



City of Whitehorse

AGENDA

Late Items

Ordinary Council Meeting

To be held in the
Council Chamber
Nunawading Civic Centre

379 Whitehorse Road Nunawading

on

Monday 24 February 2020

at 7:00pm

Members: Cr Sharon Ellis (Mayor), Cr Blair Barker, Cr Bill Bennett,
Cr Raylene Carr, Cr Prue Cutts, Cr Andrew Davenport, Cr Tina Liu,
Cr Denise Massoud, Cr Andrew Munroe, Cr Ben Stennett

Mr Simon McMillan
Chief Executive Officer

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LATE ITEMS AGENDA

9 COUNCIL REPORTS

9.1 CITY DEVELOPMENT

Business and Economic Development

9.1.3 Support for Box Hill Businesses

SUMMARY

Council is aware that traders in Box Hill have experienced a downturn in trade as a result of recent anxiety around the impact of coronavirus. The ward Councillors and officers have met with traders in Box Hill to hear about their concerns and experiences. The Asian Business Association of Whitehorse (ABAW) have put forward to Council some suggestions on how Council can support the traders, including by promoting Box Hill as a place to visit and other incentives that could be introduced to encourage people to the area. This report discusses options available to Council to promote Box Hill and provides recommendations on how best to support the businesses.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Note the actions taken to date to support the Box Hill traders.***
- 2. Endorse the proposed actions relating to communications, promotional activities, business advice, place making activities, marketing and assistance with events.***
- 3. Approve the waiving of on-street parking meter fees between the hours of 10am and 2pm on Saturdays for the months of March and April at the locations specified in this report.***

BACKGROUND

With the recent anxiety around the impact of coronavirus, businesses in Box Hill have experienced a downturn in trade. The ward Councillors and officers have heard from the traders about the serious concerns they have regarding this downturn in trade and discussions have been held about how Council can provide support. Subsequent to officers and Councillors meeting with the traders, the ABAW have put forward a proposed action plan that suggests various activities and incentives to draw people into Box Hill. These include:

- Media and social media promotions
- A temporary reduction in Council car parking fees
- Use of Council spaces/land in Box Hill for markets and other activities; and
- Following the postponement of the Chinese New Year Festival earlier this month, running the event as soon as is feasible.

These and other possible actions are discussed below in more detail.

9.1.3 (cont)

DISCUSSION

Below is an outline of the activities and incentives that Council has already initiated and, in order to support the traders, those that are proposed to be undertaken.

Car Parking

To support the Box Hill traders by encouraging customers to return to Box Hill for shopping and dining, it is proposed that free parking be provided at select Box Hill parking meter locations between 10am and 2pm on Saturdays during March and April. This would commence as soon as practicable following Council's formal decision and extend to the end of April. Prior to 10am and after 2pm normal meter parking rates will apply. Officers will cover the face of applicable meters with a cloth cover during this time so that customers will know which areas are free and that normal rates do not apply. The proposed areas are as follows:

- Whitehorse Road south between Station Street and Clisby Court
- Whitehorse Road off street car park at the corner of Main Street and Whitehorse Road (i.e. tram terminus)
- Station Street from Whitehorse Road to Harrow Street
- Carrington Road from Station Street to Thurston Street
- Cambridge Street from Station Street to Thurston Street

(Refer to map below – areas marked in blue)



In order to promote this free car parking, it is proposed to have Whitehorse branded (possibly Box Hill co-branded) meter covers. Brochures with a map outlining the free parking areas will be distributed by Parking Services Officers to the traders and it will be promoted via various media and social media outlets.

All council meter parking is free of charge after 6pm daily.

Council's new Harrow Street multi deck car park provides clean undercover, lit and secure parking a short distance away, near the corner of John Street.

9.1.3

(cont)

Communication Program

Strategy/Messaging:

- Council will continue to amplify expert messages of reassurance as put out by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Chief Medical Officers at State and Federal level.
- Our messaging will not refute community anxiety, but will emphasise trusted, expert advice.
- Provide shareable content in English and simplified Chinese without time lag where possible.

Activities to date:

- Issued 7 February media release encouraging people to 'go about their lives as usual,' and pointing to reassuring advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Victoria (English and Chinese).
- Promoted the same messaging through the corporate Facebook account.

Planned Activities:

The Strategic Marketing and Communications team will make effective use of Whitehorse News for positive stories about activities in Box Hill and amplify these further through the emailed version. Planned place-making activities in Box Hill will be celebrated and promoted through various channels.

It is proposed to do several vignette video pieces on Council services in Box Hill. These could highlight council staff doing town cleaning, providing business advice and supporting Youth ConneXions. These highlight the human face of Council staff, promote our services to our community and also show Box Hill as a clean, healthy and vibrant place.

With the agreement of Council, it is proposed to pursue leads for media activities in the mall. Public figures could be invited for events such as Cultural Diversity Week to do media spots with the Mayor or other figures that continue to raise the profile of Box Hill as a positive, healthy and vibrant place that is open for business.

Other community activities in the precinct could be promoted, including the ABAW's Chinese New Year event when re-scheduled.

Chinese New Year 2020 and other events

Council acknowledges the ABAW proposal to program the Chinese New Year Festival (CNYF) as soon as is feasible.

The CNYF is the largest event in the City of Whitehorse and appropriate time and planning must be permitted for its safe delivery. Council will work with the ABAW and contractors to determine a suitable date to celebrate our Chinese culture. This timeframe needs to allow for the re-engagement of contractors, stakeholders, the Department of Transport and Public Transport Victoria approvals as well the appropriate lead time to market the event.

Council can also work with the traders for any other smaller events that may be proposed in public spaces, subject to appropriate timing and planning as outlined above.

It is also possible for the traders to use the Whitehorse Community Kiosk in the Box Hill Mall for marketing and promotional activities.

9.1.3 (cont)

Investment and Economic Development

The Investment and Economic Development Unit offers a range of programs to ensure the continuation and development of a thriving business community. Free mentoring, workshops and information resources are available to Box Hill businesses and details can be found at www.wbiz.com.au. These services have been offered to the Box Hill traders, including the ability to provide business mentoring by a Mandarin speaking mentor.

The Investment and Economic Development Unit have had an ongoing relationship with the Box Hill Central Shopping Centre Management team (Vicinity Centres) and are meeting on a regular basis to keep abreast of business issues, foot traffic numbers and marketing initiatives. Council officers have met with Centre Management to specifically discuss the current issue and they have informed officers of their marketing strategies to support the traders and attract more people to the centre.

Place Making Activities

It is proposed to further support the traders by undertaking a number of place making activities over the next two months, including:

- Two street art murals
- Creation of an urban rest area
- Installation of ground decals (including wayfinding)
- Synthetic turf installation around the gumtree garden beds in the mall
- Community kiosk beautification
- Creation of community led activities; and
- Council led activations, for example face painting, table tennis, caricatures and live music

CONSULTATION

On two occasions the ward Councillors and officers have met with traders in Box Hill to hear of their issues and concerns and to discuss what actions the various stakeholders, including Council, can take to promote Box Hill as a place to visit. Council officers have also met with Centre Management (Vicinity Centres) of Box Hill Central Shopping Centre to discuss what strategies they have in place to promote Box Hill and support the traders, as well as how Council and Vicinity Centres can work together on promotional activities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Activities relating to communications, promotions, business advice, place making, marketing and assistance with events will be funded through the existing operational budget. There will be a loss of income as a result of providing the free parking and a small cost associated with the purchase of the 25 parking meter covers.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* Council has a role to promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipality. Furthermore, the Council Plan contains a strategic direction to support a healthy local economy, which includes working in partnership to support a strong, active local economic environment that attracts investment and provides economic opportunities for businesses and employment for people. It is considered that the proposed actions contained within this report are consistent with the above roles and objectives.