

MORNINGTON PENINSULA RATEPAYERS & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg. No. A0034245B.
PO BOX 4087, ROSEBUD VIC 3939

Newsletter – July 2014

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Tribute to Roger Lambert

Roger Lambert who was an active and much respected member of our Association passed away on Friday 23 May. He was a member of our Committee and Vice President until he could no longer be active because of his battle with cancer.

I will personally miss Roger. His support and informed advice was invaluable as were his many mischievous and humorous comments.

He was born in England in 1938 and arrived in Australia in 1967. Roger was actively involved in the broader community being a member of friends and environmental groups in Mornington. He had a personal interest in horse racing, being involved as an owner and member of the local racing clubs.

The tribute to Roger in the Southern Peninsula News noted he was a regular interjector at Council meetings. Only last week I was listening to a March 2013 recording of a public Council meeting. After a vote by Councillors I could hear Roger's voice in the background loudly saying "You're a liar Cr Dixon." (Cr Dixon had made an election pledge "No costly and environmentally damaging pool on Rosebud's foreshore and better management of our \$38 million debt to ease pressure on our rates".)

Roger was clearly upset when Cr Dixon did not vote in accordance with his election pledge to the community. Being a very honest person he openly made his opposition to the deviousness and misleading behaviour of some Councillors and officers quite clear. His comment will live on the Council's records for prosperity.

Your Committee is considering an appropriate tribute to Roger and we hope to provide you with more information in our next newsletter.

Proposed Pool & Spa at Point Nepean

The State Government has unveiled plans for the Point Nepean Development.

The development includes a Health and Wellness Centre, including a hot spring spa and a 25-metre pool. This will severely impact on the patronage of the Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre.

We have not had the opportunity to review the plans in detail but we understand that, on an initial perusal, the Nepean Historical Society and the Nepean Conservation Society are pleased that the development respects the environment and heritage of Point Nepean.

The plans can be viewed on the website at:

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/forestry-and-land-use/visiting-parks-and-forests/point-nepean-national-park>

We note that **Mr Alex Atkins**, who was the council officer promoting SPA, was a **representative on the government's Point Nepean Project Advice Forum**.

The following **questions must be answered by the Shire**:

What liaison was there between the Shire and the Department of Environment Planning and Infrastructure which was well aware that the Shire was planning its own massive pool in Rosebud?

When did the Shire become aware that a 25-metre pool and Wellness Centre would be included in the development of Point Nepean?

Why did the Shire appoint architects to prepare proposals for SPA without taking into consideration the possibility of a pool being constructed at Point Nepean when Rye, Blairgowrie, Sorrento and Portsea are considered to be the primary catchment for SPA?

Were the SPA consultants advised of the Point Nepean Development and why was their financial analysis not reviewed when the information became available? Will the financial analysis now be reviewed?

Why did Dr Michael Kennedy replace Mr Atkins who had been in the role of promoting SPA for many years with Ms Kearney, who subsequently resigned from the Shire?

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

2 PM MONDAY, 18 AUGUST 2014

Guest Speaker: Nepean Ratepayers Assoc.

Rosebud Library Meeting Room

Rosebud Central, McDowell Street, Rosebud

(Melway Map 158 Ref D12)

If you want to hear what is happening on the Peninsula from Safety Beach to Sorrento-Portsea come to our meeting

YET AGAIN THE SHIRE RIPS US OFF

There will be an **average rate increase of 5.9%** over last year. **This is 18% higher** than the Council said it would increase your rates in its 2012 four-year plan. As usual there is plenty of the usual "spin" attempting to justify the increase in Peninsula Wide, however the "Rates Barometer" below shows just how we are being ripped off by the Council's rates increases over the last 10 years.

The rate rise over the last 10 years is ridiculous and we are simply being ripped off because of council inefficiency and poor management. Over the last 10 years the rise is:

- four times the increase in cost of living (CPI)
- three to four times the cost of wage increases and rises in pensions, and
- three times the cost that the Municipal Association of Victoria estimates that councils' costs have actually increased.

The only items (from approximately 50 items which the Bureau of Statistics measures) which have risen higher than our Council rates in this period are water/sewerage and possibly electricity. Unlike these items which have been affected by the impacts of drought and renewable energy etc. councils do not have any excuse.

RATE RISES NEED TO BE CAPPED

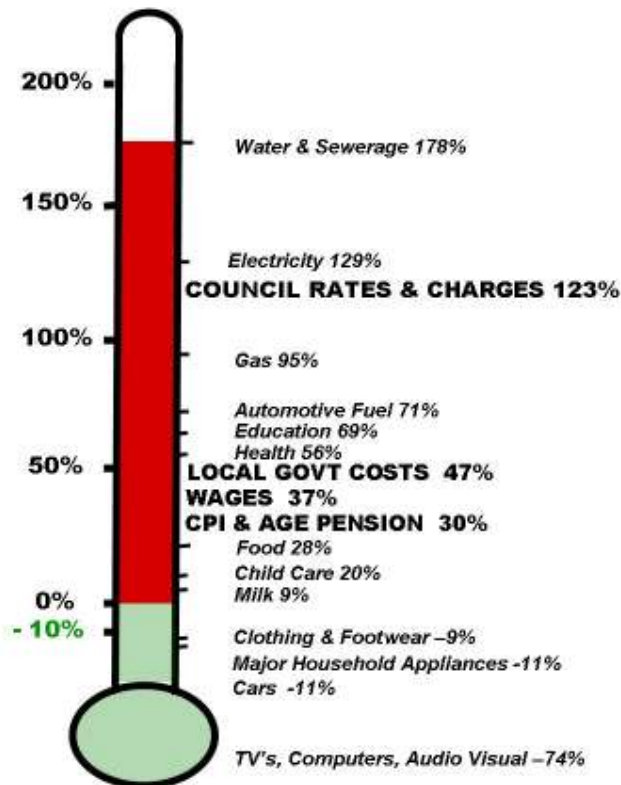
Our Association is not party political and we do not support a political party. However we support the policy announced by Labor leader Daniel Andrews who said "Victorian councils will be forced to cap their rates at the consumer price index and justify any rises if Labor wins the November election."

"Councils which hike rates will be accountable for how they spend ratepayer funds" and "councils will be forced to limit rate rises and detail where every dollar will be spent, because ratepayers deserve a fair go," he said.

It's about time someone did something about the excessive rate rises and forces councils to be more cost efficient and stick to the essentials rather than wasting our money on their pet projects.

COUNCIL RATES BAROMETER

Price increases over 10 years



Product prices source: ABS 6410

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RED HILL BY-ELECTION

Red Hill residents have clearly indicated something is wrong with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.

Less than 18 months ago only three candidates stood for election in this Ward. This time there are 17 candidates which is three times more than the number which has stood in 17 years and in the five elections since the formation of the Shire, way back in the 1990s.

This, combined with the number of active community groups on the Peninsula which is possibly a greater number than in any other Council in Victoria, clearly indicates dissatisfaction with the current administration and it is time for a change.

Our Association is concerned that some candidates may have a personal agenda which does not put the interests of the Red Hill community first.

While at the time of writing we do not have the candidates' election statements; those that we are aware of are consistent with the Association's views (in alphabetical order):

- Neil Adams (is well known to our Association and is involved with the Friends of Rosebud Foreshore with whom we have a close affiliation. Mark has been a previous councillor.
- Leigh Eustace (a previous councillor who had the reputation of being one of the hardest working councillors for his community).
- Mark Fancett (as then Vice President of the Peninsula Preservation Group) lobbied against the proposal to locate a landfill on Arthurs Seat.
- Peter Holloway (Peter is well known to our Association having been a joint supporter on inappropriate planning issues at VCAT and other Peninsula environmental and heritage issues).
- Tim Woods (a retired County Court judge who is a permanent resident of Red Hill and who will vigorously represent the Ward and is concerned with the deterioration of the infrastructure and some of Council's handling of high profile issues).

We have been led to believe Cr Gibb has been lobbying candidates, no doubt to shore up his ruling group. We hope that you do not support these candidates.

SPIRALLING COST OF SPA - NOW \$60 MILLION

Can we afford SPA? Our Association has previously said that we support a pool for Rosebud but not on the foreshore, however with the cost of SPA spiralling out of control (no

thanks to Cr Gibb) your committee has now added the requirement that **“provided it is affordable”**.

The Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre-Memorial Hall project **will cost \$60 million** and not \$40 million as claimed by the Shire (The Leader, 17 June 2014) because:

- the \$40 million cost is based on March 2012 pricing and by the time it is built in 2017-18 there will be another 10-15% (\$4-6 million) in price escalation;
- the Rosebud Activity Centre Structure Plan which has been **approved** by the Council requires Point Nepean Road to be realigned in front of the SPA-Hall project to allow for parking adjacent to the complex rather than in the central median strip (\$10-15 million); and
- approximately \$15-20 million in interest on a loan which will have to be repaid by the ratepayers.

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* Chief Executive Officer Michael Kennedy is responsible for “ensuring that the decisions of the Council are implemented without undue delay”. This will cost a further \$10-15 million.

The project's total cost is now \$60 million.

SHIRE MANAGEMENT OF OUR WASTE

Committee members Debbie Peters and Graeme Morrison are representing our Association at the Shire's forum on waste management.

Debbie reports that over two evenings in May around 100 people from across the Peninsula met to participate in the Shire's review of the existing Waste Management Strategy.

There were initial opportunities to voice numerous concerns and questions about recycling, dumped rubbish, tip fees, hard and green waste collection, better education and alternate technologies. However, it became clear that Council had set a specific agenda for the community consultation which was to only consider options for future household landfill waste.

The Rye Tip has capacity for another three years (approx.) and, as a three year lead time is needed to implement any future landfill strategy, time is of the essence.

Instead of broad based discussion and idea generation, Council presented four predetermined options. Three of these involved developing the final 'cell' at the Rye Tip either in full or the Eastern or Western sections alone. This could provide an additional 7 to 15 years of landfill space. The fourth option is to truck our waste to a commercial site off the Peninsula. Most councils do this as they do not have approved tip space of their own.

The issues are very complex and costing information was approximate, however participants did their best to work through the issues. Following much consideration, group discussion and review of the information, a number of instant polls were held. The eventual results were surprising. Subject to the costs being similar the results were to fully:

- develop the remaining Rye Tip space -- 50%; or
- truck the waste off the Peninsula -- 50%.

It should be noted that the community also made it clear that moving to alternate waste technologies, continued advances in resource recovery and recycling, together with improved green and kitchen waste management, should remain priorities for our Waste Management Strategy.

Council now intends to develop a new Strategy so we must now wait for release of the new Draft which may not be until late 2014.

SHIRE COMMUNITY ANIMAL SHELTER

The Shire's community animal shelter team comprises a mix of permanent part-time and casual staff, which equates to two full-time staff working seven days a week. They are helped by a dedicated group of community volunteers. The Shelter is the only one on the Peninsula and the nearest R.S.P.C.A. Shelter is at Pearcedale. The Shire's team do amazing and often heartbreaking work, with very little funding, and must be commended.

Some of our members put in submissions into this year's Budget, for funding to be allocated specifically to advertise that the shelter accepts surrendered pets at no cost to the owner, and that it has pets for adoption. This would help reduce dumping of pets and avoid undue cruelty. The Shire would save money by reducing Ranger call-outs to pick up wandering abandoned pets.

We are pleased to see that an excellent article has been included in the latest Peninsula Wide, and hope that it will be passed on to local newspapers.

Unfortunately the Shire has decided to charge a \$50 surrender fee. Our streets are littered with dumped rubbish by people who do not wish to pay tip fees. Will this also happen to unwanted pets? Shame on our Shire. It already makes a sizeable sum on pet registrations. It prides itself on its Pet + Pony Expo each year.

The Shire Community Animal Shelter operates from outdated facilities that need urgent upgrading. Why is it treated differently from all our other assets (sports pavilions, halls etc)? It must be included in future Budget funding and in the forward planning time frame.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST - CR PITTOCK

It is understood that the case against Cr Pittock will be held in the Magistrate's Court in August despite the Local Government Inspectorate wanting to defer the case until the end of the year.

It is an absolute disgrace that Cr Pittock has not been fully able to participate in Council matters **for two years** including this year's budget and the rate increase.

After distribution of preferences he obtained the most votes based on the proportional representation system applicable to the Ward. It is a failure of “natural justice” to deny these voters' rights. The Minister for Local Government refused to intervene to help resolve the issue of Cr Pittock not being able to vote on SPA.

FINANCE REPORT

Bank account balance (Nov AGM)	\$1777.40
Income/Expenses to Nov to July	\$431.43
Bank account balance (4 July 2014)	\$2,218.83

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