

## Whangarei District Council meeting - 23rd March 2011.

With Deputy Mayor Cr Phil Halse in the chair this meeting is underway promptly at 1000hrs. Phil welcomes Councillors, staff and members of the public.

Phil takes a few moments to reflect on the bad events in our world, activities in Japan and the earthquake in Christchurch.

An apology is received from Mayor Morris Cutforth. *My word who is babysitting, as we are privileged with Jillian sitting in the rear of the public gallery. Or has she just come in to pick up his pay?*

It was now onto Item No.1.the 'Public Forum' It was Mr Brian May, a business operator of some twenty years in Whangarei, who claims he has been bombasted by overzealous Compliance staff in regards to signage on his company vehicles. Going against IRD rulings on FBT regulations he asked if council thought they were above the Inland Revenue department rulings. It appeared obvious he had fairly genuine gripes with abatement notices threatened and numerous visits from compliance staff. *Are they short of work to do or has it become a personal vendetta.* Finishing his presentation in just 2 minutes 12 seconds he parted asking they reply to him in 14days. A question was fired from Cr Crichton Christie, *(oh he's here on time for this one)* Brian responding with, I'm here to speak not for questions, but did answer with the location of his business. *Perhaps ask the Gestapo they would know where his business is.*

At 1004hrs it was Item 2, the Minutes from the previous meeting and all were approved with no issues needing any discussion from them.

Item No.3. Minutes; Extra Ordinary WDC on Tuesday 8 March 2011. As there was no need for discussion at 1004hrs, this was all over in seconds.

Item No.4.the Police Report and Area Commander Inspector Paul Dimery, was here to present his report at 1005hrs. It was not in the report but there had been meetings relating to the media attention about gangs after a court of appeal and any effect it may have on plans for the districts policing and its policies with council. Going by the crime statistics, crime still continues. There were 46 less arrests which is a good sign. Paul had a 'bouquet' for Owen Thomas, (WDC Senior Community Services Advisor) for the Summer Safety Project. There had been positive feedback in regards to this work. *Good work Owen, its projects like that that make our communities safer for everyone.*

There is a Kaupapa o Otangarei Hikoi on Wednesday 30th March starting at Te Kura o Otangarei (Front Gate) at 10.00am. A sausage sizzle & drinks available for marchers and supporters. This is to promote a Clean, Safe, Welcoming, Thriving and Crime Free

Community. Show your support even if you stand by your letterbox in the area. *Congratulations to the organizers of this event, it shows you care about your community.*

Crime will not prosper in a community that cares; people still buy cheap items, the proceeds of burglaries.

Chair Cr Phil Halse offered assistance to police with staff shortfalls. *Does this mean Mr Syers with his 'extensive military background' may be drafted elsewhere?*

Cr Sharon Morgan enquired where they draw the volunteer base from.

Paul explained that a Senior Sergeant had advertised initially for volunteers for CCTV (closed circuit television) monitoring and it had snowballed from there. People were motivated by different reasons and a 'Blue Club' had evolved with a supply of these people sometimes not for 'fun jobs'.

Cr Morgan also endorsed the Host Responsibility Awards coming shortly, thanking the press for good coverage of this event. *Sharon this was question time for the Area Commander not an advertising campaign for the HRA. But good on you for trying.*

Cr Aaron Edwards (still back from holiday) questioned the viability of the bicycle police around the CBD (city business district) (he's a real greenie at heart, but claimed to be "independent". Check independent in the dictionary, Aaron)

Paul responded that people feel safe with the high exposure of police.

Item No.5. at 1019hrs Road Maintenance North, Central and South.

Cr Edwards questioned why council did not budget for repair costs and shouldn't it.

CEO Mark Simpson responded that 'with a \$7million storm event how do you budget for that.' 'Their aim was to minimize costs to ratepayers'. *Tell that Mark, to some who run off on crazy projects; remember the McKinlay Douglas report.*

Cr Phil Halse claimed 'history shows we used to do that but it was used for other purposes'. *Phil you have been there a long time and remember you were a "party" to all the things you now criticize.*

Cr Greg Martin wanted a right of reply. *To what? or did I miss something, didn't think you had spoken to it .* He went on to say 'we are on to it, Simon and I have had a meeting' ..... *psst we are not talking about Gomez Road Greg.*

The 2010 Triennial Elections Report Item No. 6. It's now 1021hrs and Cr Brian McLachlan shows his concern that on page 14 it states Mangakahia- Maungatapere only has 1 ratepayer in its ward. *That will keep Sharon busy.* He was also pleased that the cost of democracy \$4.46 +GST per elector, was very cheap.

Cr Merv Williams queried whether there will be a review.

CEO Mark Simpson replied 'Yes we did it before'.

Merv Williams believed that during the last election there was confusion with the conflicting systems, some being STV (single transferable vote) and others FPP (first past the post) we need to get some uniformity.

Mark confirmed the Health Board must be STV.

Merv commented perhaps is it better then to leave them confused.

Cr John Williamson queried was there a report of expenditure of candidate returns.

Democracy and Legal Services Manager, Jazz Singh replied that there were No abnormalities. *I think John wanted more details like 'who' had made donations to candidates, 'who' may have hidden behind trusts, 'who'd' spent their limits and why weren't the results made public. Is that spelling it out more clearly John?*

Merv Williams queried if they would be following up on the advice of the Electoral Officer.

Mark Simpson replied that they have no choice, it is a requirement.

Cr Kahu Sutherland questioned if there was discussion on Maori representation, how will it be received and would there be a separate election for Maori representation.

It was affirmed, if council goes down that path.

Cr Jeroen Jongejans suggested they consider a 4 year term.

Chair Cr Phil Halse claimed that was outside the agenda.

Mark Simpson informed it was a statute and for that to change there must be a change of statute.

It's now 1028hrs, Item No.7. Local Government Funding Agency.

Cr Brian McLachlan led the charge asking if 20% of the funding was by Government.

It was explained Government would put up \$5mill of the total \$25mil.

Alan Adcock, Group Manager Support Services confirmed it was supported by government; they had taken a financial position.

Mark Simpson claimed there would be savings to government of \$25million per year. *(They could spend that on a new bridge or tunnel for Auckland. It would only take 156 years to pay for the bridge or 212 years for a tunnel at that saving rate)*

Merv Williams claimed we had been paying over the top for money for a long time. He had been brought up in a Social Credit family *(gee Merv that brings back memories of names like Bruce Beetham, John Wright, Vernon Cracknell, Frank Langstone, Gary Knapp, Neil Morrison, Terry Heffernan, John O'brien, Wilfrid Owen, P.h. Matthews, and Roly Marks)* and interest rates should be no more than 3% not the present approx 5.7%. We need more efficient funding. *(Would be nice for borrowers but possibly not too great for investors)*

*There is always one, Warwick doesn't fail us by claiming 'It's absolutely a "No Brainer", (and would he know?) it means we would have to stump up with the money'. (Surely Warwick we could just borrow more, you're getting good at it)*

Cr John Williamson queries that we have put up \$100,000-00 to advance this scheme and is this opportunity available to anyone.

Alan Adcock explains that there are three tiers of membership and associated costs of being a member.

John Williamson further queries Dunedin's CEO is against the proposal.

Alan Adcock advises we have chosen to stand back at this time. Our debt level is too low to get real benefit from it. We have very convenient funding arrangements. To belong you have to meet certain criteria. We have never been a council to default on debt in our history.

Mark Simpson confirmed they will have discussions about it and it was a conservative requirement on local governments.

Cr Sue Glen suggested that with our debt between \$130m to \$150million could they borrow the whole lot to get out of the other banks and would it be a better deal.

*In his wisdom*, Alan Adcock suggested that they don't burn their bridges with other institutions.

Mark Simpson also suggested it would take some time to unwind all the different arrangements. *(Borrow from Peter to pay Paul, you know the story)*

John Williamson wanted to know what benefit was there being a shareholder.

Mr Adcock stated it didn't necessarily guarantee a seat at the table.

Cr Sharon Morgan queried if we were only 1 of 9 councils and was everyone invited.

Alan Adcock informed that Councils with the largest debt were asked to attend. *(So there you have it we are one with highest level of debt..... something to be really proud of?)*

The Formal part of the meeting concluded at 1042hrs with Paul ....., a building Inspector with the WDC outlining his most recent, of two visits to Christchurch helping inspect homes damaged by the latest earthquake. He had operated in suburbs of Avonside *(and I think)* Richmond. An interesting comment was the lightest of constructed houses had withstood damage better than those with brick cladding. He had been doing rapid assessments on homes allowing 10 minutes per home and averaging 70 inspections per day. Some very telling photos were on his power point presentation. In his opinion in the area he inspected there were only 2 houses that were ok. *(We are certainly privileged to have competent staff like Paul, who went to assist in Christchurch, working in our district. Keep up the good work it is appreciated by many.)* Pretty serious and scary stuff these earthquakes and we must ask ourselves how would we in Whangarei fare with an earthquake or tsunami of the same magnitude experienced recently in New Zealand and overseas? *I have my thoughts how about yours.*

There was now to be a public exclusion for the next 2 items on the agenda *and we thought Morris wanted open and transparent council. (It looks like more property transactions are in the muzzle and they don't want us, the owners, to know)*

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