



WOLLSTONECRAFT PRECINCT MEETING 10 April 2024 – MINUTES

1. **Open meeting. Acknowledgement of Country:** RB (Chair) read the acknowledgement
2. **Apologies:** Cr. S, Cr. S, SH, JH, LM, BR, CR, AS, AD, EY
3. **Welcome Visitors:** CEO North Sydney Council, Mayor Zoe Baker, Cr William Bourke
4. **Confirmation of Minutes** of meeting held on 14 February 2024:
Motion: That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 February 2024, having been circulated were taken as read and are hereby confirmed.
Proposer: JH Secoder: SW
The motion was put and passed unanimously.
5. **Guest Speaker:** Chief Executive Officer, North Sydney Council

She did an excellent job providing Precinct with an overview of Council's financial position, challenges and planning for the next 4 years, what is and is not included in the 2024-25 budget, and how community members can have their say.

She started by telling us there was no good news and provided us with context to help us better understand the situation.

- Many Council systems, structures and processes are no longer fit for purpose. Despite this Council has good staff and community satisfaction.
- Last year the focus was on structural realignment. There are now 3 Directors under the CEO rather than 6. There are now 16 leadership units rather than 30. The changes to staff have been breakeven.
 - New Chief Financial Officer joins us from Parramatta
 - New Chief Information Officer just started

- New Arts, Library and Event manager joins us from the Inner West Council

A number of gaps were identified and new positions added:

- Parks and Gardens
- Building Compliance
- Risk Management
- Capacity Building (capitalising on volunteers)
- Information Technology
- Customer Service
- Strategy with emphasis on Affordable Housing
- Project and Asset Management

Financial goals – Council’s financial goal is to fund existing service levels and infrastructure renewals while maintaining an operating surplus before capital grants and contributions.

The 2024/25 Budget - Council must adopt its Operational Plan and Budget for the next financial year by 30 June 2024. This budget is about renewals, not nice to haves.

Some of the activities included in the 2024/25 Operational Plan for our area include:

- Hume Street Open Space Expansion Program
- Crows Nest Public Domain Masterplan Implementation
- Public Amenities Strategy implementation

The draft budget shows a deficit before Capital Grants and Contributions of - \$8.5 million. The outcome is attributable to:

- User charges and fees (on street car parking, parking infringements, advertising revenue) have not returned to pre pandemic levels
- Revenue from rates has failed to match the pace of inflation due to the rate peg
- Costs have increased in the high inflation environment
- Borrowing costs have increased

Council cannot maintain financial viability, fund the North Sydney Olympic Pool, and manage its assets to an acceptable service level if similar operating results persist. North Sydney is not the only Council facing these challenges.

The Draft Operational Plan & Budget 2024/25 is currently out for review.

Submissions are due by 7 May 2024.

ACTION: Precinct and community members are invited to comment. You can HAVE YOUR SAY at: <https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/draft-operational-plan-budget-2024-25>

Rates – North Sydney has the lowest rates of any Council in the Greater Sydney area. Hunters Hill has the highest. Last year Strathfield’s rates went up by 38%.

10 Year Strategy - Soon, the Council will begin preparing its 10-Year Strategy. This is an important time for residents to have get involved and have their say. As well as completing surveys and making submissions, Council is doing extensive research and will be hosting Discussion Panels we can attend.

Precinct thanked her for a very information presentation.

6. Open Space

In response to the suggestion that the community continue to lobby the NSW government to contribute to fund additional open space in our area, Precinct prepared an Open Space submission addressing:

- Willoughby Road – partial closure
- Ernest Place – all abilities playground
- Hume Street Park Stages 2 and 3
- Holterman Street parking station redevelopment

ACTION: Precinct unanimously adopted the Wollstonecraft Open Space Submission (Attachment “A” and Attachment “B”) and recommends it be formally submitted to North Sydney Council with a request for a response

Councils CEO explained that Open Space would be one of the 8 key areas covered in the 10 Year Plan so our timing was good.

The Mayor told Precinct that Council would respond to our submission on the Partial Closure of Willoughby Road.

7. Matters Arising

NSW Housing Reform – At the February 2024 meeting, a motion was passed unanimously for the Precinct to make a submission supporting Council and objecting to the current proposal.

ACTION: The DRAFT submission was unanimously approved and is attached.

Five Ways Development Update – 5 Ways is now a State Significant Development site. When the developer submits the EIS it will go out for community consultation. Currently 16 storey building is approved. The developers are seeking 21 storeys.

ACTION: Await community consultation.

Garden at Wollstonecraft Station – Transport NSW advises it cannot allow local residents access to the area as has been requested. Issue closed.

Celtis weeds - Sydney Trains will have the area inspected for Celtis trees with consideration to the remainder of priority weeds across the network. They are unable to give a time frame for when this will happen.

8. General Business

Boronia Street, Wollstonecraft: How can this dangerous intersection be improved?

Boronia St Wollstonecraft is a cul-de-sac has several issues and opportunities that require community attention. The #1 issue is traffic safety entering and leaving River Road. This is multi-faceted issue:

- a.descending the River Road hill heading west, traffic turning left into Boronia St has to slow to a crawl to safely enter the narrow, 90 degree turn
- b.there is nothing to alert traffic that there is a tight junction coming up - even the Boronia St sign is hidden back out of view

- c.in the same scenario, there is a road sign saying slow to 30k for the upcoming bends, closely followed by a 50k speed sign (ie before the bends start!)
- d. ...leaving Boronia st by turning right OR left into River Road is hazardous because of poor visibility to the right.... the wire fence of the railway bridge obscures vision almost completely. A secondary issue is that vegetation sometimes also partly obscures vision
- e. ...making this "No Right Turn" would NOT solve the hazard to turning left!!

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL RE BORONIA STREET

- QUESTION 1: Who is responsible Roads, Railways or Council...where do we start?
- QUESTION 2: Does Council still have a partnership with Macquarie University? The Boronia Street situation might make a useful study topic for a students of Town Planning. [NOTE: We became aware of these links a few years back via some studies they did at the Coal Loader]
<https://www.mq.edu.au/study/find-a-course/arts-and-social-sciences/urban-planning>

Issues raised for follow up by Council included:

1. Response to Precinct submission regarding Open Space (Attachment B)
 2. Response to request to investigate Partial Pedestrianisation of Willoughby Road to increase open space and enhance social and economic benefits in Crows Nest (Attachment B)
 3. Council to respond to Boronia Street questions and intersection issues
9. Close of meeting: The chairman closed the meeting at 9.18 pm. The next meeting is Wednesday, June 12 at 7.30pm.