

# **Council**

**Wednesday, 29 October 2008  
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

## **REPORT OF THE MAYOR**



**Ross Bethell 1.10.1955 - 7.10.2008**

**This city acknowledges the passing of  
Ross Bethell in his 54<sup>th</sup> year**

**The Mighty Kauri has Fallen  
Ko hinga te kauri**

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO  
BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT WAITAKERE CENTRAL,  
6 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON, WAITAKERE,  
ON WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2008,  
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

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**6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR**

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

**Receive** the Report of the Mayor.

The sudden death of Ross Bethell on 7 October 2008 while working on his tractor was a sad and tragic event for, not only his family, but also for the Bethells community. Ross was never an easy man to get along with; he was staunch, courageous and as difficult as he may have been, I always believed that he had enormous integrity. I considered him to be a man of commitment to his land and to the Bethells heritage. I was stunned and deeply saddened by his passing. He always appeared to me to be in great health and our relationship went back almost 30 years through the surf lifesaving fraternity of the West Coast; for Ross was not only the patriarch of the Bethells family, he was also a great surf lifesaver who undertook many after hours rescues; an extraordinary swimmer and life guard. He was renowned for his ability in big surf in the Inflatable Rescue Boat and he was a key member of the local volunteer fire brigade.

The Bethells property is huge and it is historically important to this city and the Auckland region. It is a glorious coastal estate and it has been maintained by the Bethells family for over a hundred years. On it are 3 important lakes, Wainamu, Kawaupaku, and Waiotaru which is commonly known as the shag lake but holds a tapu due to its proximity to old Maori burial sites. The family have holiday cottages and homes on the land. Ross, and before him his father John, had serious issues with the various councils of the day. The battles with the council and the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society have gained a somewhat legendary status which is unfair because these differences of opinion between the family and the councils from the Waitemata Riding to the City of Waitakere have been sad testimony to the lack of an understanding of the role of historic landowners and what family ownership is about. That these clashes went on for so long without resolve is no credit to me; when I stood for mayor one of my reasons was to resolve this ongoing stressful and I thought sad affair. I understood the history of this piece of land and I knew much of it. It was Pa Bethell (John Neil Bethell) who bought the coastal property of 1625 acres from the lawyer, Defaur, who had acquired it from the Te Kawerau a Maki iwi. Bethell had come to Te Henga from Anawhata via Whatipu, Huia and Karekare. He knew the land like the proverbial back of his hand. The family struck up a working and respectful relationship with the local Maori and that has remained intact to this day. Indeed our own Rewi Spraggon was honoured and humbled to carve the lid of Ross's coffin for burial.

The family developed a boarding house which by 1912 became a set of cottages around a large dining room and farmhouse kitchen. Bethells, as the beach and the surrounds were known, became an extremely popular destination and when John died in 1943 he was honoured by the Te Kawerau a Maki with a traditional tangi.

John Bethell, Ross's father, assumed the mantle of the land, and although the family had then grown through marriage, it was the lineage of John Bethell who were charged by family members with negotiating the future.



It was a very difficult and trying period. There were endless and protracted difficulties with the Waitemata District Council and later Waitemata City. There were two sides to the story but I always thought that the council took a very high handed approach which alienated the family and created a dreadful ongoing rift between the Bethell family and officialdom.

Surfers, day trampers and strollers also discovered the wild pleasures of Bethells and O'Neills Beach and when the Bethells road was sealed in 1982, the crowds found a new west coast destination. This put pressure on the Bethell family. Today all the land bought by John Bethell in 1894, with the exception of the subdivision at the north end known as Te Henga Park and two small blocks which were inherited and sold off by a fourth generation Bethell, remains in the hands of the extended family. Rating and care of the land which brings in no financial return has been a very difficult and complex issue and here I am talking of a coast rich in seafood, and land that could be used for farming, filming and of course timber. All of these options have been considered, some taken up and others discarded. All have caused some long and very painful experiences which have never been cheap for the Bethell family. With the passing of John Bethell, Ross became the advocate, the champion of the land and its future. Mark Dacombe, the first Chief Executive Officer of Waitakere City said to me on my election as mayor: *"These people (meaning the Bethell family) need to see justice."*

I want to make it clear that I had very mixed feelings dealing with the emotions of a negotiated settlement. I respected Ross enormously and I think the respect was mutual. And although the officials would deal with lawyers and with the process, I needed to feel comfortable with where the settlement with this first family of our city would finally go.

At this stage I would like to acknowledge with gratitude and huge respect the support and strength of Graeme Campbell, his staff, Heather Ash, and Councillor Penny Hulse. A settlement was finally agreed upon and I would like to acknowledge the council who supported that and for the first time in 60 years a huge weight was lifted from the Bethell family.

The tragedy of all of the last few weeks following the death of Ross is that even though he died knowing that the honour of the family had emerged intact and indeed stronger, his health was not to allow him to see the fruits of his endeavours. I am greatly saddened by this. He of course appeared in robust health and so on a very dark wet night when he did not return from installing a water tank, a search party found him unconscious. Ross had suffered a heart attack soon after 6.00 pm. His tangi, held on Monday, 13 October 2008 was one of the largest funerals that this city has ever seen, held on the pa site of Taratuwhenua, a very significant and special site above Te Henga at the home of Trudi and John Pace Bethell. There was an outpouring of grief, celebration and the acknowledgement of a life lived to the fullest - a tribute to the respect the community held him in.

Of special significance was the gathering of all of the Bethell family united in grief and the loss of Ross supported by their many partners, children, and the community. Te Kawerau a Maki led by Te Warana Taua, Eru Thompson, Rewi Spraggon and Wayne Knox and their extended whānau came to pay a tribute.



The casket was brought by the volunteer fire brigade to the site, speeches were made throughout the late morning and afternoon and into the night. I would like to acknowledge Maria Bethell, Ross's first wife and mother of John and Lee, and Vicki Bethell; mother of Jessie. Vicki and Ross and Jessie are of course depicted in our major work of art outside the council chamber, painted by Annie Eagle (in the right hand middle ground of the mural). I would like, on behalf of the council, to extend our deepest sympathy to the wider Bethell family, acknowledge Ross's life - and the history of Te Henga and their kaitiaki role with the land of their ancestors.

### **Rail Tracks and Chimney Stacks**

Have you noticed how different New Lynn is looking right now? It is looking like development is really happening and I can believe that we have something worth celebrating. When the Transport Minister Annette King and Minister of Health David Cunliffe came to New Lynn and announced the funding package for the trench, there were a few gasps because I don't think everyone in the room had quite bought into the enormity of what we were bringing into being. And so this Council, its planners and its visionaries, can take some real credit for big dreams paying off. From chimney stacks and dinner sets to a state of the art rail and transport hub, and the potential to be one of the most culturally diverse shopping centres in the country.

As Councillors know, I have been working with developers and our key relationships with China to look at developing a Chinatown concept at New Lynn. We already know that the central New Lynn area has the highest percentage of Chinese people per head of population of any town centre in the country. So it is particularly appropriate that we embrace that.

Chinatowns are significant draw cards for cities all over the world, and yet we don't have a dedicated ethnic precinct like it anywhere in New Zealand. The experience of cities such as Manchester, that developed a new Chinatown in the late 1980s, is that they become a springboard for many other cultures to develop special 'mixed use' areas around food, merchant and retail activity that becomes a hub, not only for the different migrant cultures, but for visitors across a city and internationally. In Sydney, Chinatown is the number two attraction for visitors to the city and with our new connections by rail and road to Auckland's Central Business District and Auckland International Airport, New Lynn is well poised to become a key destination in the Auckland region.

The concept is simple. We start by erecting the traditional Chinese Gates as an entry way to a section of New Lynn. Our sister city, Ningbo, is keen to assist with the design and build of the gates. The beauty of this concept is that it is not high cost, it embraces a trend that is already underway, and it dovetails perfectly into the other developments around the New Lynn centre.

We also need to acknowledge this concept can build on the popularity of the nearby Avondale markets, with their huge array of Asian fruit and vegetables and a great variety of stalls hugely popular with many cultures, as well as a wide range of visitors from across the Auckland region.

### **The Mayoral Countdown**

*M1-M4*

With the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance findings looming, I found the attached article at pages M1 to M4 about New York Mayor, Michael R Bloomberg, rather timely.



Bloomberg is counting down his days left in office. At the time of writing, he had 400 odd days to run. And rather than have the countdown to the end of his term be a negative, he treats the time clock as a motivator. Clocks depicting the countdown to the end of his time in office are up all across 14 local government offices across New York.

Bloomberg is known as an 'accountability hound' who 'will not brook slothfulness' as the clock is ticking towards the end of his second term.

Far from winding down and losing steam as many administrations do, his is ramping up, treating each day of the countdown as critical to keeping staff 'revved up and not coasting'.

So let us all never stop to sit on our hands as we enter a period of change in local government for Auckland, but take a leaf out of Bloomberg's book and work our utmost to achieve the vision and outcomes this city seeks like there is no tomorrow!

## **Milestones**

### **Councillor and Staff Study Tour of Queensland**

Key staff and councillors from Waitakere were part of a Local Government New Zealand delegation to take part in a study tour to South East Queensland last month.

Councillors Vanessa Neeson and Linda Cooper have provided a rundown of some of the key findings of the tour to Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Fraser Island and the Sunshine Coast.

This area of Queensland is dealing with a range of issues of particular relevance to Waitakere and the Auckland region. South East Queensland is the fastest growing region in Australia. The delegation visited Greater Springfield, a comprehensively planned community that will ultimately comprise 100,000 residents over an area of 3000 hectares.

Brisbane itself is experiencing similar growing pains to Auckland, and they have to accommodate a further 145,000 people by 2026.

The city is also struggling with a lack of investment in transport infrastructure over recent decades and is developing several substantial road tunnels to traverse the central suburbs of the city. These tunnels will be funded through tolling.

Queensland's state government has also recently imposed a compulsory amalgamation on councils throughout the state; Brisbane in particular fits into the 'super city' model of governance. The Brisbane City Council governs almost all of the Brisbane urban area, and provides services to a community for close to 1 million people. The model seemed to be working well.

The delegation also found interesting work in the area of sustainability, climate change and housing affordability; with a particularly interesting visit to Fraser Island, 250 kilometres north of Brisbane. Fraser Island is the world's largest sand island, and is listed as a world heritage area in recognition of its outstanding natural values and complex ecosystem.



M5-M10

For Councillors Cooper and Neeson's summary of the findings, please see pages M5 to M10. They also have a great deal of further information that can be made available if members are interested in specific issues.

### **Kmart's 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday**



This month I attended the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Kmart store in Henderson. This was the first Kmart in New Zealand and remains one of the chain's most successful.

I was joined by Councillor Brenda Brady and along with 8 original members of staff, cut a celebratory cake. Councillor Brady tells me that on opening day in 1988 she was one of many hundreds who queued up waiting for the doors to open to the bright new retailing concept of the era.

The history of the Kmart and surrounding shopping complex is exactly that - complex. As Councillor Assid Corban will no doubt recall, the old Waitemata Council Chambers (indeed this Council's old building) was in fact designed originally for the Vitasovich Road site.

But because of the emotional and highly charged local body politics of the time, it was moved towards the end of Lincoln Road - essentially into the middle of nowhere.

That is just one of the reasons why the old building would have been so hard for us to future-proof and "retro-fit"- it was actually designed for a completely differently contoured and oriented site.

Over the years several developments on Vitasovich Road started, faltered and failed before Kmart came along as the anchor tenant. Since then the complex has thrived.

At the birthday celebration I met Kmart's Australasian managing director. We talked about development opportunities, particularly in the north of the city and that is a dialogue staff are now following up on.



Now while 20 years may not seem that long ago, here's a bit of a Pop Quiz to put in perspective:

Q: *In 1988, the year Kmart opened in Henderson who was the Prime Minister ?*

A: *David Lange*

Q: *While Assid, Janet, Derek - and others were considering their political futures, which musician announced he was going to run for the Mayoralty.....of Detroit?*

A *Stevie Wonder*  
*(I think he decided, in the end, that the bitchy, vicious, often corrupt world of entertainment was a cushier number)*

And, finally, 2 sobering facts from 1988:

- In January 1988 the Dow Jones fell by 140.58 points (6.85%); and global mean surface temperatures were at their highest point since accurate measurement began in 1880.

Gulp.....

Speaking of bygone era's of the west, former Mayor Tim Shadbolt published his memoir this month, Mayor of Two Cities.

Here's Tim and his deputy Gary Taylor bursting through the front doors of the then new Council buildings in Waipareira Avenue the night he was elected.



Tim's book is what one might call a 'rollicking read' and features myself and the still unsolved mystery of where Tim lost the mayoral chains. They were rumoured to hang on the wall of a pub in Southampton or at the bottom of the Waitemata Harbour.

My assistant Fiona Cunningham, then the chief reporter of the Western Leader, and myself travelled to Britain to try and locate the missing chains, but to no avail. The disappearance of the chains remains one of the great mysteries of local government in New Zealand.



Perhaps the best quote in the book: *"I could get a dog elected in West Auckland if he ran for Tim's Team"* and in hindsight he did. Most of them didn't like me and the feeling is mutual.

### **Infratil Community Awards**

For the fourth year we celebrated the spirit of volunteerism at our annual Infratil - Waitakere Community Awards.

It was a fantastic gathering - an uplifting acknowledgement of the many people who give their time for others in our City.

They are truly the glue that holds our community together and in these grim economic times I believe that spirit of civic pride and care for each other- and particularly the vulnerable- will be more important than ever.

The winners covered a broad spectrum, from sport to education. They were:

Overall Winner: **Outreach Therapy Pets**, run jointly by St John and the SPCA. They also won the Health and Wellbeing Category. The programme involves volunteers taking pets on visits for animal assisted therapy, working with occupational therapists, e.g. for people who have had a stroke to improve strength and motion. They also visit rest homes brightening up the day of older people and a new reading programme involves children with poor literacy reading out loud to dogs to help the children gain confidence.

Each year Outreach Therapy Pets visit 38 establishments, from New Lynn through to Massey, Henderson, Taupaki and West Harbour:

Sport and Leisure - **The Waitakere Bears Softball Club**, for carrying out great work with kids aged 3-9 playing Tee Ball. The club has a total of 50 teams, providing a positive environment for children. The club has experienced phenomenal in the past three years with dedicated volunteers and have bounced back for a set back when their clubrooms burnt down 2 ½ years ago.

Heritage and Environment - **Waitakere Tramline Society**, for continued great work from a long standing volunteer organisation on a much loved feature of the Waitakeres.

Educational and Child Youth Development - **Leataata Ole Lumanai Trust**; a Pacifica preschool, creating a great centre for community, considered a benchmark for Pacific island preschool education.

Arts and Culture - **Waitakere Indian Association** for continued great work taking their culture to a wider community. The association runs Diwali and a number of sports events, social and business networking events, and a school.

Congratulations to all the winners, and indeed the 40 or so organisations that entered.

Thanks also to Barbara Cade, Tracy Haggio and the other events staff who pulled together the call for entries, co-ordinated the judging, and of course the awards evening.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP  
**MAYOR OF WAITAKERE**