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8 October 2016

President, Juliet le Feuvre
Wye River & Separation Creek Progress Association Inc.
Via e-mail

Dear Juliet

Thank you for the list of questions regarding issues at Wye River and Separation Creek which I will answer in question order.

1 & 2 In relation to the retention of trees on Council owned land in Wye River the underlying principle needs to be the retention of as many trees as possible consistent with public safety. Where trees are removed there needs to be a discussion with the community about the replanting of trees, how many, where, what species and a process of doing so as soon as practicable.

I think there needs to be a more active oversight by both a Councillor and community representatives with Council disclosing planned works before they occur so that there can be genuine input into decisions. If there are trees identified as a risk due to safety concerns then all feasible options need to be considered. It shouldn't be a matter of just taking the simplest or most convenient course for Council.

3 & 4 BAL ratings need to take into account both the present and future characteristics of the townships. If the substantial changes in vegetation is taken into account to reduce BAL ratings then that implies that the reduction, or at least changes, in vegetation is to be permanent.

There needs to be a discussion with the community about the long term vegetation in the townships in relation to questions about trees on public land and private land. In short, I think the issue of the substantial changes in vegetation are only relevant to the BAL ratings if those changes are considered to be permanent and are managed to be that way.

I agree there should be flexibility for property owners to propose alternate responses or to change a BAL rating providing referral authorities are agreeable that the proposed solution addresses the risk. It is difficult to be more specific when dealing with a broad concept.

5 To a significant extent, the last nine months have been focussed on the immediate clean up and making the area as safe as possible. The next stage needs to be a process where the community are asked for their views on the desired character of the area, particularly to ensure that any engineered requirement, such as retaining walls, are considerate of the fact that Wye River and Separation Creek are attractive coastal communities. The key is proper consultation with the community about how they would like to see the towns.

6 Yes, I commit to maintaining pre-bushfire regular waste collections. I cannot give an unqualified commitment to maintain existing routes as damage to a road may mean that a route has to be changed. If that occurs, the damage needs to be fixed or an alternative arrangement made.

When in 2012 a Senior Manager (no longer an employee) sent a letter to property owners informing them that waste collections might have to cease I was instrumental in working with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that waste collections continued in Wye River and Separation Creek. That did involve commissioning a purpose designed vehicle for the towns and corrals or bin bays for some property owners.

It is simply not an option to cease regular waste collections, although the routes or days may have to change on occasions, such as where a road has been damaged or there is a scheduled public holiday.

7 Council has introduced two extra organic collections in October to help property owners who are reducing garden vegetation in preparation for the fire season. Every week in October has an organic collection. More information is in a Shire media release at the link below:

<http://bit.ly/Extraorganiccollections>

Rather than a hard waste collection, I would be more inclined to support a collection to help property owners in fire prone areas to clean up their property. Are the extra organic collections in October helpful? Would it be better to have, say, skips located in a central place in the townships for a weekend or would that generate unsightly dumping of all sorts of waste?

I think the issue of hard waste needs to be re-considered once we know whether the extra organic collections have been useful or not.

I am more supportive of a collection that helps landholders deal with waste vegetation than one that presents an opportunity to just throw out a mix of everything as unsorted waste is the most costly to dispose of due to the high landfill levies.

8. I support rate capping and believe that the least Colac Otway Shire Council can do is to adhere to the rate capping for the next four years. When Council made a submission on the rate capping policy I was the only Councillor to support an amendment to insert a clause to state that Colac Otway Shire agrees in principle with Rate Capping. That was at the Council meeting on 26 August 2015 and is contained on page 11 of the Minutes for that meeting. (Copy of the relevant part of page 11 and 12 is attached.)

Apart from the issue of rate capping, there is a real threat to the level of rates charged to landholders outside Colac by repeated Council attempts to make the 'balance of shire' rate, which applies to Wye River, Separation Creek and every town outside Colac, to equal the Colac rate.

I encourage the community to become familiar with this issue about the rate in the dollar as equality with the Colac rate in the dollar is potentially more costly than any attempt to go over the rate cap.

8 (continued)

Currently, the balance of shire residential rate and balance of shire commercial rate is 85% of the similar Colac rate. To a limited extent this mitigates the fact that areas outside Colac receive lesser service from Council facilities and pay higher rate bills due to higher property values, on average. If your rate in the dollar was the same as Colac the component of your rates bill calculated on property valuation would be 17.6% higher. (Colac rate in the dollar is 100/85 or 1.176 higher or 17.6%.) I am fully aware that rate bills, the amount you are charged, are much higher than Colac already, due to higher property valuations, but it would be even worse if the rate in the dollar was 100% of Colac rather than 85%.

After each Council election since 2004, the Council organisation pushes for a review to make rates 'simpler' by making the rate in the dollar in areas outside Colac equal to Colac. If this happens, your rate bill, the amount you actually have to pay, will increase significantly and Colac rate bills will fall.

In 2005 Council increased the rate in the dollar for properties outside Colac from 80% of Colac to the current 85%. This was the Council term when I was not a Councillor. That plan included a further increase to, I recall, 90% but this was overturned and kept at 85% after I was elected in 2008. The issue was again reviewed in 2013 but it was kept at 85%.

Please note that it is virtually inevitable that the Council organisation will push for another review of the rate structure. Terms such as simplifying rates or making your rates equal to Colac can easily confuse the issue. Again, the real issue under consideration is making your rate in the dollar equal to the Colac rate in the dollar which represents a significant increase in the amount of your rate bill.

If re-elected, I will do all I can to resist this repeated attempt to increase the balance of shire residential and balance of shire commercial rate to higher than the current 85% of the Colac rate. I will also do all I can to spell out the real implications of these proposals.

Yours sincerely



(Stephen Hart)

Amendment - Moved Cr Brian Crook seconded Cr Lyn Russell:

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the submission incorporating responses to the recommendations from the Local Government Rates Capping & Variation Framework Review being forwarded to the Essential Service Commission.*
- 2. Recommends the ESC delivers a differential model of rate capping, acknowledging the inequity of the proposed draft and the adverse impact it will have on delivery of services and infrastructure maintenance and renewal, especially roads and bridges.*

Amendment - Moved Cr Stephen Hart seconded Cr Chris Smith to add point 3:

Notes that the submission is to state as part of the Executive Summary that Colac Otway Shire agrees in principle with Rate Capping.

LOST 1 : 6

DIVISION called by Cr Chris Smith

For the Motion: Cr Stephen Hart

Against the Motion: Cr Chris Smith, Cr Brian Crook, Cr Lyn Russell, Cr Terry Woodcroft, Cr Michael Delahunty, Cr Frank Buchanan

Moved Cr Brian Crook seconded Cr Lyn Russell

That Council:

- 1. Endorses the submission incorporating responses to the recommendations from the Local Government Rates Capping & Variation Framework Review being forwarded to the Essential Service Commission.*
- 2. Recommends the ESC delivers a differential model of rate capping, acknowledging the inequity of the proposed draft and the adverse impact it will have on delivery of services and infrastructure maintenance and renewal, especially roads and bridges.*

MINUTES - 26 August 2015

11

Ordinary Council Meeting

Corporate Services

CARRIED 4 : 3

DIVISION called by Cr Chris Smith

For the Motion: Cr Brian Crook, Cr Lyn Russell, Cr Terry Woodcroft, Cr Frank Buchanan

Against the Motion: Cr Chris Smith, Cr Stephen Hart, Cr Michael Delahunty