

AGENDA

Notice is hereby given that an Ordinary Meeting of Council will be held at the Civic Centre, Dee Why on

Tuesday 15 December 2020

Beginning at 6:00pm for the purpose of considering and determining matters included in this agenda.



Ray Brownlee PSM
Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Northern Beaches Council Meeting 15 December 2020 by Miranda Korzy.

With Covid reappearing in Pittwater this week, most of us will have moved on from Tuesday night's council meeting. I particularly feel for those who will be spending Christmas in isolation. But a longer term issue - the Avalon place plan, the first to be revealed for the area - along with rates and some important environmental issues were on the agenda. Finally, a word on our buses. Read on for an overview

Lynne Czinner Park

Northern Beaches Council at its meeting on Tuesday night proposed a wonderful tribute to former Pittwater Mayor and councillor of 16 years, Lynne Czinner who died in September. It's so true that Lynne, who was a staunch member of Protect Pittwater, "campaigns tirelessly to protect the

Warriewood wetlands and escarpment” - as the council said in the proposal. The name and location of the park, encompassing both sides of Fern Creek at Warriewood, have the blessing of Lynne’s family and should be popular with Pittwater residents. The proposal will be placed on exhibition for 28 days and community members are invited to comment on it.

Rates Harmonisation

Councillors and staff have laboured over the creation of a plan to bring rates into alignment across the Northern Beaches, which Tuesday’s meeting voted to place on public exhibition from December 18.

This follows a four-year rate freeze adopted by the NSW government in 2015 for residents of newly merged councils. The harmonisation deadline is July 1 next year, meaning the government and these councils have been kicking the rate increase can down the road since their election.

Pittwater residents have thus been paying a minimum of \$931.92 for the 2021-financial year – compared to Manly’s \$860.62 and Warringah’s \$1,022.94.

Under the plan, rates for Pittwater businesses could leap by between 24 and 27 per cent, while Manly’s residential rates could skyrocket by up to 46 per cent.

Councillor White told the meeting that *“there’s no simple answer to rates harmonisation”*, and staff had worked hard for more than three years on it. In some council areas, business rates had been much higher and residential rates much lower. As a result, there would be different impacts for different groups, he said.

“The money’s got to come from somewhere and there’s going to have to be some adjustments,” he said. *“And we have to be as fair and equitable as possible.”*

The plan presented four options – the fourth of which has been recommended by the executive. *“We will have to make a hard decision,”* he said.

However, Councillor De Luca condemned the rate rises in the harmonisation plan, saying that: *“In my eyes it shows the complete failure of amalgamation.”*

When Mayor Michael Regan had proposed the Northern Beaches merger (as then Warringah Mayor) he had promised that rates would not rise and there would be savings.

“That has not happened,” Councillor De Luca said.

“We must consider that due to COVID, people have lost their jobs, they’ve lost their businesses and people are struggling”.

“Instead of us doing all possible to avoid any rate rises or fee increases, this council proposes to increase rates. Is that fair and reasonable considering the economy of today and the hardship that is being sustained throughout our nation?”

Avalon Place Plan Draft to go on Exhibition

The draft Avalon Place Plan will go on public exhibition after it was presented at Tuesday’s meeting. The plan, which the council said was based on extensive community consultation, focuses on the village centre and surrounds.

A re-design is proposed as part of the plan, with a temporary one way, south-bound shared pedestrian, cycle and car zone to be trailed for at least six-months on Old Barrenjoey Road (between Avalon Parade and the entrance to the Woolies carpark).

The council has also suggested setting up two bike paths, with one running east-west along Avalon Parade intersected by another running north-south along Old Barrenjoey Road. However, this route will result in the loss of a significant number of mature trees on Old Barrenjoey Road – the council says six. But Avalon resident Ros Marsh – who has worked extensively on proposals for the plan – told the meeting that the Avalon Preservation Association estimates 30 mature trees will be lost.

The APA has developed an alternative cycleway plan that saves the trees and utilises some of Avalon's back lanes – moving riders off the main roads and intersection – which Independent Councillor Alex McTaggart said has now been included in the draft after last minute negotiations on Friday.

Another controversial issue is the proposal to remove part of the hill leading to Avalon Beach next to the bus stop on Barrenjoey Road – which would include widening the footpath and terracing the rest of its western side. In a recent presentation to CABPRA (Clareville and Bilgola Plateau Residents' Association), a number of residents opposed the destruction of this natural feature of what the council calls the "*Beach Gateway*", and suggested the bus stop be moved further north to allow more space for it.

However, the draft has dismissed this suggestion, saying: "*Relocation of the bus stop to the north of the current site is not supported by Transport for NSW.*" Have to wonder why when other bus routes and stops are being changed all around Avalon.

The proposal for removal of the hillside and construction of terracing also appears to be a direct contradiction of the council's own research findings that the natural environment is the top priority for residents in Avalon – as for the rest of the Northern Beaches.

Ms Marsh noted in her address to the meeting that costings in the draft for the 10-year implementation of the plan ranged from a minimum \$66 million to in excess of \$165 million.

"It's unrealistic to mislead the community into thinking all items will be achievable," she said.

"Documents should clarify that this is a wish list and ask the community to prioritise the actions most important to them."

She called for all "*quick wins*" to be halted until the community has had a chance to have its say.

The public exhibition of the draft plan will run from January 18, 2021 to March 31. Councillors, APA and the Palm Beach and Whale Beach Residents Association encourage everyone in the community to comment.

Council Push for Say in State Govt's New Land Clearing Code

Many residents have been concerned about the impact on local bushland by the NSW government's announcement in October that rural landholders will be allowed to clear up to 25 metres of land from their property's fence line - without an environmental approval - as a bushfire prevention strategy.

The measure was not one of the 76 findings of NSW Bushfire Royal Commission, as The Guardian newspaper reported at the time.

Greens Councillor Natalie Warren told Tuesday's meeting that the bill had been passed about three weeks ago with amendments that will allow vegetation clearing 25 metres inside the boundary of rural properties and clearing on rural land will be permissible when carried out in accordance with a rural boundary clearing code, which hasn't been released.

"We don't know what the code looks like and it could affect all of our rural zoned land on the Northern Beaches which according to our GIS (Geographic Information Systems) team includes 1,106 lots in Terrey Hills, Duffys Forest, Ingleside, Eleanora Heights and Bayview and Mona Vale," she said.

That could work out at 384,000 hectares of vegetation potentially being lost – or 1.5 per cent of the entire Northern Beaches council area.

“So the motion just asks (for councils) to be part of the development of the code, which hasn’t been released yet and for councils to be consulted,” Councillor Warren said.

“We really need to get on the front foot in our response to this bill ... It’s really going to effect rural zoned lots on the Northern Beaches. We don’t want clear felling to occur without any oversight.”

Push to Protect Bushland at Risk from Road Works

Councillors Warren and Narrabeen Councillor Sue Heins also put forward a motion aimed at protecting biodiversity when road projects are carried out on the Northern Beaches. Councillor Warren told the meeting that at a briefing about the Beaches Link Tunnel last week, she and Councillor Heins had realised that creating offsets for bushland lost to major infrastructure projects by acquiring land would not necessarily be carried out on the Northern Beaches, would not be immediate and was *“somewhat undefined”*.

As a result, the council unanimously supported another motion from Councillor Warren that they ask the NSW government and Transport NSW for bushland cleared in the council area – eg for the Beaches Link Tunnel and subsequent widening of arterial roads like Wakehurst Parkway - be offset by bio-banked land within the Northern Beaches LGA.

The motion also called for the process to start immediately – rather than at the end of the project.

“We have an aspiration in our environment and climate change strategy for no net loss of bushland,” Councillor Warren said.

“... If we’re going to have a hope of getting that to happen, we really need to be pushing the state government on this. We need the state government’s support to regulate and retain our bushland. We can’t do it by ourselves.”

Also sponsoring the motion was Councillor Heins, who said the state government regards the Northern Beaches as a unique area and we need to protect its plant and animal life.

“I think we’re all concerned about, as councillors and basically custodians of the area that we look after, that we know that big projects are coming, we just need to think of a way of trying to protect what we’ve got here,” Councillor Heins told the meeting.

“It’s disappointing in the past to have seen bio-banking AKA biodiversity offsets go into other areas ... and I just think there’s opportunities.”

Ingleside Escarpment Consolidation

The motion garnered unanimous support, with Pittwater Councillor Alex McTaggart noting that it opened the way for a land swap associated with the redevelopment of Mona Road Road. The land in question lies on the Ingleside Escarpment, amongst the few remaining blocks that are needed to form a continuous bushland backdrop to Pittwater.

Councillor McTaggart said that the footpath proposed to be built next to Mona Vale Road can’t go where it was intended because of the gradients, so moving it to the other side of the road was under consideration.

“Apparently (Pittwater state MP) Mr (Rob) Stokes has been involved in some funding,” Councillor McTaggart told the meeting.

“There’s some private land and some state land where there needs to be a ‘delicate mix’ and this will aid in the connection of the Ingleside Escarpment to Katandra (Bushland Sanctuary) and then to the northern side of Mona Vale Road: a real fauna – flora connection”.

“So there’s a possibility here that we can bring these two elements together ... There is some private land that is not going to be ‘developable’ and the owner may well be amenable, and we might be able to do some sort of swap or trade.”

Liberals Foreshadow Cutting Councillor Numbers

Not happy with having merged three councils into one on the Northern Beaches - meaning a loss of democracy and self-determination for Pittwater where our councillors can now be outvoted on any issue in our area - the Liberals have now foreshadowed reducing the number of councillors in the area and restructuring the ward structure. Lib councillor Rory Amon told Tuesday’s meeting:

“The fact is that 15 councillors are too many”.

The issue was raised because council staff brought a report to the meeting to consider whether to hold a constitutional referendum at the September 2021 election, which would review the way the mayor is elected and number of councillors.

Staff and Mayor Michael Regan made it clear that it’s up to councillors to initiate a change to the process of electing mayors - now done by councillors but it would be possible to change this by referendum so that the mayor is directly elected by voters.

Councillor Amon then said staff should have brought the memo to elected councillors about the issue earlier - despite the fact that there is still time to make a change as long as it’s brought forward by February. Ironically, Councillor Amon said: *“All we’ve done is deprive our community of democracy.”*

I believe this is a serious issue - that reducing the number of councillors would increase the enormous workload they already carry, meaning less time to deal with residents problems and as a result to do the enormous amount of preparation that’s involved for such a big council. This would mean more decisions left to council staff - turning the council into a rubber stamp for the state government’s agenda.

Northern Beaches Local Housing Strategy

One of the many motions voted on in a block without discussion (known as “by exception”) at Tuesday’s meeting was for the council’s Local Housing Strategy to be placed on exhibition for at least 28 days. With yet another document open for public comment, it’s going to be a busy couple of months!

The draft, to cover the period from 2016 to 2036, must meet a government-imposed target of 3,400 new dwellings by 2021. A key finding of research for the plan was that population in the NBC council area will increase by around 23,000 people by 2036, requiring around 12,000 new homes.

Council planners say land is already zoned for around 10,750 dwellings, including in the Frenchs Forest Planned Precinct. The difference between existing capacity and projected demand is only about 1,250 dwellings, so *“there does not need to be major redevelopment to meet this demand in the short term”*, the council said in the meeting papers.

Northern Beaches Waste

One resident, Cath Dixon, took the council to task on Tuesday night over its waste policies. Ms Dixon told the public forum that 20 per cent of waste collected here is not recyclable. *“Many residents are horrified by the bulky good waste collection”*, she said, in which many items that could potentially be salvaged are simply thrown in the back of the garbage truck and broken up. She suggested a drop-off

scheme similar to one that apparently operates in Canberra – where residents can deposit unwanted items, that can be repaired and recycled.

Residents Ask Council for Collaroy Sea Wall Funds

Residents whose houses were badly damaged by the massive storm of 2016 also came to council this week asking for financial help to build a seawall they hope will protect their homes. Jo Hoatson, speaking for a group of 23 families, said they wished to ask the council for \$240,000 to cover some rebuilding expenses. *“We agree we must contribute to protecting our properties,”* Ms Hoatson said.

Another resident from the strip along Pittwater Road, Robert Orth, said the owners had spent four years working through the issues with engineers to ensure they had the best design. They wanted the money for *“pre-construction costs”* – including legal costs for creating easements over their properties in case of future storms.

They would also like the council to waive the \$22,000 charge to residents, who want to close off Stuart St at Collaroy during construction work.

Mayor to Contact Transport NSW About Bus Route Cuts

Pittwater is not the only area losing bus routes from the end of this week. North Balgowlah resident Stephen Tilston told the council meeting about problems in his suburb – where six city and North Shore buses will be cancelled. Mr Regan said that he will continue to *“lobby for reinstatement at least”*. So if you’re losing a bus in Pittwater – like the 90X or 89X – better let the mayor know about it ASAP to add it to his list!

END