site needs to maintain setbacks and adhere to other building rules, which would be very difficult to do with any significant proposed housing development on that site.

It was reported in the media that Aboriginal Metropolitan Land Corporation reached an agreement with Transport for NSW for compensation for going under the former bowling club site, of several million dollars. The Chair suggested it could be argued that the Aboriginal Metropolitan Land Corporation may view this agreement as the commercial return on the land and thereby allow their decision makers to agree to hand the land back to the Council, back to public ownership, and for it to again become part of the existing park.

The Waverton Peninsula Steering Committee will keep us up to date.

War On Wrecks

The Chairman updated the meeting on the proposed petition on removal of orphaned assets and disused items and vessels around the Harbour. This is being led by Mary Curran and more information will be provided when it comes to hand. We would like support from individual residents when it gets the green light as it will have only three weeks to achieve its goal.

Website

Modernisation of the Waverton Precinct website is underway. Fundraising is required to ensure that this can be maintained and to do other actions as we want to. So, we expect some fund raising activities in the second half of the year and will appreciate residents participating - as a means to rebuild our finances.

Community Activities and Council Awards

The Award for North Sydney Council's "Eco Warrior" was shared by two Waverton residents, both of whom are very active in the local area - Vera and Michael. The meeting congratulated Vera and Michael. The Chairman outlined some of the other well deserved Award winners. These awards are annual.

Sub-committees

The Chairman invited attendees to either join a sub-committee or feel welcome to commence one if they feel there is something not being done or which could be significantly improved.

Meeting closed at 9.52pm

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 4th June at the Uniting Church Hall, Bay Road Waverton at 7.30pm. North Sydney Mayor Zoe Baker will be our guest speaker.