

Whangarei District Council Environment meeting - 9th February 2011

The Environment meeting for 9th February started at 1030hrs with Chair Cr Shelley Deeming welcoming all those present and apologies received from Mayor Morris Cutforth, Cr Sue Glen and Cr Aaron Edwards.

Item No 1 - The minutes for the previous meeting were accepted with no discussion necessary.

The Environment Group Monthly Report, Item No 2 and again it was Environment Group Manager Paul Dell who had plenty to say. *(Watch out Shelley he may be after some ones job)* A brief mention was made of the Resource Consents department. He was pleased to announce that 2 personnel from Policy monitoring had been to a conference. The Regulatory Department had a fairly good Christmas with only a small number of vehicles on beaches problems. Some instances of food poisoning and infectious diseases had been reported with the busier times over holidays. He was pleased that there was now consistency with fee structures.

Cr John Williamson and Cr Merv Williams both conveyed that the reports were very good and a small query from Merv in regards to minor consents was addressed.

Paul Dell mentioned that a run of 100% results had incurred a small blip.

Cr Williamson queried a Plan Change, but was assured it was under Land Transport, that issues relating to State Highway 14 and their requirements had been slow. Mr Dell felt that complaints over the recent holiday period may have been caused by heat. *(I thought it may have been because more people are filling our district and more numbers = more complaints. How would I know its Paul that has all the degrees. Degrees measure heat.)*

Cr *(silent phone)* Crichton Christie had concerns over signage issues but was assured by Mr Dell that 99% of the complaints were coming from businesses and public *(was this suggesting people were not targeted. Tell some and try to convince those who have had signage issues in the past)* Complainants believed that if they 'play by the rules' so should others.

Cr Brian McLachlan asked if signage needed a review but Paul Dell claimed it was clear in the District Plan and reviewed about every ten years and signage was not an old bylaw. Policy and Monitoring Manager Paul Waanders confirmed a review was conducted approximately 3 years ago.

Cr Sharon Morgan had concerns about Dog complaints on beaches and how it was patrolled. Mr Dell claimed they had targeted the problem areas with Mr Gerry Brackenbury as there was not a large resource network for this. Unfortunately visitors

were not always aware of the laws and we must educate first, then fine repeat offenders.

Cr Merv Williams (*who obviously reads the agendas*) picked up a 'typo error' in the recommendations of this item.

In the same item it was noted that Cr Sharon Morgan was named as a commissioner, and Phil-In Halse was ready to congratulate her but Sharon confirmed she was not quite there yet. Phil had beat the gun, but we must appreciate the effort Sharon has put in to reach the higher standards required to fulfill the position and she thanked council for allowing her to go on the course.

It was now only 1049hrs and onto Item No 3, Review of Environmental Group User Charges. It was explained that there was criteria set down by the Office of the Auditor General in reviewing the fees. Mr Dell explained that the difference between Private and Public benefit was very important in making cost assessments.

A couple of 'typo errors' in Table 2 corrected and it was then Cr Williamson querying out of hours fees in relation to Dog issues.

Paul Dell confirmed the contract arrangement had in it that the contractors responded when the issue happened and needed action.

Merv Williams wasn't sure about 'Service Dogs' thinking they may be 'Studs'. It was assumed they were Police Dogs. (*I would have thought that Police dogs, Hearing & Blind assist dogs, Drug dogs and Defence service dogs etc. were in that category*)

Cr Merv Williams was also pleased to see that Gambling Act and Racing Act application fees were to rise and perhaps prevent frivolous applications.

Signage again came under the spotlight when the Seizure of Property fees were mentioned. Mr Dell assured it was the major signs that were the issue, not the smaller ones. People would be asked to remove offending signs before incurring costs.

Community signs for temporary events will be treated on each ones merits.

Merv Williams said they needed to be sure about what was going to be policed. (*think he was worried about election signs.*) Mr Dell expressed it was commercial signs that were the issue and the location of signs causing visibility problems and accidents. Merv felt a memo with clarification needed to be issued. Paul Dell confirmed Election signs had special dispensation and they worked with parties throughout the election. (*Cr Christies signs were highly mobile and just a step ahead of Mr Dells enforcement team*)

The chair, Shelley Deeming spoke by commenting that they "needed not to be Draconian but be fair and reasonable". (*Just remember that statement Shelley.*)

Certainly hope she doesn't give out the complainants details to the offender, Do we?

Cr Sutherland had concerns about Ruakaka signs that could be viewed, but outside the corridor. Paul Dell assured that New Zealand Transport Authority who governs highways, they, WDC, would have their support on bylaw infringements.

Cr Sutherland wanted confirmation that if signs were traffic hazards they would be removed and this was duly assured if they were a distraction they would be.

Cr Christie, tongue in cheek, threw the comment of “there are hundreds of signs between Whangarei and Auckland and felt they could also be a distraction.”

Cr Sharon Morgan had concerns regarding a rather large price jump on one of the Resource Management fees. *(Remember Sharon ‘The Debt’ is getting bigger and we must get the funds from somewhere. By the way hasn’t Warwick been quite this morning. Better check he’s breathing as I haven’t heard a word out of him. Must have Morris’s sore throat)*

The silence is broken at 1100hrs as Cr John Williamson’s phone breaks into full song to signify the start of Item No 4 - Plan Change 56 Withdrawal - Indigenous Pohutukawa in the Coastal Environment which produces no discussion.

Item No 5 - Plan Change 104 at Springs Flat also is over before it began with no discussion, just moved, seconded and received.

Plan Change 93 - Urban Transition Environment Commissioners Recommendation, Item No 6 must have some sting in its tail as there is some debate on this. Environment Group Manager Paul Dell commenced by stating it was about Risk Management, trying to avoid any legal issues.

Cr John Williamson *(finally having his cell phone under control after his wake up call and reminder)* believed the principle was for submitters who were outside the designated area not being able to pursue the issues in the Plan Change. Paul Dell clarified that some had submitted and some hadn’t so it was best to ‘re notify’ Cr Williamson queried if those outside the area would have status. Paul replied anyone could submit and it was for the Commissioners to determine the boundaries.

Merv Williams understood the submission process was being reopened, some had previously been discouraged from making submissions, there was no limit of status and opening up could be a whole new ball game. If you read the legal opinions you could see how involved it is.

Cr Phil Halse was ‘miffed’ that there were about 4 legal opinions on this issue. If you followed a planned process it should be clear and not have 4 opinions.

Paul Dell felt it was about interpretation of the law, it may still go to the Environment Court to debate, but by dealing with law we have no control about what people can do.

John Williamson claimed even the Environment Court judges can come up with different results.

Cr Martin *(having gained his breath after his earlier meeting)* felt it was just a “gravy train”

Cr Merv Williams (himself a Commissioner, who would possibly know) said to stop it being a gravy train, so that’s why they wanted to start it again.

Paul dell stepped in and thanked Cr Merv Williams for not going into any more detail.
(Obviously a touchy subject and could be worth watching by those that may be effected)

The meeting concluded at 1111hrs with Cr Deeming thanking all for attending and requesting all councilors to stay as the Operations Officer had something to say. We vacated the chamber patiently waiting for the next installment of.....

[LINK to appropriate Agenda](#)