

Oral Presentation - WDC 2012-2022 Long Term Plan. W & P Slater

Mr Mayor, Councillors, Staff and Public, thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am not going to go over all of the points of our statements; but I have some relevant things to add to it.

Whangarei - It's Time to Move Forward Summary -

It was interesting to note that only 'Councils Important Priorities' were listed on the summary, failing to list important items such as Hikurangi Swamp, Gomez Road Noisy Sports Park, Footpaths, No third Hockey turf, Clean healthy harbour, debt, OIA's, parking, signage, to name just a few.

These issues are of the utmost importance to many and perhaps should have been included. Coincidentally these people they affect are the ones that also pay the bills.

Remember 'Council Owns Nothing'. Often properties, projects, money, roads etc are referred to, as Councils.

This is far from correct it is the ratepayers that own it and so it is of importance that you genuinely listen to them.

We understand it's the 'Sense of Place' items that spin your cogs and not the basic infrastructure you are entrusted to undertake.

With 3537 submissions there will perhaps be many messages from those that pay wages and honourariums; so please give them the respect they deserve for their comments as most pay over \$1400 pa for this privilege.

Hundertwasser – This project is not a priority when we have high levels of debt and *are* yet to have it proven that sewage will not keep closing our most precious harbour. There has been a theme of predetermination from the beginning and frankly this submission process seems a crock..... This is just another example of projects being pushed in what appears to be staff initiated, not elected or ratepayer initiated. Is this another resume building exercise? We can't afford it, let those with ambitious ideas pay for it by purchasing the building as other leaseholders are expected to do, build it, run it and stand by any debt incurred. Where's the queue now? There may well be other projects that may encompass a larger section of the arts groups.

Gomez Road Noisy Motorsports Park - This project has some fatal flaws. Has it been concocted by some who appear hell bent in making their personal resumes look good?; Like a bus terminal without buses, a bridge that's too big to lift, a bus stop without shelter, a covered over bridge with no wind shelter. The list goes on.

I have personally attended some of these meetings and the way residents have been treated is nothing short of disgusting. A responsible organization would have taken

some disciplinary action in regard to such behavior. This project has not taken into account the quality of lifestyle, or a sense of place, that it will destroy.

There must be some underlying reasons why any reasonable person would want to create so much despair for these people. Put it in your back yard and see how you would like it. There was a councilor that tossed his toys out of the cot when the Targa Rally was going past his place, on one day, yet you expect these people to accept a Noisy Sports Park with little limitations. At present where the different codes are located is spreading the issues around the whole district, rather than being focused in one area and disturbing those that reside in a clean green environment. A southern spot would be more accessible for out of town competitors.

Hikurangi Swamp Scheme – We support an investigation and improved management of this scheme. All on the Hikurangi Swamp should be embraced and included to work together towards a solution; there should be no exclusions.

There needs to be a professional approach to ensure this viable productive area has safeguards in place to enable it to produce to its full capabilities all the time.

Footpaths – It is common knowledge that Whangarei has \$50million worth of foot path repairs due for remedial work. Only \$1 million is budgeted for per year, which equals 50 years of work waiting to be done.

I asked a question about footpaths in my statement; does anyone have the answer?

Question was - Can anyone use the same crystal ball that was used on the future fortunes for the Hundertwasser Art Centre, to estimate how many dollars of footpath repairs will be required in 2062?

Debt – In my opinion debt is soaring out of control with council being irresponsible and negligent allowing debt to climb to its current level. Surely a smart council would be focused on reducing debt and shelve away the 'wish lists' and focus on the needs, not the wants. There has been a total disregard for the current financial crisis the world has been experiencing by allowing our debt to raise. Council will use the recent Standard and Poors rating as support for their financial situation. Personally I only ever insure or invest with those institutions with AAA ratings. Remember we still have debt.

Extract from Newstalk ZB 11th April 2012 made by Honourable Bill English, Deputy Leader of National, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance “The best protection for our parents and kids who deserve support is sound public finances and these days sound public finances means getting back to surplus and getting the debt down”. So who knows best?

We have never professed to have all the answers but, but the banks sure love you as you are making them prosper at the expense of the ratepayers.

OIA – The process of obtaining information through the Official Information Act although legal is often flouted by council. We know of instances where information is withheld, or incorrectly given. It's a bit like pulling teeth, a slow and drawn out process this council partakes in extremely well, to the limits. We can access information from other councils without the need of an OIA. Recent example; Hard copies of the submissions were to cost \$600-00 from WDC while also being treated as an OIA. Hard copies of the submissions from NRC were supplied at N/C. Don't tell me you have concerns about the number of trees you chop down; Mander Park proved that theory wrong.

Culture of Council – Does it come from the top and trickle down? There have been a number of instances where members of the public have been treated poorly and rudely. Sadly this has been at the upper level of management. (More than happy to give details if required) This must be the 'accepted' culture from those higher in the ranks or appropriate action would have been taken. This is an ever ongoing issue so I ask, is a change at the top needed? On the other hand the majority of staff at middle management and also those at the coal face are in the majority, of a very good calibre.

Parking Meters - The parking meters in much of the town have issues. People get frustrated having to go from meter to meter to find one that operates efficiently. Many people don't really have an issue paying for a service, but don't like being messed about. The number of the machines that have malfunction issues is too high. Technology now allows for payments from cell phones or plastic cards. Either fix them or maybe a councilor may have some ideas about how to have tickets cancelled?

Mander Park – It is an absolute disgrace the way that this issue has been handled. It is not imperative to have a free left turn lane exiting Central Avenue; traffic counts prove that. Council needs a policy to protect heritage and land mark trees; and then adhere to it. Again, the way some in our society have been treated during this issue and the way they have been spoken to is unacceptable. Comments on record from senior elected are why people have lost respect in a number of issues and now fail to stand at meetings. Respect doesn't just come with a title. 'Respect is earned'.

Blue Goose - More information should be forthcoming about the intentions of the future of the area known as the Blue Goose.

Signage - There have been a number of instances in this town where some business operators have been treated very different than others so it is time that all were treated equally and personal attacks made on some, were to cease.

Disability Sector – There needs to be more attention paid to the catering of for the

disability sector. 25% of our population has some form of disabilities. It is pleasing that more disabled parking has been recently introduced. We understand that one council building fails to have soap and drying facilities in the disabled toilet area. This is an area where more attention to detail is paramount when catering for equipment necessary in these service areas for this sector of the community.

Library – I wish to compliment the WDC in maintaining the community library to its high standard. Keeping up with technology in this area is of the utmost importance and WDC has done well in this area. This provides education on many levels as well as recreational elements.

Finally:-

It is pleasing to see that council is about to allow youth to take active interest in local body needs; good youth are our future, hence we need a youth friendly district. There is a saying “when kids are happy, parents are happy”; and parents are the ones that determine the future of council’s participants.

A ‘dog friendly’ town could also be a big plus; making Whangarei, an even better place to live in especially for many that rely on their pets as their companions. Penalise the irresponsible ones, not the majority who are responsible dog owners.

I will hand over for Pat to have a few words before I close.

Pat Spoke Here

Having now realised we had two time slots, I have written a few notes.

*Re **Hundertwasser** and other big dollar spends; I have concerns about debt.*

Hundertwasser may not bring the money we need. I wonder if the reason why the people of Kawakawa have Hudertwasser is they knew people needed free toilets to stop at. The Hundertwasser Arts Centre will cost much in maintenance. Some have compared Hundertwasser Arts Centre to other worldwide projects like Sydney Opera House. Australians have higher incomes, a better economic situation; that is why people move there. We hear it all the time; we do not have the incomes and population of Sydney to share the burden.

The arts people may want alternatives; we have in fact heard this. Their performances stop any blandness of our district. These performances change, they are not static. There are things that small groups in our district can do with support of council. Low cost events that can fulfil us and entertain visitors. To have cafes provided by council at the

Town Basin, I feel is a slap in the face to your tenants already there in the form of eateries.

People talk of people going to the Bay of Islands; when I think of attractions there, it is about natural environment, culture, fishing competitions and the like.

Sense of Place. *The 'Love it Here' campaign was great; build on it. It involves the people. Their photos, I note are about the people, the beaches, bush, not buildings.*

I will share with you another sense of place I had this week; in a queue at an ATM, an elderly couple ahead of me were withdrawing money. The man asked the lady "why there was only about \$3-00 odd in the account". The lady said "I thought there was more, I believed there was at least \$20-00". It may be sobering to hear about such matters, but it is more sobering to live it. We need to recognise this is the level for some people.

I note a real increase in submission numbers. Great, I hope this is built on by work shopping with the people. Encouragement to do so, I believe, will work. It is often said people are not interested. I've experienced this too, however if encouraged good positive relationships can develop. Many find submission processes too hard; do we need other methods? Negative comments can be used to take an opportunity and turn it into something positive. Submission time is a time to express concerns or share problems. I have noticed a better response to people this year; it is appreciated. The only thing I would say is, could you not offer our people a cuppa? especially our elderly, on a wet cold day. Even a free vending machine in the lounge entrance would do. A small but hospitable gesture to those that pay the bills.

Point of Difference, *gets spoken about. Let our point of difference be being known as a place where we do things differently. Let the smaller exciting activities our people do be what people from the outside enjoy. Support what the people want to do, are already doing; that is what they want. Bring facilities we already have up to scratch, pretty up our area in general. Be Clean, green, tidy and safe.*

Make our harbour the focus. Encourage business around it; fish markets, seafood eateries. Encourage local performances; just look at the response the busker's day gets. Council supports these; keep doing it as it's about people.

The Whangarei Falls was an area that benefited from citizens instigating a means of providing security during the Rugby World Cup. Have a shop or information centre on a small site there etc; and copy this in our other areas of interest. I am sure there would be people willing to provide a service to create a reputation as a beautiful and safe environment.

I'll finish by saying, we are, including yourselves, here because we want to be and all care.

Thank you.

Back now to Warren

We would like to thank the Whangarei District Council staff for the work that they have put into this process. We acknowledge this is an immense task.

I make no excuse for being hard hitting with our statements, but I believe people who genuinely care would like such honest feedback. If that type of feedback was given to me; I would take it on the chin as this type of feedback gives a darn good starting point of where one's community is at and what they want for their district. In our and other peoples opinion there is no room for arrogance any longer in this arena; its honesty, transparency and inclusiveness that people want. I ask that you take it in the vein it was given; with passion and love for the place we have chosen to live in. We were not born here; but chose to live here

Thank you again.

We are happy to answer any questions.

Warren & Pat Slater

16th May 2012