

A Background History to the Shoreham Village Community Taskforce

Since November 2006, the Shoreham Village Community Taskforce, as a grass-roots body of resident volunteers, has been a major influence contributing to Shoreham's wellbeing.

Originally, the Taskforce existed as an independent group led by the late Leo Maher. A couple of years ago the Taskforce became an integral unit of the Shoreham Community Association's structure and is now a sub-Committee of the Association.

The Taskforce, formed at a public meeting held in November 2006, was made up of a broadly representative group of more than 100 Shoreham residents (permanent and part-time) and property owners.

The formation of the Taskforce followed the purchase of the Post Office property (at the corner of Byrnes and Cliff Roads) by a syndicate of property developers who announced their plan to build an aged care facility. Residents were very surprised to learn that the developers were unaware of the existence of the aged care facility at Shoreham House.

Residents considered the scale of the proposed building on the corner site to be unacceptable. Furthermore, suspicion of a hidden agenda was aroused when the extent of commercial space was revealed in the plans. The future of the Post Office was threatened also. Shoreham people resolved to protect their coastal village's amenity and character by opposing the inappropriate development on Byrnes Road, identified as Business Zone 1 under the Peninsula Planning Scheme. The threat stirred a communal response and many people contributed money into a fund in the event that legal counsel was needed in the future.

Some months later, the same property company purchased the site of the (former) General Store in Byrnes Road. Plans for more retail space and upper storey holiday units were announced. Another very well attended public meeting strengthened the resolve of Shoreham people to give the Taskforce a mandate to oppose inappropriate development. Especially, there was opposition to the removal of the 1950s designed general store building. At that time, the closure of the General Store by the developers was not anticipated.

In spite of the strong local opposition addressed to the Mornington Peninsula Shire and legal intervention at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), the initial post office site development was given conditional planning approval by VCAT. But works did not begin. Instead, the property company transferred its focus to the development of the former General Store site. To the dismay of villagers, the business was closed. The Shire did not approve a Planning Permit and the developer appealed. The Taskforce and its supporters deployed a barrister to advocate their objection at a VCAT hearing. Taskforce objections to the proposed design and its provision of excessive retail and residential space were upheld.

Furthermore, at the same time and after persistent advocacy from the Taskforce - with full support of the Shire Council - the State Minister approved 'DDO 15'. This is a Development and Design Overlay specifically relating to Business Zone 1 properties in Byrnes Road – the Post Office at the corner of Cliff and Byrnes Road, the corner of Prout Webb and Byrnes Roads and the former General Store.

Eventually, the property company went into administration, then liquidation. Later, another company, Solid Property Investments Pty Ltd, purchased both sites.

The successful campaign orchestrated by the Taskforce over a six year period, that included the actions below, demonstrates the strength and resolve of the Taskforce:

- lobbying of Shire Statutory Planners and Councillors, local State MPs, the State Minister for Planning and the State Department of Planning;
- meeting with the developer, their project manager and architect;
- liaising with, and providing media releases to, local news papers;
- engaging legal and town planner assistance;
- representing argument to Shire Council meetings and Committees;
- appealing twice to VCAT, and on each occasion engaging a barrister;
- publishing 32 newsletters and circulating them to members;
- raising over \$120,000 from supporters to afford planner advice, communications, and legal representation;
- supporting the local Post Master to ensure a continuing postal service;
- achieving DDO 15 — setting guidelines and requirements for the construction of buildings and their layout in the designated Business 1 Zone properties.

DDO –15 became an integral part of the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme and set ‘Design objectives’ and ‘Building and works general requirements’ for the Shoreham Village Centre. Development applications must be accompanied by a ‘site analysis and design response’ that ‘demonstrates respect for the existing character of the Shoreham village centre’, for the streetscape, and takes account of the 2007 ‘Shoreham Design Guidelines’. In particular, it mandates that a ‘building must have a maximum building height of no more than 8.5 metres and must contain no more than 2 storeys above natural ground level’.

During 2012 the property owner prepared preliminary plans for the construction, on the Post Office site, of a revamped post office and retail space that includes the old stables (Syd’s Shed); these buildings on the ground floor surround a courtyard on three sides. Four residential units are proposed for the first floor. A local panel of architects (Russell Barrett, Sally Draper and the late Keith Lodge) has given valuable pro bono assistance to the Taskforce, Shoreham people and to the property owner, by reviewing the plans and recommending improvements to them. This time – thankfully - the developer has chosen a process marked by consultation with the Taskforce and its panel of architects, as well as the Shire’s Statutory Planners.

From 2006, the Taskforce was very capably led by the late Leo Maher, together with Trevor Sammells, David Utting, John Lorkin, Alex Long, Peter Renkin, Sue Boggan, and Rob Patrick. Today the last three persons constitute the Taskforce.