

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 25th October 2011 – 12.00PM – 2.00PM

Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE: Cr Walker, Cr Cameron (part of the meeting), Cr Steindl
Lisa Kermode, Stuart Holley, Peter Cluff, Stephanie Kalis
(part of the meeting)
Rod Hill (guest in place of Frank Perna – Reef Catchments)
Bruce Milles, Joan Fitzsimmons,

APOLOGIES: Frank Perna, Margaret Lane, Saskia von Fahland, Wendy
Cameron

1. **CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held 09/08/11 were accepted as a true and correct record (moved Lisa Kermode, seconded Ross Walker).

2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Stuart Holley advised that Derek Ball from Reef Catchments gave a presentation to the councillor briefing session last week, to further update councillors on the review of the Natural Environment Plan and interactive website, and to provide information on the prioritisation process and priority projects for the coastal chapter of the plan. A further report will be considered by council in early November to approve funding the priority projects discussed.

Bruce Milles raised concerns with the process followed by council including the long delays in approving the expenditure of funds for the priority projects and the impacts this will have on whether it will now be possible to undertake these projects within the financial year. Reef Catchment staff had been asked by the committee to make recommendations on the projects to fund for approximately \$200,000 - 300,000.00 at the June 2011 meeting, which they then presented to the August 2011 meeting. The committee then made the recommendation to fund the priority projects to the value of approximately \$225,000.00.

Stuart Holley explained that it was necessary to brief Council and seek their approval before going ahead, as the Natural Environment Plan is not yet completed and has not yet been formally adopted by Council. Council is due to consider funding the priority projects in early November.

General discussion followed on budget approval processes and it was agreed that the committee would discuss the 2012/13 budget at the February 2012 meeting, to allow council to consider recommendations in the 2012/13 budget formulation. Once the NEL budget is set for the year, there will still be opportunities to seek additional funds from reserve or to modify the budget during the year (with council approval).

It was again noted that the Environmental Ranger position was approved in the 2011/12 budget and should be advertised shortly. Additional positions were not approved, however there has been a budget allocation, so funds may be available to employ contractors, consultants or casual staff to assist as appropriate.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Coasts and Communities project/coastal activities update

A detailed report on this item was received.

A question was asked whether Conservation Volunteers Australia could confine works at Sandfly Creek to low tide only, during the shorebird season. Unfortunately CVA have set work hours and the weeks are allocated a year in advance, however when their work at Sandfly Creek occurs close to high tide, the site is sufficiently large to accommodate the workers away from the shorebird roosting areas. Similarly, regular maintenance work, such as mowing and flood gate maintenance, is programmed to ensure minimal disturbance to shorebirds.

The alternative path at Sandfly Creek was discussed. Currently there is an alternative route that dog walkers and pedestrians can utilise. This is marked on signs located in the reserve, and on the brochure that is available at the reserve entrances. A more formal pathway is currently being designed.

2. Land for Wildlife Program

A detailed report on this item was received.

3. Sarina and Mirani Special Projects allocation

Detailed reports on this item were received.

4. FINANCIALS

The financial statements received were as follows:

- 2011/2012 Environmental Levy Reconciliation as at 30th September 2011
- 2011/2012 Environmental Levy Report as at 30th September 2011

Stuart Holley outlined the reconciliation and levy reports, highlighting the income expected, the opening balance, the amount budgeted for the year and the balance remaining unallocated in the reserve.

The simplified report format was easier to understand.

Lisa indicated the budget lines that were available to fund the coastal priority projects including the Sandfly Creek, Blacks Beach, Slade Point Reserve and NEAC Allocated Project allocations in the Special Projects section, part of the Community Projects allocation, Management Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Research and Interpretation and Signage (total \$185,000). There is also funding available in council's capital budget, including \$15,000 currently allocated to Foreshore Management Plan Implementation.

The Land Acquisition Fund is expected to reach the \$2 million cap this year and the committee may decide to recommend increasing this. This item will be listed on the December meeting agenda for consideration.

It was noted that the last round of Community Projects was unsubscribed. Rod Hill mentioned that the Reef Catchments Public Fund currently receives applications in excess of the amount of funding available. It may be appropriate to discuss with Reef Catchments whether any of the unfunded projects meet the criteria for community projects. The opportunity also exists to have groups tender for priority projects in the NEP.

It was noted that the funding for the Stormwater Officer position is the last time this item will be funded from the Natural Environment Levy.

The covered walkway capital project at the Swayne Street Nursery should be completed in the next few months. It has not been possible to complete the project sooner as it was necessary to wait for the containers and dongas to be moved from the Bedford Rd depot, following the relocation of staff to the Paget depot which occurred in September.

The Significant Tree project brief is currently in preparation and should be advertised for contract shortly.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Land acquisition

The Land Acquisition Fund was discussed further. In addition to considering whether to recommend increasing the cap at the December meeting, the committee will also consider whether the guidelines need to be reviewed.

It is anticipated that there will be some parcels of land identified for potential purchase through the review of the planning scheme and also the Natural Environment Plan.

The committee asked about the progress of the potential purchase of land at Blacks Beach Spit. Stuart Holley advised that the option had expired but council could revisit this matter. Bruce Milles suggested that the valuation needs to be reviewed to take into account environmental as well as market value. Paul Steindl suggested that the original valuation did take both these elements into account. The mapping for the Queensland Coastal Plan Coastal Hazard Mapping shows the majority of this land as being subject to either erosion due to storm impact or erosion and permanent tidal inundation due to sea level rise.

The committee asked whether this would have any effect on the zoning of this land and whether the planning section could provide further information.

Recommendation: That council further investigate opportunities to purchase the land at Blacks Beach Spit and keep the committee informed of progress.

(Moved Joan Fitzsimmons, seconded Bruce Milles).

2. East Point site

The committee requested that an update be provided for the December meeting on this development, as it will impact on the beach plan currently in preparation.

Action: Stuart Holley to investigate this matter and provide an update to the December meeting.

3. Erosion control structures

Wendy Cameron advised that she had some photos of erosion control structures in the Coolangatta area, including Kirra Beach, that may be of interest.

Meeting closed 1.50 pm

Next meeting December 13th, 12-2pm Council Chambers.

Actions arising from this meeting (October 2011)

Action: Stephanie Kalis to make the suggested changes to the financial reports.

Action: Council to consider approving funding to undertake the 10 coastal priority projects on at its meeting in early November.

Action: Stuart Holley to investigate the status of the East Point development and provide an update to the December meeting.

Recommendation: That council further investigate opportunities to purchase the land at Blacks Beach Spit and keep the committee informed of progress.

Outstanding actions arising from previous meeting (August 2011).

Action: Committee to be given feedback from council on why the remaining beach plans are scheduled for release in March

Outstanding actions arising from previous meeting (June 2011).

Action: Lisa to make the suggested changes to the Environment Levy brochure and present back to the committee for further comment.

In progress

Action: Lisa to prepare a scope of works for the Significant Tree Register and report back to the committee for further consideration.

In progress

Action: Committee to consider the Pest Management proposal at the August meeting.

To be considered by the committee

Outstanding actions (from previous meetings)

Action: Lisa to organise a site meeting with Cr. May and Cr. Walker to discuss recent vegetation clearing at Blacks Beach. Options for addressing this matter and other instances of vegetation clearing, particularly on the coast, to be brought to the next meeting, with the intention of developing a policy/standard procedure for consideration by council.