



NOTES FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID PLUM RIDGE'S DESK

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COUNCILLOR DAVID PLUMRIDGE AM
AREA COUNCILLOR - CITY OF ADELAIDE

32 Dukes Lane Adelaide SA 5000
Email dplumridge@adelaidecitycouncil.com

Tel 8232 0515 Mob 0417 088 992
Website www.davidplumridge.com

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

When one bases his life on principle, 99 percent of his decisions are already made. ~ Author Unknown

Every two weeks, almost without fail, Adelaide City Councillors are presented with a series of agendas for meetings of the Council and the Key Committees. These agendas can contain as many as 50 items of business, every one of which requires a **DECISION** to be made. I thought it might be interesting to explore how Councillors go about the process of deciding whether to support, amend or oppose each of the propositions put to us. Of course we all approach this task in different ways but there are some fundamental principles on which I am sure we all rely.

The first thing to realise is that, unlike our colleagues in State and Federal Governments, as individuals we do not subscribe to an agreed set of policies; there is no political manifesto or mandate to guide us and we do not owe each other any ongoing allegiance. Each of us comes with our own foibles, values and a fundamental belief in what we think is best for the city. However, **the Council as a body is required** to prepare various planning documents including a **Strategic Plan** (which must have regard to the State's Strategic Plan), a **Long Term Financial Plan** (with a 10 year horizon), an **Annual Business Plan and Budget** and a host of other documents, the preparation of which occupies a large amount of Council's time. These requirements are mandated by the State to ensure a level of good governance, accountability and transparency in Local Government. At almost every step we are now required to consult our ratepayers and other 'interested parties' now nefariously known as 'customers'

So, back to those Agendas and the **DECISIONS** that have to be made on a regular basis.

Almost every proposition comes complete with a **RECOMMENDED** course of action which is supported by detailed background information, technical advice, legal constraints and how the decision will impact on the adopted policies, budgets and long-term plans of the Council. This is the expert professional advice from our staff which is given without any bias and which is there for us to take or reject as we choose. Some may argue that as laypeople, Councillors should always take the professional advice proffered.

However, some decisions may have a 'political' dimension which may make it contentious or unpopular. As a Councillor I have to be able to defend my every **DECISION** and be accountable to my principles and so I may have to set aside or amend the technical and professional advice which is before me.

So to sum up, for me in coming to a decision, there are some fundamental factors that I invariably feel obliged to give due consideration to after I have taken on board all the professional advice referred to above, namely:

- Does the proposition 'fit' with what I promised to deliver in my pre-election commitments?
- Is the decision fair and equitable to all sections of the community and does it 'accord' with my values?
- Is the decision consistent with previous decisions and if not, do special circumstances warrant the deviation?
- Have I been approached by ratepayers asking for support for a particular outcome – otherwise known as lobbying – and have I given due and balanced consideration to their views in making my decision?
- And perhaps most difficult of all – Is my decision free of preconceived ideas and personal biases?
- **And sometimes I toss all this to the winds and go with my 'gut feeling' and hope for the best!**

At the end of the process if a Councillor is not happy with the decision of the Council he/she can call for a division so that the voting patterns of every member will be recorded. It is noteworthy that every Council member (who is in his/her place) is required to vote. It is also a requirement that Councillors respect the decisions of the Council!

Good decisions come from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions. ~ Author Unknown

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR SMOKE-FREE AREAS – A New South Wales Study

Increasing community awareness of the harmful effects of second-hand smoke has led the community to accept, and expect the availability of smoke-free areas. Given that over 82% of the NSW population are **non-smokers** a Council's decision to introduce smoke-free areas is often in response to community expectations.

In December 2006, a survey of 2,400 NSW residents found overwhelming support for smoking restrictions:

- 92% support bans in children's playgrounds
- 85% support bans outside workplace doors/entrances
- 80% support bans in sports stadiums
- 69% support bans in outdoor dining areas
- **In addition, 65% say they avoid places where they may be exposed to other people's smoke.**

Some recent meeting decisions (full details are available on the Council's website 5 days after the meeting)

DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PANEL - Meeting held 6 April (Next Meeting 19 April at 5.30pm)

■ **Non-Complying Applications**

▪ (Item 2.1) It was agreed to **proceed with assessment** of **125-131 Sturt St** to **vary** a previous authorisation to construct a 5-level residential flat building (reduced from 26 units to 23 *et al*) DA/497/2007/B

■ **Applications for consideration on Merit**

▪ (Item 3.1) An application to construct 11, 3-storey attached dwellings at **22-26 Selby St and 21-25 Bartels St** was **deferred** to allow further consideration of the amenity impacts from an adjacent crash repairer. DA/836/2009

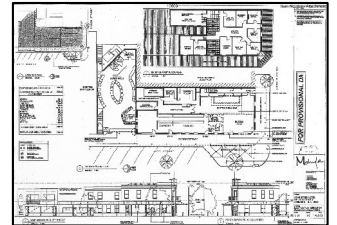
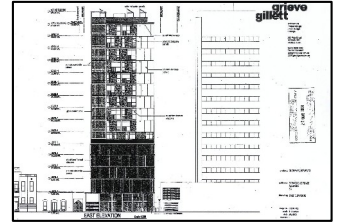
▪ (Item 3.2) An application to vary a previous authorisation for **Globe Apartments at Synagogue Place** was granted **Development Plan Consent**. The scheme has been amended to avail itself of an affordable housing grant resulting in all the units being made larger and the total reduced from 158 to 78 DA/870/2007A ▶▶▶

▪ (Item 3.3) The **Arab Steed Hotel at 241-249 Hutt St** was granted consent to make internal and external alterations to the public areas and to apply for glass screens to the outdoor dining areas. **Internal improvements** will include amalgamation of the 2 bars, relocation of the toilets and a new lounge bar and expanded dining facilities. ▶

▪ (Item 3.4) An application from **Outback Jack's Bar and Grill** at Level 1 Suite 35-36, **81 O'Connell St N.A.** was **Refused Consent** in spite of not being found to be seriously at variance with the Development Plan. The reasons were that the sign was considered to not be compatible with adjacent signage and the character of the area.

Other Business

▪ (Item 6.2) The Panel was advised of the outcome of a **Schedule 10 Matter** which had been determined by the Development Assessment Commission (DAC) - an **8 Level Car Park at 42-56 Franklin St** (DA/805/2009). The DAC had considered the matter at their meeting on 11 March. Although DAC staff agreed with Council's comments in respect to the proposal and had recommended to the Commission that the application be refused, sadly the Commission resolved to disregard all advice and approved the development. **A sad day for quality city design!**



COUNCIL – Meetings held Monday 12 April 2010 (next meeting Tuesday 27 April at 5.30pm)

■ **A Motion on Notice** was moved by me calling for actions to deal with excessive noise and unruly patron behaviour at the **Electric Light Hotel** in Grenfell St. Residents have put up with this problem for too long; by **Cllr Moran** dealing with the amenity value of trees and by **Cllr Henningsen** asking to name a small SE lane, Don Lane.

■ In the **Public Forum** Council was addressed by a **Mr Gordon Jenkins** complaining about noisy events in Hindmarsh Square and asserting that London Plane trees cause allergic problems and should be removed.

■ (12.1) The State Government response to the **Park Lands Management Strategy** was received and it was agreed to accept the minor changes requested by the Government. My attempt to have all buildings in the Park Lands defined as **Category 3** was unsuccessful but there will be a review of development processes to allow for greater public notification and a clearer definition of the term 'minor works' relative to building works.

■ (12.2) Council received a report on its **Community Land Management Plan** processes and noted that there are **21 parcels** of land which are community land and which have not had a Land Management Plan prepared for them to date. A consultant has been identified and it is intended to put the remaining plans up to Council by 9 August.

At my request Council will now make its Community Land Register available on-line as well at the Pirie St office.

■ (12.3) Council agreed to proceed with the **revocation** of community land at **90-100 Grenfell St** as provided for under Sec194 of the Local Government Act to enable its sale. This is the site of the **Grenfell St UPark** car park.

■ (12.4) Council **deferred** the **waiving** of Encroachment Policy requirements for a canopy over **Roper St** footpath.

■ (12.7) Council approved a temporary lease to the Convention Centre for **Australian Tourism Exchange** to run an event in the **Riverbank Event Space** from **20 May to 9 June** inclusive of bump-in and bump-out.

■ (13.1) Council agreed to alterations to **on-street parking** traffic control provisions in 3 locations in the city.

■ (14.1) It was noted that **After-Hours enforcement of parking controls** are mainly policed by Council Officers. Similar practices are used in other Capital Cities but larger metropolitan councils are more inclined to contract out after-hours enforcement services. The recently developed **Accessible City Program Plan** will include a review of options for better delivery of these services. **In the meantime, greater control will be used for major events.**

■ **Confidential Items** were 1) Acceptance of tenders for the upgrade of the s. side of Rundle St – Stage 1&2 (completion due by 30/6/10 and 2) Re-consideration of the **Chief Executive Officer's first Annual Review Report**.

CITY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

■ (5.1) Council received the **Carbon Neutral Council Action Plan 2008-2012 3rd Quarterly Progress Report**. Major achievements include ▪ **Adelaide Aquatic Centre** Cogeneration Plant preferred supplier selected ▪ **Central Market** major solar panel installation proceeding ▪ Council now procuring **50% Green Power** ▪ **Central Market** energy efficient air-conditioning proceeding ▪ **UPark** voltage optimisers installation proceeding and ▪ **Park Lands lighting** upgrade using LED technologies proceeding. **Other targets are on line for completion by the end of the year.**

■ (5.2) The **ACC Reconciliation Committee Quarterly Report** was received and noted. The committee provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people to influence outcomes in the city. One Committee recommendation was that consideration should be given to recognising **prominent Aboriginal leaders** in the naming of features in the city.

■ (5.3) Council adopted the plain bitumen option for the resurfacing of the Rymill Park car park (near the Bowling Club). This was contrary to APLA advice that preferred an option more in harmony with the Park Lands setting and as recommended in the CLMP. For me this is a disappointing outcome that should have been better resolved.

■ A **confidential item** dealt with the current status of the **Victoria Square Urban Regeneration Project**. I hope that the Council will soon be in a position to make a public announcement on the next stages of this major Council project.

The views expressed herein are those of Cr Plumridge and do not purport to be those of the Adelaide City Council