

# Middle Head Consultative Committee

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## Adopted Minutes for 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 6:00 Mon 27<sup>th</sup> August 2001

### ***a. Attendance***

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#### **Present:**

John Allen, Tim Allerton, Peter Caldwell, Phil Cannane, John Carmichael, Edward Elsom, Jill L'Estrange, Don Goodsir, Patricia Harvey, Audrey Lenning, Jillian Skinner MLA, Martin Skipper

Geoff Bailey, Nick Hollo, Bob Clark, Colin Menzies

#### **Apologies:**

Jean Alexander, Peter Deakin, Virginia Howard

#### **Documents:**

Letters from and to HMAS Penguin neighbours

Revised Short-term Interim Use Policy and covering letter

Letter: Geoff Bailey to Mosman Council re Penguin Path

### ***b. Minutes of the last meeting***

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The draft minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of Committee had been circulated. The minutes were accepted with three amendments:

- Jill L'Estrange was present;
- The reference to Tony Adams should be to Tony Underwood;
- The word "sho" in the Workshop dot point should be "show"

### ***c. Trust activities***

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#### **Exhibition update**

Consultative Committee members were advised that the Exhibition is extended until 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Cockatoo Island tours have been launched on Saturdays and Sundays. When the Exhibition closes, the Trust hopes to use the material to set up local exhibitions at Chowder Bay (with a reading room) and at other places such as shopping centres.

#### **Penguin Path**

Colin Menzies reported that the meeting with neighbouring landowners was held on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July with Consultative Committee members present as planned (Don Goodsir and Audrey Lenning). Subsequently, the residents had jointly signed a letter to the interim Trust (and other bodies) protesting against the proposal. Geoff Bailey and Nick Hollo had met the residents a second time and discussed their concerns. The residents' letter and Geoff Bailey's response were tabled. The Trust had recently received approval for the path from Defence.

Don Goodsir reported that it was fortuitous that the meeting with the residents occurred on a wet day so drainage problems could be seen. He commended the Trust planners for listening carefully to the residents – the matter was very well handled in the circumstances. Some

residents asked that the gate at the bottom be relocated to prevent people inadvertently walked into their properties.

There was a brief discussion on the location of the dividing fence. Don Goodsir reported that a neighbour had told him at the meeting that Defence deliberately erected the boundary fence within Defence land so the private landholders would have a pathway to Balmoral Beach. Geoff Bailey said that the Trust had no knowledge of this claim. The Trust had surveyed the southern and western boundary (Balmoral) fences. The southern fence encroached approximately 5 metres inside HMAS Penguin while the western fence was almost exactly on the boundary

Council representatives were asked how Council's processing of the letter from the Trust was proceeding. John Carmichael replied a report was being prepared and that that he had that day written to the Trust inviting them to a meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee on Tuesday next week (4<sup>th</sup> Sept) to discuss the matter. He asked whether the possible environmental impacts had been documented. Geoff Bailey replied that the Trust had drafted a report for Defence and they had then prepared their own assessment. The committee agreed that Defence should be asked to make their assessment public.

John said that the works on Council managed land could cost \$20,000-\$25,000 and Council did not have any funds. Geoff Bailey responded that he did not think the cost would be that high based on estimates for other works, but he was willing to discuss meeting costs with the Council. John added that Council was also looking at the issue of signage for the walk. It was noted that signs on the alternate walk were regularly pulled down, apparently to hide the path.

Patricia Harvey asked that the Trust ensure that building works did not result in sediment being washed into Balmoral Beach. Geoff Bailey assured her that the Trust would have adequate measures such as silt traps to avoid this. Mayor Harvey asked that straw bales be avoided, as they tended to cause weeds.

Geoff Bailey said that it would be efficient if the one contractor were to build the path across to Balmoral, and asked Council if they could expedite their deliberations. Committee members endorsed this.

John Allen asked if there were safety issues in the path's crossing of Middle Head Road. Geoff Bailey said that the Trust had just appointed a traffic consultant and his first task would be to look at that. John Carmichael said that a pedestrian crossing would need to go to Council's traffic committee. Geoff replied that pedestrian crossings were not necessarily the safest alternative because they lulled people into a false sense of security.

Asked on the timelines, Geoff said that the construction would take about eight weeks (without rain) and it was hoped to open the whole Chowder Bay – Balmoral path in early November.

### **Short-term leasing policy**

Comments from Consultative Committee members on the draft have been collated and a revised policy issued. The gym at North head was the first application of the policy and a number of inquiries had been received since it was advertised in the Manly Daily two weeks previously. The gym use would test the circulated Revised Policy before it was finally adopted.

There was discussion over how groups might apply for interim use of a building. Geoff Bailey said that this was not being encouraged because the Trust simply did not have the staff to show people around buildings, repair those buildings to usable state, or assess applications for use. Leasing buildings for interim uses was not a priority of the Trust. Examination of a range of Trust buildings showed that nearly all were unsuitable for immediate occupancy with a lot of work being needed. Services for the sites were still being documented and repairs only starting. The needs of the Evening College raised at the last Consultative Committee meeting could not be met from current buildings without significant work being done.

Nick Hollo said that the Trust's priority in works (other than urgent works to stop deterioration) was increasing access to the sites through the opening of paths. This was essential for effective

participation in planning and did not pre-empt outcomes because the paths could easily be removed.

Ed Elsom said that the Revised Policy still contained a statement about unsolicited offers which was unclear. Geoff Bailey said he would review the wording.

#### ***d. Values & Objectives Workshop***

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Colin Menzies reported that the plan for the Middle Head workshop on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept would be finalised next week after the North Head workshops this weekend. He outlined the planned North Head process and summarised current thinking for the Middle Head process (see last minutes). It was agreed that the North Head plan would be sent to committee members.

Committee members made a number of suggestions:

- It was best to start with an overview of the site and issues.
- Possibly use the library at the School of Pacific Administration (SOPA) complex as the base / workshop location for the day.
- Make people aware of what the Burra process is (circulate information to the committee, too).
- Coordinate with NPWS and HMAS Penguin (this was underway).
- Use Mosman Council library and the BridgePoint shopping centre to promote the day.
- Prepare an e-mail flyer that Consultative Committee members can send on to their contacts.

Colin Menzies said that he would circulate the committee with a plan next week after reviewing the North Head day, and asked members to respond with comments.

#### ***e. Mosman Council Sports Centre Proposal***

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##### **Introduction**

Mosman Council has circulated throughout Mosman the *Mosman News* with a proposal that a Sports Centre be built on Trust land at Georges Heights, with the land ceded to the management of Council. Council has verbally advised the Trust that its intention is to consider submitting the proposal to the Trust after analysing responses to a survey circulated with the *Mosman News*. The proposal is one to the community of Mosman not the Trust. The Trust sought the Consultative Committee's advice on the proposal.

##### **Summary Of Discussion**

As members of the Consultative Committee commented on the development, it became clear that all those not from Council shared common concerns about Council's actions. While each member had individual concerns, the following summarises the main points raised in discussion:

1. Council is seeking to advance a specific proposal for one particular part of the Trust's lands prior to the thorough investigation and community acceptance of planning principles for the peninsula as a whole.
2. The planning principles need to reflect the importance of these lands on the harbour for the whole of Sydney.
3. The specific Council proposal was not so much the issue, rather the manner in which the Council has attempted to utilise the pre-election climate and sever a part of the Trust's lands without adequate regard to the whole area.
4. It was irresponsible of Council to ask the community to endorse a concept that was merely an artist's impression, without any studies of feasibility or impacts.

5. It was inappropriate for Council to adopt a lobbying approach, bypassing the Trust's planning, rather than encouraging the Mosman community to participate in the planning process.
6. The Trust continues to receive proposals for particular sites and they all have to wait until the Trust has developed a consistent basis, acceptable to the broad community, for evaluating them.
7. The Trust should not prepare its plans by reacting to individual proposals. It must develop planning policies acceptable to the broad community and consistently apply them.
8. Mosman will benefit more than any other area from the Trust because it has greatest access to the land; grabbing land for a sport centre is greedy and reflects poorly on the community.
9. It is wrong for Council to put local use above the national significance of the land. While it could be expected that Council would want to protect local interests, it should not push for these to be paramount or considered first.
10. Council was deliberately secretive in developing the proposal; not informing the Consultative Committee at its last meeting even though printing must have been well advanced at that time.
11. Publicising a poor proposal so widely put the Trust in a difficult position because it raises expectations of a particular outcome before options and alternatives have been widely discussed.
12. Council's actions were polarising the community rather than helping people appreciate other views and seek consensus, making sporting groups look selfish whereas they are mainly local residents.
13. The survey should not have been labelled "Sydney Harbour Federation Trust" giving the impression that it was a Trust document. This was seen as deliberately misleading.
14. The survey questions were deliberately worded to achieve desired results and so the survey is worthless as an expression of public opinion. It was a wasted opportunity.
15. The role of the Consultative Committee is to help develop a holistic view collaboratively. Why does Mosman Council attend if it does not want to work in this spirit?
16. Council has wasted public funds.

Other matters that worried the committee were:

- Council has not honoured its commitments made with the Headland Preservation Group when jointly lobbying for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust legislation.
- Council has betrayed the work of the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores Committee.
- Naming the centre was a ridiculous and inappropriate way of trying to make a vague concept more concrete.
- The corridor vegetation access sketched in the plan was impractical – it would rapidly become weed infested if under Council management – Council's record of vegetation management at Rawson Park was woeful.
- Councillors and Senior Council staff were soliciting survey responses in local shopping centres like people collecting signatures on a petition.

In response during the discussion, Mayor Harvey, Councillor Skipper and John Carmichael made a number of comments:

- It was only a proposal that came out of the Trust's suggestion that building netball courts on Rawson Park be postponed until its planning was further advanced, because of the importance of the courts' location.
- This was merely asking for something in return for not proceeding with those five courts – a swap basically.

- It was a simple proposal to move netball courts a couple of hundred metres down the hill, bulldoze the Commando buildings except the hall, and later extend the oval.
- Council has already advised the Consultative Committee of its intentions through circulating MosPlan extracts.
- Council doesn't expect anything outside the proper planning process.

### **Conclusion**

After extensive discussion, the committee concluded that the Council action was a premeditated and deliberate effort to undermine the Trust's planning by lobbying for a premature decision to meet local sporting needs rather than the objectives required under the Trust's legislation.

The committee discussed how the Trust should respond. It urged that the priority be to keep the planning process on track with the workshops on 30<sup>th</sup> September, and for the Trust not to be diverted by this proposal. The Trust was urged to write to Mosman Council explaining the difficulties seen in Council's approach and asking Council to cooperate in the Trust's planning processes rather than initiating its own. This letter should be circulated to all members of the Consultative Committee.

### ***f. Next meeting***

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Future meeting times were set for the **Third Monday each month**. It was suggested that a meeting might be needed next month for workshop planning month, and committee members were asked to reserve **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September at 6 pm**.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.