



Meander Valley Council  
Working Together

# **SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

**Tuesday 7 April 2020**

## Table of Contents

57/2020 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST .....	3
58/2020 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.....	4
59/2020 COUNCILLOR QUESTION TIME.....	4
60/2020 COMMUNITY CARE AND RECOVERY PACKAGE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC...5	
61/2020 INTERIM RATES AND CHARGES HARDSHIP DELEGATION .....	10
62/2020 APPOINTMENT OF ACTING GENERAL MANAGER.....	12

Minutes of the Special Council Meeting of the Meander Valley Council held at the Council Chambers Meeting Room, 26 Lyall Street, Westbury, on Tuesday 7 April 2020 at 4.30pm.

## **PRESENT**

Mayor Wayne Johnston, Deputy Mayor Michael Kelly, Councillors Susie Bower, Stephanie Cameron, Tanya King, Frank Nott, Andrew Sherriff, Rodney Synfield and John Temple.

The meeting was conducted accordance with varied arrangement permitted under notice pursuant to the *COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020*. With the exception of Mayor Johnston who was present in the Council Chamber all Councillors attended using virtual technology (Zoom). Cr Synfield attended via telephone conferencing facilities.

In line with COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, no members of the public attended the meeting. The Mayor noted and advised the Councillors that an audio recording of the meeting was to be made. This recording will be available to the public via the Meander Valley Council's website.

## **APOLOGIES**

Nil

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

John Jordan, General Manager  
Merrilyn Young, Executive Assistant  
Dino De Paoli, Director Infrastructure Services  
Jonathan Harmey, Director Corporate Services  
Matthew Millwood, Director Works  
Lynette While, Director Community & Development Services

## **57/2020 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cr Sherriff questioned if he should declare an interest in respect of agenda item 60/2020 on the grounds that he operated a business in Deloraine that may conceivably obtain a benefit as a consequence of the measures contained in the Community Care and Recovery Package. On discussion it was determined that the measures were broad ranging and to the benefit of many in the community, not specifically to any one Councillor. The meeting determined that no Councillor had an interest to declare; citing the normal proceedings in determining rates and charges.

## 58/2020 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

### 1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

Nil

### 2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Nil

## 59/2020 COUNCILLOR QUESTION TIME

### 1. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

Nil

### 2. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Nil

## **60/2020 COMMUNITY CARE AND RECOVERY PACKAGE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **1) Recommendation**

*It is recommended that Council approve the delivery of the following actions as part of a 'Community Care and Recovery Package' to assist our community to both manage and recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic:*

- 1. Provide a remission of the General Rates charge for a period of six (6) months for the Commercial and Sport & Recreation rates categories, with the exclusion of the following groups:**
  - a) Supermarkets**
  - b) Shopping Centres**
  - c) Private Carparks**
  - d) Petrol service stations**
  - e) Banks**
  - f) Doctors Surgeries**
  - g) Chemists**
- 2. Deliver Budget Estimates for the 2020-21 financial year based on a zero per cent increase in General Rates for all properties;**
- 3. Development of a Financial Hardship Assistance Policy to be consistent with other Tasmanian Councils, for the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic.**
- 4. Deliver Budget Estimates for the 2020-21 financial year based on a 0% increase in Fees and Charges revenue;**
- 5. Waive fees for Food Business Registrations, Temporary Food Stall Registrations and Food Vendors (mobile food vehicles) for the 2020-21 financial year;**
- 6. Waive fees for Sport & Recreation Fees and Charges for ground and building hire from the closure until three (3) months after facilities are reopened following the COVID-19 emergency;**
- 7. Introduce three new community grants programs:**
  - a) Event Recovery**  
**Additional community grant round to assist not for profit community groups to recover losses from expenses incurred for advertised events cancelled due to Government orders**

- and not require the return of any event sponsorship funds;*
- b) Lifestyle Recovery  
Additional community grant round to assist not for profit community groups in developing community events that engage the community when emergency orders are lifted;*
  - c) Small Business  
Additional community grant round to assist small business owners who have incurred losses to recommence operations after being closed due to emergency orders;*

- 8. Implement additional one-off Council building maintenance and infrastructure design programs, utilising local resources, for the 2020-21 financial year; and*
- 9. Re-direct existing services to deliver a range of community assistance initiatives within the Meander Valley area.*

## **DECISION:**

Cr Bower moved and Cr Cameron seconded ***“that Council approve the delivery of the following actions as part of a ‘Community Care and Recovery Package’ to assist our community to both manage and recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic:***

- 1. Provide a remission of the General Rates charge for a period of six (6) months for the Commercial and Sport & Recreation rates categories, with the exclusion of the following groups:
  - a) Supermarkets*
  - b) Shopping Centres*
  - c) Private Carparks*
  - d) Petrol service stations*
  - e) Banks*
  - f) Doctors Surgeries*
  - g) Chemists**
- 2. Deliver Budget Estimates for the 2020-21 financial year based on a zero per cent increase in General Rates for all properties;*
- 3. Development of a Financial Hardship Assistance Policy to be consistent with other Tasmanian Councils, for the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic.*

- 4. Deliver Budget Estimates for the 2020-21 financial year based on a 0% increase in Fees and Charges revenue;**
- 5. Waive fees for Food Business Registrations, Temporary Food Stall Registrations and Food Vendors (mobile food vehicles) for the 2020-21 financial year;**
- 6. Waive fees for Sport & Recreation Fees and Charges for ground and building hire from the closure until three (3) months after facilities are reopened following the COVID-19 emergency;**
- 7. Introduce three new community grants programs:**
  - a) Event Recovery**  
**Additional community grant round to assist not for profit community groups to recover losses from expenses incurred for advertised events cancelled due to Government orders and not require the return of any event sponsorship funds;**
  - b) Lifestyle Recovery**  
**Additional community grant round to assist not for profit community groups in developing community events that engage the community when emergency orders are lifted;**
  - c) Small Business**  
**Additional community grant round to assist small business owners who have incurred losses to recommence operations after being closed due to emergency orders;**
- 8. Implement additional one-off Council building maintenance and infrastructure design programs, utilising local resources, for the 2020-21 financial year; and**
- 9. Re-direct existing services to deliver a range of community assistance initiatives within the Meander Valley area.**

In moving the motion Cr Bower stated:

*"I believe that this is a very comprehensive package that touches on many elements in the community that is within our remit and responsibility. The package provides some relief for people doing it tough in our businesses and community.*

*I think it is important that we have provided a response but we have also looked beyond the response phase to recovery and how we might help to rebuild once the emergency phase has ended.*

*I would like to thank the Council team, both staff and my fellow Councillors who have all had input into this package, in particular I would like to acknowledge the General Manager who has shown great leadership and empathy through these unprecedented times, especially given he only joined us at the end of January."*

In seconding the motion, Cr Cameron stated:

*"I will be supporting the motion as it is.*

*There has been some discussion about who should and should not be included but I feel this package is fair – as fair as it can be at the moment. Things have been changing rapidly and as a Council I believe we will also need to make changes and adapt.*

*The State Government recently announced \$10,000 grants to be made available to Doctors surgeries etc. to ensure they can manage the extra financial cost this pandemic has placed them under. The Prime Minister has also today announced support for commercial tenancies which I look forward to hearing more details on this.*

*Many business are not able to operate at all, or very limited, and I believe we need to work with them to ensure they have the best possible chance to come out from this on the other side.*

*We have policies in place to help those who may not fall under this package and really I appreciate the effort that both staff and Councillors have put into this support package. I remain hopeful for brighter days ahead."*

### **Summary of Discussion:**

The Council was supportive of the overall package. Councillors Temple, Synfield and Nott expressed general support for the package of initiatives but had reservations about the exclusion of doctor's surgeries and chemists from the six month remission of general rates charges for Commercial and Sport & Recreation rates categories; citing concerns about consistency and the front line of doctors in the pandemic response.

***The motion was declared CARRIED by an absolute majority with Councillors Bower, Cameron, Johnston, Kelly, King, Sherriff and Synfield voting for the motion and Councillors Nott and Temple voting against the motion.***



After the Council meeting, Cr John Temple provided the following clarifying comment (via email) in respect to his vote for item 60/2020 Governance 1: Community Care and Recovery Package – COVID-19 Pandemic:

*"I voted against the motion due to the exclusions. In this time of crisis, I consider it wrong to exclude Doctors Surgeries and Chemists (who are on the front line) and include other Health Professionals; to exclude Banks but include Financial Services Companies; to exclude Petrol Service Stations but include Mechanical Workshops which also sell fuel; and, to exclude Supermarkets but include Health Food Shops. This is all most inconsistent.*

*I do however support rate relief for those adversely impacted by the Corona Virus Crisis."*

## 61/2020 INTERIM RATES AND CHARGES HARDSHIP DELEGATION

### 1) Recommendation

***It recommended that Council pursuant to the powers of the Local Government Act 1993, delegates the exercise and performance of the following functions and powers to the General Manager and Director Corporate Services, effective 30 March 2020:***

- 1. Section 126, "conditions of postponement", the ability to defer the payment of rates for a specified period of time;***
- 2. Section 128, "late payments", the ability to not apply a daily interest on deferred rates payments; and***
- 3. Be in place until such time as a common Financial Hardship Assistance Policy is approved by Council and be applied where the property owner can provide evidence of genuine financial hardship (monthly expenses being greater than monthly income) caused by:***
  - a. Loss, reduction or change of income***
  - b. Inability due to illness***
  - c. Death of immediate family member***
  - d. Other factors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic emergency***

### **DECISION:**

Cr Bower moved and Cr Kelly seconded ***"that Council, pursuant to the powers of the Local Government Act 1993, delegates the exercise and performance of the following functions and powers to the General Manager and Director Corporate Services, effective 30 March 2020:***

- 1. Section 126, "conditions of postponement", the ability to defer the payment of rates for a specified period of time;***
- 2. Section 128, "late payments", the ability to not apply a daily interest on deferred rates payments; and***
- 3. Be in place until such time as a common Financial Hardship Assistance Policy is approved by Council and be applied where the***

***property owner can provide evidence of genuine financial hardship (monthly expenses being greater than monthly income) caused by:***

- a. Loss, reduction or change of income***
- b. Inability due to illness***
- c. Death of immediate family member***
- d. Other factors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic emergency***

**Summary of Discussion:**

The Council noted that a model hardship policy was being finalised by the Local Government Association of Tasmania and that a version of this policy would be presented to the Council meeting on 21 April 2020. The discussion concluded that it was prudent to put in place interim arrangements and delegations to allow matters to be dealt with ahead of 21 April 2020 if required.

***The motion was declared CARRIED with Councillors Bower, Cameron, Johnston, Kelly, King, Nott, Sherriff, Synfield and Temple voting for the motion.***

## 62/2020 APPOINTMENT OF ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

### 1) Recommendation

***It is recommended that Council:***

1. ***Approves*** temporary succession arrangements for the conduct of Council business during the period of the declared COVID-19 Disease Emergency.
2. ***Approves***, in circumstances where, under Section 61B(1) of the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act), the General Manager is absent from duty, the appointment under 61B(4) of the Act the following Council officers in order of succession:
  - a) *Mr Jonathon Harmey, Director of Corporate Services.*
  - b) *Mr Dino De Paoli, Director of Infrastructure Services.*
3. ***Approves*** the term of the above acting appointments to be for the period of any absence of the General Manager from duty or for a period otherwise determined by the Council or Mayor under Section 61B of the Act.
4. ***Notes*** that any succession or acting arrangements consequential to the COVID-19 Disease Emergency will end when the declared COVID-19 Disease Emergency is declared over.

### DECISION:

Cr King moved and Cr Sherriff seconded ***“that Council:***

1. ***Approves*** temporary succession arrangements for the conduct of Council business during the period of the declared COVID-19 Disease Emergency.
2. ***Approves***, in circumstances where, under Section 61B(1) of the Local Government Act 1993 (the Act), the General Manager is absent from duty, the appointment under 61B(4) of the Act the following Council officers in order of succession:
  - a) ***Mr Jonathon Harmey, Director of Corporate Services.***
  - b) ***Mr Dino De Paoli, Director of Infrastructure Services.***

3. ***Approves the term of the above acting appointments to be for the period of any absence of the General Manager from duty or for a period otherwise determined by the Council or Mayor under Section 61B of the Act.***
4. ***Notes that any succession or acting arrangements consequential to the COVID-19 Disease Emergency will end when the declared COVID-19 Disease Emergency is declared over.***

**Summary of Discussion:**

Cr Temple queried the need to separate key roles and for the General Manager and Directors not to be in separate rooms in order to minimise the risk of all key personnel being impacted by the COVID-19 virus at once. The General Manager advised that such separation was not always practical and that the delegation would be invoked only when the General Manager was incapacitated. It was envisaged that if an event compelled the General Manager to self-isolate without being incapacitated then work from home arrangements would be applied.

***The motion was declared CARRIED with Councillors Bower, Cameron, Johnston, Kelly, King, Nott, Sherriff, Synfield and Temple voting for the motion.***

The meeting closed at 4.51pm

.....  
Wayne Johnston  
**MAYOR**