

**NOTES FROM THE  
GEORGE TOWN COUNCIL  
PUBLIC MEETING  
AVERAGED AREA RATES  
Held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2014  
Commencing at 5:02pm**

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**1. ATTENDANCE**

Mayor Roger Broomhall, George Town Council  
Mr Dino De Paoli, Acting General Manager, George Town Council (Chair)  
Mr Kim Barker, Director Corporate & Community Services, George Town Council  
Mr Rob Foggo, Management Accountant, George Town Council  
Ms Josie Higgins, Executive Officer, George Town Council

As per attendance sheet (copy attached)

**2. APOLOGIES**

Mr Lawrence Archer  
Cr Tim Cory

**3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Mr De Paoli welcomed attendees to the meeting, introduced elected members and provided a rundown on the evening's events and confirmed the purpose of the meeting in accordance with Section 109F of the Local Government Act. Mr De Paoli also confirmed the prior receipt of submissions received on the proposed Average Area Rating system in accordance with Section 109E of the Local Government Act.

**4. SUBMISSIONS**

Mr Kim Barker provided an overview of the Agenda and submissions. Mr Barker advised that Council was not going to a new system. Council is grouping properties in localities as opposed to zones and provided an explanation of letters recently distributed to ratepayers advising of the proposed changes to the rating system.

**5. QUESTIONS**

*Mr De Paoli invited questions and comments from the floor.*

**Mr John Franklin, George Town**

Mr Franklin advised that he felt strongly that despite what the State Government has done in regard to the wording of rates to tax he believed the services provided by Council are a service and that a valuable property does not get better or less services; access to more library or less library and believed that the flat rate which reflects equal service for everyone should remain.

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**Mr Barry McKinnless, Hillwood**

Mr McKinnless spoke of the different services between a small and large block and that planning costs applied to both and the only difference Council receives comes from rates. Mr McKinnless stated that a larger block has a certain size frontage and takes more services to look after it such as gutters, lawns etc. Mr McKinnless also spoke on the use of capital value in both calculations and that by dividing the number of residences it automatically shows that smaller block holders are subsidising the larger block holder.

*At this time the Chair reminded the gallery to allow others an opportunity to have their say.*

**Mr Gerald O'Doherty, George Town**

Mr O'Doherty enquired as to whether the proposal applied to vacant land as being an owner of vacant land, he had not received a letter in this regard.

*Mr Barker responded advising that vacant property was not considered in the proposal.*

Mr O'Doherty asked what was happening with vacant blocks.

*Mr Barker advised that there is no AAR, vacant blocks are rated against capital value and there was no averaging.*

Mr O'Doherty stated that the forum should have happened before people put their submissions in and asked are we talking about a place with a residence on it?

*Mr Barker stated that the AAR proposal applied to properties classified as residential.*

**Mr Brian Gunst, George Town**

Mr Gunst asked where the pensioners fit in and stated that there are a lot of them and asked are they going to be treated fairly.

*Mr Barker advised that there was no provision in AAR legislation to treat pensioners any different however the general concessions currently available for pensioners were not changing.*

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler advised that she was not clear on what is changing apart from rezoning or renaming of areas and that the rates changed a couple of years ago.

*Mr Barker advised that the AAR was calculated recently based on zoning. The proposal ignores planning scheme zones and AAR is being calculated on the township locality with no reference to zones.*

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**Mr Winston Archer, George Town**

Mr Archer stated that in relation to AAR people would normally be paying more and that they would be paying less under this proposal and asked in percentage terms how many people would be paying more and how many less?

*Mr Barker advised that 62% of residential properties under the proposal have a capital value less than average capital value and would pay more.*

**Mr Gerald O'Doherty, George Town**

Mr O'Doherty asked which of those areas as per list, who out of this is going to be worse off if it changes?

*Mr Barker advised that people would have to refer to their previous rates notices and referred to the last page of the handout and the two sets of AAR that are listed.*

Mr O'Doherty asked if it goes no further than those three categories.

*Mr Barker responded that it is about individual rate payers.*

**Ms Simone Lowe, George Town**

Ms Lowe advised that she did not normally take notice and would pay the rates when they come in however a \$300 increase that would break the camel's back. Ms Lowe noted the letter says the rates would be \$640 and \$960 if the proposal goes ahead.

*Mr Barker advised that the letter was constructed in accordance with Act and that under the proposal if the AAR does go ahead as it currently exists the amount would be \$960.*

**Ms Helen Wheeler, Hillwood**

Mrs Wheeler referred to her property at Lulworth with a base rate of \$790 and if the proposal doesn't proceed it is \$640.

*Mr Barker advised that if the AAR proposal goes ahead it will be \$790.*

**Mr Winston Archer, George Town**

Mr Archer stated that Council has been doing it for a couple of years and by stealth Council was able to get the previous rating model through. Mr Archer commented that the Local Government Act states that the rates are a form of taxation and not a rate. The way they judge that is if you live in a cottage you pay less, if you live in a mansion you pay more. Mr Archer also stated that this is the first time Council has had to go to individual ratepayers to advise more or less.

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*Mr Barker referred to Section 86A(2) of the Act which stipulates that "Despite sub section (1) the exercise of a council's powers to make or vary rates cannot be challenged on the grounds that the principles referred to in that subsection have not been taken into account by council".*

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler stated that she had a large property at Hillwood and the proposal would reduce rates, but her lower value rental properties would all go up. Ms Wheeler stated that part of her says thank you but it doesn't seem fair that she should be paying more for the properties that are worth a quarter of the price of the larger property.

**Mr Graeme Neilsen, George Town**

Mr Neilsen voiced his concerns at when the government starts talking about an ability to pay, based on the value of your house. Mr Neilsen stated if you live in a small cottage and own it you could have one million dollars in the bank and yet live in a larger house with a mortgage. Mr Neilsen referred to analogies in regard to the averaging of a fee for services such as posting a letter which seems to be a fair way.

**Ms Nancy Donnelly Hillwood**

Ms Donnelly stated that the average rate is a lot fairer and was concerned that she should pay the same as their neighbours. Ms Donnelly was also concerned that for some people living in Low Head their rates would be colossal just being in Low Head and asked what if there is a lot of growth in one area and less in another; there is equity if you do it in areas. Ms Donnelly asked if Council had done its figures of whatever you want in total, this could be divided between all properties? Ms Donnelly asked how do you arrive at the figures required for each area?

*Mr Barker advised that there is a target in mind for the total budget revenue and the general rate is set to achieve that which is applied to the capital values and then averaged. Mr Barker also advised that there was discussion on looking at averaging under the new Planning Scheme (zones). There would have to be specific zones or areas according to the Act and he did not believe you can open up the full municipality; the Act does not permit this.*

*Mr Barker further advised that this proposal was divorced from zones otherwise if and when there are changes to the planning scheme we would have to go through the process again.*

**Mr Barry McKinnless, Hillwood**

Mr McKinnless stated that it would have been nice to have both figures presented in the letter.

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*Mr Barker advised that the letter doesn't cover what you are paying now only the figures of the proposal.*

Mr McKinnless also stated that this would upset ratepayers for what may be a couple of dollars change.

*Mr Barker advised that Council would have to apply for new certificates and that the current ones will not apply for next year.*

**Mr Winston Archer, George Town**

Mr Archer stated that accurate figures could be provided easily by checking the zoning.

*Mr Barker responded advising that the calculations are based on average rates paid and Council had to come up with a way of average rate paid, not average area rate paid. You may have been on a general rate or low density; it could have been either.*

**Mr Bill Quon, Weymouth**

Mr Quon asked if this AAR is so good, why do you need the old system to come up with a figure? Mr Quon stated that some services are the same for each block; with a larger house there is a larger amount of stormwater into the stormwater services and it can't be fair all the way around. Mr Quon also stated that affluent people have a choice, if they want to save by heating a smaller house they buy a smaller house they have a choice; under your system they don't have that choice, they are charged the same amount for each of the properties.

*Mr De Paoli stated that this was a fair comment and a decision council will need to make.*

**Mr Gerald O'Doherty, George Town**

Mr O'Doherty stated that it is all a bit one sided and there was always the assumption that because someone has a better, bigger house that they earn more money; you could for instance in George Town have bought the exact same block with the exact same house and 20 years down track one has deteriorated and the person who has decided to keep theirs maintained is penalised because of the value of their house. Mr O'Doherty stated that there is always the assumption that the house valued more has more money, in some cases a person may be earning less money with the bigger house.

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler stated the Hillwood rates are \$956 with George Town being \$960 yet Hillwood doesn't have kerb and guttering or walkways or lighting so there is an inequity in the charges for George Town and Hillwood being similar.

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*Mr Barker stated that the rate is based on capital values and Council need to consider this in their deliberations going forward.*

**Mr Barry McKinnless, Hillwood**

Mr McKinnless asked if any Council has looked at rating not based on capital values?

*Mr Barker advised that he could not comment and that Council would need to direct accordingly.*

**Mr N. Laird, George Town**

Mr Laird enquired how units would be treated?

*Mr Barker advised that with five units there would be five lots of AAR.*

**Mr Michael Gearing, George Town**

Mr Gearing stated that 62% of ratepayers are low income earners. We voted for councillors to look after us; apparently they aren't going to if this proposal goes through, we won't vote that way again next time.

**Mr Winston Archer, George Town**

Mr Archer referred to Mr Gearing's comments and stated that Councillors should think about inequity re low income earners and that the Councillors should be really looking out for all ratepayers making sure a particular class aren't disadvantaged and that's how it has been in past few years.

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler asked about pensioner concessions.

*Mr Barker stated that pension discount rebate would still apply to the principal place of residence.*

**Mr Brian Gunst, George Town**

Mr Gunst asked which pension card?

*Mr Barker advised that there was no change to the Health Care Card, pension, and Veteran's affairs.*

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler asked if there were any objections to leaving it the same?

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*Mr Barker referred to the submissions attached and advised that 37 were received, against 29, in support 4 in support with 4 requiring more information and the percentage of of submissions received was 1.18%.*

**Mr John Franken, George Town**

Mr Franken asked what happens if you don't go ahead?

*Mr Barker advised that this was up to Council.*

**Mr Bill Quon, Weymouth**

Mr Quon stated that if it doesn't go ahead, it would revert back to average rates, the letter indicates capital value \$200 less for small properties and that the analogies don't stack up.

**Mr Gerald O'Doherty, George Town**

Mr O'Doherty stated that the analogy does stack up and he has been involved where the Valuer General has looked at property in the past on the previous rates system.

*Mr Barker responded advising that people can query the value of their property by going to the Valuer General.*

**Mr Des Wootton, Low Head**

Mr Wootton asked if 63% are paying more under the proposed scheme what would the bottom 10% be paying extra?

*Mr Barker advised that the minimum rate under the proposal is \$640; it was \$620 and that's as low as it will go.*

**Mr Barry McKinnless, Hillwood**

Mr McKinnless commented that it wasn't stated in the letter; it said we are on averaged area rates now and it doesn't make sense to push it out and confuse the situation.

*Mr Dino De Paoli advised that under legislation the letter had to be constructed that way.*

**Mr Winston Archer, George Town**

Mr Archer referred to the letter that was sent out for one of properties in the lower 10% and asked did that letter state that they would be paying a minimum of \$620 or was it stated it would be calculated lower than that.

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*Mr Barker advised that they would have been given the minimum rate figure if that applied.*

**Mr Gerald O'Doherty, George Town**

Mr O'Doherty referred to the comment made earlier in regard to someone who has a bigger house has more water into stormwater; someone could have a bigger two storey house with smaller roof area than the one that is valued less than single storey house.

**Ms Robin Wheeler, Hillwood**

Ms Wheeler enquired asked with the village rate at \$790 for the current year why if it doesn't proceed will it reduce down to \$640?

*Mr Barker advised that if the averaged area rate does not proceed this would be the minimum rate.*

**Mr John Reay, George Town**

Mr Reay stated that the meeting was going round in circles and Council should revert back to the original system.

*Mr Reay proceeded to move a motion to this effect but was advised by the Chair that this was a public meeting and as such the public were not a decision making committee and therefore could not move a motion.*

Mr Reay asked when the vote is coming up and when vote will be taken.

*The Chair responded the 16<sup>th</sup> April.*

**6. CLOSURE**

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and their contributions, comments and questions and invited attendees to contact Council staff should they further information on the proposal.

The meeting closed at 6.08pm.



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PUBLIC MEETING  
ATTENDANCE REGISTER  
2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014  
Commencing at 5.00 pm - Council Chambers**

No.	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	ADDRESS
1.	Matthew Hunt	250 Old Banger Tram Rd, Mt Diab
2.	Pat Webb	34 The Strand G.T
3.	Budget Archer	G.T.
4.	Gail Archer	GT.
5.	SHONA FITCH	25 RIDGE ST Hillwood
6.	Rosanne Fitch.	25 Ridge Rd Hillwood.
7.	M GRATTING	14 GRINROD AVENUE (Tand)
8.	Rhonda O'Sign	8 Gunn Parade, Low Head
9.	EMMA STEWART	GEORGE TOWN
10.	LEE-ANN PATTERSON	COUNCIL.
11.	MALCOLM AITKEN	135 YOUNGS RD, MT DIAB
12.	WINSTON ARCHER	GT.
13.	MR & MRS GUNST	GT.
14.	<del>WASS</del> DOUG BURT	GT.
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**Commencing at 5.00 pm - Council Chambers**

No.	NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	ADDRESS
1.	BARRY Mc KINLOP	47 LEAM RD Ansonia
2.	JOHN REAY	16 Stonehouse St George
3.	Simone Love	54 Main Road, 27 Wellington St, G. Town
4.	Winston Archer	George Town.
5.	BARNETT ROBERT	
6.	JOHN AUSTIN	30 ESPLANADE N <sup>TH</sup> E/T
7.	GERALDINE AUSTIN	
8.	JOHN FRANKEN	84 TAMAR AVE. G.T. TOWN.
9.	N. LAIRO	67 Franklin St GT
10.	GERALD O'DOHERTY.	37 MURRY ST. GEORGE TOWN
11.	G & J NELSON	51 Tamar Ave GT.
12.	DINO DE PAOLU	G.T.
13.	ROB FOLGO	GT
14.	KIM BARKER	GT
15.	JOSIE HIGGINS	GT.
16.	TIM PARISH	GT.
17.	JACQUI BURT	GT.
18.	STEPHEN GEALE	GT
19.	GEORGE O'SIAN	LOW HEAD.
20.	DEAN GIBBONS	GT.
21.	HEATHER BARWICK	GT.
22.	NEVILLE MARSDEN	GT.
23.	ROGER BROOMHALL	GT.
24.	ROBIN WHEELER	GT.
25.		
26.		