

Local Council Meeting Report - 22.02.14

Meetings held:

21.01.14 – Meeting with the Cabinet :

Attended and addressed a Cabinet meeting held in Mellieha. Points raised :

- 1) Security – the urgent need for a Police station
- 2) State of the roads- need for state financial assistance
- 3) Identity - Centru regionali ta l-Arti u l-Kultura
- 4) Civic Centre - devolution
- 5) Pjazza- purchase of the land adjacent to the civic centre
- 6) Tunnel in Swieqi road – need to resolve the problem where people walk along side cars.
- 7) Overdevelopment – the need to control overdevelopment which is taking place in the locality.
- 8) Sports – the need for sports facilities which will be placed in neighbouring Pembroke
- 9) Environment – the need for assistance to improve the environment
- 10) Active Ageing – the need to introduce services for the benefit of our mature residents.

It must be noted that the Prime Minister took particular interest with regards to the Civic Centre and Hon J Herrera and Hon M Farrugia were involved in discussion. After the meeting an exchange of e mails between the Prime Minister, Hon Herrera and Hon M Farrugia took place, wherein Hon Farrugia informed the Prime Minister that the devolution of the land will take place during February.

Also, when I mentioned the fact that the locality is desperately awaiting the opening of the police station, the Prime Minister looked at Hon M Mallia, who however showed no reaction.

22.01.14 – Meeting with the Hon Joe Mizzi – in attendance Justin Fenech and Hugh Zammit

We mentioned the locality's requirements vis a vis the state of the roads (Keffa, Marbat, Tiben & Giebja) and the lack of funds to finance their resurfacing. The need to clear dead end roads (Terz, Stasija, Franciz) and the entries into and exits from Swieqi. The Minister informed us that it will be impossible for him to assist us with all our requirements. However he advised us to contact architect Christopher Cachia to whom we will report all our requirements and who will in turn report to the minister re requirements and priorities. Meeting with Architect Cachia fixed for the 21/02/14 at 10.30am.

23.01.14 – Meeting at Transport Malta – in attendance Alfred Curmi, Alex Chetcuti Mr Hugh Zammit

Met Mr Vincent Micallef Pule, with whom we discussed the introduction of clamping and towing. We were informed that we could introduce these measures as long as we obtain police permits and put up the required signage. Agreed to meet the Council's lawyer so as to confirm the interpretation of the law.

27.01.14 - Meeting with Mr C Zammit, a manufacturer of honey – in attendance Hugh Zammit

Mr Zammit is a producer of honey and he met us so as to lodge an official protest about the fact that our contractor uses weed killer to stop weeds from growing in the streets. He insisted that this weed killer weed killer is harmful to the bees and to nature in general. He also produced photos taken in the locality of workmen spraying weed killer so as to prove his point.

It may be interesting to note that during a recent mayors' meeting and also during the meeting with the Cabinet the subject matter was brought up by certain mayors and it appears that St Paul's Bay and Naxxar Councils, besides others, have decided to abolish the use of weed killer in their locality.

I am of the opinion that this council should also decide against the use of any chemicals that may harm nature in general.

28.01.14 – Meeting at the Pembroke Local Council re Pembroke / Swieqi road races - 6th April

Together with the mayor of Pembroke, we met the organisers of the Pembroke / Swieqi road race at the Pembroke Local Council. The organisers requested assistance re supply of police/wardens, trophies, doctor/ambulance. I am of the opinion that we should offer our assistance since 1) the race passes through Swieqi and it offers our locals the opportunity to participate, 2) Athleta Pembroke Athletics have regularly helped us to organise the Swieqi road race/walk/fun run for seven consecutive years and 3) there are prizes for participants from Swieqi. The road race is scheduled to take place on the 6th of April.

29.01.14 – Meeting with Ms Marie Bernardette Psaila – from the ministry for the Ageing – in attendance Carmen Said

Following our meeting with the Hon Franco during late 2013, we met Ms Marie Bernardette Psaila from the said Ministry and discussed the possibility of opening a Day Centre for our mature citizens.

The Ministry is presently embarking on a pilot project in Birgu, Balzan and Gzira and it is planning to organise various activities for the elderly so as to keep them active . The Department will offer the staff to run the premises. However what they will require from the local council are specific tables and chairs as well as a kitchenette. The service could be offered on a weekly basis or even a daily basis.

We proposed that we will initially start organising once weekly meetings. With regards to premises, the Parish Priest has offered us one of two halls at the Parish Church. Eventually the premises in the new Civic Centre may be used.

Ms Psaila has informed me that she will be coming to the locality so as to inspect the premises that we are offering. The date still has to be determined.

31.01.14 – Meeting Madliena Contractor – in attendance, Justin Fenech, Alfred Curmi, Wallace Farrugia, Dieter Falzon, Ben Muscat, Edward Schembri and Hugh Zammit

Discussed outstanding works and payments due to the contractor. The meeting ended with a heated exchange between Mr Wallace Farrugia and Mr Edward Schembri.

It may be interesting to note that when the contractor was told that he still had to carry out resurfacing works at the lower end of Madliena Road, he denied having to do the works and he challenged the signed agreement that we had. To the amazement of all present he stated that someone had falsified his signature on the last page of the agreement, that is the page which contained the list of outstanding works !!!!! that implies that either I falsified his signature or I instructed someone else to falsify his signature or that someone falsified his signature behind our backs !! in all honesty I took the accusation lightly because, 1) I am convinced that the accusation is false and 2) had I to challenge

him, it would probably mean the end to his commitment to complete the outstanding works. During the afternoon, I phoned him once again and though he still maintained that the signature was false, he said that he is prepared to complete the works once he starts working on the new coast road project during April/May this year!! At the same time he said that he will be taking legal action vis a vis the falsified signature.

Since then he has carried out the repairs that he had to do and I am waiting for an official report that has to be issued by the architects re outstanding works and outstanding payments due to him. I must point out however, that is very unfair on the contractor that the council takes so long to certify works done and issue the relevant payment.

01.02.14 – Konferenza ta l-ahbarijiet – Gwardjani Lokali

Central govt. will be introducing radical reforms to the Local Wardens Scheme. The new scheme plans to create a unit that will be responsible for the administration of the new system. It plans to increase the number of wardens employed and their education/training. Any profits registered will be shared among the local councils.

A meeting to this effect for the local councils in the North region is going to be held on Saturday 22nd Feb at the Dolmen Hotel.

03.02.14 – Enemalta

I met Enemalta officials who requested permission to dig a hole in triq il-Qasam (in the corner Qasam/Qantar, near Meat & More), which would serve as a temporary vent for the interconnector tunnel that is being constructed. It appears that whilst digging the said hole they encountered problems caused by water that was flowing underground. So it was decided to abandon this site and dig another hole in the corner of the field in triq it Terz/Qantar. Meanwhile the hole in triq il Qantar/Qasam has been re filled and the contractor will be sealing it in the coming days.

05.02.14 – Meeting with the Lawyer - in attendance Hugh Zammit

Met the council's lawyer re possibility of introducing clamping/towing in the locality, re accusation made by contractor Edward Schembri re falsified signature and re on going court case re triq il-Keffa project.

11.02.14 – Meeting with the Hon Michael Farrugia

Met Hon Michael Farrugia at 8.30pm in Castille. We discussed the devolution of the Civic Centre, and he confirmed that this should be handed over on 26th February. We also discussed the possibility that the government purchases/barters the land adjacent to the civic centre. I pointed out that the locality does not have its own piazza and the need for open spaces in an overdeveloped locality.

I also raised the issue of overdevelopment and begged him to take steps so as to control development especially in the upper part of Ibrag, Victoria Gardens and Madliena.

13.02.14 - Meeting with AKL president Dr Marc Sant – in attendance – Mary Anne Abela, Alfred Curmi, Alex Checuti

We stressed the fact that each and every council has its own particular requirements, and AKL should intervene to understand and assist local councils with their particular requirements. Pointed out that AKL must make sure that the resources of Central Govt be shared fairly between local councils and it should make sure that there will not be an imbalance between one council and another.

Discussed the following points :

- 1) **Garbage Bags** – the issue of garbage bags at the wrong time – the need for AKL to get involved and organise/take steps to help councils combat this ever increasing problem.
- 2) **WSC repairs** – we protested about the shoddy and poor reinstatement repairs carried out by WSC since these poor repairs are ruining our roads. AKL must intervene so as to make sure that WSC carries out decent and long lasting repairs.
- 3) **Enemalta** – we protested about the delays taken by Enemalta to carry out repairs and to approve new lighting.
- 4) **State of the roads.** We stressed that our council simply cannot afford to build/rebuild any of the roads that are in a very bad state. AKL must intervene to assist councils in obtaining the funds required to repair/rebuild roads in the locality.

We also discussed :

- a) parking problems and the need to make a study about ‘residents’ parking
- b) the ‘Pjazza’ issue,
- c) overdevelopment,
- d) the urgent need for a Police Station, and
- e) the opening of a regional Centre for Arts and Culture.

15.02.14 –Opening of Outdoor Gym

Finally the outdoor gym was officially inaugurated by Hon Stefan Buontempo. six exercise machines have been installed in F X Ebejer Garden and another two machines were installed in the St Andrews garden. The whole project has been financed by Kunsill Malti Ghall Li Sports, and for this we thank them very much. It was an enjoyable and well organised event.

18.02.14 – Meeting with Mr Charles Muscat from Transport Malta – in attendance Alfred Curmi

We discussed the change of triq il-Migbed into a two way road. agreed to hold an on site meeting on the 20th February at 4.15.

We also discussed the possibility of turning the Triq in Nofs leading from Lebrun to Kwarta in to a one way down, that part of Triq il-Hemel and Triq il-Ghajn become one way and the installation of Zebra Crossings in triq is Swieqi and Triq Lourdes Lane.

Mr Muscat pointed out that Transport Malta had received a request from a resident to turn part of Triq is Sejjiegh into a one way. We informed him that we will be discussing this proposal in council.

Works in progress

Triq il-Qasam – the resurfacing works in triq il-Qasam have been completed. We have been informed that UIF funds for the embellishment of the area next to the shops has been approved, and once the agreement is signed works can commence.

Social services - unforeseen delays seem to be taking place with regards to the setting up of the Social Services Unit at the local council. I am chasing for its introduction as soon as possible.

Drug conference – works on the organisation of this event have started and Mario Fava and Hugh Zammit are working on the project.

Keep Swieqi clean campaign – we need to step up this campaign.

Go green campaign – Mary Anne Abela has accepted to head the Go Green Campaign.

Triq I-ingenier – delays have been caused by WSC. Before Christmas time they assured us that within 2 days they would be finding a contractor who would charge lower rates than those quoted by Road Servicing Ltd. However it took them two months to come up with an offer!! It has now transpired that the rates that WSC have offered are slightly higher than those offered actually offered by Road Servicing !! we have now asked for an urgent meeting so as to conclude the matter.

Demolition of wall – the wall built by a private contractor in triq tal Franciz corner with triq V Menville has been demolished by Mepa.

Gieh is Swieqi – work on Gieh is Swieqi have started are progressing well.

Embellishment of Gnien F X Ebejer – I have asked the council's architect to sketch some plans so as to embellish Gnien F X Ebejer, particularly with regards to its main entrance and the blocked 'entrances/exits', the removal of the chicken wire, the installation of a Gazebo, as well as the installation of a childrens' playhouse. UIF funds will be used to finance this project.

Embellishment of triq l-Uqija – Dieter Falzon has forwarded plans related to the refurbishment of triq l-Uqija. On the 26th February I have to meet the developer of The Forum so as to discuss these works, after which I will present the plan to council.

Triq Migbed – We need to discuss the tenders submitted with regards to the resurfacing of triq il-Migbed and to award of the tender. I suggest that works should be completed by say November this year and payment will be effected in two payments - € 50,000 from this year's budget and € 50,000 from next year's budget.

Triq il-Mizura corner with Triq il- Keffa – the newly opened ironmonger is causing parking congestions similar to those caused next to 'Corner Food Store'. Vans & cars are regularly parking on the double yellow line thus obstructing the vision of cars driving up Keffa and wanting to turn into Mizura and this includes public transport. I suggest that we widen the pavement as we did next to Corner.

Pavement in triq it Tiben – works on the pavement have started.

Dog bins – we need to install dog bins in Victoria Gardens.

Migration to the new Civic Centre

Now that it has been confirmed that the devolution of the Civic Centre will take place during the end of February, we have to actively plan the migration of the local council from its present premises to the new one and also to plan the lay out of the premises and the services that will be offered from there. An action committee had been set up for this purpose, however no reports have to date been forwarded to the local council. I suggest that another action committee be set up to plan this migration and the use of the premises. A special meeting will be held within two weeks so as to take a final decision.

Forthcoming meetings :

21.02 – Meeting with Architect Chris Cachia, an advisor to Hon Joe Mizzi

22.02 – meeting re Local Wardens reform at the Dolmen Hotel

26.02 - Meeting with The Hon J Herrera re setting up of a Regional Art & Culture Centre

26.02 – meeting with the Hon Leo Brincat re embellishment assistance that can be given to the locality, particularly with the planting of trees, replacement of the brick wall that was constructed by Transport Malta in Triq Josef Kalleja, Go Green Campaign and measures that may be taken to improve the quality of air in the locality.

Noel Muscat – 20.02.14

