

Northland Regional Council meeting - 15th March 2011

This month's meeting was scheduled to be held at the Far North District Council chambers in Kaikohe, so we decided to head north for the day (the Craig's joined us) and later we would call into the Bay for a bite to eat before heading back south to Whangarei.

A morning workshop had been held and lunch was still being consumed at 1300hrs by the attendees.

A flippant comment made about the coffee being better in the Far North than that at NRC, by a very senior, (*as in older*) councillor was shot down rapidly by Mr Brown claiming "with the amount of items on the agenda could he report that to someone who really cares." *You could have heard a pin drop with the pregnant silence that followed.*

It was 1305hrs, when Chairman Craig Brown receives the attention from councillors and the meeting begins.

There were no apologies in Item No1.0 as councillors sat in the quickly rearranged chamber. There was mention by the meeting secretary of additional tabled items being circulated.

Chairman Craig Brown states that any 'Conflicts of Interest' were to be advised item by item as they progressed through the agenda.

A presentation, Item No 3.1 is for Northland Sailor of the year 2010 and is awarded to Christopher Hornell for his comprehensive involvement to sailing. The presentation was made by Jim Lyle, Northland's Regional Harbour master. Craig Brown also congratulated Christopher adding that the trophy would look good in the middle of the dining room table. Christopher responded that he was privileged to receive it and thanked his family for all the support while he was away sailing. Applause filled the room and his support team were invited to stay for the remainder of the meeting but gracefully declined the invitation and vacated the chamber.

It was now get back to the norm with Item No 4.1 (@1312hrs) Confirmation of the previous minutes which required no discussion.

At 1312hrs Item No 4.2 was a little something new. Titled 'Report on Conflicts' and was all centered on the previous issue regarding both 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 with the possible rating in the future for this project. Cr Graeme Ramsey who had initiated the interest claimed "it was not his intention to move back to this issue but it was about a 'general conduct rule'. Roles can be seen to or influence another role and it can be a non-pecuniary conflict of interest. You can see from articles in newspapers that those perceptions are out there and we must manage the perceptions fairly and appropriately. (*Do you think that's about the helicopter funding?*)

Cr John Bain, who had earlier asked that we join them for lunch but the Golden arches had sufficed us earlier, was quick to comment that he had taken Graeme's statements seriously and had phoned his QC for advice and hadn't got a bill. *Most people have a lawyer and perhaps barrister, but a QC? Could some be paid too much or take a lot of risks?* His QC had told him it was a Conflict of Position not a Conflict of Interest. He suggested one removes oneself from the debate if there is a possibility of such issues.

The Chairman's report, Item No 4.3 and there was no discussion to this at 1317hrs.

Item No 4.4, Chief Executive Report also at 1317hrs and CEO Ken Patterson welcomes Angela Jane, from Taranaki (present today), to the NRC as a Corporate Planner working on the Long Term Plan. He also commented that some senior staff had volunteered to Christchurch to help with the aftermath of the earthquake.

Cr Ian Walker was looking for updates on the Kaipara District Plan.

Graeme Ramsey queried the draft work plan (on page 30 of the Agenda) paragraph 2.

Cr Bronwyn Hunt asked who was to speak on behalf of council in regards to Aquaculture (on page 31 of the Agenda). All were told it was going to be Ben Lee.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley again queried Farm Effluent and the need to be sent updates as they all need to be informed.

It was to Item No 4.7 Statement of Proposal Regarding the Navigation Safety Bylaw was all passed at 1322hrs only for Cr Bill Rossiter (our very senior councilor) to ask if it was too late to go back and discuss something on page 82. *Going too fast for you Willy?* Courteously, Chairman Brown agreed and clarification on Item 3.16.12 allowed Bill to rest easy.

With time now at 1324hrs and Item No 4.5 Draft Charging Policy (on supplementary sheets) there were a couple of corrections from the original item but in short it was about the charges having a 4% increase and all was approved.

It was now back to Item No 4.6 Statement of Proposal Regarding the Navigation, Water Transport and Maritime Safety Bylaw Charges 2011 and then Item No. 4.8 Bylaw Charges made Pursuant to Section 684B of the local Government Act 1974 and these were respectively approved at 1327hrs.

Back on the Supplementary at 1328hrs (*some appear to be having trouble keeping up*) and It is Item No 4.9 Draft Annual Plan 2011-12 (tabled material and Corrections) and 4.9a amendment promoted by Tony Davies-Colley for Road Noxious Knockdown. Tony said staff had done a good job summarizing the item.

John Bain had some problems with organizations like DOC on board but emphasized the NRC had environmental responsibilities.

Cr Joe Carr claimed there were protocols with District Councils and more knowledge was needed on subsidies.

Tony Davies-Colley believed a 50% subsidy was available from NZTA for weed control.

Joe Carr felt there was a need to know of existing conditions from District Councils.

Deputy CEO/Operations Director, Tony Phipps confirm facts on the subsidies.

Cr Joe Carr claimed 'he was not supporting this motion as they were out of line on this big sum of money. They were struggling with funds for river work and it was a tough ask'.

Cr Ian Walker needed clarification on whether it was the landowner's responsibility after the first hit.

Cr Davies-Colley believed it was NZTA responsibility once they get on top of it.

Cr Bronwyn Hunt felt weed killing and beautification program was similar and with the Pohutakawa corridor they could look at both.

Cr Bill Rossiter (*oh you are still awake*) stated they need to check for water supply pipes. (think that was when they plant pohutakawa that they needed to be aware)

Cr Ramsey felt it was a worthy proposal to look at but he was not supportive of it. They were taking a significant hit in rating terms when people are struggling with rates in Northland.

Graeme it's a shame others don't think like that as there are many scraping the barrel to just feed their families let alone try to feed their vehicles with fuel prices reaching the sky. He

believed it was not as high a priority in the environmental area and priorities such as waterways need prioritization.

Cr Brown inclined to agree with both Graeme Ramsey and Joe Carr but will support it on the basis it is a good initiative. It sets an example, similar to pest control programs. While it has had its times, work has to be done and it's a DRAFT Annual Plan for the ratepayers to submit on. It's the ratepayers plan not our plan. In the end we make the decision but rely on the system of submission. *(Craig sounds a bit like an election speech. Pss't it's the District Council that may be having a bi election not NRC, or what do you know.)*

It was time for Cr Tony Davies-Colley's right of reply. It's going to the Annual Plan for consultation and focusing on economic development we must consider the environment. He was disappointed in the chair of Environment Committee *(Joe Carr)* not being all for the environment. *(a little below the belt eh Joe? bet that hurt)* We will take the lead, raising rates is a concern *(possibly not to some eh, Tony?)* but it's going in the public arena.

Speaking now to Item No 4.9 Draft Annual Plan 2011-12, Craig Brown bet they *(Public, I assume)* don't come back agreeing in totality with it.

Bronwyn Hunt felt there was little statement about 'treaty settlement'

Craig Brown wanted the CEO, Ken Patterson, a chance to have a say, as it states "a word from the CEO" wanting small discussion on this issue as he didn't want to be there for tea. *(But Bill said the coffee was great)*

Graeme Ramsey wanted more clarification and some words left out.

Craig Brown's response "when I wrote this.....I wondered at the time" to hoards of laughter. *Only Craig can get away with those comments.*

It was Cr Bronwyn Hunt wanting a change to interested parties.

Hang On Hang On. Craig now wants to go round all the councilors for corrections *(and he will)*; it's hopefully up to the ratepayers.

Graeme "Methodical" Ramsey asks to go through it section by section.

Chairman Craig Brown states 'No, some will only be reading it for the first time *(are you awake Bill)* and I want the public to see it as it is and make decisions.

Cr Ian Walker refers to page 15, of the Annual Plan, believing it was 'misleading regarding mangrove management program. That's a load of hogwash; we haven't addressed it at all'.

Tony Davies-Colley felt it was questionable and not clear enough.

CEO Ken Patterson, *to the rescue*, claiming they are updating the public on what we have done. General Manager CEO's Office and Projects, Linda Stansfield, substantiated Ken's comments by clarifying the way it's done, what has been addressed over the last twelve months, but not saying the program has finished.

Craig Brown continued that it sounds like we have a big active program and that's not the case, so it needed to be softened up a bit before the draft is presented.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley, referring to page 13-13 of the plan queried the amount for river management and also believed Project Promise was not to be in the Annual plan. *That's taken the lid off the hot potato Tony.*

Craig Brown suggests Ken Patterson needs to explain.....

CEO Ken Patterson, *carefully*, it's about managing risk, it's in draft for councilors to discuss.

They *(the Public)* need to see both sides of the story, a balanced option. At least something on Project Promise will bring out the 'Yays' and the 'Nays' in public debate.

Tony Davies-Colley was not comfortable with it as it inferred it fits in with economic development and not where we want to go.

Graeme Ramsey believed the CEO was correct and they need to be clear to the public as it does not reflect our situation. Submitters could drive our decision making. It may be influential if a large amount comes from the public. It could be a donation not a committal statement favoring one side or the other.

At 1404hrs it was now Cr Joe Carr who felt they needed to make a statement, not a one sided argument.

Tony Davies-Colley believed the statement should be 'it's not appropriate for this council to back it'.

CEO Patterson believed it needed a neutral statement.

Craig Brown understood 'they would not back this subject'. Submitters could high light the issue. *Will they listen?*

Cr Ian Walker felt they needed to check legalities on using the council data base for fund raising.

Linda Stansfield again confirmed it was no longer a statement; it came from the workshop and was a fair opportunity for public comment.

Graeme Ramsey stated council has not included funding for Project Promise and it doesn't fall under NRC jurisdiction. (Does this mean funding for the helicopter imposed on ratepayers unvoluntary will cease or is it there forever, forever, amen providing a salary for you know who)

Craig Brown believed they shouldn't take away the purpose of the fund raising campaign *(are you listening John? Don't you have one of those also for the airy-beater?)*

Joe Carr also believed we are undermining the fundraisers. *(are you still taking notice John?)*

Tony Davies-Colley felt 'it could take the heat off everything else if there is something to throw rocks at'. Take note people *(check the Draft Annual Plan carefully people, as that comment says they may be hiding something of greater importance)*

Ken Patterson believes it must be a diplomatic statement. *(that's why he gets \$200k plus p.a. for being diplomatic; maybe next they will step on the toes of the helicopter funding?)*

Tony Davies-Colley emphasised they must explain it carefully. *How right you are.*

It was now, going round the table, John Bains turn to have his say on the Draft Plan. His long winded reply "I'm too frightened to say anything" *Why not John don't you have a tame QC?*

Last but not least, Cr Bill Rossiter, "Most has been picked up by Graeme Ramsey, I'm fine" *(he may of course come round to it later).*

Craig Brown generously gives Graeme 'chaffing at the bit' Ramsey, for two more mistakes.

Heard John Bain say a comment about something 'about swallowing your tongue', *but wouldn't like to misquote him.*

Graeme Ramsey continued with his now less important items.

Cr Bronwyn Hunt wanted to finish this session on a positive note complementing the way it was written as her husband understood it. *Then again he may have a degree in local government whatever to understand it. Good on you Bronwyn it's been a little touchy for some.*

Oh my gosh, is that Mr Bains phone going off/ oh he's so popular.

With that one out of the way it was Item No 4.10 Draft Financial Plan (at 1430hrs) and Cr Bill Rossiter stated the government budget may have influence on some issues. It was subject to changes and the maths was being checked by Lisa Aubrey.

1433hrs and Item No 4.11, Draft Upper North Island Regional Agreement. It was Bronwyn Hunt who was surprised at the lack of Sustainable Environmental management when reading through it. Perhaps I'm more concerned and not surprised.

Cr Graeme Ramsey also had felt it was not written in language of sustainability, but in its adoption, it was an authority to get on with it.

CEO Ken Patterson added that by both the signatories of Chairman Craig Brown and himself, CEO Ken Patterson, not only was it an operational document but political.

It was now 1440hrs, Item No 5.1 Receipt and Confirmation of Audit and Finance Committee Minutes- 22 February 2011 and no discussion needed.

Financial Report 28 February 2011, Item 5.2 and Investment Schedule to 28 February 2011, Item No 5.3 are all over and dusted, so we must assume all is in order.

Item 5.4 Paid Accounts for Approval February 2011 gets a comment from Bill Rossiter that they only spent 41.2 million last month. *Not a lot when it's someone else's money, eh Bill?*

It's Item 5.5 - Lease Transactions for February 2011 at 1444hrs and Item No 6.1 Confirmation of Environmental management Committee Meeting Minutes for 22 February 2011 and these also require no discussion.

We are on the home straight at 1445hrs, Item No 6.2 Receipt of Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Minutes - 1 March 2011 and Cr Joe Carr questions about a payment on page 160. He claimed if it was done in a timely manner it would have been good. Craig Brown clarified the situation. Government said there would be a fund of \$500k. It was granted to FNDC & WDC getting \$500K each. Both FNDC & WDC didn't meet the criteria for the funding. WDC had paid it back but FNDC had not at this stage.

Item No 6.3 Report on Environmental Monitoring for the Period 1 Feb - 28 Feb 2011 and again no discussion is required.

Item 6.4 Consents Decisions and Progress on Notified Applications in Process, Objections and Appeals.(at 1449hrs) Cr Graeme Ramsey has a query on Kiwi Rail item on Page 176 in relation to consent costs. Ken Patterson gives some clarification.

Cr Rossiter queries about septic tank consents.

Cr Joe Carr adds that FNDC had decided to maintain septic tanks introducing checks.

Tony Phipps concluded that there had been varied acceptance by District Councils.

Cr Tony Davies-Colley claimed economic was one of the well beings. Consents of 35 years continuance gave a length of time and there was economical effect on it. The RMA (Resource Management Act) was working against it.

It was becoming obvious there was more to this so Craig Brown commented that an application of 35 years had been turned down and consent for 25 years had been granted. It appeared there was housing across the harbour and this case in point was Balance Agri-Nutrients Ltd's application. *Do I smell a COI (conflict of interest) here regarding reverse sensitivity with a close neighbour, or is it just the air conditioning?* Resource consents give certainty.

Tony Davies-Colley claimed 'as an owner you want certainty, it's not a game as an employer' when Ken Patterson made some comments of his experience with resource consents and a power company he worked for.

Cr Ian Walker queried why resource consents are required every five years for dairy farms, as a lot of cost was involved when they already had most of the information.

Tony Phipps commented that dairy farms had upgrades and it was 'best practice options'.

Sounds a bit like dog registration where the responsible owners pay their registration every year to cover the unregistered ones that appear to create most of the problems.

Time now at 1503hrs, Item No 7.1 Receipt and Confirmation of Regional Policy and Development Committee Minutes - 2 March 2011.

Cr Joe Carr wants copies of agendas and minutes of these meetings.

Chairman Craig Brown states that all members of council get all minutes and agendas and there may have been a slip up in this case with communication. *(Don't think they are trying to keep you out of the loop, do you Joe?)*

Cr Bronwyn Hunt mentioned she was disappointed at the lack of response from councilors to a Hui. There were no other councilors present and no replies to emails sent out. (*So much for the monthly communication allowance paid to councilors?*) Bronwyn continued to thank the NRC staff that attended.

It's not about you.

Tony Davies-Colley paid a compliment in regards to the question about economic development that was asked at that particular meeting (Hui).

The meeting finished at approximately 1510hrs, the councilors going into business with the public excluded.

Craig Brown thanked those present for attending and the lovely mural endowed chamber was vacated by those leaving.

It was 'on the road again' and off to Paihia for nibbles and a drive back to Whangarei.

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)