

COMMUNITY MEETING
HELD IN MT SURPRISE
WEDNESDAY 04 MAY 2016
MT SURPRISE HALL

Mayor Warren Devlin opened the meeting at 9.10am

ATTENDANCE

Cr Will Attwood (WA)
Cr Troy Barnes (TB)
Rebekah Hill (RH)

Cr Warren Bethel (WB)
David Munro (DM)
Cr Warren Devlin (WD)

Community Members: Total of 10 people attended from the Mt Surprise Community

APOLOGIES

Cr Tony Gallagher (TG)

Michael Kitzelmann (CEO)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY, EWAMIAN PEOPLE

We respectfully acknowledge the Ewamian People - the traditional custodians of this land where we meet for the Community Consultation Meeting in Mt Surprise. We pay our respects to the Ewamian People, especially the Elders, past and present and acknowledge their traditional customs and lores and recognize their continuing connection to this Country. We look forward to a long and continuing relationship with the Ewamian People and value any opportunities in strengthening relationships and partnerships through collaboration by respecting their Country.

COUNCIL VISION

Cr Devlin (WD) advised Council has \$2.2 million of NDRRA, R2R and TIDS money to upgrade the roads. The first project we will be looking at completing is the Georgetown to Forsyth road. From there, the Undarra Rd has 6km of critical work that needs resealing. Current works include the Georgetown Airport Rd and widening works on the Gulf Development Rd.

WD - would like to look into the possibility of charging rates for state parks.

ROADS UPDATE

WD – The flood damage money is being spent on Abingdon Downs Rd, Bryant’s Creek, Agate Creek & Forsyth district area.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like the council to fine tune the roads development and grading process. The local businesses attribute the drop in customers in contrast to previous years to the Einasleigh short cut road not being graded before Easter and the Kidston Dam being closed.

The crossing at O’Brien’s Creek Rd has stood up well with the weather earlier in the year. The residents of Mt Surprise would like to see signs put up that encourage people to slow down at the crossing.

ACTION ITEM - Congratulations are to be passed on to the workers who performed the grade of O’Brien’s Creek Rd as it’s probably the best grade that’s ever been done there. The residents of Mt Surprise noted it was from gutter to gutter and were very impressed.

The local police are having issues with people speeding through town and road rage incidents. The residents of Mt Surprise would like big orange slow down 60/80km signs put up that are impossible to miss.

The residents would like the council to lobby for a 110km zone between Mt Surprise and the 40mile and the 40mile to the 20mile as long as the road is widened and grass is mowed in close to the road.

Currently there are too many cows and roos along the road at night for the faster speed zone to be considered safe.

ACTION ITEM: That council take the issue of laneway grazing to the regional roads group.

The residents would also like to see the main arterial road fixed up so that Cairns to Karumba is two lanes the whole distance.

WD – There is \$5 million available for road widening

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY UPDATE

WD - There are currently two renewable energy projects which are Genex and Infigen. Infigen is currently amidst negotiations with Ergon regarding pricing however Ergon is not a definite buyer yet.

In the last week we have hosted the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Brazilian Grains Agri-business Mission and given them a tour of some local properties. In regards to water they are looking at either a dam or on farm storage.

Strathmore currently has about 30,000 hectares of Sorghum and employs 50 – 90 people and is continuing to grow. A possible dilemma to be aware of is that all of Strathmore's property is in the Croydon and Mareeba Shires, except for the entry. Strathmore pay rates to Croydon and Mareeba Shire Councils but not to Etheridge, however Etheridge has to maintain the road into Strathmore. To cart 30000ha of Sorghum out will be at least 500 loaded up road trains out to the coast, and that doesn't include the road trains coming in. Due to the usage the wear and tear on the road is predicted to be quite substantial.

ACTION ITEM - The residents of Mt Surprise would like ESC to enter into negotiations with Scott Harris of Strathmore Station regarding the upkeep of the road.

The mine site at Georgetown may be increasing operations again however there may an issue getting the ore out.

Aviation College is establishing a base in Georgetown and has negotiated with council to use the airstrips within the shire. Their services will include training students both locally and from overseas to attain their commercial pilot's licence, aircraft and helicopter maintenance, freight and charter flights. They will undergo a trial period and have agreed to lease and pay rates on a hanger or area at Georgetown Airport to begin with.

CATTLE IN MT SURPRISE TOWNSHIP AND THE COMMON

The residents of Mt Surprise notified council regarding cattle being inside the Mt Surprise Township and the town common. Where they come up the railway track and the train common, it would be beneficial to put a grid in. The issue is believed to stem from graziers not maintaining their fences along the highway. The residents of Mt Surprise recall that years ago graziers were given money from council to properly fence their properties along the highway, however the fences did not all get fixed. Mt Surprise Station is responsible for their boundary fence but it remains quite damaged despite numerous requests from locals to fix it.

ACTION ITEM – Council will look into establishing a fence around the town common to keep the cattle out.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

WB – It would be beneficial to explore the idea of having a major event in Mt Surprise. There could be bush racing, rodeo, quad bike races, stock car races, motorbike races, even an art and craft event. Bush races in particular would be possible if the straight track was built and there could even be a Calcutta run on each event.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like to see a work for the dole program established for clearing the chinky apples.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Warren Devlin was appointed Mayor and Councillors, Bethel, Attwood, Barnes and Gallagher thank the residents of Mt Surprise for their respected votes.

TB – presented the idea of each of the councillors representing one of the towns within the shire so the residents of each town have an advocate on council and know who to approach with issues.

WB – Council could distribute fridge magnets that have a photo, the name and contact details of the councillor for each town.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like to see voting happen in divisions next election.

GENERAL BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

The residents of Mt Surprise would like to add a feedback section to the Inform, where resident's letters to the mayor or to the editor could be displayed.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like a pest letter sent out detailing the funds and equipment available for dealing with goats heads and bindy eye. Perhaps there could be a hire arrangement for free or at a minimal rate where residents could have access to council equipment.

ACTION ITEM – Place notice in inform to residents, “Please address goat heads and bindies in front of your yard as well as the ones inside your fence.”

The residents of Mt Surprise are concerned about fire safety in regards to people not mowing their lawns and keeping their yards tidy. They would like a pamphlet to be distributed containing information on fire safety and what services are available to help them clean their yards.

ACTION ITEM – Council will inspect Mt Surprise properties in town.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like to have shade cloth erected over the playground and a tin roof over the eating area nearby.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like more land to be made available for purchase in Mt Surprise. Can there be more freehold land in town so that local people and new settlers such as the grey nomads can buy land.

ACTION ITEM – Council will look into the process of making more land available.

The residents of Mt Surprise would like council to note that Mt Surprise is not flood proof. The drain runs like a river in the wet season and a local has already had to dig another drain down near the cemetery.

CONCLUSION

Cr Devlin closed the meeting at 12.35 pm