

GENERAL MEETING
Thursday, 15th June, 2017
Degani Creek, 25 Chute Street, Diamond Creek
12.00 pm

MINUTES

DISTRIBUTION LIST

ANDREW COOPER	ADVICE FOR LIVING	VICTOR WONG	H&R BLOCK
ANDREW GILLARD	DAREBIN TRAVEL	NICHOLE CHAMBERS	BLUSH CUT & STYLE
PHIL MARENDAZ	MARENDAZ CONSULTING		
HEIDI CRUNDWELL	CO-ORDINATOR		
GEORGE & GINA HALAL	PLATTERS CAFÉ & BAR	BERNARD MCCROHAN	GIGLIOLA
EX OFFICIO			
CR P PERKINS	NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL	DARKO POPOVSKI	NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL

1. Welcome

Attendance:

Attendees: Mel Swan (LP Warren), Gina Hallal (Platters Café & Bar), Tania Carnes (property owner), Paige Hastings (Mitre10), C Tsioulos, (Titans) , Kathleen & Bernie Coulthard (Simply Beautiful Decorations), Andrew Cooper (Advice for Living), Darko Popovoski (Nillumbik Shire Council), Jeremy Livingston (Nillumbik Shire Council), Phil Marendaz (Marendaz Accounting), Cr Peter Perkins (Nillumbik Shire Council), Mayor Cr Peter Clarke (Nillumbik Shire Council), Barry Henwood (Valley Financial Services), Lyn White (Mason White McDougall), Gill Da Pasquale (Gigliola), Heidi Crundwell, Peter Koiker (Barry Plant), Andrew Gillard (Darebin Travel)

Apologies: Nichole Chambers (Blush Cut and Style), Victor Wong (H&R Block) – noted that he has given proxy to the Chair

Phil Marendaz opened the meeting by thanking the traders for attending, and special mention to Cr Peter Perkins, Mayor Peter Clarke, and council officers Jeremy Livingston and Darko Popovski.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting –

Minutes of meeting held 9th February, 2017

Proposed that they be accepted: Andrew Cooper, seconded Barry Henwood CARRIED

Minutes of meeting held 5th April, 2017

Proposed that they be accepted: Andrew Gillard, seconded Andrew Cooper CARRIED

3. Special Rates Levy

Introduction and update from the President

Phil Marendaz, stated that he hoped to finish meeting with a clear action plan to achieve successful continuation of the association. He noted that if the scheme is not adopted, in his opinion the association will run out of funds and cease to operate. He added that this meeting is not the one to explore an understanding of the different points of view. This needs to be done at another meeting and part of our action plan to find a successful solution. He will endeavour to chair meeting to that effect.

P Marendaz then provided a recap of the Nillumbik Shire Council meeting Tuesday, 13th June. 71 objections out of 136 rateable properties, which meant that 65 businesses did not object, this represents about 5 to 60% of the value of the funding to be raised from these. 3 objectors spoke at the meeting, P Hastings, C Tsioulos, and T Carnes. P Marendaz spoke in support. B Henwood was scheduled to speak though he thought that it was deferred and did not attend. P Marendaz said that he was disappointed that he heard misleading and

incorrect statements during the objector statements which were in the public domain regarding the management of the association by the current committee and more importantly the financial governance and how it affected his firm. These items will be responded to accordingly, as the committee and he in particular as he was mentioned in the public domain, but in a more informed and measured response. At present a formal request has been made for the audio transcripts so that we can give due consideration. Currently the Nillumbik Shire Council policy is that the audio is recorded for minute taking, but not for the public consumption.

We want a solution focused discussion with our members, however it is fair to say that some of the misleading and misguided comments are having their impact amongst the membership community.

P Marende then distributed a summary of the meetings that have taken place with members (these details are available upon request), and as well much discussion amongst the committee and the sub-committee group. Meetings were also held earlier this year with D Popovski, but in hindsight not enough time was given to explore different levy collection methods. 12 months would be required, so to prepare and then move to an approval stage, a sub-committee was formed and issues such as discounts to the light industrial area and capping were proposed. It was agreed at a vote, to not introduce these and let it fall. As a consequence there has now been a spill out and we need to now pick up the pieces and work through the objections. We had quickly learned that there would be significant objections. From that the Association entered into consultation meetings, and met individually with businesses – Mitre10 and Diamond Creek Tavern in particular.

Nillumbik Shire Council Comments

Cr P Perkins spoke that where the council sit and the Traders Association is supported going forward. Cr P Perkins said he is working hard to make sure that Diamond Creek gets on the map and that he felt the community and council are very supportive whatever direction the Association takes. Everyone benefits as far as he is concerned, and it is unfortunate position where we are at and Nillumbik Shire Council has no room to move at the moment. Council will have no choice but to abandon. He felt that he is not confident that the people who signed the objection letters understood the gravity of the letter that they signed, as it was constructed as, vote yes or no. As the majority voted no, then the decision is deferred for at least one month. Unless the current situation changes, Nillumbik Shire Council have no choice but to abandon the scheme. He is also disturbed by the notion that there is a perception council profit from this venture. He said that if it were to fold, that will be disappointing as they have done fantastic work for the community and businesses, but they do not realise. One particular business could not survive without the support of the community. A post he put on a Facebook Diamond Creek community page, said that they are very supportive of the events and promotions that we have and maybe some did not realise that these are funded by the traders. If the scheme does not continue it will have wide implications, no Santa, Xmas decorations, etc and Nillumbik Shire Council will not pay for any Diamond Creek community events.

Mayor Peter Clarke, said in his experience, retailers do better if they have a good chamber representing them and growing that space. He mentioned that he was surprised when learned how little money generated and do what the Traders Association does, and frankly he thought it was remarkable that we did what we did with the money that we got. He wants to see the chamber grow that, but at the same time would want to ensure value to the members.

He also added that Nillumbik Shire Council does not take a cent out of the funds received, for either Eltham or Diamond Creek, but instead, with limited capacity, get out and do more business related events for the entire shire. He is keen to see this continue to happen over the course of 12 months. He stressed the importance of measuring foot traffic and the marketing activities need to be measurable and make a difference. With regards to the arts project Cube Z, it does not surprise him that it is controversial because artistic things usually are.

Members need to feel an ownership of equity and value out of those projects and some people decide, if it is not working for me we can stop it, and they (the objectors) have done this. It appears that there is enough support to say that they want to change how things are done and in different ways.

The next Diamond Creek Traders meeting, the committee need to decide what is the program, how much will it cost to deliver this program, and what is possible to achieve with no, or limited, funding.

Cr P Clarke also mentioned that the Association

- should be putting more pressure on Council to deliver more.
- determine what is the retail offer over the next five years.
- how do we grow what we have got,

- urban upgrades better,
- develop an event attraction strategy (like the Jazz Festival).

Cr P Clarke believes that the base is too small to make a real difference and need to get a few people in the room to work that out, and he mentioned that the Shire of the CEO, Mark Stoermer, has offered to assist. M Stoermer has offered, through Cr P Clarke, to sit with the traders. Commentary is an opportunity rather than an obstacle he added, and today is not about trying to get an absolute resolution, but instead get a process in place.

He also added that commentary from one objector to shut the whole thing down is short sighted.

In his opinion what needs to be proposed and addressed:

- Need to resolve engagement of volunteers or employee that can makes things happen,
- Association need short term functioning that ensure that that continues - 6 to 8 weeks,
- One meeting with all traders in it and ask "what is your perfect world going forward?"
- Want people to feel engaged and supported, understand what is the 5 year plan, opportunity and get on with it.

P Marendaz added that whilst this situation is unfortunately it is healthy and would like to go on the record as saying that any business has to face the 'why does it exist' scenario from time to time. He believed that our vision and objectives are strong and for that reason himself, and Vice President Andrew Cooper were on the Mayors doorstep, within three weeks of taking office. He welcomes the suggestion of a further meeting with traders and discuss how we go forward, the offer of the CEO in attendance will help to get balance in the room.

D Popovoski mentioned that there was an administrative error in counting the objections, and one was in favour of the scheme. Following being alerted to the error, he checked with governance to enquire if the public record could be amended and he was advised that that is not possible. He formally apologised for the administrative error and to his knowledge it is just one.

It was noted that there is a 21 day notice requirement under the Model Rules as this will be a Special Meeting. IT was suggested, the Association call the meeting dates as soon as possible so as not to delay the statutory process. Lock away the dates, then work out the format which should include:

Objectives – items to note:

- Do members feel disenfranchised and not happy about something,
- How does the Association get them back on board,
- Calling a special meeting all 136 and putting a further report on the last three years,
- Start conversations what was good bad and indifferent that people liked, did not like,
- Do we want to proceed and with a funded scheme.
- Pick an option, this is what numbers mean, etc how do you feel about that, and
- Outside of that resolve position and
- Take it back to a second vote.
- Association can exist without the Council

T Carnes said that the businesses she spoke with and presented them with an objection letter, she personally engaged with everybody and they knew what they were signing. She warned that if you open it up again, you run the risk of getting more businesses objecting and failing a second time.

C Tsioulos, – suggested that you need to re-engage and distribute a letter that has information on it. She acknowledged that some read it and others do not. C Tsioulos suggested that minutes of meetings be made available on the website. P Marendaz agreed to look into it.

P Marendaz said that he would doubt if we could get 70 to 80 business owners in a room, and he like others, does not have the time to deliver face to face. To combat the number of letters is beyond the capability of those on the committee. It was felt to get 20% of members to a meeting would be an enormous success.

P Hastings spoke to her objection of the fee that they are currently paying and it does not deliver value.

B Henwood spoke and said that we need to determine do people not want to be in it, or is about the cost. If the members understand the value then they are prepared to pay some money. He does not think that dissatisfaction of the work done by the Association in the past is driving a large majority of the traders, it is more about do they want to pay money or not and that is how it was pitched.

A Gillard said to his recollection the Association has been around for 30 years and it started with nothing. At that time there were many empty shops, and now there is one empty shop. (note there are three across 136) Our Association pulls together the community and business, they go hand in glove. It is great that the CEO has offered to get involved and assist.

P Marendaz then spoke again and suggested that there is a committee meeting and that the three objectors who spoke at the council meeting be invited to speak to the committee about their concerns. He felt that there were misleading statements out now in the public domain and he wants these concerns that they have to be taken seriously and if there is mismanagement or malpractice that they are aired and given their due serious concerns. The accusations against his practice he felt were unwarranted. T Carnes said she will not be attending any further Association meetings.

Cr P Clarke said that the Nillumbik Shire Council would like to see more retail activation and support for local economy and his Council are looking at ways to generate this income.

B Henwood, addressed P Hastings, , C Tsioulos, and T Carnes and asked them are they prepared to pay a fee or you don't pay, to gauge their ongoing support. P Hastings said that Mitre10 would be pleased to, and also come to arrangements with regards to sponsoring to get naming rights. But felt that the free structure is incorrect, those who own lots of land are taxed. C Tsioulos and T Carnes did not comment.

Proposed – PMarendaz.

Call Special General Meeting within 35 days to discuss future of the Association, and create an agenda in consultation with Mayor Peter Clarke. Call the meeting

Seconded Andrew Gillard. CARRIED

L White, mentioned that she felt this current situation does not make the Association look united, but it is important that the books are balanced. She further added that people who do not participate on the committee they have no idea what is actually done by the committee or the Association. It was mentioned during the meeting that no one reads their emails from the Marketing co-ordinator.

P Marendaz then took the opportunity to say that the Treasurer, B McCrohan has resigned due to work commitments. That the Association has not had a Secretary for well over 10 years. With this new engagement with traders he is looking forward to more assistance.

5. Marketing Report

H Crundwell reported on the following:

Mothers' day competition – just under 800 entries received from 41 businesses who participated. We have gained just under 500 email addresses to add to our mailchimp. Winner Carol Lee, posted on social media. Carol will have her shopping spree on Monday 26th June.

Easter – 293 maps were sold and 38 businesses participated. Sent out survey, had 11 responses.

Diamond Creek Town Fair – had conversations with a trader in Elizabeth Street to see if there was any interest in a car mechanics competition or similar at this year's town fair. From these discussions it was felt that it would not be supported. Last year considerable effort went into the Chute Street display, custom cars and penny farthings, with little impact – the people who attend just seem to want Show Bags and Rides. Cube Z will host an exhibition – at minimal cost to the Association.

Artists On Show – this new initiative is in its second series and we have eight businesses participating, ten artists. Promotion has been via social media (Facebook), brochure distributed through the shops and Visitor Information Stalls. This is now on hold.

Mailchimp – we now have approximately 800 email addresses to the Diamond Creek eNewsletter to residents.



Website – making minor amendments to the site.

Social Media idea / competition – the result of a meeting on Thursday 8th, H Crundwell met with Peter Koklier from Barry Plant yesterday, fleshing out the idea.

6. Council Officers Response – covered above

7. General Business

Finances

P Marendaz distributed Profit and Loss to 31st May, 2017.

Accompanying the reports he tabled copies of the Bendigo Bank Statement to 31st May, 2017.

- He stated that the Meeting expenses which was raised by an objector at the Council Meeting included the Diamond Creek Traders Business Breakfast network function.
- He also clarified that he has no administrative rights of MYOB
- Previously the accounts were audited by Yarra Group.
- Previously, our association did not own the general ledger system, but we now do and we upgraded, migrated your firm is not the administrator

It was proposed that the Financial Reports be approved:

Proposed B Henwood, Seconded A Gillard.

Meeting closed at 2.00pm

Next Meeting **TBA**