

At the Annual Electors Meeting in December 2020, the BRRAG committee approved six motions. On the night the motions had to be moved by members of our committee. Other residents also moved motions.

At previous Electors Meetings in the last four years, there has not been one councillor that has thought any of the various motions in that time, were worthy of pulling them out of the item package and moving and putting them forward as motions themselves, to be voted upon by the rest of the council.

Following the Annual Electors Meeting each year the item then comes before the OCM the following February. Each year electors hope that just once a councillor might think that one of their motion is worthy of moving forward. Sadly every year in the last four no councillor has done this. Instead they have followed the Officers recommendation to take no further action on any of the motions and pass the item through en block with everything else. It could appear to some a message is being sent by our councillors that they are not interested in what is important to their electors.

The closest we seem to have got to being heard was when we called a Special Electors Meeting in 2019. One of the motions was to live stream meetings of council. Following that meeting when the matter had to be considered a win of sorts occurred. Finally after years of asking, it going before council countless times, there was a breakthrough. We now get the OCM's recorded but not live streamed and you still do not record other council meetings.

So once again at the Annual Electors Meeting which this item refers to, we moved another motion on the topic. This time we asked for all council meetings that are open to the public be live streamed by the end of the 2021 financial year.

According to the report this went to an Information Forum in October 2020 and once again there was no interest from councillors to make any changes. Two months later residents move a motion at their Annual Electors Meeting wanting this to occur. Now officers want to wait until mid 2021 to gather further interest on this from residents.

If people are interested and it is available, people will go and listen to it and if not they wont bother. We have the equipment to do it, so why are our councillors not taking a leadership role on this? We keep hearing how the City of Belmont prides itself on being innovative and forward thinking. Well I am sorry to say you are way behind the eight ball on this, as many other local governments have already taken this step. Not us no, as we are not having leadership from our council.

BRRAG feels it is important enough that we have recently made our own decision on getting involvement from the community. Transparency is important to us. At any Agenda Briefing Forum wherein BRRAG either does a deputation or submission, we will forward a copy to our councillors following the meeting. We then intend to make our own recording based on the documentation given to councillors and ensure it becomes very public on our social media and website. It is important that residents get to hear the issues raised and what was said, and Agenda Briefings certainly do not make available all the details of submissions and deputations. The only ones who know what was said, are those that are at the ABF.

The second motion moved was regarding the Belmont Trust which is the land publicly known as Parry Field. The motion asked that a report be prepared for public consultation so future use could be decided. The motion also asked that meetings be open to the public.

Once again the Officers have said no further action as it can be referred to the Belmont Trust for consideration.

Each councillor is listed as being on the Belmont Trust. Trustees it is assumed. Why are we having so much trouble getting any information regarding the Belmont Trust? Trust laws are strict on accountability and hold Trustees responsible.

Certain minutes are suddenly not available to residents after previously being on the website. Why are they suddenly unavailable and residents forced to seek the assistance of other government agencies to get minutes? If there is one particular part of a meeting that is confidential the normal practice is to close the meeting and it is discussed behind closed doors and that is reflected in the minutes. It appears that the entire meeting of some of the early days is confidential. This is land that was left in Trust to the Residents of Belmont. Do all of our nine councillors think that it is unreasonable that residents should have a say in the future of the land and to be open and transparent with public meetings? If this is the case how can you with good conscience go to residents at election time telling them you are being transparent and acting in their best interests when it is so secretive?

The third motion was regarding the gratuity payments. The motion requests a complete review of the scheme and an application for an amendment under S210 of the Fair Work Act. This scheme since it started has paid in excess of \$1.7 million to staff that leave. The payments are outside the amount of the Local Government Act which is capped at \$5000 per employee.

The Officers in their report state "as the system has been in operation in excess of twenty six years it is not considered that the allocation of resources required to collate payments made over this time frame is appropriate." Given that more people are continually signing employment contracts have our councillors considered that this cost of \$1.7 million is going to go up? Is it OK with you all to keep allowing this without a proper review because the officers provide this sort of response. It is the staff who would be affected by any changes to follow legislation, so it would be unlikely they would support it. It should be remembered that Councillors are not appointed by the staff they are voted by the electorate.

The Officers statement that all sorts of negotiations would need to take place before a new agreement could be reached is quite wrong based on the information that was provided to me via Justice Ross. The advice provided was that an application could be made to amend the EBA under Section 210 of the Fair Work Act. This does not require all these negotiations and the Fair Work Commission is prepared to help with it. I have provided all councillors the details as provided to me and still nothing.

One question that has not been considered is why are more employees signing contracts under this EBA when it is outside the legal requirements in WA? Why has a new EBA that is consistent with the Local Government Act not been provided since 2005, Had this been done, many of the existing employees since that time should they leave would be capped at \$5000. Many of our councillors were on council at that time, so why has this not happened? Surely you are accountable to the residents.

It would seem to me, that the choice in what legislation is followed is a bit like throwing heads or tails. For instance tonight councillors are asked to pass Item 12.8 regarding the appointment of a complaints officer in accordance with the Act, Officers recommend you do that but Officers dont recommend you do anything to comply with legislation regarding their gratuity payments?

The next motion asked that the existing meal allowance be replaced with a cheaper alternative of a sandwich platter. Once again the Officers recommendation of no further action on the basis of waiting until the next budget. This is one area that really gets residents riled and promotes a lot of discussion on social media when it is presented. The meal allowance over the years has obviously been something that some councillors do not agree with. Cr Cayoun for one, has often moved a motion to get rid of meals, which of course has not been supported by the majority council and it has therefore failed.

Back when this was introduced councillors were paid only a few thousand dollars for their role. Then payments went up for Councillors but the meals stayed. Entitlement perhaps? Our council meetings last significantly less than many councils in WA and it is time this indulgence is gone or at the very least reduced.

The fifth motion was relating to rates freeze. The motion wanted cost saving measures of 2% or the estimated CPI amount, so that in essence rates could remain the same. Again the Officers recommendation was no further action as a number of plans, projects and priorities are yet to be finalised.

BRRAG has on many occasions brought to the attention of our councillors areas to look into as far as cost saving measures. None have been even given any acknowledgement. There was the LGIS insurance scheme

wherein there were potential large savings on insurance. There were the legal bills which are huge especially when Officers in the past don't agree with the legal advice. Attending SAT conferences which should be able to be handled by staff. More scrutiny could save us a significant amount. We have previously asked questions and done a submission on the huge monthly account payments especially on food and catering when in a lockdown. Then there is \$33 000 trips to Japan for councillors and staff when the kids on the Sister City program do not even get the City paying their entire airfare and they have to fundraise.

Tonight we have once again brought up the \$1.7 gratuity scheme and the councillor meals. All of these costs would be a starting point to a 2% or CPI reduction to in effect support our motion and freeze rates. From a ratepayer point of view, it would not be unreasonable for cost cutting in areas like these, which are unlikely to be affected as a result of plans and projects which are yet to be finalised.

The final motion moved by Paul Hitt who was a former councillor was a vote of no confidence in the City of Belmont council. Firstly it is prudent to note, that we do have a few very hard working councillors some of who it would appear take notice of residents. However, this can't be said about all of our councillors and this was the reason the motion was moved. We did not want to single out individuals who are just not performing.

The reasons given for the motion was that some councillors do not do the necessary reading of material to make an informed decision and that a small minority look around the chamber to see how other councillors cast their vote before they vote. There has also been some complaints that councillors don't get back to residents. Our letters are often ignored by the Mayor who is the spokesperson for the Council. Our membership awaits responses to our letters and we often have to say no response again to this letter. Is this a good look?

The officers comments listed different rules to which councillors are suppose to abide. As already pointed out in this deputation regarding gratuity, just because there are rules it does not mean they are complied with.

This year Crs Cayoun, Davis, Sekulla, Ryan and Powell are up for re election. On that basis we will be scrutinising everything and making the public aware of what our councillors are and are not doing. Overall we have a number of councillors who have been there in excess of ten or fifteen years. We believe that the City of Belmont is behind the times and not a forward thinking council on many things. The live streaming of meetings being one. Is this because some councillors have been there too long?

We are asking that our councillors give careful consideration to the motions we raised. It would be a nice step forward to see at least one taken out of the package by one councillor, even if an adjustment to the wording is required. It would certainly be a first that I would have seen in the last four years.