



## **SPECIAL ELECTORS MEETING**

**Minutes of Special Electors Meeting Called in Response to a Petition to Discuss  
Options for the Future Use of Heritage House  
Meeting held in the Civic Hall  
at the Civic Centre, Sandgate Street, South Perth on  
Wednesday 13 July 2011 commencing at 7.00PM**

### **1. DECLARATION OF OPENING / ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS**

The Deputy Mayor opened the meeting at 7.06 pm and welcomed Councillors, officers and ratepayers in the public gallery, with a special mention to former Mayors John Collins and John Hardwick, Kerry Davey - Chairman of the May Gibbs Trust, Lynne O'Hara - Chairman of the South Perth Historical Society, and former Councillor Bill Gleeson. She then paid respect to the Noongar peoples, the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, and acknowledged their deep feeling of attachment to country.

### **2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE / APOLOGIES**

#### Present:

Deputy Mayor S Doherty (Chair)

#### Councillors:

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| I Hasleby    | Civic Ward      |
| V Lawrance   | Civic Ward      |
| G Cridland   | Como Beach Ward |
| T Burrows    | Manning Ward    |
| L P Ozsdolay | Manning Ward    |
| C Cala       | McDougall Ward  |
| P Howat      | McDougall Ward  |
| R Grayden    | Mill Point Ward |
| B Skinner    | Mill Point Ward |
| K Trent, RFD | Moresby Ward    |

#### Officers:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Mr S Bell       | Acting Chief Executive Officer              |
| Ms V Lummer     | Director Development and Community Services |
| Mr P McQue      | Manager Governance and Administration       |
| Ms P Arevalo    | City Communications Officer                 |
| Ms G Nieuwendyk | Corporate Support Officer                   |
| Mr R Woodman    | Acting Minute Secretary                     |

#### Apologies

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Mr C Frewing     | Chief Executive Officer – annual leave |
| Mayor James Best | Approved Leave of Absence              |
| Cr P Best        | Approved Leave of Absence              |

There were approximately 40 members of the public and 1 member of the press in attendance.

### STATEMENT FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR

The Deputy Mayor outlined the format for the Special Electors Meeting, called in response to a Petition from ratepayers to discuss the options for the future use of Heritage House. She then apologised on behalf of the Council for omitting the South Perth Historical Society President Lynn O'Hara as the joint petitioner in requesting this Special Electors Meeting.

She then advised that it was his intention to apply the City's Standing Orders Local Law to the running of the meeting, and raised the following points:

- Only electors can speak or vote at the meeting;
- Councillors are not obliged to attend Electors' Meetings but have chosen to do so to listen to the comments made by the residents of South Perth. Councillors will not respond to any questions;
- Electors have the right to speak however any Councillor wishing to speak does so as an elector;
- Council is not bound by any decision made at the meeting. Comments in relation to the project will taken into consideration when a report is presented at the August 2011 Council meeting;
- Each speaker will be permitted 5 minutes and should restrict their comments to the subject of the meeting;
- Speakers should not repeat comments / points already raised by another speaker.
- Meeting protocol is to be adhered to.

### **3. PETITION**

Petition received 8 June 2011 from Kerry Davey JP, CPA, Chairman of Trustees, The May Gibbs Trust, together with 210 signatures.

The Deputy Mayor read aloud the text of the petition, as follows:

*"We the undersigned electors of the City of South Perth, request that a Special Meeting of the Electors of the City be held. The details of the matters to be discussed at the Special Meeting of Electors being to: **facilitate community input into the development of options for the future use and preservation of Heritage House as a Historical, Heritage and Exhibition Centre for the community of South Perth.**"*

### **4. REPORT / PRESENTATION**

The Deputy Mayor handed over to the Acting Chief Executive Officer who presented the following points:

- Background of Heritage House
  - The site is reserved under the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) and classified as 'Civic & Cultural' reserve
  - Heritage House is identified on:
    - State Register of Heritage Places (since July 1999); and
    - City of South Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory (since 1994)
  - The City is required to protect the site under the provisions of the Heritage of Western Australian Act 1990
  - Forms part of a group of historic buildings that includes:
    - Windsor Hotel, former Mechanics Institute, Post Office, & Police Station
- Former uses of Heritage House
  - Formerly the South Perth Road Board Offices
  - Local Studies Collection (i.e. collection of books, records & photographs depicting the history & growth of South Perth)– only permanent feature operating at Heritage House on a daily basis – relocated to the Civic Centre Library in early 2011

- May & Herbert Gibbs collection permanently based at Heritage House – six (6) exhibitions since 1 July 2007
  - Bead Guild of WA exhibition (four (4) since 1 July 2007)
  - ‘Wilt the Wombat’ exhibition (two (2) since 1 July 2007)
  - City of South Perth ‘Emerging Artist Award’
  - Phillip Pental Young Heritage Award and Exhibition
- Exhibition attendance
    - Common to all exhibitions held since July 2007 is that other than the ‘opening event’ function for the higher profile exhibitions, attendances are very low
    - Since 1 July 2007, no event has exceeded an average daily attendance of twenty (20) persons
    - The highest attendance is on “opening nights”, ranging from 30 to 133 persons
    - May and Herbert Gibbs Exhibitions – Only one (1) exhibition recorded average daily attendances greater than ten (10) persons; and – Three (3) exhibitions recorded five (5) or fewer average daily attendances.
    - City of South Perth Art Awards – Average between 11.2 and 13.8 persons per day
    - Japanese Pottery Exhibition (July 2007) – Average 19.5 persons per day
- Heritage House opening hours
    - Prior to closure\*, Heritage House operated the following hours:
 

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Monday            | Closed                          |
| Tuesday to Friday | 10 am to 4 pm                   |
| Saturday & Sunday | 1 pm to 4 pm (exhibitions only) |
    - Total hours per week
      - 30 hours during an exhibition period
      - 24 hours during non-exhibition period
    - \*Heritage House was closed when the Local History Collection was relocated to the Civic Centre Library
- Heritage House staffing issues
    - Heritage House was staffed by one (1) person
    - An OSH audit identified this to be a high safety and security risk
    - No coverage existed for lunch or rest breaks, sick or annual leave
    - The City does not have sufficient staff resources within the Library to service the opening hours or cover leave and rest breaks
    - If the City is to staff exhibition functions there is a requirement that at least two (2) staff members are present on site at all times
    - There is a high cost in operating Heritage House (i.e. staff wages, cleaning and utilities, IT, building maintenance etc)
- Future use considerations
    - The City has no operational need for a presence at Heritage House
    - The City is undertaking a review of potential strategic uses for Heritage House which will be concluded late 2011, culminating in a report to Council for consideration
    - South Perth Historical Society will be taken into consideration along with many other potential uses for the building
    - No funds are allocated in the 2011/2012 Budget or Strategic Financial Plan to fund operations at Heritage House (approx \$150,000 pa)
    - The City will consider all possible uses for heritage House that are:
      - complementary to the building and area in general,
      - provide a Return on Investment to the City, and
      - in the best interests of South Perth ratepayers
    - The City does not wish to set a precedence by fully subsidising a community group within an invaluable City asset

- The City needs to be satisfied that the building is maximised to the best possible benefit for the community, ensuring there is no opportunity cost or loss of financial return to ratepayers
- South Perth Historical Society – Short term accommodation
  - The City is willing to offer SPHC the use of the former South Perth Learning Centre (Labouchere Road) on a short term basis until the property is required to accommodate the Civic Triangle Project.
  - The City has a longer term strategic view that SPHC be permanently located within the proposed Old Mill Precinct Redevelopment.

## 5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The Deputy Mayor opened the public comment period at 7:20pm. The following is a ‘summary’ of comments raised:

Kerry Davey, Chairman of the May Gibbs Trust - Apologies from Hon. Barbara Scott and Ray Turner. Brief history of the acquisition of the May and Herbert Gibbs Collection and the formation of the May Gibbs Trust. Last valuation of the collection was approximately \$350,000. Extra works have been donated to the City via the Trust. The City are the owners of the collection and the Trust feels that the City have lost interest. The Trust is concerned the City are seeking to lease Heritage House and questioned the need for the City to collect rental revenue. The May and Herbert Gibbs Collection needs to be housed at Heritage House. The building has historical and cultural significance. Only community use should be allowed at Heritage House.

Lynne O’Hara, Chairman of the South Perth Historical Society - Apologies from Bob Maher and Rob O’Connor QC. An agreement between the City and the South Perth Historical Society states ‘to hold and display the Collection’. Council have not been officially informed of the points raised in the Acting Chief Executive Officer’s presentation. South Perth Historical Society have contacted the City numerous times regarding the issue of consultation on the future of Heritage House. We are to protect heritage buildings. South Perth Historical Society was established by way of Council resolution. Heritage House was named so in 1992 after being restored following thirty years of commercial lease. It was difficult to secure Heritage House as a venue for the Philip Pandal exhibition, which affected promotion of the event. Heritage House should not be leased commercially and should be leased to the South Perth Historical Society.

John Hardwick, 2 Bickley Crescent, Manning - When the collection was acquired the only condition put by Council was that private funding be sought for its maintenance. Heritage House is an intrinsic part of South Perth due to its location and iconic nature. Heritage house is underutilised because it became a place where large and rare events occurred rather than as a place of regular displays. I would like a situation where the tenants of Heritage House can commit to a series of events that would mean that the building is open over 70% of the time to residents and visitors. It may well be that a sub tenant could be housed in Heritage House subject to the wishes of Council and the South Perth Historical Society as the main tenant.

John Collins, 39A Sulman Avenue, Salter Point - A flyer created by the City in 2003 for an exhibition at Heritage House named the building as “The Cultural Centre Heritage House”, so what has happened since then? For Councillors to properly consider this issue, they need to be given all of the appropriate information. There is no innovative plan for the Cultural Centre or Heritage House. The Cultural Centre should be the starting point for people visiting the City of South Perth. Closing Heritage House to the public would be like closing Collier Park Hostel. Volunteers will happily work with staff on building heritage within the City. The budget should be adjusted to include Heritage House.

Marjorie Barker, 11 Garden Street, South Perth - Previous Councillor who persuaded \$22,000 from Council be used to restore the building initially. It is sad that the Local History Collection has been

moved. Councillors have a duty of care to protect the history of the City. Heritage House needs to be preserved for South Perth Historical Society and to have a permanent collection on display.

Bill Gleeson, - Did Mayor James Best not email Councillors suggesting that they not attend the meeting? I want to congratulate the Councillors who attended. Fifteen old Council chairs have gone missing from Heritage House.

The Deputy Mayor requested Mr Gleeson to keep his comments related to the subject of Heritage House.

Lynne Giblett, 17 Amery Street, Como - Lived in Amery Street since 1952. Something historical should have a high priority. When South Perth Historical Society doesn't have a dedicated headquarters, member numbers suffer.

Finola O'Doherty, 357 Mill Point Road, South Perth - Managed heritage arts buildings in Ireland. It seems that there are two issues here - the collection and the building. We need to use the building in a contemporary way. The City needs a better policy on public arts and culture. Local Government doesn't want to invest given the high cost, but the South Perth Historical Society wants to protect heritage.

Maxine Pental, 15 Swan Street, South Perth - The City's vision statement mentions "sharing of spaces". Is the Council saying that there is no operational need for the building? Council isn't for monetary gain, but for community value. Leasing Heritage House seems like an executive decision.

Jenny Wood, 9/85 South Terrace, Como - Lived in the City of South Perth for 30 years. Speaking as a grandmother of Manning residents. Took grandchildren to see the Philip Pental Young Heritage Award and Exhibition at Heritage House. Heritage House gave entrants to the competition a sense of joy, pride an inspiration. I hope that we never put a price on that.

#### PROPOSED MOTION

Moved Lynne O'Hara, Sec John Hardwick

That:

- (a) the City of South Perth Historical Society request that Heritage House Cultural Centre remain the home of heritage and culture in our City, as dedicated by the City in 1992 celebrating the centenary of the South Perth Road Board.
- (b) May Gibbs Trust and South Perth Historical Society are appointed as guardians of the substantial May and Herbert Gibbs Collection.

#### COMMENTS FOR / AGAINST MOTION - POINTS OF CLARIFICATION

##### Lynne O'Hara for the Motion

- Appreciated the offer of temporary housing at the at the former South Perth Learning Centre
- Nothing is planned for Heritage House by September 2011
- We need open discussion with the City on heritage issues

## AMENDMENT

John Collins moved that the following be added to the Motion, which was agreed by the mover and seconder of the substantive Motion:

That:

- (a) The original part (a) and part (b) be combined, and part (b) being amended to read  
*“And that the South Perth Historical Society, with the May Gibbs Trust be granted occupancy forthwith to act as guardians of the substantial May and Herbert Gibbs Collection and maintain interpretation of the Heritage Precinct”*
- (b) a new part (b) added, which reads,  
*“the Council instruct City Officers to cease any negotiations for lease or part lease of Heritage House”*
- (c) a part (c) be added to read  
*“the City officers, in conjunction with the community and South Perth Historical Society, provide Council with an innovative plan to promote Heritage House Cultural Centre as the cultural centre for arts and culture in the City of South Perth”*

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>MEETING DECISION</b> |
|-------------------------|

The Deputy Mayor put the Motion

That....

- (a) the City of South Perth Historical Society request that Heritage House Cultural Centre remain the home of heritage and culture in our City, as dedicated by the City in 1992 celebrating the centenary of the South Perth Road Board. And that the South Perth Historical Society, with the May Gibbs Trust be granted occupancy forthwith to act as guardians of the substantial May and Herbert Gibbs Collection and maintain interpretation of the Heritage Precinct.
- (b) the Council instruct City Officers to cease any negotiations for lease or part lease of Heritage House.
- (c) the City, in conjunction with the community and City of South Perth Historical Society, provide Council with an innovative plan to promote Heritage House Cultural Centre as the cultural centre for arts and culture in the City of South Perth.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**Note:** This matter will be the subject of report to the August 2011 meeting of Council.

## **6. CLOSURE**

The Deputy Mayor closed the meeting at 8.30pm and thanked everyone for attending.