



MEETING MINUTES

Environment and Sustainability Reference Group

Date: 16th August, 2023

Meeting Start: 5:30pm **Meeting End:** 7:16pm

Venue: Whitehorse Civic Centre

**Minutes
recorded by:** Cassie Lukies

Attendance: Cr. Cutts, Cr. Massoud, Anne Payne (OAM), Glenys Grant (OAM), Kushal Singhal, Peter Whittle, Petrina Adams (proxy), Jeff Green, Steven White, Belinda Moody, Cassie Lukies, Dale Belmore (replacing Callan Walker), Miho Kagawa

Apologies: John Malvestuto, John White, Shaun Scallan, Thomas White, , Steve Day.

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Item 1. Welcome | 2 |
| Item 2. Tree Assistance Fund Report | 2 |
| Item 3. Council motion: Advocacy to Government on Bushfire Prone Areas | 3 |
| Item 4. Sustainable Living Week – Future Program | 4 |
| Item 5. Other Business | 6 |

Agenda Items:

Item 1. Welcome

Item 2. Tree Assistance Fund Report

Belinda Moody

Belinda provided further information on the Tree Assistance Fund including:

- Information on the Fund was published in the August Whitehorse News
- There is a Council report to be developed, would appreciate ESG feedback.
- There have been many positive experiences with community members on private property – many residents are excited to show Council how they are looking after the tree.
- Tree ultrasounds have been undertaken so residents can find out how much of the tree is wood. It is not something that people would think to do on their own or be able to afford.
- People receive \$1000 from the Fund, any further financial requirements to ensure the health of the tree fall to the resident which can be expensive.

Thoughts for improvement – to be discussed after last meeting

- How can we make the fund more equitable?
- How can we best support people?
- How can we better celebrate these trees?
- Do we need to update the significant tree list with new trees?

Key discussion points:

- Suggestion to request funding to update the tree register.
 - Previous study did not include SLO's, do future studies continue not to include them? Should they be included?
 - Planning implications create a challenge as development means that people have less land for trees.
 - There is a 2 year time limit before residents can apply for funding again. Successful people were excluded for 2 rounds before they can apply again.
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- Suggestion for Arborists to attend properties with students as an internship opportunity for experience.
 - Further feedback can be received by Belinda until 30/08/23
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Item 3. Council motion: Advocacy to Government on Bushfire Prone Areas

Cr. Massoud

Cr Massoud provided background information on Bushfire Prone Areas: Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) was introduced in 2014. In August 2020 the State Government presented the Bushfire Prone Areas across the state with no opportunities for consultation.

A 'one size fits all' approach was used for the state where the same restrictions now apply for metropolitan areas as they do in regional areas.

Trees within 60m of the identified boundaries can be removed without question. This poses threats to all fauna in the area.

Council already has a bushfire program to remove fuel load in undergrowth.

Key discussion points:

Advocate from the community to review the Bushfire Prone Areas.

Advocate as the ESG to review the Bushfire Prone Areas.

Council has extensive fire program and fuel load reduction. Council meet's with Fire Vic before each fire season.

Action Item 1: Distribute Cr.Massoud's Notion of Motion wording to ESG Members and in next meeting develop wording from ESG to Minister for Planning and Department of Transport and Planning.

Council is not advertising information on the Bushfire Prone Areas to the public due to informing people of tree removal exemption, however, lobbying to MP's is acceptable.

Item 4. Sustainable Living Week – Future Program

Miho Kagawa

Report distributed with final agenda.

Overview of Sustainable Living Week

- 25 events over 10 days.
- 800+ in attendance
- 50% drop-out from free and registered events
- 15+ officer collaboration.

Upon review of Sustainable Living Week: Attendance doesn't always equal action. Community members taking action is difficult to measure. Questions such as 'What have you done after the event' which focus on long term impacts/behaviour change are probably more valuable.

The last review of the Sustainability Awards was in 2017. The awards commenced in 2006 and were held annually until 2017. It was viewed as important to reward the community. The review proposed: the awards were held every second year and Community Grants were promoted in the off year. This did not occur.

Council's Community Grants now has a dedicated Environmental Sustainability Grant category. A monthly 'Green Champion' is highlighted in the Whitehorse News and Sustainability eNews.

Future Opportunities

Sustainable Living Week – Reimagined

Below is a summary of proposed events program:

- Have sustainable living events throughout the year – not just one week.
 - Provide opportunities to build community, inspire, encourage behaviour change and educate about sustainable living topics.
 - Internal stakeholders have expressed strong support to continue to collaborate and deliver an annual program of events with consistent messaging and promotion.
 - Leverage 'Days of Significance' that highlight the importance of environmental sustainability, and host events and/or promote consistent campaign material across the municipality.
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- Have a combination of smaller regular casual events to share information and stories and host educational workshops by sustainability experts.

This will allow for better use of existing budget and resources already allocated.

Sustainability Awards

Council currently holds its annual Civic Awards organised by the Governance and Integrity department. Rather than creating a dedicated environmental sustainability category, nominations in this nature can be directed to existing categories. These are: Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, and Community Achievement Awards(s).

Other available awards include the Premier's Sustainability Awards. Council will continue to promote this and any other opportunities for award nomination.

Request for feedback from ESG:

Council seeks to work collaboratively and effectively to support the Whitehorse community in *Sustainable Climate and Environmental Care*. The above approach will allow Council to deliver its programs efficiently with consistency across the year.

- Are you supportive of the proposed program structure in lieu of the traditional SLW?
 - What factors could be considered to ensure its success?
- Are the Civic Awards an alternative to the previous Sustainability Awards?

Key discussion points: (All in support of Sustainable Living Events throughout the year)

- Food swaps/clothes swaps etc. that happen throughout the year can be advertised.
 - Susty e-news can reach an audience of 1000+ who are already specifically interested in susty topics organically.
 - Allows for further promotion of activities that run throughout the year already.
 - Event recordings are considered valuable, retain them in a spot where they can be watched at a later date (some considerations: approvals, captioning, if the provider allows recording)
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- Belinda suggested that shorter videos are easier for people who are short on time to watch (example: Ian's parks of Whitehorse videos)
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Item 5. Other Business

- Burwood Brickworks roof-top site visit report **All**
 - Relationship between the adults and students with hearing impairment was great to see.
 - Very early days, but excellent concept. They grow multicultural food and herbs. Issues with hydroponics (running, hygiene etc.)
 - Urban Forest Strategy from a planning scheme perspective **Cr Cutts**
 - Councillors receive consistent requests from groups such as CROWAG to incorporate documents in our planning scheme. The UFS can be a reference document in the planning scheme.
 - UFS was not written as a planning control document originally. What we are trying to achieve in UFS on private land is already well covered in the Planning Scheme. We can make the UFS a reference document in the Planning Scheme. This would require a budget initiative and to follow the public consultation process. Suggested other documents to include: Integrated Water Management.
 - ESG supports to progress.
 - Would this encourage people who go to VCAT to treat the UFS more seriously? VCAT is not required to take on board reference documents. However, it may provide some weight. **Action item 2:** provide link to UFS website.
 - **Action item 3:** Extend invitation to Gregory Day for next meeting as there is possible increase in canopy cover from Nearmap flyover.
 - EPA Community Consultation for Whitehorse **Anne Payne OAM**
 - Anne met with Leonie Gibson and EPA representatives about firming up better emergency contact procedures.
 - EPA, Council and Melbourne Water can have a numbering system to identify areas – the Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Parkland Advisory Committee (PAC) is working on this and will work with Council.
 - Jeremy Sims (Coordinator Eastern Melbourne Region) is going to discuss with the PAC about ways to reduce pollution before it reaches the catchments.
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- Hoping for a wider consultation – watch this space.
 - Peter Whittle announced his resignation as he is moving to Perth leaving mid-September. Peter was thanked for his contribution to the ESRG.
 - Committee Membership – planning for next round of recruitment.
 - Cr. Cutts, recommended to increase community representative membership number to 10.
 - ESRG members to have a more active role in review of Terms of Reference and recruitment.
 - **Action item 4:** Send Terms of Reference to ESRG members as editable google doc for review before next meeting.
 - Suggestion to be open to a variety of backgrounds (i.e., economics but with an interest in sustainability)
 - Suggestion that we need more clearly defined roles for community representatives.
 - The current process for appointing members and for changes to the ESRG requires reporting to Council. It is proposed that as part of the Council Report for the next round of community member recruitment that the report recommend that some of the decisions about the ESRG, including membership decisions, is transferred to the Group.
 - Forestree – continuing to collect data. Will collect data from high profile parks in late spring.
 - Forestree volunteer project – artificial hollows
 - Working towards customer facing website
 - Cr Cutts. Upcoming Motion: Overview of enforcement action regarding the illegal removal of trees. Report when it comes out will be good news story for Council.

Action Items from meeting:

- **Action Item 1:** Distribute Cr.Massoud's Notion of Motion wording to ESRG Members and in next meeting develop wording from ESRG to Minister for Planning and Department of Transport and Planning.
 - **Action item 2:** Provide link to UFS website.
<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/things-do/parks-playgrounds/parks-and-bushland-reserves/urban-forest>
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- **Action item 3:** Extend invitation to Gregory Day for next meeting as there is possible increase in canopy cover from Nearmap flyover.
 - **Action item 4:** Send Terms of Reference to ESRG members as editable google doc for review before next meeting to inform future Council report.
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Next Meeting: Wednesday 25th of October 2023, 5:30pm

Location: Nunawading Meeting Room 2, Whitehorse Civic Centre
