

# Council war of words as deputy takes over

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by Mike Dinsdale

Deposed Whangarei Mayor Stan Semenovoff vowed to go quietly when unseated last month, but his deputy hasn't, accusing his successor of not telling the truth in a council meeting.

Whangarei District Councillor Phil Halse has become the district's deputy mayor but his swearing-in was marked by an accusation by his predecessor, Kahu Sutherland.

Cr Halse is in his seventh term

as a Bream Bay Ward councillor since 1993 and was nominated for the role by Mayor Morris Cufforth.

But Cr Sutherland, appointed Mr Semenovoff's deputy last term, did not appear as happy with the appointment.

"I congratulate Phil Halse on the decision but I do so with a bit of caution," he said.

Cr Sutherland said that during the 2003-07 council, headed by Mayor Pamela Peters, Cr Halse, who was then deputy mayor, made a commitment to a

developer (Neil Group) to give it a prized piece of the district's heritage.

He was referring to a plan by Neil Group for a \$50 million redevelopment of the CBD and linking to the Town Basin. The group is believed to have wanted a bit of land at the Town Basin for the link.

"... If commitments are going to be made, they should be made through the council, not the individuals involved," Cr Sutherland said.

Cr Halse said the council did not make any commitment to sell the land unless it went to the full council for consideration.

"I heard that, but it's not true," Cr Sutherland said.