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| Description: ttp://www.graphicdesignblog.org/logo-design-gallery/wp-content/themes/logo-design-gallery/thumb.php?src=logo-design-gallery/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Aro.jpg&h=190&w=330&zc=1&q=90 | MINUTESARO VALLEY COMMUNITY COUNCIL GENERAL MEETING DATE: 08 November 2016 7.30 pm |

**Topic for meeting**: What’s the buzz in Aro Valley: come and learn about urban beekeeping and the various restoration projects happening in Aro Valley.

**Present**: Luke Allen (Co-chair), Brent Efford, Heather Mackay (Secretary), Daniel Brown, Rachel Griffiths (Treasurer), Krissy Cloutman,

**Apologies**: Hilary Unwin (Co-chair), Nicole Benkert, Roland Sapsford, Jo Brien, Sacha Green, Chris Carey-Smith, Catherine Carey-Smith, Lexi Taylor.

Members of the community attending were encouraged to sign the attendees register.

**Guests**

**Te Aro School children talking about the bees that they keep at the school.**

Beth Tuffs and Tallulah Adam gave a very confident presentation on their school beekeeping project. They handed out colour photocopies to show their beekeeping in action. Beekeeping is an Enviro Schools project based around experiencing how honey is made. The children are writing about it to share with other schools. They do a hive check each week assisted by their specialist beekeeper. A good spin off is that it helps their vegetable and flower beds at the school. They have had to provide a special first aid kit to deal with any bee allergies. The two children were very enthusiastic about the programme and were keen to carry on their learning about beekeeping. Best quote: “Actually working with the bees is better than just watching on YouTube!”

**Dan Brown on beekeeping in Aro Valley.**

Dan keeps a few hives at his house in Epuni Street and shared some interesting experiences from his five years beekeeping as well as some facts e.g. bees have about a five km range. The initial financial cost was for boxes and tools and he sourced the bees from Palmerston North. He recommended the book “Practical beekeeping in New Zealand’ as a useful reference if anyone is thinking of starting. Dan recounted his personal experience of “taking his bees for a walk” i.e. trying to catch his bees when they swarmed. His philosophy is to leave honey in the hive over winter rather than take it all then having to feed the bees a sugary syrup. Dan is interested in separating the different types of honey that the bees produce dependent on the food source at the time and really enjoys being able to give away the honey – 30 litres were produced last season. Dan acknowledged Julia Stace Brooke-White as his beekeeping mentor.

**Paul Stanley Ward on the Polhill restoration project**

[**http://naturespace.org.nz/search/node/polhill**](http://naturespace.org.nz/search/node/polhill)

[**https://www.facebook.com/groups/Polhill/**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Polhill/)

Paul told the meeting about the history of the project, the work involved and the benefits which are becoming increasingly obvious.

Polhill Reserve has 70 hectares in Aro Valley which is not a sanctuary or zoo but open wilderness. Until mountain bikers put tracks through the area it was largely inaccessible but is now one of the most popular trails in New Zealand used by thousands of walkers, runners and bikers.

The area is well sited next to Zealandia and the birds are starting to spill over into Polhill. In 2014, a Saddleback nest was found which is the first time Saddlebacks have nested outside of a sanctuary or island for over 100 years! Nesting is continuing to be viable for the Saddleback. Kaka and Tui are now common and kereru are coming back. The dawn chorus sings in the valley.

The regional and city councils had been keeping the possums controlled by trapping in the area and two and a half years ago 12 people started a trapping group targeting rats, mice, stoats etc. It is largely a volunteer driven group and last year expanded numbers with people now also trapping their backyards (Predator-free Wellington initiative). Twice a year an indicative survey is run to see how effective the trapping is. The latest survey showed 0% rats and 30% mice. Which is positive but not an end to trapping. The Facebook page has 400 people signed up.

Local businesses have been supportive – Garage Project (left-over grain) Good Nature (self-resetting traps and bait), Fix and Fogg (peanut butter).

This regular trapping work has contributed to birds coming back to the valley – a positive celebration of that was the naming of a nesting kaka “Cortina” which was near the school – “bogun birds back in the valley!”

Garth Baker also talked about the Brooklyn group which is planting trees to soften tracks and now moving back from the tracks to plant big trees such as Kahikatea. Groups work together, volunteers and corporate volunteer groups, runners groups etc. Garth’s personal mission is to plant 1000 Nikau trees back in the valley. The area in Brooklyn is part of the town belt and council is helping.

Aaron Matthews introduced the Predator free Wellington initiative, Aaron is getting a group together called Predator free Aro Valley with a Facebook page. The aim is have traps in one out of every five homes to keep the pests down. He is keen to contribute an article to Valley Voice to further publicise the group.

**Shona McCahon on the restoration group Upstream: Friends of Central Park and their 2017 arts trail http://upstream.org.nz/**

Shona introduced the meeting to some Central Park history and the Upstream group.

Central Park is also part of the town belt and has 13-14 hectares of land including the Moturoa Stream which is one of the few free flowing streams in the city and has eels, bullies and koura.

The Upstream group started in 2005 as people were dissatisfied with the state of the park. A restoration plan was developed in 2008 by the WCC concentrating on the stream. The playground has been revamped and new parts of the park opened up to encourage people to enjoy it. The history is from 1913 when residents established a formal garden, annual fair and the entry gates.

Upstream is a volunteer working group which meets the last Sunday of the month in the morning. The work is mostly weeding now that there is adequate shelter and the trees are regenerating. New members are welcome and will enjoy a home baked morning tea.

An inaugural Arts Trail was organised by Upstream for emerging artists including children’s art. The first effort won the Visual Arts Category of the Fringe Festival. The next Arts Trail is planned for March 2017 and has 14 artists involved.

**Denis Asher on Tanera Gully restoration project.**

This was started by Denis three years ago with the aim to re-establish pre 1840 vegetation. So far 2-3000 plants have gone in. Plants are supplied by the WCC, Forest and Bird and Denis grows some in his backyard. Working parties have planted these with the priority being to get the big species in. There is evidence of some planting work done a few years ago and Denis is keen to find out who was responsible for this work so that they can see the benefit.

Feedback is encouraged on what sort of use would be best for this area? Bikes, family groups or whatever. This area has access from Brooklyn and has a close relationship with Zealandia, Polhill and Central Park. There is a very healthy personal benefit from the work of disturbing the soil and releasing beneficial bacterium.

**Discussion followed on from the speakers.**

Great support from the meeting for all of this wonderful work that is happening. Question was raised about where food crops/fruit trees could fit into this to help feed the local population. Agreement that there was plenty of land and that an initiative around that would also be welcomed. There is a Kai Te Aro group that could be tapped into.

**AVCC Update**

**Minutes of previous general meeting**.

 Minutes of previous general meeting were not available for this meeting but will be posted on the website as draft minutes and confirmed at the next general meeting.

**Update on committee activities**

Luke introduced the community consultation process for the Community Centre upgrade. There is to be a weekend event titled “Festival of Place” which is a series of participatory activities around values, needs and priorities. He extended the invitation to everyone to be involved on the 19/20 November. Details on our Facebook page as well.

**Topics for future general meetings.**

Topics put forward by the meeting were:

Road safety, public transport, bikes, car parking, skateboarding, living wage and AVCC as an employer, quality of housing, VUW houses for sale, community resilience which could be facilitated by WCC to make a community plan – contact Remo, tangata whenua of the area, history of Aro Valley, vandalism. These topics to be added to the topics already existing.

Suggestion to repeat the successful Hangi event.

**Urgent general business**

There was none.

Meeting closed at 9.20 pm and everyone was invited to stay for refreshments.