

Whangarei District Council Environment meeting - 8th December 2010

The Environment meeting for 8th December started at 1100hrs with all Councillors present to discuss again this month, four items on the agenda.

The public gallery had swelled with many unhappy Whangarei residents filling the first two rows, holding yet to be revealed placards.

The minutes for the previous meeting were accepted with no discussion necessary. Under Chair Cr Shelley Deeming it was mentioned that some figures were inflated by a \$20m application in Item No 2 Environment Group Monthly Report, this raised by Environment Chair Cr ~~Paul Dell~~. Shelley has it pretty cruisey, as Paul loves to be at the helm and answers questions at every opportunity during the meeting. Do you think he may want to wear more hats next year?

Cr Sharon Morgan has concerns about the Alcohol Reform Bill and Cr Merv Williams feels the bill is watered down (good pun Merv), after he has read it, requiring by council, better definitions of a dairy or a grocery store. Paul Dell confirms that a workshop on 1st February may enlighten them more. Cr Crichton Christie queried whether there was a holdup with the lower harbour bridge. I missed the answer, so probably did others? Cr Jeroen Jongejans had a query on Plan Change 65 which is a rezoning at Ngunguru. Cr John Williamson commented about the amount of interest on the Northland Regional Council Regional Policy Statement and Paul Dell suggested the next stage will be interesting.

Food Premises Food grading 'Was C a fail'? Asked by Cr Sharon Morgan, to which Mr. Dell said 'No'. I know there are many complex issues involved with these ratings and we ourselves really like to eat at A's or B's. A thought for you....what goes in must come out.....it's just HOW. Cr Crichton Christie noted that over his many years on council he has seen a vast improvement in Food Premises grading. We believe vigilant compliance staff has ensured the standards available to our people have improved and they must be complimented on this service which overall makes for a healthy community. Cr Williamson had concerns on the skyscraper on page 24 re dog incidents. Paul Dell explained after dog registration time there are increases in incidents and peaks show for certain months but these even out over the year when averages give a better indication of the situation.

Item No 3 NZ Coastal Policy Statement was given a rundown by Group Manager Environment Paul Dell. Chair Shelley Deeming quoted it as a very descriptive document. Cr Jongejans again had issues regarding his patch in relation to Ngunguru Sandspit and Tutukaka high exposure to tsunamis. Mangroves in some areas are

problematic but ecologically are important is some areas for wild life and a balance must be found as they are part of the environment. Cr Christie had concerns on Coastal /countryside boundaries and Mr. Dell explained 'it must go out to the process of submission and believes our process to be robust'. Cr Williamson believed there were coastal hazard risks. Cr Phil Halse mentioned there were 5 plans above Council District Plans. The National Policy Statement had no consistency and by lobbying government may avoid it going to the Environmental Courts. There also needed to be consistency throughout the country.

Item 4 Hikurangi Motorsport and Outdoors Recreation Park was obviously why the gallery had placard wielding residents waiting to view the following. It appears Cr Greg Martin is in the hot set. (This project was mentioned at a Hikurangi Election meeting on 16th September 2010, when it was raised by a resident, with a comment made by someone obviously in the know, "That's let the cat out of the bag" Cr Martin then spoke briefly of the project in question) Cr Martin led the charge saying he was happy this document had come forward now and the community can have its say, claiming he would be available to discuss it with them. I have to ask why did he not discuss it with these locals, did he feel it may have an effect, while campaigning up to the Election? You probably already know this answer. An upset member from the group tried to make a comment but was promptly shut down, which is normal at WDC.

But here comes the cavalry

Cr Merv Williams suggested 'the word possible should be inserted before preparation of a plan change'.

Cr Warwick Syers said 'the Plan change was a discussion document'.

Cr Crichton Christie claimed 'this gave clarification of the process that council was starting the process and till now did not have permission to talk to people'

The ratepayer who was earlier prevented from speaking yelled "You have already talked to the Sports Clubs'. Again he was hushed.

Cr Williams claimed 'he was aware of the project as he had been on field trips to look at sites for their activities. It is obvious your side needs representing in this and there has been none to date. It was an involved process and he wanted to proceed with it'

The ratepayer again called 'there's 29 lifestyle blocks' until again stifled with silence.

Cr Sue Glen, to the rescue, addressing the group advising 'that the GOMEZ group hadn't come to council asking for noisy activities. Told to address the chair, Sue continued in her ever soothing manner,' that she too would come to council with placards if placed in that position'. 'Rest assured' she said (I always have fears with that statement) and went on 'to spell out the next steps on page 68 of the agenda relating to the bullet points. Bullet point 1- The investigation stage, Bullet point 2 - Consultation and Bullet point 3 - Reporting back to the community' She 'wished to reassure the people from GOMEZ and suggested they attend the meetings, keep their hand on the pulse at

every opportunity, they will be effective if they stand strong, they need to be consulted with and to watch out for the dates’.

Good advice Sue, but wouldn't it have been common courtesy to have spoken to the, soon to be affected residents, rather than leave it to now after spending ratepayers money on “Beca Carter” reports, at what price? It was mentioned in yesterdays Northern Advocate 7 December and carefully hidden in the sports section. Many do not receive newspapers. I reiterate, the ward councilors campaigning recently should have had the decency to discuss this issue earlier than now, or is this the accepted culture of council? They shouldn't have to watch out for the dates, as interested parties they should be informed; I believe that is councils duty.

Under the control of Paul Dell he confirmed ‘that this is stage 1, they hadn't talked to the community but there were early things they had to test and this today was only approving the 1st stage’

Cr Sue Glen queried ‘if all people in Gomez Road and the surrounding area would get a letter/’

Paul Dell replied ‘People will be given the opportunity’

Cr John Williamson had a query ‘Will the plan change be independent?’

It was confirmed that it would be.

The recommendation as tabled in the agenda was passed unanimously.

The meeting concluded at 1143hrs and councilors promptly started discussion at the rear of the chamber with the residents from Gomez Road, distraught at how council had failed to communicate with them as stakeholders in this issue but only 2 & 3 days after the election had met with interested groups to discuss this project but had FAILED to even notify them of the process presently happening.

Speaking to this group I believe that have the sheer determination to stop this project because of the effects they believe it will have on their chosen living environment. This group consisted of 13, who were able to attend.

Interesting number, perhaps Lucky for Some?

Again the mayor, made no comments during the meeting, but when questioned by one of the residents after the meeting about the report and how much it had cost, he replied “What report?” So there you have it, a captain completely in control of his ship. The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. I know what the hands are doing.

Footnote. It was mentioned to the group by Cr Martin that a copy of the report was available at the Hikurangi council service centre. I ask How many go and ask for something they don't know anything about?

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)