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Surf Coast Shire Special Council Meeting

Thursday, 14 November 2024 at 5.30pm

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MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Welcome to our Council meeting. I'm Robyn Seymour. I'm the Chief Executive of the Surf Coast Shire.

The Surf Coast Shire spans the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people and tonight in Torquay in the Council meeting we are on Wadawurrung country and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and any Aboriginal people who might be viewing this meeting via our live stream or here with us tonight.

The purpose of this meeting is to determine the Mayoral term and to elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In accordance with section 25 of the Local Government Act 2020, I will be chairing this meeting until such time as a Mayor is elected.

It's a pleasure to welcome members of the community into the chamber and also family and I can see there's lots of staff from Surf Coast here as well. Welcome to the chamber tonight. This meeting, as I mentioned, is being live streamed, so a big welcome to those tuning in online as well. Live captioning will also accompany the live stream. We hope that this assists those who may have hearing difficulties.

So Council meetings operate according to our adopted Governance Rules, which include the following procedures. For the first item, which is to determine the term of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and the re-establishment of the office of Deputy Mayor, our standard meeting procedures will apply as follows. The mover of a motion may speak for a maximum of 5 minutes to open the debate and then a further 2 minutes to exercise their right of reply and to close the debate. Any other Councillor, including the seconder, may speak for or against a motion for no more than 3 minutes.

The second and third items on our agenda are to enable Councillors to elect a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor. As I noted earlier, I will chair this meeting until the Mayor has been elected. When we get to that part of the agenda, I'll go over the procedures associated with the election.

So we have no apologies tonight. In terms of declarations of conflicts of interest, Councillors, I note that regulation 7 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 provide for a number of exemptions in relation to declarations of conflicts of interest. One of these exemptions relates to the election of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor. Because tonight's meeting is being held for the purpose of electing a Mayor

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and a Deputy Mayor, in accordance with sections 25 to 27 of the Local Government Act 2020, there is no need for any declarations of conflicts of interest to be made.

So our first report, the term of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor. The purpose of this report is for Council to determine by resolution the term of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and to re-establish the office of Deputy Mayor. Council may choose to determine a Mayoral term of one year or two years. This has been left blank in the agenda recommendations, so the Councillor who moves the motion will need to state the term they are proposing. Do I have a mover of a motion? Councillor Schonfelder.

CR SCHONFELDER: Ms Seymour, I'd like to move that the term of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be 12 months and that we establish the office of the Deputy Mayor.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you, Councillor Schonfelder. Do I have a seconder of that motion? Thank you, Councillor Pattison. So would anyone like to speak to that motion? Councillor Schonfelder?

CR SCHONFELDER: No, thank you.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Thank you. I'd just like to say that I think it's really important that we do have a Deputy Mayor. I've found in my two years as Mayor that having a Deputy Mayor was invaluable. It's a great opportunity also for another Councillor to really learn and understand in detail the role of Mayor, so it's a great succession planning to some degree as well as a really important asset throughout the year of that Council term. So I think it's really important that we have both and a one-year term makes a lot of sense.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Great. Thank you, Councillor Pattison. Would anyone else like to speak to the motion? Councillor Schonfelder, would you like to make any --

CR SCHONFELDER: No, thank you.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Okay. So that being the case, all those in favour of the one-year term and the re-establishment of the Deputy Mayor. Thank you very much. That motion is carried unanimously.

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The next item on tonight's agenda is the election of the Mayor. The purpose of this report is to elect the Surf Coast Shire Council Mayor for the period resolved by Council of one year. Councillors, in accordance with the Governance Rules, I will be asking for nominations rather than for a motion. Therefore, there will be no provision for debate.

Each nomination will need to be seconded. You may nominate yourself or another Councillor. If only one nomination is received, I will declare that candidate elected. If more than one nomination is received, I will call for a vote, where the Councillor with the absolute majority of votes, which is five or more votes, will be declared elected.

I would now like to call for nominations for the office of Mayor. Do I have any nominations for Mayor? Councillor Barker.

CR BARKER: I'd like to nominate myself, thanks.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you, Councillor Barker. Is there a seconder for Councillor Barker? Thank you, Councillor Grist. Are there any other nominations?

CR WALKER: I'd like to nominate Mike Bodsworth.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Thank you. Is there a seconder? Thank you, Councillor Pattison. Are there any other nominations for Mayor? No? Okay.

I will now call for a show of hands for votes. So as the first nominated candidate Councillor Barker, can I see a show of hands for the election of Councillor Barker to the position of Mayor? Thank you. And for Councillor Bodsworth? Thank you very much. So it is my pleasure to welcome Councillor Bodsworth as the Mayor of Surf Coast Shire for the next 12 months. Congratulations, Councillor Bodsworth (applause). Well done.

Councillor Bodsworth - oh, Mayor Bodsworth, apologies - would you like to say a few words before we proceed to the next section of the meeting?

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, CEO. I would like to say a few words. Firstly, I'd like to thank Councillor Barker for nominating. I'd like to thank all of the Councillors, Councillors who've supported me for Mayor and also all of the rest of the Councillors.

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Look, we've got a very new Council. I've said a couple of times in the last few days that the old-timer Councillors here have done one term, so four years is the longest trot that anybody here has had on Council. We also have a number of new Councillors bringing new perspectives. So it's a fresh Council. I think that's a really healthy thing. Also healthy to me is the breadth of perspectives that's brought by the Councillors. We've seen that through the election campaign, a respectful election campaign that drew out a lot of different ideas and perspectives, so I think also that's a healthy thing to see that representation of the different perspectives that are out in our communities.

So my priorities as Mayor firstly will be to help us all work together to build a strong Council culture. One of the early pieces of work that we'll be working on is the Council plan. In the last term, we found that the Council plan was an essential roadmap for the work that we did together as Councillors for the whole term. The Council plan also includes a lot of community engagement, so that's the time when we align the Council's direction with the community direction. It's an absolutely essential time in the lifetime of a Council and that will be coming up within the first year, so a critical piece of work for us.

In the new year, also we have the budget process. That's a really important one. I know the new Councillors are going to play a really important role in the budget process.

Establishing Council effectiveness straight up, really there are two priorities that I see that we can return to time and time again. If things get tough, if we find that there's difficult contention on the Council, which Councils have, there are two things that I hope we can return to. One is a dedication to the places and people of the Surf Coast, to our communities. The other is returning to a focus and commitment to the business of Council, to being a high-performing Council and overseeing a high-performing organisation.

So, yeah, I'd like to thank fellow Councillors for a great start over the last few days of our induction process and thanks very much to the staff and to the CEO, Robyn, who's helped us get off to that good start in our induction and so a great thanks to the Surf Coast community as well for being a great community to work with. Thank you. (Applause).

So now I'm in the chair chairing the rest of the meeting. So we now move on to the election of the Deputy Mayor. The purpose of this item is to elect the

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Surf Coast Shire Council Deputy Mayor for the period resolved by Council, which remember was one year. Councillors, in accordance with our Governance Rules, I'll be asking for nominations rather than for a motion. Therefore, there is no provision for debate.

Each nomination will need to be seconded. You may nominate yourself or another Councillor. If only one nomination is received, I will declare that candidate elected. If more than one nomination is received, I will call for a vote, where the Councillor with an absolute majority of votes will be declared elected. I would like to call for nominations for the office of the Deputy Mayor. Councillor Pattison?

CR PATTISON: Could I nominate Councillor Stapleton, please?

CR BODSWORTH: Okay, thank you. Do I have a seconder? Councillor Phelps, thanks. I've just got to catch up on a little admin. Excuse me.

MS ROBYN SEYMOUR: Would you like me to do that? Would that help?

CR BODSWORTH: Yes, thanks, CEO, backing me up. Are there any further nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor? Councillor Grist?

CR GRIST: I'd like to nominate Councillor Barker.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. And a seconder? Councillor Bourke.

CR BOURKE: I'd like to nominate Councillor Barker.

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you. Are there any further nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor? Okay.

CR WALKER: I'd like to nominate Adrian Schonfelder.

CR BODSWORTH: Okay. Thank you, Councillor Walker. A seconder for that nomination? Councillor Stapleton, thank you. We have three nominations for Deputy Mayor.

We will now move on to the voting, noting that under the Local Government Act 2020, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes to be elected. In our case, this is five votes. We'll vote in the order nominated and so can I have a show of hands, please, for Councillor Stapleton? Oh, I get to

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vote too, sorry. That's five votes for Councillor Stapleton. So that's an absolute majority. Therefore --

CR STAPLETON: I think you still go through the --

CR BODSWORTH: Sorry. Having put - okay. Oh, sorry - I'm sorry, everybody. Rookie errors. I'll now call for a show of hands for Councillor Barker. Three, okay, thank you. And I'll now call for a show of hands for Councillor Schonfelder. Thank you, one vote.

Having put the matter to the vote, I declare that Councillor Stapleton has received the absolute majority of votes and has been duly elected as Deputy Mayor of the Surf Coast Shire Council for 24-25. (Applause). So Councillor Stapleton, as the newly elected Deputy Mayor, you may make a short address to outline the priorities for the year ahead.

CR STAPLETON: Thank you, Mayor. I'd better put my glasses on. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to support our new Council as Deputy Mayor and help ensure we get off to a really strong start in this new Council term and a big thank you to my fellow Councillors for your support. Each of us here has been elected to represent our community and to do our best for the community, we need to be an effective and well functioning Council working well together as a team. My focus will be to support the Mayor to do this.

Relationships are integral to all elements of success. For us as Councillors, it's our relationship with each other, with our communities, with Council officers and with representatives of the various agencies and organisations that Council works with across the region that will be pivotal to our success. I am committed to promoting a culture of teamwork amongst Councillors, upholding standards of behaviour and integrity, while also ensuring good governance and transparency of the Council. These essential functions will be critical to our early success. Listening to each other respectfully, taking time to build relationships and doing my best to understand the priorities and values of each and every Councillor will be really important to me in my role as Deputy.

I look forward to representing the whole of the Surf Coast community, not just Torquay or the coast but the Hinterland too, which I also hold very dear to my heart. We know Winchelsea is earmarked for the most sufficient growth in the shire and Council will be working closely with the community to plan for this. There are already some great things under way, like the revamped pool and

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playground space in Winchelsea, the new aquatic centre in Torquay, which we can see under way outside our window, and hopefully not too far in the distant future an affordable housing project on the coast, but I'm also really excited to work with this group, and it is a new group - even though there are some returning Councillors, with four new ones it makes us a new group - and I'm really excited to work with you all and our community on the new Council plan that will provide direction for this Council term.

So thank you again for your support. I hope I can meet the expectations of everyone around the table and our broader community in representing Council as the Deputy Mayor over the next 12 months. Thank you. (Applause).

CR BODSWORTH: Thank you, Councillor Stapleton. That brings our meeting to a close. I declare the meeting closed at 5.48pm and thank you, all.