

Oral Presentation - NRC Long Term Plan. 2012-2022 W & P Slater

Chair ,Councillors, Staff and Public. Thanks for the opportunity to speak today.

1/ Rates Subsidies. In general we have been pleased to see that in some decisions the hardship many in the community are suffering has been taken into consideration, such as rates. We appreciate the financial status of this council, as we believe huge debt is unnecessary and unacceptable to most ratepayers. Certainly this is what we hear from many! On the other hand, public consultation and other forms of engagement with the community needs greater focus, if you want informed decision making. It's so easy to get out of touch with what is happening with those living in the district when caught up in day to day business of the council. We get concerned that a few people, often the same ones, from various sectors that get consulted with; and this is considered to be sufficient. There are effective ways of communication these days and the opinions of the masses, must be sought.

2/ Economic Development Funds. In our opinion we must be focusing on developing that, which enables progression of our Port and Rail link. Just recently we have heard that it is all happening in the Bay with Oracle America's Cup training to be done in Bream Bay, the Marsden Point Refinery is being expanded, plus the approval for Marsden City has recently been given. Phew! So with these projects and the Port, there are many reasons for the development of rail in the area. We feel lobbying government hard for things in Northland that are extremely important in these tougher economic times. Ask yourselves these questions. ...Do you believe rail is needed for Northland's economy? Does industry need rail? Is rail needed for industry, such as forestry? Would it be logical, now in these hard times to build on the rail infrastructure needs? We believe 'Yes' applies to all these questions.

3/ Economic Development. We have covered a few points in our statement and a group if formed must work closely with government ensuring appropriate projects remain in the region.

4/ Flood Management. There are varying theories on whether this will help or hinder. NRC needs to work in this area to find a suitable solution.

5/ Managing our lakes, rivers, aquifers and wetlands. As per our statement, target high priority catchments first.

6/ Which are our outstanding freshwater bodies. NC. Read the statement.

7/ Rescue helicopters, should we keep supporting them? The recent investigation into due diligence would not have been necessary if open and transparent management by some in the Northland Emergency Services Trust had been brave enough to show their cards when repeatedly asked questions.. It's fine to be thought of as a good community person, giving your time freely, but when the 'rumour mill' portrays that substantial payments or large honorariums are being paid to a few select ones; doesn't that put the total project under question? The service, we and many others were advised, was on the bones of its arse; But surprise, surprise, then a 2nd chopper was purchased, it wasn't long before a third machine was obtained, and now we understand there is a fourth one for spares, under a tarpaulin, in a hanger at Onerahi Airport. Not bad for an organization on the bones of its backside. Don't get me wrong, the rescue helicopter is a great service, no one doubts its importance. Personally I have been involved in search and rescue with Coastguard for approximately 18 years and also the Police Launch section in Auckland. An extremely good friend of mine was the pioneer of rescue choppers in NZ, so I do have quite a bit of information in the importance of this service, but there are many other services that also need support in the way of funding; St John Ambulance, Fire Service, Tiaho Trust, Surf Life Saving, Coast guard, Hospice, Project Promise, Search and Rescue, Disabled Persons Assembly, Diabetes Association, Parkinson's Society, Forget Me Not, Heart Foundation, Alzheimer's, North Haven Hospice, Stroke Club, Women's Refuge, Drug Foundation, Citizens Advice, Rape Crisis, North Able, Arthritis NZ, Problem Gambling, and Life line etc. Sadly none of those organizations have elected representatives on this council, or they too may have received funding. Only Mr Ramsey.... just wanted to check, if you were listening. We still believe funding for NEST or any other organization should be in the form of ONLY a 'donation area' on the rates demands document and NOT a targeted rate.

8/ Reduce funding for Destination Northland. Although tourism is a large industry, there are others and we reiterate that we believe a focus needs to be on the needs of our locals and to provide those localized needs, will make a more vibrant district. With the internet, the tourism industry will tell the world about us and people will want to come and see the real people that make Whangarei, the great place we live in.

9/ Selling our 21 year lease properties. Not for just the sake of change. Existing Leaseholders should be given first right of refusal. Tender process / Highest Tender not necessarily accepted. Give details.

10/ Biodiversity. Support Councils decision. The staff have the expertise in this area.

11/ Should we make changes to monitoring activity. Can't slacken off in these areas.

12/ Should we join Local Govt Funding Agency? If there is a genuine advantage but not only with a motive to increase debt, as we are against this unless for essential projects.

13/ Our objectives – have we got it right? It is a shame that Central Govt is talking of disbanding the 4 well beings. Environmental, Economic, Cultural and Social well beings. Our belief is that all decisions should be based on attaining all of the well beings. There must be guidelines or some councils will be totally off track and on their own tangent.

14/ Maori capacity policy. We believe that people should be given the chance to be treated equally taking each sectors needs into careful consideration.

15/ What should we consider Significant. No further comment

16/ User fee and charges – We must keep up with rate of inflation with small regular increases; as if not, it's hard to catch up at a later date.

17/ Mining. We have great concerns about this and urge you all to keep up with your knowledge on this subject. Make it a personal endeavour to keep informed as our environment, our land as well as financial and job security is very much a part of this. We urge you to visit sites on the web where much documentation, groups and individuals have a lot of material around this subject. Anyone can surely decide what is good or bad in this - and only fools would rush in. The concerns and wishes of those in the community that live in areas where they will be affected by mining must be given great consideration. We note an online petition has been circulating and there are online groups with members numbering in the thousands. This is a very contentious issue. Something we heard recently, or similar to “Nothing about us, without us” would be a good policy to abide by.

We emphasize from our statement....NZ HERALD 5/4/12 Levels of arsenic and lead in a contaminated Thames subdivision are so high that a handful of soil could prove fatal if ingested by a small child, a toxicologist has claimed.

18/ Hikurangi Swamp. There have recently been some issues in regards to this area, that have been aired in the public arena. This highly productive area is important in our local economy and a far more professional protection plan needs to be managed in a responsible manner for the future viability of the Swamp. In our opinion the NRC is an able bodied local body that could possibly oversee this project and manage it appropriately. They have experience in similar projects in Northland and we understand they have made vast improvements in those areas of responsibility.

19/ GMO/GE. Caution is needed and we suggest they work closely with the people who are knowledgeable in this area.

20/ Protecting streams, waterways and harbour. We highlight.....If Northland Regional Council is having difficulty dealing with pollution from dairy farming, District Council's overflows from sewerage etc , using the carrot too often and not the stick with one sector but not the other, should we have concerns re NRC monitoring pollution from mining companies. Remember the "Ode to Craig Brown" Also beware that seeing it's the 'same identity' behind pushing mining is also hell-bent on unitary authority in Northland, after the people by majority have said no, should we be worried? Actually we do acknowledge recent use of the stick on farmers and hope this will happen to councils should they fail in the area of wastewater care.

21/ Rail – Port. Need more access points into and from NZ. An incident similar to the Rena disaster in Auckland could have created supply and demand issues far greater than we have seen with the employment strikes. Rail and the Port could well be Northlands saving Grace.

We really want to acknowledge the educational element within council that is inclusive of enviro schools, expos and awards, the obliging staff and also the openness and readiness to supply accurate information when asked, sometimes even without the needs of Official Information Act Requests. It is most important to have easy access to the elected officials as we have personally experienced when contact is needed.

Also we thank you for how we are welcomed and embraced at meetings as this is what makes people feel they too are an important part of their district and that council is there for them; top marks in this area.

Thanks again for this opportunity to speak and accept our statement.

We are most happy to answer any questions. As long as they are easy.

Warren & Pat Slater

7th May 2012.