



Forrest Residents Group

Minutes – General Meeting

30th of August 2016

A meeting of Forrest residents called to consider the formation of a proposed Forrest Residents Group was held at 6:30 pm in the Italian Cultural Centre, Forrest. More than 60 residents attended.

The meeting convenor, Gary Kent, President of the Inner South Canberra Community Council, welcomed attendees and noted apologies from:

- Jeremy Hanson MLA
- Shane Rattenbury MLA
- Chris Bourke MLA
- Alistair Coe MLA
- Andrew Leigh MP
- Senator Zed Seselja
- Elizabeth Brenchley
- Susan Cowan
- F. & J. Broughton
- Cath & Feliks Skowronski
- Susan Cowan
- John & Jennifer Minns

Gary acknowledged representatives from the Old Narrabundah Community Council, the Deakin Residents Association, the Oaks Estate Progress Association and the Kingston-Barton Residents Group, along with the Independent Candidate for Kurrajong in the forthcoming A.C.T. Legislative Assembly election, Marea Fatseas. Steve Doszpot MLA, the current Member for Molonglo, arrived towards the end of the meeting and was acknowledged by the convenor.

Gary indicated that the purpose of establishing a Forrest Residents Group was to provide a voice for those living in Forrest on any relevant issues affecting the

community. Similar groups had already been established for other suburbs in the inner south. Forrest was to be the last.

In his capacity as President of the Inner South Canberra Community Council, Gary offered a seeding fund of \$500 to any future steering committee set up following establishment of the FRG. He then asked whether attendees wanted to raise any issues or to comment on those issues raised in the flyer distributed to homes the week before the meeting. He iterated those issues on the flyer for the benefit of the meeting:

- Heritage listings
- Block sizes
- Rates
- Community Consultation
- Redevelopment
- 168 new dwellings proposed for Forrest
- Manuka shops
- Traffic and parking
- Footpaths and services
- Nature strips, verges and roads
- Forrest Primary School
- Local events
- Manuka Oval Redevelopment
- Trees

Several residents took the opportunity to endorse and expand on those topics:

- The relentless and increasing pressure on parking in the area, particularly in residential streets. This was an issue not only for residents and people seeking access to narrower streets in the suburb, but was also an issue for those working in the area, with limited alternative parking available.
- The more than 250 per cent increase in rates for residents over the last 5 to 6 years. This had the effect of pushing people out of the area, including those who had lived there for many years, were retired or widowed. Further comments in relation to rates included:

1. A perception that the ACT government tended to use Forrest as a cash cow.
 2. The fact that outer Canberra areas were better serviced than the inner areas, particularly in terms of maintenance of green spaces, street trees, drains, lighting, street signs and footpaths.
- Significant and inexorable loss of heritage from the area. Development and re-development decisions seemed to be made without consideration of the historical importance or long-term value of individual structures or spaces.
 1. Residents enjoyed and valued the heritage character of Forrest and wanted the historical features protected and maintained.
 2. The meeting endorsed an intention that the FRG obtain information on the government's interpretation of 'heritage' and on the associated constraints or provisions under legislation for the purpose of designating something as having 'heritage' value.
 - The number of new dwellings on specific sites and the height of buildings were seen as impinging upon the privacy and security of neighbouring properties, as well as on the heritage look and feel of the Inner south. Objections were expressed about combining separate residential sites or dividing existing sites to increase the number of dwellings that could be built on a particular parcel of land.
 - The tendency for the ACT government to designate areas for development or re-development, including re-zoning for commercial, medium or high-density housing, without providing adequate notice of its intention. Residents wanted sufficient opportunity to raise concerns about changes to residential blocks before decisions were made or the bulldozers came in. Specifically,
 1. Residents wanted more and better community advice and consultation on the ACT development plan. That advice should include information up front on processes for making comment and raising concerns on the plan.
 2. Any changes in zoning for land in Forrest should be made clear well in advance of sales.

3. Plans for blocks also should be available for community consideration well in advance of being settled and agreed by government.
- To aid community understanding, the FRG was asked to obtain information from the ACT government on:
 1. The borders of the suburb of Forrest and the designations of areas within those borders.
 2. Areas in the suburb currently being considered for re-zoning or for which proposals had been received for redevelopment.
 3. The powers and role of the NCA.
- Particular concern was expressed by the meeting on the following current development proposals and the lack of community consultation to date by the government or developers:
 1. Proposal for a seven story hotel on the existing Italo-Australian club site (Block 9 Section 19 Forrest). Only two people attending the meeting had received flyers about this proposal. Any comment to the government on the proposal had to be submitted by the 21st of September 2016. The proposed change in use of the site would require a change in the lease purpose. It was unclear whether any change had yet been agreed by the ACT government, although a development proposal had been submitted by the developer. The speaker on this issue suggested that the ISCC make a submission to enable time to be provided for proper community consideration of the proposal. Gary Kent declared his interest as current Secretary and Board member of the Italo-Australian Club, although noting that the Club had sold the land in question before he joined the Board.
 2. Proposal for development of the site between the Jewish Centre and the Forrest primary school (letter to ACT Government to be co-signed by FRG, Forrest Primary School and the ISCCC)
 3. Proposal for Melbourne Avenue near Parliament House and near the Swiss Embassy.
 4. Rumoured proposal for a multi-story complex in National Circuit.

- The scale and extent of proposed developments in the areas around Forrest also were of concern to Forrest residents. It was suggested that the residents of the different areas get together to increase leverage on the ACT government. People enjoyed the small community feel of the area, particularly Manuka, given that Forrest did not have its own shopping centre. Issues raised in relation to this concern included:
 1. Recognition that the area near Manuka, including and beyond Murray Crescent, was similar to Forrest and had the same heritage, parking and development considerations.
 2. Barton and other areas of Griffith, Red Hill, Yarralumla and Deakin also had heritage concerns.
 3. Concern lingered in relation to the Manuka Oval development proposal. It was thought that while the Giants/Grocon unsolicited proposal had been rejected, a proposal to extensively redevelop the area had only been temporarily put aside by the ACT government.
 4. In relation to point 3 above, the meeting questioned the need for an international standard sporting facility in the inner south of Canberra. The proposal to upgrade Manuka Oval to take international sporting events was considered inappropriate to the character of the area and the desire by residents to retain that character. Individuals at the meeting had sent letters to both major parties on the Manuka Oval issue without getting a response.
- The need for a guarantee that parkland and open spaces in the suburb would be retained into the future, even by designating them as 'heritage' was raised by the meeting. Several speakers expressed concern about the future of Collins Park.

Two motions were put to the meeting. The first motion, proposed by Alex Morozow of Dominion Circuit was:

“That the Development Application process in respect of Block 9 Section 19 Forrest be suspended because of the extremely limited level of community consultation that was conducted prior to lodgment.”

The meeting passed this motion unanimously.

A second motion, proposed by Dr Peter Cook of Empire Circuit:

“That the meeting expresses concern at the rezoning from community to mixed use of Block 10 Section 13 Forrest and the proposed siting of a hotel and residential apartments on the site, including creation of new road access from Canberra Ave.”

The meeting also passed this motion unanimously.

Gary called for nominations for membership of a Steering Committee for the Forrest Residents Group. The meeting agreed that:

John-Paul Romano of Franklin Street, be convenor of the FRG Steering Committee

Tui Davidson of Hobart Avenue, be Deputy-Convenor

Membership of the Steering Committee would also include:

John Newham of National Circuit

Carolyn Norrie of Dominion Circuit

Brian Weston of Empire Circuit

Margaret Atcherley of Dominion Circuit

The Steering Committee would seek to identify a lawyer who was a resident of Forrest and who could advise on legal matters affecting the operation of the FRG.

The meeting concluded at approximately 7:40 pm.