

EDITORIAL

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People put new man in charge

POLITICS is unlike any other occupation. If you're the mayor, a councillor or any other type of elected public representative, you work for the people — not yourself, your mates, cronies or business associates — the people.

And every three years the people decide whether or not you are doing a good job.

In the case of Whangarei Mayor Stan Semenoff, he could argue he hadn't done a bad job. Sure there was controversy and argument over commercial rates rises and lease agreements.

But debt had been reduced, there were ideas forthcoming to generate tourism income for Whangarei district — the Town Basin Hundertwasser project, for example.

Roading challenges were being met.

Sadly, a mayor can't own a transport company and not be accused of some sort of self-interest in roading, which means Mr Semenoff's contribution in this area may never be truly appreciated.

Along the way, his unique leadership style meant he annoyed more than a few people.

When your employer is the "people", that's a dangerous thing.

So what now?

In Morris Cutforth we have a "people's mayor" with limited political experience, backed by some high-profile businesspeople unhappy with the direction of Whangarei under Mr Semenoff.

Putting aside what Whangarei needs for a moment, let's look at what we don't need.

To go from one leadership extreme to the other would be disastrous for Whangarei.

What we don't need is endless pandering to the discontented minority who want referendums every five minutes that council wants to make a decision about the use of public funds.

We've just held the only referendum we need.

We also don't want the vested self-interests of a few powerful businesspeople running the show.

Mr Cutforth has entered politics courtesy of his own integrity and skill, some strong backing, and some perhaps stronger "anti-Stan" sentiment.

He needs to find his feet as a confident mayor quickly and strike that balance all good leaders have — the ability to be able to listen, to consult, and to be able to make the hard calls. Most importantly, he needs to make those calls for the benefit of no one other than the residents of Whangarei.

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