



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP INC.

Protecting the distinctive features of Blackburn since 1987

BULLETIN

Bulleting No. 65

October 2008

Our New Financial Year and AGM

Subscription Renewal

Subscription notice for 2008-2009 financial year is enclosed for members who have not yet paid. Prompt payment, would be much appreciated. Subscriptions can also now be paid by direct debit to the BVRG bank account. See Subscription notice.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Wednesday 12 November at Blackburn Lake Visitors Centre commencing at 8:00pm sharp. If you have an interest in planning outcomes for Blackburn and would like to work with the Committee you are welcome to discuss this with our President, David Morrison (phone after hours 9894 2531). A Committee member nomination form is attached. Agenda items for consideration at the AGM should be sent to David Morrison (bvrg@optusnet.com.au) by 29th October 2008.

Christmas Dinner

The Annual BVRG Dinner will be held on Friday 5 December at Jumbo's Restaurant and is BYO wine only. The dinner is informal and enables members to join with the committee to celebrate the years end. Please RSVP by Sunday 30th November 2008 to Allison Summers (bvrg@optusnet.com.au) or phone 0413 188 049.

Lack of a Development Contribution Plan for Public Open Space in the City of Whitehorse

The City of Whitehorse Chief Executive Officer, Noelene Duff, responded in August to the most recent Combined Residents of Whitehorse Action Group (CROWAG) letter on this topic, as reported in the last Bulletin. While informative on a number of associated matters and providing us with a much clearer picture of the funding available for open space purchases, it unfortunately fails to present arguments as to why the City of Whitehorse, already so far down the list of municipalities, has not embraced a Development Contributions Plan.

A follow up letter from CROWAG has now been sent that asks council, among other things, to detail the amount of public open space that has been acquired in the City of Whitehorse in the last decade and highlights policies of neighbouring councils that have more progressive policies in this area.

The following are excerpts from this letter:

How much new land?

1. How much land has Council purchased for public open space since 1998?
2. How much land has been retained for open space in larger subdivisions since 1998 in lieu of financial contributions?
3. How much open space was added to the City per 1,000 increase in population – allowing for the average occupancy figures for the City?

4. How much has the Council collected by way of financial contributions in lieu of open space [since 1998?] and has this been maintained in a specific Open Space contribution account? What is the current balance?
5. What has the Council budgeted for open space acquisition expenditure in the 2009 budget and beyond?

Development contribution plans?

6. CROWAG asks why Council does not have such a plan when its open space per 1000 persons lags behind the Melbourne average and that of many of our neighbours.

Pro-active response by council?

7. Could Council please provide CROWAG with the updated lot size distribution to current figures to allow a better appreciation of what remains and how strategically important the last few candidate areas are?
8. Can you therefore advise how many of the 3000 new developments built between 2001 and 2006 attracted an open space contribution and how many have contributed to date?
9. Please advise the average ratio of site value to Capital Improved Value for lots lodged for subdivision and for lots larger than 600 sq m in our City?

What is the minimum open space ratio acceptable to council?

10. CROWAG asks what our own planners feel is adequate?
11. What is Council's current policy on Open Space ratios per 1000 new residents for the City?

In Conclusion

CROWAG believes it is imperative that Council adopts a feasible and funded strategy for the provision of Public Open Space in the City of Whitehorse. It is critical that this strategy provide Open Space ratios that adequately provide for the present and future expanded population of the City. This can best be achieved if there is full disclosure of policy and data, and open communication, between the Council executive, State Government and the wider community they represent. This strategy and policy needs to be fully considered and articulated by Council in writing and involve an iterative process of development with the involvement of the community.

Update on ongoing projects

Library forecourt

Following discussions with council regarding the proposed works at the Blackburn Library forecourt, council has decided to put the work on hold until the library is redeveloped. This outcome ensures council resources are not wasted and that the redeveloped library and forecourt will involve community consultation.

The Blackburn and District Environment Protection Fund

The fund which aims to preserve and protect the natural environment within the City of Whitehorse has been entered on the Register of Environmental Organizations and has tax deductibility status from the entry date of 19th June 2008.

The fund Committee of Management (COM) held its first official meeting on 23rd July 2008 and it is developing strategies to inform the community of its objectives and procedures to receive donations.

COM members are David Morrison (Chairman), Andrew Lockwood (Secretary), John Bergin (Treasurer) and committee members Mary Crouch and David Berry.

1 Lake Road

The community was invited to the Blackburn Lake Visitors Centre recently for a celebration of the signing of the three levels of government agreement for the purchase of eight blocks of land along Central and Lake Roads from the REGIS group. The land will form an open space habitat link between Blackburn Lake

Sanctuary and Morton Park. Tony Robinson (State member for Mitcham) and Mike Symon (Federal Member for Deakin) made short speeches and mixed with the local residents who attended.

The Seventh Day Adventist Site - the Concept Plan and Residential Development

In mid-July the church submitted a Concept Plan to Council for a residential subdivision and representatives of community groups (including the BVRG) concerned about the fate of this significant bushland remnant were invited to attend a meeting at Council on Wednesday 6th August to view the plans.

This was part of a consultative mediation process similar to that adopted for 1 Lake Road a couple of years ago and enabled interested community groups to comment on the concept plan with SDA and Council prior to the submission of a formal planning application which included residential development. The BVRG and others made submissions, which were principally concerned with protection of the High Value Vegetation. An associated proposal at the Adventist School for the development of a new oval and ongoing access to the adjacent school make a master plan, including the surrounding area, a matter of high priority.

More recently, advice has been received that the proposed housing subdivision has been shelved and so, at least for the time being, 'we must await further developments.' Advice is that the proposed development of the new oval on the adjacent school site is proceeding.

Supermarket Development - 64-66 South Parade

Construction on this site is expected to commence soon and present indications are that it may be ready to operate towards the middle of 2009. As previously reported, the developer has been most co-operative in incorporating a number of our design suggestions and our main concern remains the adequacy of facilities for traffic flow and parking, especially at peak periods. The proponents justified the arrangements in part by reference to the parking spaces available in nearby areas and it is interesting to note that Council has since, effectively reduced the capacity of the nearest off street car park by converting ten of the seventy-three spaces to permit parking.

The Stately Progress of Planning

Further to our comments in the last Bulletin about the inequities of the planning system, the West of Elgar Residents Association (WERA) relate the experience of their representative at a Tribunal Hearing who referred in his submission to the Box Hill Structure Plan. The WERA representative reported that 'The Chair asked me quite pointedly why he should consider the Structure Plan 2007 when it was not mentioned in the Planning Scheme and had not been endorsed by the Minister?'

While technically correct, this means that the emphasis placed on developing these plans amounts to virtually nothing during the protracted process leading up to their adoption. And it is why we are so concerned that such a process has not even started in those Neighbourhood Centres, which, like Blackburn, do not even have interim height controls.

It also alerts us to the need for the prompt lodgement of completed Structure Plans. It is sometimes the case that the Minister is blamed for delays when council policies remain unreviewed and unsubmitted.

Whitehorse Council Elections

Elections for the new Council take place on Saturday 29th November. Now is the time to quiz candidates on their platforms and the BVRG and CROWAG (Combined Residents of Whitehorse Action Group) will be raising at least one general issue with Central Ward candidates – their attitude towards Whitehorse having a Development Contribution Plan for the acquisition of Open Space.

Zones

We await more information on the form and process associated with introduction of such zoning. City planners appear relaxed about its likely affect on Whitehorse but until a lot more detail is available, experience tells us that all residents should remain on the alert to further proposals for erosion of third party rights.

Stop Press 1

Amendment VC49 was recently approved and details are on the Department's website - <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>, under the Planning section. This is worth a look as VC49 exempts from permit applications those 'minor works' (pergolas, swimming pools, etc) included as some of the 'cutting red tape' measures which we were critical of when first proposed. There are other 'improvements' (i.e. no need for permits for tree pruning on heritage properties and changes covering removal of native vegetation from Vegetation Protection and Significant Landscape Overlay areas). The effects in Whitehorse of all these changes needs to be more thoroughly assessed and it is hoped that Council will contribute to that assessment.

Stop Press 2 – End of an Era

Cr Peter Allan has resigned (effective immediately) as a Whitehorse Councilor after almost nineteen years.

Cr Allan was first elected to the former Nunawading City Council in 1986 and served nearly eight years and was subsequently re-elected to Whitehorse City Council in 1997, 2000, 2003 and November 2005. Cr Allan was also Whitehorse Mayor from 1999 to 2000.

BVRG thank Peter for his support over the years with local issues and wish him well for the future.

There will be no replacement due to the imminent Council elections.

Blackburn Village Residents Group Committee

Correspondence or payments may be delivered to your nearest committee member. If there are any members interested in joining the BVRG committee, please contact the President.

If you wish to discuss any planning issues with the committee, please contact us by email at bvrg@optusnet.com.au or in person – contact details below.

Committee Members

President	David Morrison	Phone 9894 2531	49 Glen Ebor Avenue, Blackburn
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Inclusions

- New Member Form – Application for Membership
- Committee Nomination Form
- Subscription Notice