

From: Merri Southwood <MSouthwood@lanecove.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Sport and Recreation Facility Project
Date: 11 April 2023 at 8:57:51 am AEST
To: Peter Deane <petergdeane@gmail.com>
Cc: "gca2065@gmail.com" <gca2065@gmail.com>

Dear Peter

I have already acknowledged receipt of the letter sent by Gore Valley Action Group on behalf of seven resident/community associations.

I acknowledge that we have before us the resolutions of Council that have brought us to this point and further acknowledge that each Councillor must vote as they feel is consistent with their responsibilities as a Councillor.

I wish to put on the record my reasons for voting as I have to date. I will email each group separately

On 23 March, 2023 Council voted to proceed immediately to procurement of a demolition, sediment control and bulk earthworks contractor for the Sport and Recreation Facility site and to proceed, after the April meeting of Council, to procurement of a contractor for the construction of the facility.

The vote in Council that night was 4-4, with the Mayor and Cllrs Roenfeldt, Bennison and Mort voting in support and Cllrs Kennedy, Bryla, Flood and me, against. Cllr Brooks-Horn has consistently absented himself from the Chamber for votes on the facility due to a conflict of interest.

The Mayor used his casting vote to take this \$75 million project to tender procurement.

I acknowledge that we now have a validly passed resolution of Council to proceed to tender but I would like to explain why I voted against the motion on 23 March.

I do not speak for the other 3 Councillors who voted against it.

I am fully aware that the North Shore region is in need of more sporting facilities, indoor and outdoor. We hear this from all our sporting associations and expert reports back up what the associations are telling us.

But I think this lack of facilities is a regional problem that should be solved at a regional level.

I have always hoped that the shortfall in facilities could be addressed by LGAs working together to deliver large purpose-built facilities.

Joint development and operation of facilities will save huge amounts in construction costs, reduce environmental footprints of large-scale construction projects, share operating expenses, share risk and share the cost of provisioning for asset maintenance and replacement.

Willoughby Council is well advanced in its planning for a 6 indoor court and multi-purpose space facility next to Gore Hill Oval on the highway. This site ticks all the boxes – a nearby rail station and a Metro station on its way, frequent buses, great cycle tracks, several high schools nearby and all the workers in the hospital and commercial precincts, not to mention the thousands of residents in the high rise along the highway (and soon to be thousands more in St Leonards South)..

As of October 2022, Willoughby had costed its project at \$46.5 million.

What a great opportunity for Lane Cove and Willoughby to pool their resources and build a large shared facility at Gore Hill.

Regrettably, this option had not secured the required support at Lane Cove Councillor level as at 23 March.

Whilst I am personally disappointed to have got to this point, what is of immediate concern to me is the effect of the 23 March resolution:-

- work on the demolition of the clubhouse and tennis courts may commence after the close of tenders for construction of the facility and after Councillors have been advised that the project is within budget. This means that demolition could be completed before we have in place a signed construction contract, at a time when the construction industry is challenged

- Councillors will not have the right to vote on approval of the final tender documentation.

Councillors will be provided with an update at their workshop this week on the detailed design, to date, of the facility and some other information that they have specifically requested, mainly around environmentally sustainable features of the project. No binding decisions may be made in workshop.

Whilst we hope that all the features we have pushed for so hard will be incorporated into the final design, the tender documentation will be finalised for issue to the market after our April Council meeting. Given the recent upheaval in the construction industry, I think Councillors have a responsibility to be fully aware of the basis on which Council will issue invitations to tender for construction but, at this stage, this will not happen

- Councillors have no clarity around the actual operational and management structure proposed for the completed facility. The resolution affirms that Council will determine the management/operational model but there is no target date for this to happen. The detail of the management and pricing structure for the facility is important to ensure that the community is not burdened with significant expenses for the long term, noting that the servicing costs of the \$10 million debt secured for the facility will not be funded out of the facility operations but from Canopy rental income

- Councillors have no clarity as to how the needs of the Lane Cove community - the funders of this facility - will be balanced against the demands of those who live outside the LGA. This is particularly the case for the community members who wish to access the facility for the sorts of events so well catered for by the current clubhouse - community meetings, musical performances, dancing, family celebrations.

I share your concern about the haste with which the Sport and Recreation Facility project is being pushed through Council.

We are told that Council needs to meet a project commencement deadline of end June 2023 under the \$5 million grant conditions.

I would have hoped that, in the current construction industry climate, the Minister for Sport would see merit in taking time to get things right.

I will seek to secure agreement to request a delay in the key dates in the grant conditions at our next meeting but the success of such a motion will rest with my fellow Councillors.

There remains, however, one important step before the Sport and Recreation Facility (including demolition) can proceed - determination by the Sydney North Planning Panel, scheduled for 3 May.

All who have made submissions have the right to address the Panel during the hearing - just 3 minute time slots (via Microsoft Teams at this point).

The Panel will provide registration details closer to the hearing date.

I hope that community members will take this opportunity to address the Panel.

Regards

Merri Southwood

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