

Northland Regional Council meeting - 15th February 2011

The clock had struck the normal 1300hrs prompt start to the meetings, but all was not ready.

It was 1305hrs when Chairman Craig Brown had reigns in hand ready for the ensuing meeting. He welcomed all and made special comments to the placard wielding group sitting quietly at the front who obviously had grave concerns about the prospect of offshore petroleum exploration in the region. Signs about protecting their environment (one held by an infant "Don't Kill My Future") and other environmental concern messages certainly should be taken into consideration as this group, we understand, has a big following. He assured them their comments were noted by councilors.

All the reading lights, imposing as microphones, were switched on, bar Mr Bain's which failed to ignite throughout the entirety of the meeting. (Doesn't he like people hearing some of his comments?) *Was it a waste of power, as no increase in sound was heard in the public gallery. Or is the meeting recorded for future reference?*

Chairman Craig Brown started in his normal professional manner explaining 'emergency evacuation procedures' and the location of rest rooms to visitors stating, also that any 'Conflicts of Interest' were to be advised item by item as they progressed through the agenda.

There were no apologies in Item 1.0 so it was on to the next.

A presentation, Item No 3, by Mr Jim Quinn, Chief Executive of Kiwi Rail explaining why rail will not be getting improved in Northland. The region needs massive investment to make the network in Northland viable. With 350 kilometers of track needing a lot of money spent especially on some tunnels.

Cr Bain, (Viagra-ly rising to his feet), believed with the price of diesel presumably going up rail was a good option, but must have a good commercial outcome. *John you could have just turned your microphone on rather than having to stand to be ~~seen~~ heard.*

Chairman Brown allowed questions from the floor and this is great to see as a number had come along for this item of discussion. This interested group, (one holding a "Rail Corridor Now" sign, at the completion of the presentation, left the gallery with some media in tow, not to be seen again today. This MUST have been the topic to 'Leader' the news.

It was now onto the 'norm' with Item 4.1 Confirmation of the previous minutes which had Cr Graeme Ramsey requesting why the discussion made last meeting in regards to Chairman Craig Brown & Cr John Bain, who had met separately with people from 'Project Promise,' as both these people, have conflicts of interest by being on Northland District Health Board, and with the possible rating in the future for this project. He had concerns this was not in the minutes. Chairman Brown agreed, Mr Ramsey was right and the minutes needed correction. He also added that he had met with the Mangawhai group in regards to mangroves.

The Chairman's Report Item 4.2 and Chair Craig Brown flippantly asked Cr Graeme Ramsey "if there were any 'Conflicts of Interest' in his (chairs) report". Smiling Cr Ramsey confirmed, "No, but he had certainly looked very carefully for any". Great to see this issue is being taken seriously, but without hard feelings?

The Chief Executive Report Item 4.3 and it was Cr Bronwyn Hunt who had some queries over the RPS (Regional Policy Statement). Cr Joe Carr made comments of during the latest 'Cyclone Wilma' there had been a dumping of milk at a great cost to Northland. He felt there were security issues to 'macro routes' and in particular it was not satisfactory that State Highway One was cut off in places during the storm.

Cr Ian Walker had some concerns about an item on page 33 'Farm Plans'. What were they and how are they to be implemented and for what reasons. Deputy CEO/Operations Director Tony Phipps explained a sustainable farm use plan which varied in complexity from very basic to complex was what it was all about to be used in a useful manner to farm owners. Cr Tony Davies-Colley believed it should be presented to the Environmental Committee for approval.

Committee Delegations Item No 4.4 and Chair of Environment Committee, Cr Joe Carr had some policies he wished to see instigated by the committee under the functions of the Environment Committee (page 37).

Cr Ramsey (page 39) was hot again about the Performance and Remuneration Committee for the CEO. (*Don't you like Ken...Graeme?*) The Team needed to discuss the NEEDS of this item and it was not for the staff to investigate as that had implications of Conflict of Interest.

CEO Ken Patterson advised, he had instructed staff to investigate other councils about what best practice and KPI (key performance indicators) and other detailed information were required for CEO appointments. *Hello isn't this a Conflict of Interest?*

Cr Ramsey has real concern for best governance practice and a 'what we require list' was needed. Chair Craig Brown asked the CEO to arrange a workshop for the full council to meet and discuss. Discussion followed but there was some confusion.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley who had put an alternative option forward believed that "Whether we want to accept best practice or not that you may wish to persuade the council to decide on this motion" He continued "If you go back to 'status quo' option means we don't want to go for 'best practice'.

CEO Ken Patterson suggested strongly, strongly, strongly, strongly, that is very strong he recommended a decision was made to make a decision to form an Audit and Finance Committee as at present there wasn't one'.

Chairman Craig Brown, obviously getting a touch annoyed at the situation, was going to make a new motion. The performance of the previous Audit Committee had been fine, it wasn't broken... so why fix it. He had checked with other councils and they didn't have extra personnel in the committees and it was only a recommendation by the Audit Department.

Cr Bronwyn Hunt in support of Cr Joe Carr also believed more time was needed to decide on the alternative option circulated by Cr Tony Davies-Colley as only some had received it prior to the meeting. *Good call Bronwyn.* Cr Hunt continued 'If improvements can be made, let's just look at it'.

Cr Ian Walker suggested if we go with the status quo and make the 1st item on the committee's agenda was to make changes after considering Cr Tony Davies-Colley's "Option D". *Another good call by Ian, we may be making some traction here.*

Cr Joe Carr now wanted Chairman Craig Brown to remove his (soon to be overruling option) motion and go with Cr Walker's suggestion.

Tony tried with another question (keeping his right of reply up his sleeve) but his plan was not to be. Tony replied with "OK, Mr Chair if you are making the rules" only to be interrupted with an "I Am" by Craig Brown. *Some good banter going on here.*

Tony continued with a comment similar to 'I hope the intelligence around the table can make the right decision'. Craig Brown suggested "Don't query the intelligence around the table"

Cr Ian Walker, in his professional manner 'Lets pass it and get it on the agenda'

Chair Craig Brown wishing everyone to have a say on this issue turned to Cr Bronwyn Hunt to have the last chance, but quickly corrected that by claiming he was to have the last say. *A few chuckles around the room followed his comment.*

Craig Brown relented and gave Cr Tony Davies-Colley his 'right of reply' after previously having a question-mark over it, which he exercised, with " We should get on with the committee, pass the status quo to get it going and would be very disappointed if 'best practice' is not a priority" The item was finally adopted as Option A, status quo same as previous council.

With that marathon out of the way and it being 1428hrs Item No 4.6 Proposal for National Marine Park in Northland hits the scene. It was obvious some had not read the agenda by proposing Craig Brown as the NRC representative. Under correction, it was pointed out that TDC, Cr Tony Davies-Colley had been providing Council with updates from the group and he was duly appointed as the NRC representative.

Things are speeding up and Item no 4.7 has a title change requested by Cr Tony Davies-Colley to Community and Economic Wellbeing Initiatives.

The baton is passed and we are into overdrive, maybe the jugs boiling.

Items 5.1 Financial Reports, Item 5.2 Investment Schedule to 31 Dec 2010, Item 5.3 Investment Schedule to 31 January 2011 and Item 5.4 Paid Accounts for Approval are all over and dusted quicker than I have typed this, so we must assume all is in order.

It's Item 5.6 - Lease Transactions for January 2011 and we have Cr Bill Rossiter move away from the table claiming a 'Conflict of Interest'. *Didn't even realise you were there Bill, you were so quiet.* This item was in regards to a property owned by Carl Hansen. *Maybe Bill can get plastic fittings at a good deal, or does Bill (baby face) own the greatest weather station in Whangarei? It's not what you know, but who you know.*

A presentation on the Flooding Event Item No 6.1 was delayed till the end of the meeting, time permitting, so off goes the overhead projector.

A query by Cr Bill Rossiter on Item 6.2 Consents decisions is clarified and we move on.

Item 7.1 Kaipara District Council - Variation 1 (Landscapes) to the Proposed Kaipara district Plan kindles some interest. It is Cr Ian Walker who believes the NRC can't give guidelines or give councils comfort when writing them (submissions). He also believed that landowners need to be included as they are stakeholders who may be affected.

Cr Joe Carr had concerns with the RPS (Regional Policy Statement), the submissions being made and that changes were needed. Cr Bill Rossiter also believed some changes were necessary.

Cr Walker's comment of "the District Plan will turn the lights out in Kaipara anyway". *What was all that about? What did Ian know and does he have more information than he's letting on?*

Cr Joe Carr had concerns about lava flows and there may be adverse effects with this submission.

Cr Graeme Ramsey wanted to move forward with Cr Carr and the Environment Committee overseeing the submission preparation from Draft to the Final. Cr Ramsey added that he wished to commend the staff on the preparation of this submission, the process and also the good working relationship seen working with the Kaipara District Council.

Cr Ian Walker also believed there were serious constraints and lots of rules.

The time had come to satisfy the patiently waiting group, concerned about Offshore Petroleum, Item No.7.2. There was no discussion on this item. *Obviously not enough fuel for the subject.* (was this planned because of the placard-wielding visitors or just a matter of only receiving the report). *I understand this group will be vigilantly watching mineral exploration in the region with the protection of the environment being their main focus.*

Item No 7.3 Review of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Afforestation Schemes. It was to be Cr Joe Carr and Cr Tony Davies-Colley to be those approving the submission on behalf of council prior to it being lodged. A question was also raised in regards to the amalgamation of MAF & Department of Fisheries and any effect it may have. *No real answers to this were available, perhaps only hypothetical at this stage.*

The Minutes of the Regional Transport Committee were received, Item No 8.1 and it was Joe 'on the pulse' Carr who enlightened all that the Bay of Islands Airport was running at a loss. There were suggestions of a departure tax of \$3-00 to help in the funding shortfalls but selling the idea to Air New Zealand would be the challenge. Chairman Craig Brown thought that if \$3-00 departure tax was the figure.....surely they would be happy to pay that to leave. *Craig loves to have a bit of fun during the meetings with his little quips. Good on you Craig, I too, love a sense of humor.*

It was Item 8.2 Submission on Puhoi to Warkworth Indicative Route with Cr John Bain claiming that 'going with the flow' was showing support for its future (although we were out of its area) providing an economic advantage for Northland and rural communities. *The medication must have worked off as he didn't 'rise' to the occasion this time he spoke.* Cr Graeme Ramsey was concerned there was no connection at all for rail.

Time was obviously no issue now so the presentation on the Flooding Event Item No 6.1 was shown. Tony Phipps continued by supplying some photos and informative statistic on the devastation caused by 'Cyclone Wilma' on 28th and 29th January. *God help us if FRED decides to get angry after Wilma has paved the way.* It was commented that District Councils had no money to fix the damage totally, so we may have to endure damaged road edges and damaged sewerage system issues for some time. *Strange they can find funding to make the place look pretty for visitors, how about making it healthy for the ones that live here permanently.*

The meeting finished at approximately 1537hrs, the councilors retiring for refreshments only to continue their workshop that had overrun time in the morning, after a break.

Looking forward to the next meeting and hopefully the stereo fixed for the occasion.

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)