

WE ASKED FOUR MAYORAL CANDIDATES TO ANSWER LEADING QUESTIONS ...

What are the most important issues facing residents and ratepayers?

How will Whangarei benefit from electing you as Mayor?

Stan Semenoff

Our District is in the welcome position of already tackling its most pressing issues.

Three years ago there were major concerns about excessive rates rises, runaway debt, an unaffordable stadium and traffic congestion.

Since then we have held rates rises to CPI, capped debt, and built the events centre within the \$16 million allocated by previous councils. We are building a second harbour bridge and extensions to Spedding Road and Porowini Avenue to ease congestion. We have acted decisively in embarking on a \$50 million strategy to get the sewage out of the harbour.

The issues now are the need to grow our economy and show the vision necessary to develop our District as a thriving, vibrant retail centre and tourist destination.

The second bridge enables the building of a world class walkway/cycleway taking in the Town Basin and redeveloped Pohe Island and featuring an art park and a market on the Basin's redundant bridge.

Central to the Town Basin's development is an upgrade of the Central Business District (CPD), and the joining of the two. I have been pursuing the construction of a hotel in the area, and also major tourism initiatives to aid this.

The transformation of the CBD into a boutique retail precinct will breathe life into the city centre and make it a great shopping/café experience.

I look forward to CBD property owners and businesses working with Council on this exciting project.

I intend to continue leading a Council which benefits all ratepayers and all areas of Whangarei District, and which has vision to constantly improve our District.

I have led, and will continue to lead, an harmonious and hard-working council which consults the community and then gets down to the business of developing our District into an increasingly affordable and enjoyable place to live.

Warren Slater

My objective as Mayor is to make Whangarei first, through sincere and honest representation ultimately benefiting Whangarei, enabling the varied issues facing our residents and ratepayers to be addressed. I will serve our community without 'fear, favour or bias', operate a transparent, accountable Council supporting local businesses, individuals and other sectors, meeting needs through a 'level playing field approach', providing equal opportunities.

With no flash campaign sponsored by big business, I will be able to make the necessary decisions, not beholden to a few. Interested parties will have input throughout Council projects and via public forums. Encouraging genuine dialogue and involvement with our diverse community will result in better decision-making.

Council's current debt is unsustainable. The wholesale sale of assets to 'balance the books' is not beneficial long-term. Reducing wasteful expenditure is more effective to reduce debt.

I advocate for public demand to gauge the prioritisation of projects, thus providing for the needs of many, not the wants of a few.

Promoting essential project affordability whilst reducing debt should be instrumental in keeping rates to a satisfactory level.

Over the last five years, my wife Pat and I have attended most Council meetings and submission processes in Whangarei, and many local community and public meetings at the Far North, Kaipara and Northland Regional Councils to observe the varying styles.

Having campaigned since 2007 for upgrading our sewage network, my priority is to ensure infrastructure in Whangarei serves the needs of our increasing population. We must instigate changes to protect our harbour and waterways from pollution whilst decisions must be made while observing the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of our community.

I am focused on major issues, willing to listen and prepared to act. ■

Vince Cocurullo

As your Mayor, I will be seeking and implementing solutions that include: improved inner city traffic flow with a reduction in traffic lights and installation of roundabouts; increased parking facilities; the protection of our harbour and waterways; protecting our District assets rather than selling them; the protection and enhancement of our coastal, rural and urban environments; ensuring Council portfolio holders are made accountable and that Council business dealings are transparent.

Most importantly, I will take effective action to ensure that Council budgets are not exceeded and that budget allocations made with respect to the LTCCP are kept within the reasonable reach of our communities, without unnecessarily burdening ratepayers; all WDC contracts are awarded to LOCAL contractors and suppliers; an effective promotion campaign is created to encourage outsiders to see Whangarei as the destination of choice for all.

Whangarei District WILL benefit by electing me as Mayor.

Following three years service as a WDC councillor, *Community First* has emerged as an important Whangarei District theme. Without our people, our District is of little value. Whangarei District issues affect all residents and the opinions of all who wish to be heard, must be heard, no exceptions.

In alignment with my *Community First* policy, I believe WDC should set the example of buying local by ensuring that Council contracts go to local contractors and suppliers. We must support our own people. It's critical to our development.

My civil engineering background offers the District a practical eye, along with a commonsense approach to the issues to be addressed. With the high energy I will bring to the mayoral seat, a 'can-do' attitude, and good health, I won't be found on the sideline tiring on issues after election.

That's my promise to the District.

Morris Cutforth

What are the most important issues facing residents and ratepayers?

There is a disturbing lack of openness and consultation with the public shown by current Council. Residents and ratepayers have a right to know exactly what is going on in their district; none of us should have to fight for information.

I see a clean harbour as an absolute priority. Beaches must be fit to swim in and to gather shellfish. While efforts are being made to deal with wastewater issues, in my opinion more effort is needed to resolve this problem.

We need to work towards a more vibrant, healthy CBD in Whangarei. Currently the roading system is prone to clogging at peak times. Why no easy access from the CBD to the Town Basin?

Finally, why do so many tourists fly into Auckland and immediately head south, and how can we encourage more New Zealanders to spend their spare time and holiday dollars with us?

How will Whangarei benefit from electing me as Mayor?

As Mayor, I will operate a robust and transparent Council. Nothing will be hidden and you will know exactly what is going on in your district. Information you require will be readily available.

I will do everything possible to ensure that wastewater issues relating to Whangarei harbour are top of the agenda. We must make every effort to put this problem behind us.

Also, expect to see better roading system around the Whangarei CBD, with better access to the Town Basin via a suitable walkway. Let's live up to our potential as a great place to live, work, and visit.

I want to help encourage tourists to our wonderful district. We have so much to offer and I will articulate our assets to the rest of New Zealand and, indeed, the world. The spotlight on Whangarei at the Rugby World Cup is a golden opportunity that we must not miss.

The public notification at close of nominations of a further six candidates for the Mayoralty came too late for statements to be included here. The names of those candidates are: Terry BURKHARDT, Don HEDGES, Paul JEEVES, Rita Kayal MURI, IsopoSAMU and Simon VALLINGS.