

Candidate survey – Noosa Shire Election 2024

Surname:	Wegener	Given name:	Tom
Position contesting:	Noosa Councillor		

- **About you:**

Are you a member of a registered political party?	YES/NO	No
If so, are you endorsed or formally supported by that political party?	YES/NO	No

- **How will you deal with situations where you or your immediate family have assets, interests or affiliations that might be likely to present you with potential conflicts of interest in carrying out your tasks as a Councillor?**

Comment: I follow the COI guidelines and disclose possible conflicts

- **If elected, how do you intend to engage with your community and/or the region?**

Comment: I will continue to engage with community groups. I am active in several including Permaculture Noosa, Majestic Theatre, Country Noosa and the bush care groups. I think the best way to listen to the community is through the community group representatives.

- **Why do you think that you are the best candidate for the position you are contesting?**

Comment: I have a very good understanding of local government after my first term. I can see how my experiences of practicing law, having my own business in Noosa for 25 years, and researching a PhD on Australian Small Manufacturers shape my decisions in Noosa Council

- **Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning this section of the survey?**

Comment: Being a good local government councillor is a very difficult, demanding job.

Governance, Transparency and Ethical Behaviour

- Are you aware of:

the Principles listed at the beginning of the Local Government Act 2009 and will you commit to abiding by these principles?	YES/NO	yes
the relevant legislation and regulations that govern the conduct of Councillors and the activities of Council?	YES/NO	yes

- How do you see the above influencing your decision-making?

Comment: In Noosa, you cannot act outside the local government act without getting caught.

- Will you:

support providing requested information (other than current commercial-in-confidence) to the community without the need for individuals and organisations having to resort to Right to Information applications?	YES/NO	yes
support that community consultation will become routine and results respected and acted upon such that the public interest takes precedence over vested interests?	YES/NO	yes
commit to forensic scrutiny of projects and expenditure directions and the budget overall?	YES/NO	yes
support the Environment Levy and its policies, including the continued acquisition of land for conservation, support for the Council's Voluntary Conservation Agreement Programs and the provision of funding to the Noosa Biosphere Reserve Trust?	YES/NO	yes

- What do you mean by, and how would you measure sustainable development?

Comment: Noosa has a very good town plan and developments must be consistent with the plan. In the next term there are planning scheme amendments coming for public consultation and I will advocate for further restrictions on developments which will leave Noosa worse off for the next generation. A councillor has a very difficult time pushing back private developments which are consistent with the town plan. The focus is on a strong town plan.
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- Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Governance, Transparency and Ethical Behaviour?

Comment:

Climate Emergency

- **What do you see as the key impacts of Climate Change on the Sunshine Coast and how should Noosa Council deal with this now and into the future?**

Comment: There are many impacts of climate change! The one I have focussed on is local agriculture and creating resilient food production. I know how fragile our food chains are. Running out of food is a climate change reality and growing our own on our degraded, wildly underutilized agriculture land is a key climate change response. I was president of Permaculture Noosa from 2021 to 2023. Regenerative agriculture is now in Noosa's Corporate Plan, Climate Change Response Plan and Economic Strategy.

Not eating vitamin rich, super healthy, locally grown food is an abomination. I am advocating for radical change.

- **Do you endorse the Climate Change Emergency Declaration made by the Council in 2019 and will you advocate for a review of its scope, effectiveness, transparency and accountability to give effect to the Declaration?**

Comment: From the fires of 2019 and floods of 2022, Noosa has \$149 million of disaster relief funding from the state and federal governments. This speaks for itself.

- **What role do you see for the Noosa Council and its Planning Scheme to accelerate the LGA achieving net zero emissions by 2026?**

Comment:

Noosa is looking at the Resource Recovery Centre (tip) as the key to zero emissions. We can put solar panels on the filled cells. We can turn wood waste to biochar. We can sequester green waste through regenerative farming practices. The answers are staring us in the face. If the right people are elected, we will make this happen.

- **The Coastal Hazard Adaptation Plan (CHAP):**

Will you ensure that the current CHAP is regularly updated as new Climate Change information and IPCC reports become available, and ensure CHAP updates are incorporated in the Planning Scheme?

YES/NO

- **Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Climate Emergency?**

Comment: The State is floundering. There is little hope on the big government level. We can only make a local stand and hope to be an example. We can be the tail that wags the dog.

Planning issues

- **What is your understanding of when it is appropriate to override the Planning Scheme (PS) when there are conflicts?**

Comment:

The planning scheme has fundamental guiding principles which are to lead the finer details of rest of the document. We may never go against the guiding principles, but can make some seemingly conflicted decisions when the details are not consistent with the guiding principles in some circumstances. For example, the details of the planning scheme made STA supported in high and medium density areas. I was voted down 6:1 when I voted to refuse the DA applications. However, I read the planning scheme principles which state that STA may not deteriorate the amenity of residential neighbourhoods nor become predominantly STAs. Eventually, Staff and councillors followed my reasoning.

Covid has changed our world. Our planning scheme is now interpreted in a different time. Overwhelming public interest may lead to decisions which were not anticipated by the pre-covid planning scheme.

- **Do you agree that:**

Development Applications (DA) that conflict with the relevant PS Performance Outcomes and other planning instruments should be refused unless there is an overriding need in the public interest?	YES/NO	yes
applicants wishing to lodge a DA that substantially does not comply, or seeks to override the PS, with or without a proposed amendment to the Scheme should only be permitted to lodge a DA following a successful appropriate Scheme amendment?	YES/NO	no
the community should be able to make formal public submissions and have the right of appeal to the Planning and Environment Court for development applications involving major impacts on the community and the environment?	YES/NO	yes
Councillors rather than Council staff should decide such major development applications?	YES/NO	yes
development that is vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change such as flooding, inundation, coastal erosion, landslip and bushfire hazard should be prohibited?	YES/NO	?
longer public submission timeframes than the statutory minimum times concerning amendments to the PS should be implemented to allow time for the community to understand and make an informed response?	YES/NO	no
further development on floodplains should be prohibited and not approved?	YES/NO	?
where community expectations about the PS are inconsistent with the planning directions and expectations of the State Government (eg in the SEQ Regional Plan Update or State legislation or policies), you will advocate strongly to ensure that the State accommodates the expressed planning wishes of our regional community to the greatest practicable extent?	YES/NO	yes
Halls Creek should not be recommended for residential development and should remain part of the Inter-Urban Break?	YES/NO	?
Do you support measures to curb the proliferation of Short Term Accommodation (STA)?	YES/NO	yes

- **What measures would you propose to reduce the impact of STAs on the liveability of the Noosa Shire?**

Comment: Through rates, we can internalize social externalities of STAs on Noosa's residents.

- **Concerning the South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ) Update of December 2023, what are your views on the strategic directions for the Northern Subregion and the population and dwelling requirements for the Noosa region?**

Comment: The state is using a sledgehammer to slice the diamond of the Sunshine Coast. They will destroy all that makes this place paradise. Los Angeles was once a paradise like the Sunshine Coast. The question is can the locals stop the seemingly inevitable destruction?

- **Given the focus on increased densification via higher buildings and/or "gentle density" as per the SEQRP2023 Update will you commit to:**

the development of careful guidelines for "gentle density" and that this type of development is not just seen as "accepted" or "as of right" development?

YES/NO

no

Comment: It is ham-fisted. Council should be given time to react and bring nuance to the state led population expectations.

- **The coastal hazard "erosion prone area" is defined by the Queensland Government. The State Planning Policy Guidance states redevelopment is to "avoid urban footprint expansion into erosion-prone areas while the State Policy prohibits this land "to be used for urban purposes" unless already located in an urban area or urban footprint in a regional plan. Will you oppose increases in the urban footprint and the density of medium and high-rise mixed-use residential buildings in these designated coastal hazard areas to reduce overall risk – and if so, how?**

Comment:

Gee, this is a really hard question. How can development be supported in erosion prone areas when insurance companies will not insure them. Insurability is the number one variable and nobody is bringing it into the conversation.

- **How can the Planning Scheme support the biosphere?**

Comment:

Another great question. It can't. Stupid politics will block any visionary discussions of what really matters. Only Stoics can maintain the fight.

- **Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Planning Issues?**

Comment:

Please elect councillors who hold the culture of conservation and biosphere principles, not short term political or financial gain.

Transport Infrastructure and Service

- Given the Australian Government has withdrawn financial support for all but one of the 5 major transport projects on the Sunshine Coast and has reduced Federal contributions from 80% to 50% for approved projects, and given the strong nexus between land use planning decisions and the provision of transport infrastructure, do you agree that:

all the current regional transport projects should be reassessed to identify and “lock in” the most effective and affordable project or projects that realistically can be delivered with Federal and State funding?	YES/NO	yes
accurate budgeting with realistic cost increases and contingency funding must be included in this reassessment process?	YES/NO	yes
projects that meet the need to efficiently move large numbers of Olympics 2032 spectators to, from and within the Sunshine Coast and that deliver a significant “legacy” transport benefit to the region must be a major decision-making consideration?	YES/NO	yes
any reassessment should explore some options that do not involve the high capital cost, fixed transport infrastructure projects currently under consideration eg significant increases in the regional public bus network with small and large battery buses on more routes, servicing all major regional destinations, with greater frequency and express services, and with bus right of way clearways at peak periods and priority at traffic lights?	YES/NO	yes
that ratepayers should not be subsidising major infrastructure projects that have been traditionally funded by the State Government through an increase in Council debt or increases in the Transport Levy?	YES/NO	no
given the importance of synchronising and integrating land use planning and development approvals with the planning, funding and delivery of transport infrastructure and services, you will support including in the proposed new Planning Scheme medium, high and gentle density land use changes only where the relevant transport infrastructure and services are guaranteed to be funded and delivered in a synchronised way?	YES/NO	yes
Active transport and Accessible transport should be made priorities in any transport infrastructure projects?	YES/NO	yes
Would you advocate for the Noosa Council to own and manage its own small, electric bus fleet to service the Noosa region?	YES/NO	yes
Comment:		

- Given the community is calling for a “transformational” approach to address Noosa’s transport and traffic issues, what specific proposals do you advocate to address the problem?

Comment: You have done your homework! I am still watching to see what emerges. I see the scooters whizzing around and I hear the complaints and see the benefits. I think our transformational future has not been formulated yet. I hope the answers do not get politicised.

- **Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Transport Infrastructure and Services?**

Comment:

Noosa became a world leading biosphere and paradise because of radical visionary thinking. Now, it seems many residents want to go back in time when things were quieter and simpler. They were never quiet and simple. Noosa culture is forward thinking and transformative. Let's embrace it.