

Ordinary Meeting of Council 3 June 2020

The following statements were submitted prior to the meeting. Submissions made live during the meeting include some variations and can be listened via our live stream webpage:

<http://webcast.portphillip.vic.gov.au/archive.php>

Lyndon Gasking Item 15.1 Notice of Motion -Bernadene Voss – The Sale of 8 York Street St Kilda West

I request that in the event of a sale of the Kindergarten facility at 8 York St. which has been a temporary rental facility and could cost effectively be reinstated as one, Some or all of the funds to be hypothecated for capital works/improvements, the rental costs of temporary premises etc. for use by the Middle Park Kindergarten and other local kindergartens in St Kilda West and Middle Park. There needs to be a fair and equitable distribution back to the 3 and 4 years' old's futures in the area, the motion needs to include a percentage of the proceeds that would satisfy this community need and request.

The following statements were submitted prior to the meeting and a summary of the statements were read out during the meeting by the Coordinator Governance.

Adrian Jackson – Public Question Time

Comrade Councillors,

Why is a further \$180,000 being loaned or given to the Port Phillip art community when council already offers generous art grants annually and has pork barreled some local arts institutions for decades. Why is this grant including art acquisitions when the council has too much art in storage? Is some of this art items no one else wants. Is council aware that artists can apply for commonwealth government financial assistance if out of work.

Jon Webster – Public Question Time

Council is under financial stress with the current Climate, will Council institute a wage freeze for 2 or 3 years?

Jenni Roper – Public Question Time

With regards to the Petition 'A Social Amenity Crisis in St Kilda' which was received by Council on 18 November 2019 and presented to Council on 4 December 2019 with over 900 signatures. I am enquiring in relation to Recommendations C and D of the petition as to whether the CEO has written to Minister Lisa Neville, Outreach Services and the Alfred Hospital as yet? Now speaking as a victim from an incident in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda. I am advocating for the letters to be sent without delay or debate if this request has not already been actioned. The current decline in Fitzroy, Acland and surrounding streets is now out of control. As a local Community in Port Phillip including Council, Victoria Police and services we all need to work together to secure a better outcome so no more people can get hurt.

Jason Rouda – Public Question Time

I write to Council in regards to the Petition 'A Social Amenity Crisis in St Kilda' which was received by Council on 18 November 2019 and presented to Council on 4 December 2019 with over 920 signatures. As a lead petitioner, (due to an administrative error, we have not yet received a formal response from council). I wish to enquire in relation to the recommendations.

- A) Does CoPP council intend to declare a Social Amenity Crisis? YES/NO, noting that the amenity situation has worsened, during COVID-19?
- B) Is considering increasing resources in relation to social amenity (by laws officers) in the Fitzroy St, Acland St and Carlisle St precinct, noting that PSO's have been deployed to these precincts during COVID-19. YES/NO?
- C) I request the CEO write to the Hon. Lisa Neville Minister for Police and Emergency Services requesting extra resources.
- D) I request CEO to contact Alfred Health and Outreach Services including Launch Housing, noting that Launch housing has recently located homeless from St Kilda into the St Kilda Hostel, which is currently a crime hotspot and Rydges Hotel on Fitzroy St, which is also a precinct frequented by local drug dealers and a crime hot spot.
- E) I request social and community housing associations (namely Housing First and Prahran Housing) that are completely ignoring problem tenants, be held accountable. If this is a state issue and cannot be controlled by council, then funding from Council must cease.

David Keane – Item 15.1 Notice of Motion -Bernadene Voss – The Sale of 8 York Street St Kilda West

Like many other residents and ratepayers in Port Phillip I have been keenly following Council's response to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as it relates to budgetary and strategic planning measures. In terms of budget, I note you intend releasing your draft for consultation on 17 June 2020. I further note the central significance of an estimated revenue shortfall of \$32m in framing your response, along with the associated savings and service delivery implications.

In light of this, it is alarming to note that at its meeting on 20 May 2020, Council voted not to proceed with the sale of one of its long term unused property assets, 8 York Street, St Kilda West, against the recommendation of Council officers. The sale of this asset (estimated to yield in the range of \$3.5 - \$3.8m) would reduce the revenue shortfall by over 10%, could be achieved within a matter of weeks at practically no cost and would yield immediate and ongoing savings in holding costs.

Defeat of the motion to sell was largely based on the assertion that real estate values have fallen and that a significantly better return could be achieved when the market recovers. This assertion was made without any supporting empirical evidence and is readily refuted by reference to historical data over at least the past 20 years. It appears to have been based on some media reports making generalisations about the property market as a whole. Anyone who has bought property in Port Phillip, and in Lake Ward in particular, will attest to the area's extraordinary resistance to general trends. It also ignores the fact that there is substantially less stock available at this time. In short, the assertion was just plain wrong.

I am sure you will be only too aware of the current level of anxiety and concern for the future amidst your ratepayer and other stakeholder community. And I imagine that your options for addressing that pose all sorts of problems of priorities and competing demands. This can make a cut-through difference. It will reduce your revenue shortfall considerably, it will

lessen your difficult budget decisions commensurately, it will help in a substantial way to quell ratepayer discontent, it could be a public relations positive in these beleaguered times and the timing is perfect in terms of feeding into the budget cycle.

I am aware of at least two potential buyers who are keenly interested at the estimated sale price. The property can be sold now at or above a fair market value which is unaffected by COVID-19 or any other influence.

In summary, I believe that the decision not to dispose of this asset, the unprecedented budgetary problems facing Council and the current levels of ratepayer concern are so obviously inextricably linked that there is really no option other than to reverse the decision. I recommend that you take the matter back to Council and that Council approve the sale as soon as possible. Everyone can be a winner in this!