

OCEAN GROVE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER.

Issue No. 4

October 2004

REPORT FROM THE PUBLIC FORUM WITH LISA NEVILLE MLA – BELLARINE.

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Public Forum when Lisa Neville MLA – Bellarine was our guest. Lisa spoke about many local issues and took questions on notice and from the floor. A summary of some questions and responses from the evening:

Q - Bellarine Police station has been for open for 9 months, operating on half staff and endeavouring to open 24-hours a day. Can you give us an indication of when it will be fully staffed?

Response by Lisa Neville.

The station is the main station of the Bellarine Community, while police will be stationed at Ocean Grove, they will continue to also work out of smaller stations in the Bellarine Community. Many cultural issues and transient population issues (tourists) have to be taken into consideration when looking at rostering of staff and the hours stations in the district are open. In the short term 15 new staff have been allocated to the Ocean Grove Station, previously 8 now 22, Drysdale has 5, Portarlinton previously 4, at present 3 (1 on sick leave), Queenscliff 5. 6/7 extra staff due over Christmas time at the Ocean Grove Station. (The station has the capacity for 66 staff).

Q - Lack of consultation between Vic Roads and Council and the lack of action to important residents issues, regarding traffic management. Many ratepayers are disappointed at the large rate increases on their properties and yet we see no services happening in our area. Is this a legislation issue?

One wonders if the amalgamation of councils and the high growth of Bellarine Peninsula, has meant that the area has become too big for the council to service properly?

Response by Lisa Neville.

A meeting had already been held with Vic Roads, and other interested parties regarding some work on important road infrastructure in Ocean Grove. Work should start soon at the roundabout at Wallington Rd, to improve it; also important work at the end of the shopping centre is being done, before a serious accident happens. This may not fit into the overall traffic management scheme the council comes up with, but it needed to be made safer now!

Yes, there should be a full study done, but it is council's job to do a Traffic management Study of Ocean Grove and there doesn't appear to be funding allocated in the coming years budget (Study estimated at approx \$100,000). The council is the closest rank of government to the local community and it is their job to prioritise traffic management issues.

In regards to Councils/State Government bodies and the difficulty in getting answers. I could try and mediate or be a voice to get answers from local government; I can also mediate and question those State run Departments to help residents get a clear answer. A reminder that council is a form of elected government just like State and Federal government and while they work under guidelines set down by State and Federal Laws in many areas they are also independent and responsible for their own laws and decisions in many general areas.

Q - What, if anything, is the state doing to address the issue of "Cost Shifting" after the Federal inquiry?

Response from Lisa Neville.

Lisa mentioned the Hawker Report, and that if the recommendations from the report were implemented it would have a negative effect on Victorian Councils. Some parts, of the report are important, there needs to be better coordination between services and resources and a clear line of responsibilities for local, state and federal governments, with each knowing where their responsibilities lie and working together where responsibilities overlap.

Q - State Govt policies impact on Local Govt through the capping of fees that are implemented/administered by Local councils eg: parking fees, planning permit fees etc. Many of these limits do not take into account the increasing costs at the local level (eg: Rescode). Why does the State Govt. impose legislation on Local Govt and then not fund them to comply with, and implement the requirements?

Response from Lisa Neville.

The state government sets fees for some services such as planning fees, many fees were reviewed last year in conjunction with Local Government associations. Councils also have the capacity to look at development contributions (eg charging heavy industry a road tax, because of the amount of heavy trucks that use a particular road) as a way of recouping money spent in a particular area, above the "norm."

Q - What is the State Govt's reasoning for not implementing legislative changes that would allow Councils to be more flexible regarding the levying of municipal rates?

Response from Lisa Neville.

Rates are based on properties values, this happens all over the world. Changing this involves huge legislative changes. Using income tax as a base for local government revenue raising could happen if there was sufficient pressure but it is unlikely on the short term.

Last year COGG looked at bringing in legislative change to cap rate increases, but no other council would support them, some were actually against it. The 4 times rule is being looked at with the Minister's office. (this is where the higher differential rate is limited to 4 times the lowest rate, which in COGG the farming rate is the bottom one, and the industrial rate is at the top). There are other options that can be used in deciding on rates - geographical differential rates (Colac-Otway has a differential rate for their coastal region) and the municipal charge, of which COGG is one of the lowest (of those Councils who have one.) Fairness and equity decisions need to be made by COGG with the community involved.

These options were canvassed as part of COGG's rating strategy. There seems to be a lot of blame between all parties. There is strong interest in spreading the increases but it is difficult for the Minister when items raised by COGG did not get the support of other Councils. People have asked what role State govt might play in coastal communities. The Coastal Spaces Project (like the Great Ocean Road Strategy) looks at the urban growth in coastal communities. It seeks to avoid linear development or coastal sprawl and to maintain open spaces between communities. It looks at the trends and capacity for growth and to manage that growth in a sustainable way. Gippsland and Bellarine are the 2 to be looked at. The community needs to be vocal about it and get involved.

Q - We have been informed that the Leisure Needs Study draft would be completed by Christmas, where COGG, states it will not be done until April 2005, due to council elections.

Response from Lisa Neville.

After talks with COGG this week, draft plan should be ready by Christmas; I see no reason that council elections should affect the plan. I am striving to get state government funding for the project through in the next two budgets. She then explained that the project will be done in stages and it should be completed within 5 years.

Q - Are there any dollars for the Ocean Grove RSL, this vibrant active group has no permanent home?

Response from Lisa Neville.

I have been working with council and RSL to deal with this problem. There are no government buildings suitable in the area, although the Police Residence is being looked at. RSL needs to be looked at as part of a master plan. Very few government buildings will be built specifically for one area of the community, most buildings will need to be multi-functional and multi-purpose, so that as many community groups as possible can be integrated into the facility. RSL would look favourably at the Neighbourhood Centre, if it moves. Lisa said that negotiations would then need to go on with COGG, as the building belongs to them, and this would not happen until the Neighbourhood Centre moves, which unfortunately is not in the near future.

Land being an issue in Ocean Grove, money has been approved to build a new CFA station in Ocean Grove (paid staff and volunteers) to meet the growing needs of the community, but the right site has to be found.

Q - Queried funding and how long it will take to see things happening at Shell Rd. Re change facilities for females (Junior female footballers and women soccer players have no change facilities at all)

Response from Lisa Neville.

Lisa said the first step in the process is the Recreation study with staged priorities, draft report by Christmas, working with community. This needs to be done quickly to tap into State funding.

Q - Why are we in this position. Are we looking at change rooms being finished in 10 years?

Response from Lisa Neville.

COGG must submit completed proposal to get funding, 30-40 active groups want to be involved and catered for. Lisa would like to talk further with Tony Potter to see if a short-term solution for female change rooms can be organised.

Q - Asked for clarification on different answers given to the Ocean Grove Tennis Club, on freezing of funding. Council's website showed not much funding went into the Ocean Grove area. COGG apparently provided funding after the State rejected their application –were told the reason for rejection was the current Study that is underway. Is the study the reason for lack of funding?

Response from Lisa Neville.

Council apply for funding for major recreation facilities to the state government. Councils are also given a budget for minor works from state government and they include extra municipal funds for minor recreation projects. OGTC would come under the second funding criteria and would be not affected by Shell Rd project. Council then prioritize minor recreation projects and the higher priority jobs get done first. OGTC needs to lobby councillors about this and Lisa can also help in the lobbying.

Q - The Structure Plan done by Council about 12 years ago. In new Bellarine Project will State government set parameters about green areas, limitations on heights, density and structure of buildings.

Response from Lisa Neville.

It is important for councils to have upgraded structural plans, an overlay is needed, wildlife corridors need to be included and the affected communities need to have a say. The coastal study (project done by State) will address green belts.

Jo Hawthorne commented that she had spoken to Stuart Walker and the new structure plan will be similar to the last one.

COGG COUNCIL MEETINGS.

Your committee finds the continued, regular fortnightly attendance by rostered members at COGG Council Meetings a very important part of our activities.

By doing this, we can be aware of Agenda Items being debated by Councillors, and then bring back information about matters relating to the Bellarine Peninsular, and Ocean Grove in particular.

Many thanks to those attending Meetings throughout 2004, including Michael H, Ted & Elaine M, Phyllis M, John B, Bob A, Howard D, Laurel G and David T.

Council usually meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, at City Hall, so If you would like to help 'share the load' by being on the 2005 roster, please call Jo Hawthorne on 5256 2221.

TOURISM – WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR AREA ?

Tracey Jamieson the newly appointed person at Bellarine Tourism recently attended a committee meeting and explained her role and responsibilities.

Members had many questions about the promotion of tourism in the Ocean Grove area. A decision was made to have regular contact with Tracey.



ROUND-ABOUT UPDATE.

Work on the roundabout on the corner of Wallington Road and Orton Street has begun and the Council has promised to have it completed by the end of October.



The Association believes the progress is too slow and we are writing to the COGG to ensure the work is finished as soon as possible. We have been informed that work will begin shortly on the landscaping of the roundabout on the corner of Bellarine Highway and Grubb road, and the COGG have ensured us that it will be completed before Christmas. The OGDCA will be closely monitoring its progress.

NEXT PUBLIC FORUM

Wednesday 10
November 2004

At 7.30pm at the Grove Centre.

Speakers will be the new Council Candidates for the City of Greater Geelong.

Advisory group to Council

For those members who may not be aware, the Ocean Grove and District Community Association successfully applied for an establishment grant from the City of Greater Geelong (COGG).

In December 2003, we received \$1500 to go towards setting up the association, including a membership database, a brochure and a newsletter.

One of the objectives the association put forward to COGG was to establish ourselves as an advisory group to Council. In this way, it is hoped we can assist Council in ensuring "Community Consultation" is facilitated easily.

At this stage, we have only 89 members. In a population of over 12,000, this is not nearly enough to be representative of the community.

A printed brochure will be developed to better advertise our existence and increase our member base.

Please help by spreading the word. There is a better chance of effecting change through Council if we are a strong association – a force to be reckoned with!



Other Councils have Community Advisory Groups (CAG's); please help us to help you have a voice.

Ocean Grove Structure Plan

In the 2004/05 Council Budget, the City of Great Geelong have allocated some funds to undertake new Structure Plans for some areas of the Bellarine Peninsula

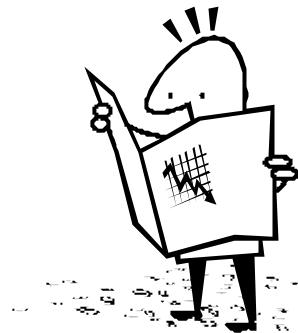
The Draft Leopold Structure Plan (discussion document) was released by Council in March 2004. The Structure Plan for Ocean Grove is currently being formulated by Council officers.

The OG&DCA are endeavouring to have significant input into the plan and are very keen to ensure there is maximum community consultation.

It is hoped that public meetings and workshops will be undertaken by the city and members are encouraged to attend.

We would also like to survey our membership to capture some demographic information (regards age, numbers in family, disabilities etc) so that we can provide a balanced viewpoint on some issues.

Keep an eye on future newsletters, posters and public meeting information.



Any members who have email addresses please advise so that we can send your newsletter electronically (and save on postage!)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL

Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

- Please tick area of interest
- Attend occasional Council meetings
- Serve on a sub-committee (please tick area of interest)
- Recreation
 - Traffic
 - Future planning
 - Tourism
 - Family/Youth services
- Assist with any admin tasks or distribution of materials or newsletters.
- Other: please suggest.....

Submit \$5 to P O Box 78, Ocean Grove