

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

Tuesday, 1 April 2014

Held at Swan Hill Town Hall,
Council Chambers,
McCallum Street, Swan Hill
Commenced at 1:00 PM

COUNCIL:

Cr LT McPhee – Mayor

Cr JN Katis

Cr GW Norton

Cr GI Cruickshank

Cr JA Kiley

Cr CM Adamson

Cr JB Crowe

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SECTION A – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- **Open**

Mayor, Cr Les McPhee assumed the chair and declared the meeting open at 1:01pm.

- **Acknowledgement to Country**

Cr McPhee read the acknowledgement to Country

- **Prayer**

Cr Adamson read the prayer

- **Apologies**

Nil

Recommendations

That the apologies be accepted.

- **Declarations of Pecuniary Interest**

Nil

SECTION B – REPORTS

B.14.15 INTENTION TO DECLARE A SPECIAL RATE FOR THE SWAN HILL REGION - RECEIVING AND HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS

Responsible Officer: Director Development and Planning
File Number: 26-34-00
Attachments: 1 Declaration of Special Rate for the Swan Hill Region
2 Submissions for Special Rate

Declarations of Interest: Officer

Brett Luxford - as the responsible officer, I declare that I have no disclosable interests in this matter.

Summary

Council resolved on 18 February 2014 to give notice of its intention to declare a Special Rate under Section 163 of the Local Government Act on commercial, industrial and tourism properties for a period of five years commencing 1 July 2014. As part of the consultation process, comment on the proposed Special Rate was sought. This report documents the submissions received.

Discussion

At its meeting on 18 February 2014, Council at the request of Swan Hill Incorporated resolved to give notice of its intention to declare a Special Rate for the purposes of defraying expenses in undertaking marketing programs associated with the encouragement of business and commerce in the Swan Hill region.

It is intended that the Special Rate scheme run for a period of five years commencing from 1 July 2014, with \$339,130 raised in the first year and the total raised increasing by CPI per annum thereafter. The marketing programs involve activities associated with the promotion of the Swan Hill region as a place to live, work, shop, invest and visit.

In line with sub-sections 163 (1A), (1B) and (1C) of the Local Government Act the public notice was published in 'The Guardian' newspaper on 21 February 2014 which provided details of how the Special Rate will be assessed and levied. A copy of the public notice was also mailed on 24 February 2014 to the owners and occupiers of 747 properties covered by the Special Rate, alerting them to the proposed declaration (Attachment 1) and notifying persons wishing to object or make a submission in relation to the Special Rate (under sections 163A and 163B of the Act) to do so by the close of business on 21 March 2014. They were also informed that any person requesting to be heard in support of their written submission is

entitled to appear before a meeting of the Council on 1 April 2014 or be represented by a person acting on their behalf and, that Council will consider the submissions and declaration of the Special Rate on 15 April 2014.

There were a total of 381 submissions received in relation to the proposed Special Rate. Many of the submitters simply returned the form provided and ticked whether or not they were in support of the Special Rate. Some submitters added additional comments while others provided a more detailed submission. The tables attached (Attachment 2) outline the submissions that were received. They also highlight whether or not the submitter supports the Special Rate. Where comments were provided, these have been highlighted on the table and copies provided. Of the 381 written submissions received 12 have indicated they wish to address Council in support of their submission.

The 12 presenters are listed below:

Showbiz Cinema
Sun Centre Carpet Court
McAlpines Sewing Centre
Swan Hill Incorporated
Murray Valley Lasers
Burke & Wills Motor Inn
Comfort Inn Campbell
7 Cobb Crt
Swan Hill Artworks
Northern Shoe Store
Murray Downs Golf & Country Club & Swan Hill Club

At this meeting, Council will only receive and hear the submissions in relation to the Special Rate. Council will consider the submissions on 15 April 2014, prior to making a decision on the declaration of the Special Rate on that date.

Consultation

Significant consultation has been undertaken including writing to all people liable to pay the Special Rate, public notices and information on the Council website. This has resulted in the submissions that have been received.

Financial Implications

The consideration of the submissions in relation to the Special Rate has no financial implications for Council.

Social Implications

The consideration of the submissions in relation to the Special Rate has no social implications.

Economic Implications

The consideration of the submissions in relation to the Special Rate has no economic implications.

Environmental Implications

Nil

Risk Management Implications

Nil

Council Plan Strategy Addressed

Attracting new business - We will encourage new business development and will provide support to attract new business investment and expansion in the community.

Options

Nil

Recommendation

That Council note the report and receive the written submissions.

15/14 Motion

MOVED Cr Adamson

That Council:

- 1. Note the report and receive the written submissions.**

SECONDED Cr Kiley

The Motion was put and CARRIED

16/14 Recommendation

MOVED Cr Adamson

That standing orders be suspended.

SECONDED Cr Kiley

The Motion was put and CARRIED

The following is a précis of the verbal submissions:

Mr. Andrew Taylor

- Vacant shops not unique to Swan Hill.
- Swan Hill Inc has good brand and recognition in the market place.
- Swan Hill Inc can improve. If Council votes against it, who will replace it?

Mr. Chris Craig-Neal

- To be successful in business, you need to bring skills in. Swan Hill Inc is to be commended on skills development.
- Modern business is only a click away from success or failure and Swan Hill Inc is critical in marketing.
- The cost of Swan Hill Inc is minimal, would happily pay extra.
- Business can leverage off what Swan Hill Inc is doing.

Mr. Colin McAlpine

- Swan Hill would have gone backwards in the last 15 years if it had not been for Swan Hill Inc.
- Swan Hill Inc should market itself better.

Mr. Murray Ray

- The brand is known Australia-wide.
- Swan Hill Inc will adopt a new 5 year strategic plan, will become more flexible and encourage participation, and improve communication with members.
- Our model is the envy of other regions who are interested in adopting our model.
- Swan Hill Inc is best placed to spend the special rate proceeds.

Mr. Colin O'Bryan

- Never had a visit from Council asking how we can help or support.

- Objects to the Special Rate and doesn't agree with the provisions of the Act.
- Made suggestions on where money is best spent, for example, bulk buying of electricity, encourage solar, create program to help young people get work, and make a "Made in Swan Hill" sticker with a common logo.
- The Visitor Information Centre should have a list of manufacturers.

Mr. Geoffrey Fletcher

- Commends the achievement of Swan Hill Inc, but objects strongly to the Special Rate.
- Swan Hill Inc should be funded from general rates, because everyone benefits from Swan Hill Inc achievements in the form of employment of young people etc.
- The Special Rate is inequitable, for example, his private residences pays the rate.
- Why is agriculture business exempt?
- If Council has an objective, then why is it funded by an extra tax?

Mr. Graeme Girdlestone

- Supports the Special Rate but believes it is not applied equitably and shouldn't be applied on residences. The amount he pays is exorbitant and doesn't believe that motels get a larger benefit than other business. Other business such as restaurants and takeaways do not have the same physical limitations to grow their business.
- Businesses should be listed on the Swan Hill Inc website.
- The Visitor Information Centre should become a booking agency for motels.
- Council should have other funds (in addition to the Special Rate) to promote the region. This should be a core function of Council

Mr. Lynton Smith

- Supports the Special Rate but it is inequitable.
- Currently paying two levies whilst in the past was only paying one.
- Council officers to look into the matter.

Mr. Roger Day

- The rate isn't fair.

- Burden placed on a few, not many.
- The rate has a valid purpose but area north of Piangil is excluded.
- Residential properties don't pay and we need to add home based business.
- Need to add Manangatang and Robinvale.
- Need to reduce general rates to attract business and retain them.

Mr. Terry Jennings

- The Special Rate was originally requested 12 years ago by the business community.
- Explained the history and operation of Swan Hill Inc.
- Role is to attract people to the region to work, live and invest.
- We have a good brand "Heart of the Murray" and are competing against other Councils such as Mildura.
- We have the highest percentage increase in visitor numbers to our region, thanks in part to Swan Hill Inc.

Mr. Greg Roberts

- Murray Downs pays \$5,000 a year voluntarily.
- Swan Hill Inc is a proposal put forward by the business community.
- This is unique and better value for money than Mildura's scheme.
- Swan Hill Inc's role is to market and promote Swan Hill. It's role is not economic development. That is Council's role.
- Need to take account of visitors that visit family and friends market, when we consider the benefits of tourism.
- Swan Hill Inc can achieve results that individual business can't do on their own, eg. promotion in metropolitan Melbourne.
- There is room for improvement at Swan Hill Inc.
- Hasn't seen a comparable model anywhere on the Murray River.

Mayor, Cr Les McPhee thanked the submitters for attending today's meeting and everyone that made a submission even though they did not attend today. Cr McPhee advised it is an important decision that will be made at the next Council meeting on the 15th April. Cr McPhee reiterated that again, today was a hearing on submissions and that no decision will be made today.

17/14 Recommendation

MOVED Cr Norton

That Standing Orders be resumed.

SECONDED Cr Adamson

The Motion was put and CARRIED

There being no further business the Mayor, Cr Les McPhee closed the meeting at 2:34pm

Attachment 1

- Declaration of Special Rate for the Swan Hill Region

Attachment 2

- Special Rate Submissions