

# **BOARD MEMBER QUARTERLY REPORT**

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**7<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

The Local Board Plan has been the big theme for the last quarter with the Board trying to meet with every community group and as many community members as are willing, and to pull this into a cohesive document to guide us for the next three years. We've had visits from Governing Body members Cathy Casey, Mike Lee, Bill Cashmore and Mayor Phil Goff, all helpful and appreciated. We've received our Dark Sky Sanctuary status, completed a new branding exercise, started a visitor strategy and a sustainability & renewable energy strategy, and agreed most of the budget spend for the new financial year. Busy as usual. I have attended all meetings and workshops and will report here on events specific to my portfolios.

**Environment Groups Hui 5th July** at the Department of Conservation (DoC) office in Okiwi. A gathering of people all doing various environmental work out there to share their experiences and collate information. Themes were mainly around the types of trapping and baits used for rodents, and the monitoring results. It was a good platform for DoC (Louise) and Council (Shanti) to share details of their work programmes, and for Paul McArthur to meet some of the local conservation volunteers. It was reported that Rakitu will definitely be rodent-eradicated this 17/18 financial year, in autumn.

**Local Government New Zealand Conference (LGNZ): 23 to 25 July "Creating Pathways to 2050"** Auckland City Sky Tower. I attended this conference for the first time to try to better understand the relationship between local and central government. Most city, district and regional councils were represented as well as many sector groups. It seems the relationship is not great and so the pitch to improve this was thrown to the various political party politicians standing for election this year and speaking at this conference. LGNZ has a manifesto titled "We need stronger local democracy" and says "the future of our communities cannot be left to central government alone, we need to empower and unleash the potential of our local communities to ensure a successful future for all NZers".

Another significant theme was climate change with a position statement that includes "LG will factor in the impacts of climate change on water security.....will incorporate emissions reduction targets into investment decisions that it makes on transport, fleet procurement and waste management....seeks to work with central government to develop a joint response to climate change including a clear pathway to a low carbon economy". There is much more, obviously, on planning decisions and on growth, development, and land use.

A presentation from Future and Global Strategist, Holly Ransom, was a highlight. Holly told us that 50% of the global population is under 17 years but NZ and Australia are in an aging population situation, joblessness is the greatest "people" issue, 20-25% of NZers are under-employed, and that digital bandwidth & capability is the next big issue...prepare for digital inequality (access). She said neuroscientists say we will start to lose "empathy" due to our digital emotional responses being so short-term. There was stuff about change being constant and the velocity of it only intensifying e.g. it took 75 years for telephones to reach 50 million consumers and now it takes about 13 days for a new digital tool to reach that milestone. We will also have bio-tech food mainstreaming within 5 years (cell technology growing food in labs without animals e.g. meat, eggs, milk, fish) and this will be wonderful because it will be cheap, won't get *E-coli* or salmonella, and no animals will die.

**Environmental Defense Society Conference: "Tipping Points" 9 to 10 August** Due to continuing cumulative degradation of terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats this conference considered the tipping points along the way. The most irreversible one is species extinction and much of our indigenous biodiversity is facing this now. We heard recently that

crayfish in the Hauraki Gulf are now “functionally extinct” which means (I think) that while they are there they no longer fill their role in the eco-system and we know one of the consequences is kina barrens where kina are prolific but kelp is gone and so habitat generally is lost. And so it goes. As Raewyn Peart says “there are also societal and governance tipping points, moments in history when public sentiment can spill over into activism and outrage, which in turn drives political change. Freshwater is a case in point..”. We were told that while we currently focus on throwing money at the species on the brink of extinction there is a tsunami of other species, eco-systems even, all heading toward the same cliff (I probably mean shore). There were several scientific presentations on analyzing/predicting tipping points but they are very difficult to define due to the complexity of habitats, ecosystems, and pressures.

In the session “The future of farming” we heard from another futurist, Dr Rosie Bosworth, about “Disruptive Food Technology” i.e. about the impact of digital technologies, science and biotech on the future of food and agriculture, particularly the field of Food 2.0 (food without the farm and animal). Further speakers in this session acknowledged the change coming to the primary sector from this technology and about the ways they need to get more “high value” from raw product i.e. add value in NZ before exporting so that \$250b becomes more like the \$1trillion that our products are worth by the time the tickets have all been clipped overseas. This means meat, dairy, fish, forestry etc.

The session “ Freshwater Habitat Loss” showed the wonder of the ancient ecosystems that are our freshwater streams and rivers. We have over 400 endemic taxa in them (!!) yet we still tip our effluent and garbage down there, and think we can redirect/pipe them without consequence. We saw cost/benefit analyses of riparian planting and fencing and guess what ? it is fiscally worth it to the nation. Well then... We heard about iwi aspirations for freshwater reform; Te Mana o te Wai has come from the chairs forum and is an all-encompassing, “universal concept developed as a critical component in redesigning NZ’s water allocation framework. It ensures that the first right to the water goes to the water...”. There was also a heads-up about a new “electronic nitrate sensor system” developed by Digital Sensing Ltd, which will enable kaitiaki and authorities to locate point source discharges to our waterways. This device remains in the stream sending real time alerts.

The session “The Future of Fishing” was led by a presentation from Volker Kuntsch, CEO Sanford, entitled “Looking into the future”. Volker said that “The consumer in 2030 wants to do the right thing...” and wants to know “What exactly am I consuming...ingredients, supplier/manufacturer, impact on environment, ethical values? ...more people are putting value in sustainable choices..”. Volker said that fishing is here to stay, that it’s a challenging environment (ocean warming, acidification, plastic pollution, MPAs, ecosystem-based management, 3-D printing..), and that he is very aware of the new “fin-free fish” biotech food threat. He said that, due to climate change, the greatest percentage of global growth in the sector will take place in the arctic region and that there will be significant developments in fishing technology from things like autonomous submarine devices that can select specific fish (no by-catch, but able to go where nets/lines cannot??). Volker was pleased to meet another speaker, Kim Drummond from Our Fishing Future - an incorporated society that promotes responsible management of recreational fisheries and envisages the sector stepping up to deliver on stewardship expectations. Volker muttered something about how he thought there was only Legasea out there in the recreational space, and that in time the inshore fishery will be entirely for recreational use. A map showing the GPS marks for commercial boats around the edges of our EEZ over a 3 month period highlighted the intensity and scale of fishing out there, and Volker said NZ urgently needs decipherable marine resource legislation.

A final session, "Pitch a Policy" was interesting...how about "ban whitebaiting", "run an environmental rule over all government decisions just like we run a treasury rule over everything before it is signed off", "no more off-shore drilling/mining".... Anyway, this was an intense and very informative conference and I want to thank Council for supporting my attendance in my role as environment portfolio lead.

**Aotea Conservation Park Advisory Committee Meeting** 14 August, DoC office Okiwi. I attended this meeting only as an observer and at their invitation. Unfortunately, there was no quorum so we held an informal meeting only.

### **PORTFOLIOS:**

**Community Facilities/PSR** – the projects from 16/17 continue to drag to their completion. They are all great projects but just have loose ends to tie off, incredibly slowly.... No new 17/18 projects have been agreed yet and will likely come out of the LIPs budget as usual.

### **Environment:**

- 1) The Heritage Plan: a good meeting with Megan Walker (Council specialist), David Watson, and Tony Christiansen and June Brookes from the History Research Group on 27<sup>th</sup> July. These locals helped immensely, their local historic knowledge adding real value. Megan and Tony will work to protect the old council records currently in the city library basement, our stone arch culverts will be recorded etc.
- 2) Biosecurity/biodiversity meetings have resumed monthly.. Shanti is working on our Jewels booklet and we have agreed that connecting the Dark Sky Sanctuary to our nocturnal species in this production is a good idea. Apparently, about 60% of our indigenous biodiversity is nocturnal; think Morepork, Pateke, Black Petrels, penguins, Puriri moths, bats, geckos, glow worms.... Shanti wants us to consider a local publicity campaign to improve kauri dieback awareness and action, and she will talk with pig hunters about their responsibilities too. We discussed opportunities from the Ecology Vision around potential oases and Shanti suggested working with the Golf Club to enhance the biodiversity values there. We finalized board feedback to the RPMP.
- 3) Water Quality Tryphena reports are in from 2016/17.
- 4) Marine budget : The board is considering working to deliver recommendations from the SeaChange project where we can and while we wait for agency responses. The plan says all streams, rivers and harbours need to be looked after with riparian planting, stream quality monitoring for nutrients and pathogens and so continuing our catchment-based water quality programme in another area fits that recommendation easily e.g. we could do Port FitzRoy and include understanding the effect of boat effluent during summer. We could also consider the plan's aspirations for marine hubs of excellence around the region focusing on research, education and interpretation.

Cheers,

Sue