

MAIN STREET (SHERIDAN) UPGRADE – PUBLIC FORUM – Minutes.

TIME: Wednesday 5 February 2014 at 5:33pm

PLACE: Council Chambers

Attendance: 7 Councillors, approx. 80 residents/ratepayers

Apologies: Cr P Gain

Mayor Abb McAlister welcomed rate payers and residents to the Public Forum. He told the forum that Sheridan Street had been on the Council agenda for 15 years - this Council and previous councils. The process was to get a plan and get costing. Now there is a need to know if the upgrade is wanted and how to fund it. There is a need for a public forum as part of IPART application and for public consultation. Asked everyone to be open and make positive comments. Mentioned the bypass in 1970s and Gundagai that because we were the first town bypassed there was no funding for main street. Informed the meeting he was asked at yesterday's (4 Feb) meeting if we had taken that to ministers. Council has repeatedly done so.

The Mayor introduced the facilitator, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] described the meeting procedure and rules of the public forum.

- Opportunities for questions will be provided at end following presentations.
- Approximately 2 mins to get point across. If further time is required we will come back to you time permitting.
- Please identify yourself if asking a question or making comment.
- Please let know if having trouble hearing.

[REDACTED] Would like to get the feeling from the Councillors, and if they are committed to this. Clr McAlister: notified he was totally committed, Clr Graham: 100% behind it, Clr Kingwill: there has been main street meetings for 25 years, all wanting upgrade, this is the closest we've been. Clr Magnone: seen promises made and nothing done, will hear what's said and then make a judgement. Clr Moses: has a reservation regarding the imbalance with rate ask between rural and business side. Wants a balance people are happy with. Clr Batey: try to progress with plan now he believes it's a matter of action. Like to see it done as soon as possible. Clr Crane: every community meeting the main street has been talked about. Highlighting main street projects and Morleys Creek. Keeps coming up as the most important project. It's time to see if we can have a crack at it. Need to push forward. Biggest concern population is an aging population and more and more retirees. The street is a major danger for a lot of elderly people. There has been major accidents.

Presentation by Assets Engineer [REDACTED] thanked everyone for coming on behalf of Phil.

➤ Background of project –

- Development of plan, history
- Costing exercise
- Focus on doing the whole project

- Modest design
- Proposed timetable of work
- Main street committee
- Community engagement

██████████ Asked about the retaining wall on the northern side. How wide are the steps? Worried about gofer getting along the path.

██████████ Claimed Sheridan St is a b-double route. Fuel tanks will they be removed? (Sheridan St is not a b-double route).

Presentation by Director of Corporate and Community Services Mr Paul Luff

➤ Finance

- Consultant background
- Findings / recommendations of the consultant
- Catch-up rate base
- Explanation of rate notice
- Revenue officer available after the meeting for queries

Facilitator ██████████ opened the floor and asked for any questions or comments.

QUESTIONS:

██████████ Do we need it and does the benefit outweigh the cost? Do we need to do the full \$4m worth? Are we going to lose parking spots and loading zones? Has there been a cost benefit analysis? Is it fair and equitable? He says no, it's not. He personally will pay too much. Does not want to be landed with all the costs. Not fair. Farmers can't pass the cost on to the market for stock and grain. They only use streets occasionally. You can reallocate monies in General fund. He believes it should be done, but not at such a cost to rural landowners.

██████████ On what basis was the original finance changed to the present plan? The reasoning behind the change of initial option to current.

██████████ We will pay 78% do you think that fair? Who is going to benefit the most? It's not the farmer.

██████████ Can we see the two scenarios up on the board again?

██████████ Residential ratepayer. Land values are taking drastic jumps. Carigg Place is going to take big jumps. The rates are put from land value. Garbage and water rates - will they still be increased?

██████████ Farmer. Is there any provision under the rating to taper off the % of increase? They will pay a disproportion of the cost. He is just an individual and gets hit harder plus other costs eg drought .

██████████ Rural ratepayer. If all pull your weight 78% gets paid by rural rate payers – money that gets paid now covers all things spent on roads etc all over the shire. This is just

one project for one area. Why does 85% have to be paid by the farmers. Does not see how it was done.

Doesn't accept, like , that 85% is fair. Can't see how, in all fairness, the businesses that will gain most the benefit should not pay more. Disagrees with the current proposal.

Is concerned for farmland ratepayers. Is concerned re drought times, if locked into that debt. Worried if farm owners are locked into set amounts when their situation can fluctuate so much. It's a large payment over 10 years. Worried for the landowners.

Un-named: Residents and business ratepayers are in good position compared to other shires. Both are privileged. The rural rate payers are being over loaded . Business and residential have a greater capacity to accept the increase.

rural landowner (not Councillor): He is going to have to pay \$37,000 over the 10 years. What's happening with the Gobarralong bridge. If locked into the main street and the bridge falls in the river, the main street's no good if we can't get to it.

Rural rate payer. 5 out of 7 councillors have got a business in the main street. Told those present to get off their *asses* and vote rural people onto council. Council doesn't have a rural rep.

What an extraordinary position we are in. To be able to have a discussion and voice our opinions. Get to hear from anyone that they are opposed to the plan. The final bit is how do we fund it? It's important we play the game and not the man. The debate should be about how we pay.

The current option is a lot of money for farmers to find. Small farmers will find it hard. He was burnt out 33 years ago and only survived by taking a job. Rural landowners are going to find it hard to find the money. Gundagai is a low socioeconomic town, so to ask residential owners to pay \$110 is too much. Lot are pensioners. Hard job to decide how to do it.

Opposes the upgrade but agrees there are sections that are dangerous. How much risk are we negating. Main street may not be pretty, but can we afford pretty?

Small business owner. Has been on Main street upgrade committees for many, many years. Congratulations to this Council on having the initiative to try something. Payment options certainly still not fair. Initial option is a big increase for a small businesses in the town.

Reiterate Drew's words. We nearly have a full consensus to upgrade. Suggests that such a large cost can't be passed to rural sector. It's inequitable. He is very much in favour of the initial proposal (45-45-10). It is a cost that no one benefits from. Recognizes that. We hope in the future it will bring benefit.

Current SRV 9.8%. What's going to stop future Councils them from having another SRV. He's worried council will go on borrowing and upping the SRV. He is generally in favour of doing some work. Initial proposal is a lot better than the current one.

Where do we go from here? Do we get a resolution? What happened last night?

He was rural but is now residential. Doesn't care what he pays absolutely in favour of the initial proposal. Have you considered a 15 – 20 year loan?

Is it worth a show of hands to see a vote on initial or current proposal?

resident. Grant applications. Why have our grants been unsuccessful? Are we doing anything to ensure we do get one next time.

Its obvious something has to be done. If we don't go with this plan where are we going to go? Can you do one side (everyone awwwwed)

Do you have an analysis on the surveys?

Un-named: Pays both Junee and Gundagai Shire rates . Paul has it very wrong in the rates comparison. If its jacked up 8.3 % people will buy land in another shire because land in Gundagai would be too dear.

Gundagai, Coota, Harden ratepayer. Coota and Harden have upgraded without extra burdon to ratepayers.. Not going down real well here. (Harden got 2m Grant.)

Is it reasonable to put it on the backburner till we get a grant? Everyone wants upgrade but no one wants to pay for it.

In favour of current proposal. For the saleyards and Gobarralong bridge, money comes from same kitty. (Not saleyards.) says everyone should pay same amount. Town doesn't benefit from a new Gobarralong bridge. Added we are splitting hairs.

Rural and main street commercial ratepayer: Is there an additional contribution from the main street premises? His rates in rural will jump by \$2,000. Do we need the full monty?

Rural ratepayer: What are the 5 options? All councillors are for an upgrade, what are their individual positions on the finance option?(Clr McAlister said Council would vote at the Ordinary Meeting of 11 February 2014 and invited all to come to the meeting)

Felt ashamed when he watched a woman get out of the car in front of Westpac bank, she couldn't get up the steps and he felt ashamed of our main street. She was a traveller and said they would not come back into the town.

Show of hands for options:

Current Proposal (14.3% straight increase for all categories): 2 hands

Initial Proposal (increase split 45%-45%-10% by Farmland, Residential, Business): All but 2 (approx. 80 people).

Mayor Abb McAlister thanked for attendance and closed meeting at 7:45 pm.