

ACT Bushfire Council

Meeting Minutes

26 April, 2007
3.00pm – 5.00pm

Conference Room
Air Support Operations Centre
4 Point Cook Avenue Fairbairn

Attendance:

Kevin Jeffery	Chair
Tony Fearnside	Member
Simon Katz	Member
Bruce Leaver	Member
Conrad Barr	ex Officio
Gregor Manson	ex Officio
Tim McGuffog	ex Officio

Apologies:

Peter Kanowski	Member
Michael Ross	ex Officio
Geoff Butler	Member
Tony Bartlett	Member
Stephen Wise	Member
Bronwyn Mills	Secretariat

1. *Opening*

Kevin Jeffery opened the meeting at 3.00pm.

2. *Minutes from extraordinary meeting – 12 March 2007*

The minutes from the extraordinary meeting, held in March were presented.

Motion to accept the minutes:

Proposed: Kevin Jeffery

Seconded: Simon Katz

Accepted unopposed.

Minutes from March meeting – 22 March 2007

The minutes from the meeting, held in March were presented.

Gregor Manson requested that he be given the opportunity to revise the minutes and send to members via email for acceptance.

3. *Correspondence*

Out:

1. An email was sent from Kevin Jeffery to Gregor Manson regarding Bush Fire Council's position in the new structure.
2. A letter of congratulations was sent to Cliff Stephens for his receipt of a medal

In:

1. Gregor Manson responded to Kevin Jeffery's email and stated that the Bush Fire Council still reports to the Minister and the website will be updated to reflect the update.

4. *Business Arising*

4.1 *Update on mediation*

Bruce Leaver advised that he and Tony Bartlett met with Pat Barling and Val Jeffery and that Tony Bartlett conducted follow up meetings with Pat Barling & Val Jeffery and had briefed Bruce before his leave over seas. Bruce explained that Tony stated that the issue was still volatile and noting the time of year (April rather than October) there is still a lot of discussions needed on a whole range of issues to come to a resolution. Bruce Leaver stated that he and Tony Bartlett would take no further action until Tony returns from his absence over seas.

4.2 *Farm Fire Wise Briefing*

Virginia Dixon reported on the current stage of Farm Fire Wise. Farm Fire Wise is currently ready to release a booklet to the community being 'Stay or Go' and it has been dual badged with the ACT Government information in it. It also has a separate document for preparing a "Stay plan" and "Go plan".

The development stage was completed by Jeremy Friend and there is still some tidying up to be done e.g. The information brochure still needs to be finalized and sent off for printing.

Virginia Dixon has completed the recruitment phase and there will be a new employee starting within the next few weeks. The successful recruitment is David Inskeep, he has been a NSW RFS volunteer for the past 20 years and will be joining us from his current position within JACS as a Community Education Officer.

The next phase will be to get the volunteers prepared and up to date with the program ready for the delivery to the Community. Road Shows will be held to involve whole families and these will be held in 2-3 locations within the catchments, brigade sheds or on selected properties. After the road shows volunteers will be asked to do an individual assessment those that do not volunteer will be given the assessment when their lease is renewed (every 5 years) or when new leases are completed.

The next phase would be to recruit a project champion who would be someone who is familiar with the project and is in the rural environment to help deliver.

To capture the data, a GIS unit will be used in vehicles so that mapping of the properties can be done. Then ground troops would use these maps to verify mapping information is correct before the final stage is done.

A slogan for the project has been created and is still open for change/comment. The current idea for a slogan is "Farm Fire Wise, Preparing your property, Protecting your Community".

Kevin Jeffery asked if we could involve the Australian Federal Police in the delivery of the project to the community to raise their awareness in the booklet and the communities' awareness.

4.3 *Report on visit to Minister / Minister request for BFC to monitor Coronial implementation*

Tony Bartlett and Kevin Jeffery met with Simon Corbell. Simon and Kevin exchanged an overview of the process they went through and where they stand in regards to the restructure and Rally of Canberra. Simon Corbell asked the Bush Fire Council their intentions and their response to the letter he sent to the Council in March 2007. Simon Corbell would like the Council to take on the role in which the Coroner foreshadowed in his report and he intends to get extra budget.

Gregor Manson explained that there would be \$50k each year for 2 years to provide assistance for the Bush Fire Council to assist it in developing an audit process of the implementation of the Coronial and McLeod's report.

Tim McGuffog asked the council to let RFS know what the Councils priorities are so that they can be used in the developing of the RFS business plan.

Action:

Kevin Jeffery to send letter from Simon Corbell to members. Kevin to draft a response to Simon Corbell.

Tim McGuffog & Gregor Manson to draft a project plan for the budget and forward to the Bush Fire Council to utilise in their response.

4.4 *Technical inquiries for bushfire disasters*

Kevin Jeffery and Tony worked on a brief recommendation to send to the Minister regarding technical inquiries. Gregor Manson asked where could the Minister send the recommendation to maximize the effect. Gregor suggested AFAC for political lobbying and Conrad Barr suggested COAG.

Gregor would like to work alongside AFAC regarding this issue before they involve COAG.

Tony Fearnside asked Gregor whether Technical inquiries should be set in legislation or a policy matter. Gregor's view is that a Bush Fire Inquiries Commission could be set up to be brought together only when a major incident occurs to investigate, maybe like the ATSB.

Action:

Gregor Manson provide advice on addresses for letters (COAG, AFAC)

Kevin Jeffery amends the brief with additional information from today's meeting including whom BFC would like the brief sent to.

5. *General Business*

- 5.1** Bruce Leaver requests briefing from the Government on the Molonglo Valley development plan proposal in particular the land planning issues relating to bush fire both in location and development and form and nature of development.

Action:

Organise ACTPLA to come to BFC meeting to give briefing on this development.

Bush Fire Council to draft letter to Minister requesting the above information.

- 5.2** Tony Fearnside mentioned that the NSW RFS has released a revised version of planning for bush fire protection which now becomes law.

Conrad Barr mentioned that currently Fire Brigade & ACT RFS are currently working on amending the ACT version.

Action:

Conrad Barr to let Bush Fire Council know where the ACT Fire Brigade are currently up to in this process.

All members to start documenting suggestions in this process for the next BFC meeting

6. *Reports*

- 6.1** Gregor Manson states that at present all planning issues are being sent via his office as a coordinated response to the Chief of ACTPLA. The bush fire plan has been discussed with a few people who might assist Tim & Gregor to facilitate fairly quickly (with the ESA Planning Group) as to what a bush fire plan looks like. Gregor states that the plan should be a series of maps that can be used to manage the areas for Hazard reduction burns etc. Gregor would like a major draft done by spring.

- 6.2** A letter to the ex-captains was sent out regarding the restructure; Pat Barling has since receiving the letter has met with the Captains for a meeting and Gregor is awaiting their response. Gregor also spoke to Pat Barling regarding the media's release of information on their discussions.

- 6.3** Gregor Manson discussed the ACT RFS business plan and how he believes RFS needs some input from other groups. This would help in circumstances where an issue is raised and how it would be overseen in the business plan. Kevin Jeffery suggested the Business Plan be discussed next meeting when there is sufficient time.

- 6.4** The Molonglo plan has been given to Gregor as a draft cabinet submission before releasing the plan. Gregor has disagreed that the city area is low bush fire risk. Gregor has suggested that there are a number of issues that haven't been dealt with in their plan; Gregor will be holding a meeting tomorrow to review these issues with ACTPLA.

Conrad Barr discussed the possibility of relocating some current resources to cover the new area rather than having to employ more staff to cover a new station.

6.5 *ACT Fire Brigade*

Conrad Barr stated that FB is currently reviewing some of their bush fire training with a view to slightly change the delivery to FB. ACT Fire Brigade is also working hard on getting their business plan completed.

6.6 *Audrey Fagan*

The funeral for Audrey Fagan will be held tomorrow at St Christopher's Cathedral. Conrad Barr discussed the working relationship that she and the AFP had ACT Fire Brigade and other departments and that a letter of condolence from FB has been sent.

Any donations are to be made to 'The Hope Foundation'

Action:

BFC to send a letter of condolence

6.7 *Hazard reduction burns*

Gregor Manson let the Council know that he has been in contact with TAMS regarding the burns and the lack of smoke in the area. Gregor would like to ensure that hazard reduction burns are conducted before the next fire season. Gregor would like FB, RFS and TAMS to discuss Bush fire management plan for hazard reductions in the Territory.

Action:

Bush Fire Council to put forward an interim action plan to ESA on hazard reduction.

6.8 Simon Katz mentioned the death of Harold Adams who was the president of Rural Association for 18-20 years.

Action:

Council to send letter of condolence

6.9 *Tim McGuffog report on RFS*

6.9.1 Nick Lhuede has been working with TAMS and the Lower Cotter Catchment Group and they are close to an agreement with the removal of debris.

6.9.2 Winch training is being looked at for all RAFT crews in conjunction with NSW RFS. Tanker driver Licence training is currently being completed (4 officers per brigade).

6.9.3 Village fire fighter course will roll out in the next few months with each brigade trainer to be trained in both presenting and assessing. NSW RFS will be overseeing the brigade trainers until they are competent. The course covers a range of training that isn't currently available to RFS including Road accident awareness, structures (do's & don'ts) and HAZMAT incidents.

6.9.4 There is a new training database being introduced by Carol Brook.

6.9.5 There are 2 students from PR Institute who will be working with RFS to improve the internal communication lines for both incoming and outgoing communications to the brigades.

6.9.6 Roberta Liddell has received a grant from "The Women's Network"; this is to be used for ensuring the brigades are women friendly. Roberta is also currently working on nominations for service awards. The recruitment program

is also underway with the first information session to be held on the 9th May 2007.

6.9.7 On the 8th May 2007 there will be a Vector Command training exercise held at RFS with NSW Parks & Wildlife service, NSW RFS as well as agency personnel. This exercise will be used to ensure that there is staff trained up in Vector Command and to ensure the building can manage under an extreme fire situation. Ken Hall (Regional Manager for RFS at Batemans Bay) will provide an overall assessment of people in positions and the overall running of the exercise.

6.9.8 Last week Tim McGuffog spent a day on 'Performance Indicators'. The key indicators which have been recommended through AFAC are:

1. Fire Deaths per 100,000 people
2. Number of primary dwellings destroyed
3. Percent of area burnt by wild fire high value / high risk zones
4. Total number of hours by volunteers on wild fire suppression
5. Fire injuries per 100,000 people
6. Percent area of commercial plantation areas lost
7. Number of cultural heritage sites destroyed by fire

These performance indicators will go to AFAC Council and then up to the Agencies to adopt into their process. This will also go to the productivity Commission.

6.9.9 Tim McGuffog would like to see Brigades recognising qualifications and skills rather than the traditional way, which has seen Volunteers becoming captains & deputy captains. Tim would like 1 Captain and up to 2 Deputy Captains per brigade.

Action:

Tim McGuffog to draft a memo/draft policy for consultation

7. *Confirmation of next meeting*

Kevin Jeffery closed the meeting at 5.00pm

The next council meeting will be held at the ASOC on May 24th at 3pm