



Shire of  
Wongan-Ballidu

# Minutes (Unconfirmed)

Annual Electors Meeting  
Wednesday, 7 February 2024



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## Item 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY/DECLARATION OF OPENING

The Shire President, Cr M Stephenson, Presiding Member, declared the meeting open at 6:03pm

## Item 2. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES

### Attendees:

#### Electors:

Ross Lane	Ross Lane	Eric Ganzer
Des Booth	Brian Donnellan	Sylvia Donnellan
Danielle Reed	Pam Toster	Steve Clarke
Dawn Vaughan	Eugene Morgan	Fiona Brown

#### Councillors:

Cr M Stephenson	Shire President
Cr D Coad	Deputy Shire President
Cr G Chambon	Councillor
Cr E Giedraitis	Councillor
Cr M Sewell	Councillor
Cr S Starcevich	Councillor
Cr S Boekeman	Councillor

#### Council Staff:

Stuart Taylor	Chief Executive Officer
Sam Dolzadelli	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Melissa Marcon	Manager Regulatory Services
Stephen Casey	Manager Works and Services
Ross Rayson	Manager Community Services

### Apologies:

Bill Hooper	Dianne Hooper	Ros Sutherland
Len DeGrussa	Chris Sadler	Don Sadler
Sheree Chasland		

### Item 3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

#### 3.1 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2023

##### Correction to minutes

Eric Ganzer advised there was an apology missed for Brian Donellan for 2023 electors meeting. This to be updated on minutes.

**Moved: Cr S Boekman      Seconded: D Booth**

That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Electors held on WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2023 be confirmed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

**CARRIED**

### Item 4. RECEIPT OF THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2023

**MOVED: B Donellan      SECONDED: S Clarke**

That the Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 2023, inclusive of the following reports be received:

- President's Report
- Chief Executive Officer's Report (Incorporating Officers Reports)
- Annual Financial Report
- Auditors Report for the year ended 30 June 2023

**CARRIED**

### Item 5. GENERAL BUSINESS

#### 5.1 Congratulations – Top 20 OAG list

Brian Donellan and Steve Clarke congratulated Shire for making top 20 OAG list.

#### 5.2 Thank you for Handrails

Fiona Brown thanked the Shire for prompt action on installation of handrails in toilet within general part of medical centre.

#### 5.3 Thank you for Generator

Cr Coad, On behalf of Len Degrossa, thanked Council for generator support at Ballidu.

#### 5.4 January 2024 - Power Outage & Fire

Brian Donellan asked what was learnt from power outage for next time around?

The CEO gave a brief summary of the two incidents (fire and power outage);

- Credit to BFB, VFES & VFRS and big credit to Ross Lane.
- Learnt about WACHS evacuation policy, Shire was not aware of the decision to evacuate.
- Fire close to town created a lot of angst and uncertainty, photos and comments from the Fire ground didnot help the situation in town.

- Impacted substation north of town, this at the time was thought to be the only source impacting power within the Shire.
- Fire duration in the scheme of things was short (6 hrs).
- Due to wind shift, consider different wind patterns and impacts on the townsite should a fire occur in the future, as these could follow hospital road/Avon Road, or the CBH side of town.
- Biggest issue was loss of power, It was not known that a massive storm hit Perth, the storm damage area was bigger than Saroja, complexity of event and the number of communities impacted (15 shires to Kalgoorlie)
- Mobile Phone tower outage at 6:30
- We became priority for Telstra due to having the fire, generator provided and Towers up and running around 11.00pm.
- Learning to be more aware of what's going on. However, we received minimal information from external agencies.
- One mistake in hindsight regarding sharing message from Western Power via Facebook was not maintaining Western Power Branding so that the public knew we were only a conduit for the provision of information.
- Threat to water supplies across most of the affected area. Water Corp indicated that they required 300 generators to support Perth to Kalgoorlie.
- Big reliance on internet to get messaging out, however NBN Fixed Mobile Network suffered same issues as Telstra Mobile Phone Network
- Utilised TIMS network, however, was ineffective as many people did not have access to mobile network due to loss of power and no generator backup of Telstra systems.
- Dept. Communities responsible for welfare, responsibility fell onto Shire as department staff were stretched due to the size of the event and the number of communities without any facilities at all requiring assistance).
- Generator to connect to Sports Pavilion worked well, was able to be relocated to Ballidu when power was restored to Wongan Hills Townsite.
- The Shire Admin generator worked well.
- Shire was fully operational, however perhaps created false sense of comfort that things were okay when other localities were not. Also gave false sense of our communications being received by the wider community as the Shire had full Mobile Phone and NBN Internet access.
- Shire needs to investigate and implement alternative methods of communication when total failure of all mobile communication systems.
- WALGA putting forward to Telstra at Federal level and NBN for connection issues during emergency. Burakin no water, rely on water from Kalannie.
- One source of truth, hard to identify accurate information.
- 46 poles taken out from the fire north of town.

Brian Donellan asked if the issue was information in, rather than information out?

- This was definitely an issue, with State Agencies in the first few days while the coming to terms and understanding the full extent of the damage and failure of infrastructure.
- The CEO spoke about maybe in the future utilising satellite phones systems for emergency services and support services within the Shire as result of the over-reliance on power-based telecommunication systems.
- Telstra phone service outside post office in some local government works as they were thought to be analog based systems.

- 40 channel UHF Radios works, but we've replaced most with mobile phones due to increased mobile towers within the Shire. Not sure if repeater systems were working during power outage which may impact distance communications depending on event location.
- LEMC was not initiated locally, this is because it was a district or State emergency thus the DEMC and SEMC were activated with various groups and committees dealing with the larger area.
- The Shire implemented programs and assistance where the State
- Perhaps we could have created a ISG, maybe asked the Fire Brigades members in uniform to door knock and drive to isolated properties on the fringes of townsites to check on our vulnerable community members.

Brian Donellan suggested that Firies could organise a big speaker and go around the area broadcasting advice etc.

Brian Donellan also asked if the office generator performed well and as expected and if it was regularly tested and maintained.

CEO spoke about Generators & Support;

- Another 2 would have put us in a lot better place to provide help, however the decision of the Shire to support the cost of fuel supplies to outlying townsites assisted those most in need to operate independently owned generators.
- Current generators are tested regularly.
- The mobile generator is stored at depot it has 100amp breaker, only drew 30 at pavilion with everything on.
- That generator would manage with lights at tennis/bowling.
- Local Electricians were flat out around town assisting local business and community members install and set up generators.
- The community is very fortunate that the IGA and local fuel provider had generators installed to ensure provision to community and emergency services.
- Many of our Neighbours had no relief centres, or access to fuel and food supplies
- In relation to Evacuation and Relief centres we have insufficient staff numbers to manage these facilities and our workforce may not have the skills or training etc to look after vulnerable people who may need to access them.

Brian Donellan mentioned how fortunate that Dunning's got fuel to keep things up and running.

Ross Lane described the Satellite sleeve, goes on phone \$600 bucks, could be worth looking into.

Ross Lane described how the Fire mitigation implemented to the North of town Reserves worked well and truly overdue;

- 3 wind changes, never had wind change during a fire over his many years as Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
- The mitigation around Christmas rock and rubbish tip area was very beneficial, saved that side should the fire have spread to this area.

Shire President commented that it is good to hear when we are doing the right thing by fire mitigation, has been criticism of the Shire and DFES around attempts to clear firebreaks and mitigation lines in bushland surrounding the town, short term pain for long term gain.

Pam Toster advised that Ballidu power was out for 8 days. Many outages in past 12 months, phoned Minister Dawson and received a call back that he would be very happy to send someone out to talk to us about the uncertainties. (Matthew Dixon from the Minister's office)

Community needs to be involved as well. Perhaps a warning call? Live 10kms out of Ballidu, didn't know what to do.

Bring community in on debrief. Community connection is important, thanks for generator being put in.

Steve Clark referred to the Shire opening up the Pavilion for evacuation centre and asked will that be used in future?

The CEO advised that we have a number of options, but depends on the situation of the incident, i.e. where is impacted? A question for Western Power, what will they do to strengthen power situation in the Shire.

Des Booth thanked Shire for rubbish collection after event, good recovery service.

Silvia Donellan commented that Phone system never went down previously when power went out etc. She stated that it is a horrible situation when you've got no means to communicate.

The Shire President asked the question – Do we all have fire plans and telecommunications plans? We all need them. Need to be able to promote the implementation of these. Luckily got a few minutes on radio to alert community, radios with batteries are helpful.

Cr Sewell advised for future reference; if you still have a landline you can still plug it in and dial 000 on the copper, it will still work.

Fiona Brown said that Macka tells us all public phones work. Gave thanks to Wheatbelt ice for providing ice.

She also stated it was unfortunate that the hospital was not open, Eugene Morgan had dog bite and couldn't use ER, had to go to Northam.

CEO advised that it is his understanding that the hospital didn't close and that the Emergency Department with Telehealth facilities was available during the entire event. It is probable that when treatment was needed the staff were fully engaged to assist with evacuation of the hospital and Lovegrove Lodge.

Brian Donellan gave his understanding of Telstra; towers talk to each other, but need power both ends, i.e. generator each end.

CEO advised that we only had no phone for 5 /6 hours, had access to mobile phone and data services from that point onwards.

Danielle Reed asked if an evacuation plan existed for the town.



CEO advised that in a local emergency the Department of Communities is responsible for evacuations and the evacuation and welfare plan with assistance from the Shire.

There is an evacuation plan in place and an agreement with our surrounding Local Governments to access facilities in their Shire should the need arise.

A discussion was had with the CEO of Victoria Plains in the event that we needed assistance and access to their facilities.

The CEO referred to the alerts saying that the initial messages were precautionary and after the wind changed there was no concern.

The DFES Superintendent came out, assessed the situation, was comfortable wind had changed and no danger anymore. Communication issue between RDC or whoever calling the evacuation. Shire wasn't party to incident control (evacuation point of view).

### **5.5 Thank you – From Ballidu Community**

Pam Toster thanked the Shire for everything they do in Ballidu, special thanks to horticulture team. She has sent letter to all Councillors and asked what the protocol is for getting acknowledgement from Councillors. Can we have official acknowledgement so we know it has been received and will be addressed?

### **5.6 Barracks**

Des Booth stated that he mentions the issue of the Barracks every year. White ants. Does not look nice. Keep getting told it will be fixed. Toilets need knocking down, they are a disgrace, safety issue.

The CEO advised that works are included in the budget this year, previous years it has not actually been budgeted.

### **5.7 Hall Maintenance**

Des Booth advised that the undercover entrance to the hall is rusting away, needs to be maintained. Shire President advised that the administration would investigate this

Brian Donellan advised that the men's toilet downstairs in the Civic Centre needs to be cleaned properly, fly screens out of the windows, full of spiders etc.

CEO advised this also will be investigated

### **5.8 Civic Centre Parking**

Silvia Donellan commented that the Civic Centre parking is lovely, apart from the lines at the side closest to the Shire, on the hall side, still needs the lines painted.

CEO advised that this will be looked at and corrected as this is minor maintenance and we have the resource and materials to undertake the minor works

### **5.9 Mural – Ballidu Hall**

Dawn Vaughan asked about the mural on wall of hall in Ballidu.

She advised that Phil Dawson has completed a rough sketch, this was in letter sent to all Councillors. Can this be considered?

The Shire President Requested that all information be provided so it can be discussed at the next informal meeting of Council.

### **5.10 Depot Fence Mural**

Silvia Donellan asked about the mural on new depot fence.



The Shire President responded that this is why it was built as Colourbond and white - it is future project to be planned in conjunction with the community.

#### **5.11 Community Toilets**

Brian Donellan asked if there was an update on the community toilets.

CEO responded that this is budgeted and funded. Now to secure tradespersons.

#### **5.12 Murals**

Fiona Brown asked; when doing new murals, can old murals be revamped?

CEO responded that there is a proposal from a local group in conjunction with the original artist to update the existing murals.

#### **5.13 EV Charger**

Des Booth asked if the EV charger was profitable? Can it be made free?

CEO advised that it is grant funded and during day is powered by solar. The usage is minimal.

If Council want to approve making it free that is their decision, this can be done.

#### **5.14 Corellas**

Eric Ganzer advise that he met with Shire in January, discussed situation. Seems numbers were down compared to prior years. Thanks to Stephen Casey for organising WA Shooting & Game Association with shooters to do the cull. They brought up 7-10 members, some stayed overnight, some went back. Saturday was extremely hot, but most successful day, birds were in the air and kept them moving, shooters down at sewerage pond (4), 4 down behind oval.

Numbers unsure, maybe 60-100, they pick the birds up and remove them. Sunday morning was cool, so birds wouldn't come out for a drink. Shot from 7am-9am, in all it was very successful, reduced numbers enough, so they are not flying in big packs all the time. School oval trees, Shields Crescent behind houses in salmon gums and up and down main street.

Not creatures of habit, they moved spots from last year.

Need another cull in 1-2 months time, the group is fine to come up again.

Gas gun update? Stephen to chat with Bruce regarding gas gun.

Eric advised that individuals can become a member for a cost; they prioritise safety, check licences and guns etc. We will never get rid of the corellas, but we can reduce their numbers over time.

#### **5.15 Thank you – BFB support**

Ross Lane wished to thank Shire staff, in particular Stephen, Stuart, Sam and Councillors for supporting BFB and the other brigades. 1470 hectares, west Kondut fire, over 1000-man hours.

LG is supporting these brigades in a big way, putting measures in place.

#### **5.16 Christmas Lights**

Steve Clark spoke on behalf of progress, took over from Men's Shed from putting up annual Christmas lights. Need a younger crew to assist with putting them up. New protocols are making it harder, in a few years cannot put lights up (no lights, harvest festival etc.) It has been very important part of the calendar for the Shire last 18-20 years.

Can we co-share with Shire?

#### **5.17 Christmas Lights Competition**

Fiona Brown asked about Annual Christmas Lights Competition, participation prize.

Xmas light trail book?

#### **5.18 Footpaths**

Des Booth congratulated the Shire on footpaths. The one going up on Ellis Street is looking good.

Not many streets left without footpaths now.

#### **5.19 Shire Roads**

Pam – Thanks to Shire road staff for the state of the roads and backslope clearing, vegetation is good.

#### **Item 6. CLOSURE**


The Shire President thanked the Chief Executive Officer and his team. And the deputy Chief Executive Officer and the Finance team for audit successes.

Thanks to Manager of Works the Executive team and their staff for thier efforts over the last 12 months.

Thanks to all involved in emergency services, big thanks to the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer for everything, it is much appreciated and does not go unnoticed.

Big thanks to the community for being resilient and helping each other out.

There being no further business, the Shire President, declared the meeting closed at 7.17pm.

  
Signed by:  
Cr M Stephenson  
**Shire President**

*12/02/2025*