



Katoomba Chamber Minutes 14th April 2011

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1800 876 553

Monthly Meeting opened at 6.35pm, The Library, Carrington Hotel, Katoomba

1. Present: 14th April 2011

Robert Stock (RS) (President), Peter Carroll (PC) (Vice President)(Rotary), Chrissie Thompson(CT) (Secretary), Marie Wood(MarieW), Christine Killinger(CK), Chris Davidson(CD), Guy Fordy(GF), Karim Rizkalla(KR), Julie Head(JH), Anne Elliott(AE), Shane Desiatnik(Gazette), Tom Colless(TC), Harry Box(HB), Carol Box(CB), Bruce Ferrier(BF), Robyn McAdam(RM), Andrew Onslow-Smith(AO), Jane Young(JY), Bob Kemnitz(BK), Margaret Weatherall(MW), Allan Sturgiss(AS), Paul Sturgiss(PS), Pam Seaborn(PS), Peter Poulos(PP).

Apologies:

Mark Jarvis, Paul Payten, Janet Cahill, Juliet Green, Anton Curnow, Glen Davidson.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting 10th March 2011.

Accepted by Pc. Seconded CK

Matters arising from the previous minutes: None

3/ Correspondence In:

Receipt from QBE Insurance – up to date. RS reported at the meeting held of combined Chambers, shared insurance was discussed. Council had tried but given it up as too hard. RS felt it can be done.

Letter from Peter Adams requesting to attend next month's meeting to discuss the proposed statue to Peter Carroll and his dog Aurora.

Email from Janet Cahill advising we have new codes for the Chamber website- more to come.

Letter from Tom Colless regarding graffiti cleaning and working with Juvenile Justice Dept.

Moved correspondence be accepted PC. Seconded CK.

4/ Proposed 56% Rise for Katoomba Businesses

Blue Mountains City Council intends to impose a 56% rate rise on all businesses in the Katoomba area to take effect from July 1 this year.

Council is attempting to support their case by arguing from two specific points of view.

1. Who benefits from Council spending.

2. Who has the ability to pay the most.

On the first argument.

Council staff are saying that 8.71% of Council spending goes to support business.

Business rates currently contribute 7% to Council revenue.

This does not include the compulsory business charges levied by Council on footpath usage and inspections.

Council believes the rate on business should contribute 10% of total rates.

Council staff have provided us with the breakdown of how the figure of 8.71% was arrived at for the percentage of Council's annual expenditure attributable to Business.

It is this figure that has been used in the report to Council (Item 5 - March 15th) as the primary validation for increasing the rates on business zonings.

We have attached their figures from which you can see they are saying that \$9,786,331 (8.71%) is the annual amount Council puts towards business in the Mountains.

Two figures however stand out,

1. Operating expenditure for Tourism \$2,891,271. This figure is from BMCC 2010-2011 Operational Plan but does not take into account the associated revenue to Council from Tourism of \$2,343,774.

This associated revenue figure is shown boldly on the same page and you would think would be hard to miss. The real net expense to Council therefore is \$547,497.

2. Capital Works Program - Economic Development \$3,545,272. This figure is from Council's document entitled 'Detail of 2010-2013 Capital Works Program - New Projects - Major' and is the figure given for the complete Lawson Industrial Estate Development which is firstly in no way an annual expense as is being represented by Council staff.

Of course this is also 100% funded by a Federal government grant so is in no way a cost to Council that needs to be balanced by rate revenue.

Direct annual Council expenditure on business has therefore been very deliberately overstated by \$5,889,046.

That leaves a possible \$3,897,285 as an expense attributable to business - that is approximately 3.4% of Council's expenditure.

We are disappointed to see these misrepresentations.

Is it possible to believe that mistakes such as these could possibly be the result of negligence alone?

On the second argument.

In Katoomba we currently have 25 empty shops where businesses have 'voted with their feet' so to speak. We understand that there are another 15 facing closure.

Businesses, particularly food related businesses have struggled with substantial increases to gas and electricity charges in recent months. The continuing highway upgrade has led to reduced visitor numbers and therefore has reduced business volumes overall.

National retail growth figures continue to be sluggish and the dominant consumer sentiment is described as 'frugal'.

In framing this rate increase no survey of local business conditions was relied upon to come up with the stated view that local small business had an ability to pay.

This we believe was negligent.

Blue Mountains City Council continuously 'talks the talk' of support for small business, but in the street we see nothing. In Katoomba there is no upgrade or even maintenance of civic infrastructure.

Volunteers are forced to do graffiti removal and landscaping works or allow the retail area to decay further. The pavements, that retailers are charged extra for the use of, are in a state of disrepair.

We would encourage people, who have concerns about this rate proposal from Blue Mountains City Council, to make their opinions known, filling out and forwarding the attached BMCC Submission form as soon as possible.

At Council's meeting on the 15th March a Rate Review was proposed and agreed to by 5 of the 8 councillors present. The 5 councillors who agreed to the proposal were Councillors Greenhill & McLaren (Labor), Councillor McCallum (Greens), Councillor Gibbs (Independent, formerly Greens) and Councillor Creed (Liberal).

Those who voted **against** the proposal were Councillors Myles & Van Der Kley (Liberal) and Councillor Mays (Independent).

Glenbrook, Wentworth Falls, Springwood, Lawson, Leura and Katoomba Chambers will meet with Robert Greenwood (General Manager) next Tuesday 19th April at 11am to seek resolution.

Even though the rate rises are on business's shoulders it will still impact on everyone in the whole community - it could lead to reduced employment and reduced services. The value of contributions that small business makes to the community must be stressed. All Chambers involved have agreed to put \$300 in each to fund a Gazette advertisement. Also noted, was the bad timing of this issue being put to councillors in the business papers just 10 days before a State Election and without warning – no pre discussions with the business community either. There also appears to be confusion in Council over the zones of rates, inconsistencies and arithmetical errors.

Noted, Council does respond to submissions especially if there are a large number of them. Anyone can access the BMCC website and fill in a public submission form.

These Draft Plans can be downloaded from

www.bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/operationalplan

Hardcopies can be viewed at Council Offices and Council Libraries.

Public Exhibition Fri 8 April to Fri 6 May 2011

Post to Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba NSW 2780

Hand deliver to Katoomba or Springwood Council office; or

E-mailed to council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Submissions must be received by 5pm on Friday 6 May 2011.

For more information please contact Corporate Strategy on 4780 5775.

KCCC has A4 posters available to display in your shop or business.

Cllr Mays reiterated that this on public exhibition till 5pm on the 6th May and the volume of submissions is very important – there should be hundreds of submissions from business.

All members are urged to vent their displeasure at the councillors, especially those that voted for the proposal (see above). Members should also be encouraged to contact those councillors that were not present at the meeting to lobby them not to proceed with this proposal. Those councillors were Searle (Labor), Luchetti & Hamilton (Independents) and Clarke (Greens). Contact details for these councillors can be found on the Blue Mountains City Council website.

Discussions continued around concern over the size of the increases and that is it not stepped over time, and some concern as to why some residential properties will have their rates decreased. It was noted that this is a 'rate pegged' Council and that last year they tried to get a special rates variation approved but were knocked back. It is suggested that once business rates are raised then in 18 months time a special rates variation will be sought again and possibly approved, but based on a higher rate. This is encouraging a polarisation between business and residents.

Motion moved by RS:

The KCCC agrees to make a \$300 contribution towards combined Chambers advertisement in Gazette.

Seconded by CT.

Carried unanimously.

Motion moved by TC:

That KCCC should talk to every Chamber in the Blue Mountains, and seek through our local MP, a meeting with the Minister for Local Government.

Agreed by RS, Seconded PP.

Carried.

Meeting to address the issue of rate variation and the following:

Misinformation in the Council report

Misinformation about the services by Council provide

Withdrawal of services i.e. garbage collection for business

Importance of contribution small business makes to communities

5/ 'Wines of the West' Wine Show 2011

Meeting advised of approx. \$7,000 profit share to the KCCC from this year's fund raiser. Terrific result. Notes for next year included more advertising, especially in Sydney to encourage overnight stays, and to start the organising committee meetings in October.

6/ Mural on wall of the 'Corner Roast' shop, corner of Parke Street and Bathurst Road

This mural is not part of the Street Art group that addressed the KCCC a few meetings ago. Permission was not given and it will be going soon.

7/ Town clean-up and employment of P/T gardener/cleaner

TC attending a meeting with Juvenile Justice Dept Friday 15th April to discuss working together on taking young people out with the graffiti cleaning team to show them how to clean graffiti off. This has proven to be an effective experience for young people in the past even after 12 months.

It was noted that Leura Village Association pay a part time gardener or contractor to care for the village gardens with great success. TC will seek some more information and advise KCCC.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Flower Pots in CBD

Working Bee delayed till warmer weather as it's been too wet to sand and varnish. Some plants however will be replaced in the meantime. Meeting agreed to Chamber funding \$100 for plants.

Festival of Walking

The idea of a 'festival of walking' has well received but not progressed. It is suggested that KCCC invite Randall Walker BMTL along to the next meeting to at least talk about the idea and how we might involve City Rail, the Heart Foundation, a list of Mountains walking groups, TAFE and BM Conservation Society to begin with.

The Art Deco Walk

AE advised the flyer is in need of updating.

Motion by AE: Jane Canfield Design should be approached to quote on updating the Art Deco Walk flyer.

Seconded by CT. Carried.

Street Plans noting all street furniture

BK gave to RS for safe keeping a copy made by Architect Phil Nobis of all the existing street furniture in the CBD in 2002.

Bicentennial Committee

Committee met 13th April in Springwood. Moving slowly. Being a committee of Council there seems to be so many rules & regulations. Randall Walker BMTL has now joined the committee. First priority is to find a major sponsor. KCCC needs to be involved at some stage a little later on.

Meeting Closed 7.20pm

Next meeting 12th May at 6pm The Carrington Hotel Library.

Signed by President, Robert Stock..... Date

Minutes by Chrissie Thompson (Secretary): email: secretary@katoombachamber.com