

Councillor stands for chamber rules

By Denise Piper

A furore over standing for Whangarei's mayor has caused some residents to take a stand.

When mayor Stan Semenoff was re-elected in October 2007, he reinstated the tradition of standing at the start of each full council meeting for the entrance of the mayor in

official robes.

He also reinstated a Christian prayer at the start of each full council meeting, to be said by a councillor.

But a handful of residents who attend the public meetings have not been standing for his worship.

At the meeting on Wednesday, councillor Warwick Syers said the ac-

tion of not standing was an insult to the office of the mayor.

"I'm appalled and disgusted at some disrespectful behaviour in this chamber," he said.

"To choose not to stand is a snub to the mayor, not to the person, but a snub to the office," he continued.

"If people choose to enjoy the hospitality of this

chamber, they should abide by the rules."

Mr Syers suggested if people did not want to stand for the mayor they should join the meeting after the prayer.

But members of Integrity Action Whangarei, who attend and blog on each meeting with the aim of increasing accountability and openness, say respect

has to be earned.

Wayne Deeming says Mr Semenoff has been disrespectful to the group.

Last year, in response to a request for public forum at council meetings, Mr Semenoff wrote a letter saying the council would not want to waste ratepayers' money listening to "innate abject whingers, inveterate anti-everything whiners,

idle asinine wafflers, inane arrant wasters and insipid aimless windbags".

Mr Deeming says if Mr Semenoff wants to apologise, he will consider being respectful.

Mr Semenoff agreed with Mr Syers that the standing was not about him personally but about the position.

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