

Northland Regional Council meeting - 16th November 2010

After the declaration of elected member Ian Walker's swearing in, the meeting under the control of Chairman Craig Brown weaved its way through the agenda. Early out of the stall was Cr Tony Davies-Colley declaring his interest in a number of items on the agenda and it was decided that when those items rose he would not participate. Followed shortly by Cr Bronwyn Hunt having concern about a project she was involved with it resulted in the same stance. It was great to see the newly elected, abiding by the rules. There was obviously no discussion due about helicopters on the agenda, as others sat silently.

The confirmation of previous minutes and tabling previous and current chairs reports went without a hitch. Some concerns were raised during the Chief Executives report regarding staffing levels and touched on Farm Dairy effluent. The Northland Regional Council Community Trust, Enterprise Northland and Destination Northland reports were addressed by the present Jo Douglas and Brian Roberts. A bit of a light discussion about how some of the reports were easier to read and understand than others.

It was interesting that the item of Making Good Decision Training for Commissioners was promoted as later during the meeting it was indeed a valuable item for reference later. New councilors were encouraged to take part on this course with only one appearing to pass at this stage.

Item no 4.7 NRC Standing Orders were discussed and it appeared there was a little concern from some on Chairs casting votes. I believe common sense prevailed in the end and they moved on to the next item.

Flood Management Liaison re-appointments were followed by Cr Carr & Cr Hunt appointed to Civil Defence Emergency Management Group. Cr Hunt also drew the short straw becoming representative of Northland Sailor of the Year selection representative.

A supplementary item for a Northland Marine Engineering Major Regional Initiative saw Cr Davies- Colley leave the room but called back, probably before his cheeks hit the chair down the hall. No problems Tony it was all over, but good to see you vacate the chamber. Cr Bain was appointed as Local Government NZ Zone 1 representative and later an independent commissioner was appointed for a consent hearing.

The Finance and IT agenda items passed with little discussion, the only concern for the number of trees lost in preparing the reports. Sometimes these types of documents are hard to reduce for fear of leaving some vital information out.

Past the boring stuff until Agenda item 6.1 Appointments of Hearing Committees. Ex Chairman Mark Farnsworth was recommended for a number of positions but there was concern by a couple of new Councillors. Both Cr Davies-Colley and Cr Ramsey questioned the suitability of Mr. Farnsworth as commissioner. Cr Joe Carr to the rescue understanding people's concerns but thought in future a list of all available commissioners should be made available. Chairman Craig Brown, very thoroughly I must add explained Mr. Farnsworth was the author of the earlier training program, Making Good Decision Training for Commissioners and he was possibly the most qualified to take on those hearings. Cr Ramsey claimed it was nothing personal about Mark,' but did feel 'it reeked of a job for the boys' and that it may be perceived that way. There was more convincing required and the Chair confirmed 'Mark Farnsworth doesn't get favors from me.' The decision was made.....Mr. Mark Farnsworth was the best qualified to take these positions and that is how it finished.

The Consents Decision item had a couple of small clarifications while the item on Environmental Monitoring opened up the old problems of Dairy Farm effluent. This is an area that indeed needs some intensive time invested in. It appears there is a constant 'lifting of the bar' in regulations so perhaps a concerted effort needs to commence as this appears to be an ongoing issue. Some farms have doubled their herd size and had no upgrades to the effluent system. Same sort of problem we have in the Whangarei District Council; let's encourage developments and increase the population but don't improve the sewerage system. They seem to think the brown stuff will sort itself out. Perhaps a trip to Aussie to see what they do may be the norm, or do we just instigate an education program.

Another couple of items to go and the last one resulted in Cr Hunt complimenting the staff on jobs well done with the Marine and Coastal Area Bill submission. Sometimes the staff who work hard need this type of recognition and it can mean more than many other rewards.

A confidential section followed so the public gallery vacated the chamber for their business to proceed as planned.

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)