



MORNINGTON PENINSULA RATEPAYERS' & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

Reg. No. A0034245B.

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NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2018

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have continued to represent Ratepayers over the last few months. While further details are provided later in this Newsletter some of the items include:

- A submission to the Council on the proposed 2018-19 budget. The Government has pegged the rate increase at 2.25% for next year, but the Shire proposes to increase the waste service charge and the charge for the green bin by a massive 10%.
- Sent a letter to the Government lobbying for improved public transport on the Peninsula.
- In conjunction with Ratepayers Victoria submitted our concerns with the Government's proposed new Local Government Act.
- When asked by ratepayers we provided advice on inappropriate development e.g. over development of residential sites.
- Advised Council in writing that our rates should not be used to help pay for the proposed Stony Point to Cowes car ferry.
- Continued to argue against paying insurance to the Shire when using the Rosebud Library meeting room.
- Lobbied for Improved road signs and clearing of vegetation in front of existing road signs.
- Made a submission to the Shire supporting retention of the "Green Wedge" zone.
- Monitored the progress and helped organisations like Peninsula Speaks with the opposition against three storeys on the Peninsula.
- Attended Council meetings when items of importance to ratepayers were being considered.
- Monitored and advocated for the rate cap to ensure that ratepayers' views are being listened to.

While there are a number of Ratepayer and Action Groups on the Peninsula are only concerned with single issues within their particular location. We are one of the few organisations which endeavour to monitor and hold the Council accountable on its budget and planning to ensure we are all getting value for money.

The Council where knows we are watching them and we are convinced that this makes them more concerned with it Council does with our money.

We need your continued support to help us continue as a viable organisation and welcome any suggestions.

John Cain, President

.HOW YOUR RATES ARE CALCULATED

How your annual total rates and charges are calculated can be confusing. It is the total of four different items detailed below:

1. A residential rate which is based on the Capital Improved Value (CIV) of your property, that is, on the value that the Council estimates your house and land are worth. Next financial year the rate will be \$171.67 for every \$100,000 dollars your property is worth.

The increase on this year's rates has been capped by the government at 2.25%.

Until the government set the rate cap the annual increase was about 6%, however since it was introduced three years ago the increase has been reduced to about 2% to 2.5% a year.

2. A Waste Service Charge which covers rubbish bin collection, disposal, street sweeping, footpath sweeping plus street and drain litter collection. This charge does not come under the government's rate cap and will be increased by a whopping 23.43% to \$241 next financial year. More about this later.

3. Fire Services Levy. This is not a Council charge but is collected on behalf of the Victorian Government and replaces the fire services levy which was included in your insurance when you took out a private insurance policy on your property. The way you now pay the levy was recommended by the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. That is, rather than contributing through insurance premiums, the property-based levy is now collected with council rates.

The levy for residential property for 2018-19 is a fixed charge of \$109 plus 5.8 cents for every \$1,000 your property is worth (i.e. the CIV). If the value of your property is \$500,000 then you will pay \$109 + 500 x 5.8 cents = \$138

4. Optional Green Waste Bin. If you have the optional green waste bin then this year you had to pay \$135 for each fortnightly collection. We could not find the fee in the budget papers for the next year but the Shire has allowed for the revenue to increase by 10.41%.

Despite the introduction of rate capping the Shire has continued to reduce its debt from \$35 million at the end of the 2014-15 financial year to an anticipated \$17.7 million by June 2019.

YOUR GARBAGE & GREEN BIN CHARGES

10.15% Increase next year

We made a submission to the Council outlining our concern with the increase of 10.15%. We are aware that the cost increase is not necessarily under Council's total control because of China's recent refusal to accept low grade waste from other countries, which includes Australia, however we suggested:

"The Shires ball tampering with waste charges is not cricket."

The Council advises the government that it's cost to collect waste services is only \$89 yet they are going to charge us charge \$241. We suggested that this is tampering with the ball and is not cricket.

We also mentioned that a fixed fee, unlike the principle of paying rates on the value of your property does not help those less well off in our community living in the lower valued properties as they have to pay the same as those living in multi-million dollar properties. Our suggestion was that like rates, the waste service charge should be based on the CIV value of a property

SHIRES PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2018-19

The Shire expects to have a total income of \$235 million and to spend \$210 million which gives a surplus of \$25 million.

What is the Shire proposing to spend our rates on next year? Big ticket items include:

Employees	\$76.5 million
Property and buildings	\$19.6 million
Recreational facilities	\$8.6 million
Roads	\$5.1 million
Parks and open spaces	\$7.4 million
Consultants	\$4.5 million
Drainage	\$2.8 million
Computers and telecoms.	\$2.0 million
Footpaths and cycleways	\$1.3 million
Library books	\$0.9 million

Total full time staff next financial year will be 728 which includes 39 casuals. There is a reduction of 11 full time staff next financial year.

RE-APPOINTMENT OF THE SHIRE CEO

The Shire CEO, Carl Cowie's is appointed for 4 years. His contract terminates in November this year. On 12 June 2018 Council decided to re-advertise his position. (A condition of the contract, and this condition was also in the contract for Dr Michael Kennedy the previous CEO, is that the CEO has to be advised 6 months prior to the end of his contract whether or not the Council will be re-advertising the position.)

During his term Carl has been very accessible to our Association, has been willing to meet with us whenever requested and Carl and the Council have supported a number of our concerns including: opposing three storeys; preserving Tootgarook Swamp; the finalising of the Green Wedge Plan; more efficient management of the Shire's recreational activities including Pelican Park; significant improvement in the Shire's transparency and openness in response to our requests for information, and significant cost savings with the items such as the Shire's insurance.

Despite the introduction of rate capping the Shire debt has been reduced from \$35 million in the 2014-15 to an anticipated \$17.7 million by next June.

An issue with some is whether Carl's acceptance to attend Lindsay Fox's birthday party cruise in the Mediterranean was appropriate. He took leave and paid his own fare to get there.

UPDATE ON THREE STOREY HOUSING

A big thank you to the members of our Association who letterboxed the petition opposing the increase by the Government in the Shire from two to three storeys up to 11 metres high.

Peninsula Speaks estimates that over 10,000 petitions have been delivered to Parliament.

What happens now

The Shire has now completed the Housing and Settlement Strategy which demonstrates that the Peninsula can cope with our share of population growth without the need for three storeys.

The next step is for the Shire to advise the Minister for Planning that the Strategy is complete and request that he formally approve commencement of the implementation of an Amendment to the Planning Scheme. If the Minister supports the request then this is the start of a long drawn out process which can take up to 18 months including exhibiting the proposed Amendment for public comment. We will keep you informed of the progress.

WHAT IS GREEN WEDGE?

For many years State Governments and the Shire have had a policy that 30% of the Peninsula should be developed and 70% should remain rural. This 70% is known as the "Green Wedge Zone". These are not unique to the Shire and areas on the fringe of metropolitan Melbourne. They are also and are outside the boundary for Melbourne's planned future development and growth.

On the Peninsula the areas located in Green Wedge and therefore not planned for growth include Arthurs Seat, Red Hill, Main Ridge, Fingal, Cape Schanck, Boneo, Tuerong, Merricks, Moorooduc, Flinders and parts of Mt Eliza, Mornington and Rosebud.

Why and When were Green Wedges Introduced?

Green Wedges were created in 1968-71 by the Hamer Government to create breathing spaces for present and future generations.

Importance of protecting the Green Wedge Zone

The Mayor says: "Green Wedge is a key aspect of the peninsula's character and it is absolutely crucial to the amenity, lifestyle and wellbeing of our residents and visitors."

"The Green Wedge must be protected and managed to ensure it remains an area where the natural environment and biodiversity is preserved,"

Threats to Green Wedge

Green Wedge is continually facing a number of threats including development pressure as Melbourne's population continues to grow and from incremental creep because the definition of green wedges has been loose and conceptual.

Distinctive Areas Landscape Bill

The State Government recently introduced its Distinctive Areas Landscape Bill into Parliament. Peninsula Speaks lobbied the State Opposition to get the Mornington Peninsula included in the Government's "Distinctive Areas Landscape Bill" as this would give further protection to Green Wedge and would also strengthen the case against three storeys.

However the Greens, who hold the balance of power in the Upper House, appear to have been totally disorganised and did not support the Amendment which included the Peninsula, so the Amendment failed.

The report in Southern Peninsula News (5 June 2018) said under the headline: "Greens in Blue over planning" and quoted Christine Haydon co-founder of Peninsula Speaks as saying: "Despite all the hard work and effort across the Mornington Peninsula to avoid this disastrous planning situation, the Greens, a party for the environment, have chosen to allow Macedon Ranges only to be included".

How will the future of Green Wedge be Managed?

Despite the disappointment with the Bill the Council passed its proposed plan for managing Green Wedge at its Council meeting on Monday 14 May 2018 with the recommendation that an Implementation Plan be brought to Council through a Council briefing within six months.

SHIRE'S LIBRARY MEETING ROOM COST

For many years we were able to use the Meeting Room in the Shire's Library free of charge however about 18 months ago a charge for its use including insurance was imposed. We objected to these charges and in particular to Insurance. Our argument was that the Shire was already required to have public liability insurance because the Library is used by the general community.

Thanks to our previous secretary Margaret Wilson's persistence the full Council agreed to a policy whereby we get a reduction of \$13.50 on the insurance but are required to pay a hire fee of \$30 for each use.

A small win but there is a principle involved. Well done Margaret.

VICROAD'S VANDALS

The VicRoad's May project update says:

"We are now preparing to install flexible safety barriers along the Mornington Peninsula Freeway between Safety Beach in Dromana and Jetty Road in Rosebud, which includes the removal of most of the shrubs and trees from the median strip to ensure the barriers are effective."

UPDATE ON STONY POINT TO COWES CAR FERRY

In our last newsletter we indicated that the Stony Point to Cowes ferry was a State Government responsibility and the Shire has no right to get involved in contributing to the cost of construction or operation. The only way it will be viable is if the State Government is prepared to heavily fund it.

The Southern Peninsula News (14 May 2018) reported that:

- 1073 responses were received from the community with 41% supporting the project and 51% opposed.
- Peninsula respondents to the survey were twice as supportive of the car ferry plan as those on the Bass Coast: 76% to 37%. About 20% were unresponsive as opposed to 54% and four per cent were undecided as opposed to nine per cent.

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

The Government is undertaking a review of the Local Government Act which sets out the rules for how Councils are required to be managed and operate including how they must apply rates to our properties, budget, report finances, elect Councillors, and how Councillors and staff should behave.

We have some serious concerns with the proposed new Act as we believe the officers and staff will have more control. Our Association is working with Ratepayers Victoria to lobby the political parties to enable the community to have greater input. Some of our concerns include:

- The Government wants to change our Wards and how many Councillors represent a Ward. **We do not want to return to the past where we only had one Councillor representing a Ward.**
- The Act talks about greater transparency and then has a clause which **says information is confidential if it is not in the public interest.** Who decides this?
- The Act is supposed to be easily understood by the average person. It is over 400 pages long, and very legalistic and difficult to follow.
- If you want to complain about a Council you need to be a lawyer to work out the correct way and how to prepare to make a complaint to be successful.
- The Minister is going to have an Advisory Committee comprising of five Mayors. To avoid bias **we believe the Minister should also appoint and meet with an Advisory Committee made up of Ratepayers' Groups.**

JOIN THE ASSOCIATION – WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Joining Fee (\$20 per person)	\$.....	
Annual Subscription (\$5 per person)	\$.....	
Donation	\$.....	
Total	\$.....	Send remittance to: MPRRA, PO Box 4087, Rosebud, 3939
TITLE.....FAMILY NAME.....		FIRST NAME.....
ADDRESS		EMAIL ADDRESS.....
I agree to abide by the rules of the Association (Signed)		