

Council

**Wednesday, 28 September 2005
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN
THE CIVIC CENTRE, 6 WAIPAREIRA AVENUE, LINCOLN, WAITAKERE CITY,
ON WEDNESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2005, COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM.**

PART B - REPORT OF THE MAYOR

FLYING OUR WAY - THE IMPENDING ARRIVAL OF BIRD FLU

On the western side of Waikumete Cemetery, near the Chapel of Faith in the Oaks is a massive grass area. In this quiet corner are the unmarked graves of people who died as a result of the 1918 flu epidemic. Known as the Spanish flu, this epidemic killed 40 million people around the world with 8,250 in New Zealand alone (at that time 0.78 percent of the population). In the Pacific Islands there was up to 25 percent mortality.

These graves are testament to the horror of a pandemic. Can it happen again? Yes. And it will, say the experts. And it's on its way now, carried by migratory birds to New Zealand from Asia, Russia, the Baltics and central Europe.

I have been concerned about this possible pandemic since I was in Europe last year and started to read about it in the English and European papers. Initially it was thought of as another Ebola, one of those terrible but rather over hyped 'scares' which are soon off the radar. But this one stayed and gathered momentum as medical professionals discussed its possibilities and the consequences. The more I read, the more a pandemic seemed inevitable. It's not a matter of if it's a matter of when.

I recently sent to all Councillors an excellent article from the New Yorker. I hope that it allowed Councillors to understand the background of this possible pandemic and spelt out that, like all viruses, there is little one can do until it actually happens; and that is truly frightening. There is no prevention and indeed no cure. It takes its time and its toll. Any medical remedy to a pandemic can only be developed after the strain has been identified. I am very close to the reporter who went to Asia and interviewed the two Kiwi doctors Richard Webby and Robert Webster who have developed the best hope yet for a vaccine to combat the deadly bird flu. They have been involved in the World Health Organisation's development of an H5N1 bird flu strain, to be used in a vaccine which has shown early success in clinical trials in the United States. The pair work for one of WHO's three vaccine research labs.

I have a copy of the programme that appeared on TVNZ and the Chief Executive Officer and I have discussed a workshop so we can impart all the information we have to Councillors and Community Board members as well as officers.

So why is it important Waitakere City takes a lead when it quite clearly is a national issue? To not be proactive would be to fall in the trap of the New Orleans' administrators. Here is a case where preparedness across a wide front could very well save hundreds of lives in a City like Waitakere. But first we have to understand what the problem is.

The flu is an acute viral infection and produces a wide range of complications, the most noticeable pneumonia. It spreads from person to person via droplets in coughing and sneezing. Thus we would need to have face masks stored and ready for our people. The Chief Executive Officer and I believe one of the ways to slow or halt such an epidemic is by the use of water, soap and hand washing, surprisingly something almost rarely done these days. People will happily spend all day touching a variety of public surfaces and then walk into McDonalds and chew into a hamburger and fries using their unclean hands. Escalators, shopping trolleys, door handles - they're all potential hotbeds of disease. They are rarely washed or wiped.



Epidemics like bird flu are seasonal and in most years they appear in the cooler months. So the migratory birds would bring this to New Zealand in autumn. The complications from seasonal flu will target firstly the elderly and those with underlying health problems. A pandemic flu is global and puts everyone at risk. It's new and it is difficult to predict how it would affect different races ie. new migrants, Pacific Islanders and Maori.

One thing is certain - the health sector will not be able to cope. The flu operates often in a two way cycle. The first one can be severe and the patient will recover but the second one, as in 1918, is far more deadly and the patient can well die. This bird flu affects 15 types of wild birds, particularly water birds, waders, ducks and swans. And these are always in contact with migratory birds that have flown to New Zealand. It would quickly move to poultry.

In modern New Zealand we have no experience of such a catastrophe as our society tends to be robust but if the bird flu arrives we would be devastated. It will have a huge impact on our society and economy - it will simply be like being at war. Our health services will be stretched to the limit. If households are struck down parents will be unable to help their children.

So what does this all mean for Waitakere? Firstly this Council needs to recognise the potential danger and draft a series of responses that can be put in place. They could fall in the following categories (from Steve Brazier, National Coordinator - Pandemic Planning):

- Isolate households and patients immediately.
- Close local libraries, video stores and internet cafes and game arcades.
- Restrict movement in or out of the area.
- Involve all government agencies to assist local cities such as Waitakere to respond.
- Prohibit any mass meetings or gatherings.

Ministry of Health pandemic planning will immediately go on red alert to provide vaccines, communication and information. It will also develop the OSH issues and work closely with a team of GPs.

The Council as an organisation would be greatly affected with possibly 50 percent absenteeism. This will affect the ability to maintain essential services such as waste collection and even burials.

The effect on personal finances through absenteeism will hit families hard. Schools would be closed and so in a young city like Waitakere there would be an enormous amount of work to be done with young children unable to be brought together at out of school programmes.

By the time of this Council meeting I will have attended the regional Civil Defence workshop which covers issues such as bird flu, New Orleans and the tsunami and I will report back.

If this report makes glum reading so does the possibility of this happening. And I make no excuses for posing more questions than there are answers. The bottom line is we need to move now or we will be in very dire circumstances.

Recommendation: That the Chief Executive Officer and Council officers arrange a workshop to discuss and debate the bird flu issue and subsequently continue with urgency to develop the already commenced programme for action in terms of health and safety.



LESSONS FROM NEW ORLEANS

Imagine it raining for three days - torrential rain from out in the Tasman, hitting a warm belt of Pacific air and creating what is now called a weather bomb. It coincides with the high tides which I am sure you have noticed on the Henderson Creek. Now think of those graphic pictures of New Orleans that we have lived with for the past month. Ask yourself a simple question. Could it happen here in Waitakere, what if it did and are we prepared?

This is the question I have asked many times at Council meetings and I have been reassured we are as prepared as anyone and that we have indeed a dedicated group of men and women more than ready, willing and able to respond. But I'm sure that's what that great nation America also felt until Katrina struck.

So let's consider the heart of our City - Henderson, and its surroundings. And to assist I have, with the help of new technology, doctored some photographs to show what a possible flood would look like and how it would affect this area.

What if it happened?







Henderson - the business and cultural district with all the facilities it has - sits between two major streams - the Oratia and Henderson Valley. Fed by 30 smaller streams, a massive amount of water flows down these tributaries to the sea. If you take time to look over the bridge on Sel Peacock by the pool when it is in flood, believe me you will see a raging torrent. And if you take the same view on the bridge leading to West City you'll see a creek that rises up to 12 metres at its height, right up to street level. Its flow is swift and severe.

Emergency plans are always top of mind for people. But in moving our headquarters to Henderson we will also be taking this City's archival history - paper, records, photographs, books, manuscripts. Just over the road, in our new library building will be other historical document collections. So our 200 year old records will all be deposited in two buildings between two possibly volatile streams. In short they will be on a delta of woe if it floods.

I raise this issue as, in the next few months, every local government will need to take stock of their emergency systems and although this City has kept ahead of the disaster scenario it is the unexpected and unexplainable that causes most of the anguish.

New Orleans, and indeed how America coped with this disaster, is quite extraordinary and beyond comprehension. I have read extensively about the leadership and management, or lack of it, of New Orleans and all Mayors in this Auckland region have discussed it at length. But none have touched on the subject of my report to you about the possible, indeed probable, loss. Not of life or property, tragic in itself, but of the loss of history and all that that means to the future.



M1-M6 Please read the article attached at pages M1 to M6. I would appreciate any feedback. In the meantime the Council needs to understand the enormity of potential disasters and give thought to what is needed to ensure archival material is not placed in basements below ground or in files that can just float away. We have accumulated a large amount of historical and worthy documentation. It would be a tragedy if by oversight we lost our past and therefore our future.

M7 I took the liberty to write to the Mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, soon after the extent of the devastation was known and that letter is attached at page M7.

Recommendation: That Council officers investigate how best to protect our archival material following the move to Henderson and implement the best possible option.

THE ROAD TO WAIATARUA - A SIGN OF OUR TIMES

Although I believe in public safety and signage, lots of it around dangerous corners and nasty bends, it seems to me our roads, particularly through rural areas, don't need to be festooned every 100 metres with warnings and instructions.

I have certainly noticed on the Desert Road that large, anti-speeding signage tends to slow you down and large and serious warnings on the fatal Meremere stretch have reduced the carnage. But the West Coast Road, from Parrs Park to Waiatarua, is a different kind of highway. It moves quickly from urban density to orchards, vineyards and the foothills of the Waitakere Ranges. Yes, it does have a few more bends than the Desert Road but these come much later, near the summit of the ranges. Most of the time the road goes past schools, along the flat down to Kelly's Bridge and then rises to Waiatarua and onto Piha.

Over the past five years I have noticed more and more signs appearing on this stretch of road, a mere 5.1 kilometres, so we are not talking serious distance. So how, I have to ask, have we accumulated 126 road side signs? That's right, I said 126. I have counted them. And that does not include street or road signage. That's just signs nailed, screwed or bolted to posts warning about horses, graders, speed, road contours and bridges. I have included in my Mayoral count broad bands of arrows and bridge markings - after all they are on the road and clearly indicate what you should do and what to watch out for. And there is a lot to watch out for. I have no problems with signage around schools and particularly Oratia, one of my favourite schools, so a warning that a school is nearby is a must. But, as for the rest I believe we have gone truly overboard.

To be honest I don't see any end to it. Every new Community Board adds more signs. Go count if you need to but would someone please take stock of what is needed, what warnings need to be spelt out and therefore what can go. And will someone consider taking a ladder along the West Coast Road to remove some of these signs so we at least can talk about keeping Waitakere beautiful.

GOING WEST

This inspiring festival just goes from success to success but this year it excelled with its line up of speakers and communicators. Murray Gray and the team at Council delivered a 10th anniversary knockout festival and we can only pay a resounding tribute to his, and the team's, ability to bring people who make up our literary scene together from all over New Zealand.

Remember, this is not an international festival but a home grown one for New Zealand authors. The audience, once predominantly Titirangi, is now from different regions around the country which means it has New Zealand wide appeal.



A magnificent powhiri and performance by pupils from Rangeview Intermediate, on the eve of a trip to Canada, started this festival with energy to burn. It was infectious and set the mood for the whole evening and weekend ahead. There was a real sense of dialogue and participation. On Saturday night in a tribute dinner to Hone Tuwhare, we were treated to the documentary of his life and supporting music from the dazzling Graham Brazier and Hinemoana Baker. The organisers of Going West have been trying for a dinner since the festival's inception and this sell out occasion proved anything can happen and it generally does at Going West.

M8-M16 The key note address from Nigel Cox, recently returned from an amazing entrepreneurial adventure bringing together a museum in Berlin as well as writing two best sellers, is a funny and very well observed piece about New Zealand through the eyes of a returning Kiwi. It was well received and I thought it deserved a second reading and so have attached it at pages M8 to M14. I have also attached at pages M15 to M16 one of the many complimentary writings on the festival, this one by Kathy Hunter.

MILESTONES

The Election

The day after the election I was delighted and greatly honoured to represent this Council and the City at the powhiri to welcome Pita Sharples, Tariana Turia and the Maori party victoriously to Hoani Waititi Marae. I had no hesitation in speaking on behalf of this City in honouring Pita and the work he has done for Maori, for young and old, and for advocacy on behalf of this City. Pita has been incredibly loyal to the west and I am sure will do everything possible in the future to make Waitakere and the partnership between Maori and Pakeha an absolute winner. This extraordinary person has brought a sense of worth to Maori education and has worked consistently to develop programmes to ensure young Maori do not fall into the trap of crime. Walking the talk, Pita Sharples has brought a real sense of integrity to electioneering, refusing to fight a dirty campaign. His stance has been clearly recognised by Maori and he rightly becomes the MP for Tamaki Makaurau through sheer hard work and determination. Pita has earned that place and mana.

The election of Pita Sharples and the success of the Maori Party also signals the true arrival of the Maori voice and vote. For too long it has been silent or non-existent and I would like to think having Pita and his team fully included in the process of government will enrich all of our futures. Kia Kaha.

Re-elected were Te Atatu MP Chris Carter (third consecutive term), Waitakere MP Lynne Pillay (second term) and New Lynn MP David Cunliffe (third term).

A tireless advocate for Labour in the west, a consummate politician and one of the characters in my book *Westies*, Chris Carter has the ability to survive the political rollercoaster seemingly unscathed by controversy or media beat up. Chris has maintained a bright and shiny image unlike others who have unfortunately tarnished themselves and the political system. The 'Mr Clean' of politics, Chris has not been beyond taking a swipe at Council but he has remained a friend to the City and a supporter of most of what we try to do.

We are looking forward to working again with Chris who has seemed to have bottomless ministerial pockets to acquire land in the South Island and in every hill country station with a "for sale" notice. Chris' budget has also reached into areas of environment and sustainability and I think it may very well be the term for Waitakere to see some of the budget spent on the home turf.

Lynne Pillay is a stalwart of good and true politics. Lynn has been a conscientious friend of the Waitakere Ranges, the environment and the Council. She is an enthusiastic and energised politician who effortlessly makes a tiring job seem enjoyable. We all know it's damn tough but Lynne shines through, always with a smile and underestimated wisdom. I would like to record our special thanks for the work, support and integrity she has brought to the Waitakere Ranges Bill process.



An imposing politician with a great future ahead, David Cunliffe has worked for the City as a local MP and a Minister. He has kept an excellent relationship with community groups and has supported the Council in many of its initiatives. This last term has been a milestone for such a young newcomer to politics. The confidence the government has shown in David is a fine example of the west getting a share of voice and energy in Wellington. This is a turnaround because for more than 70 years the west had either had politicians who have focused elsewhere or never on issues of importance.

And so the team of politicians that has come out of Labour has been one that this Council can work comfortably with and a group committed to the betterment of our people. One couldn't ask for anything better.

I am sure Council will also acknowledge the hard work of John Tamihere both as Chief Executive Officer of the Te Whanau O Waipareira and by his representation of Tamaki Makaurau (which covers a large part of Waitakere). An avid supporter for the bid for a commercial Whenuapai airbase and as Minister of Small Business, John showed an early and keen willingness to work with the Council and its agenda for the creation of jobs. One of Labour's more interesting MPs I believe John will make a re-appearance and emerge again as a political voice in New Zealand. We thank him sincerely for his work on behalf of our community and we wish him well in the years ahead.

This Council has not got to know John Key as well as we should and that is a pity as he is clearly an interesting newcomer to politics with a bright future ahead. Indeed, it's my bet he will probably be the next leader of the National Party and certainly a major force in the next election. John, who has made much of his success as a financial broker, came through this election as someone with a solid grasp of finance and budgetary issues. He knew what he was talking about far more than the party's leader Don Brash and in keeping his wits about him he endeared himself to the electorate and a wide television audience. Young and personable, he needs to concentrate on the sensible, solid management of government. This second term will see John rise rapidly through the ranks.

Our own Council colleague Judy Lawley fought a very good and fair fight against the might of John Key and I would like to acknowledge Judy for standing in the community and for going for it with gusto and enthusiasm. Her vote was considerable in what was always a National stronghold and impossible to win. Nevertheless she made a lasting impression and I would like to applaud her efforts on the campaign trail.

We also congratulate and welcome back Tau Henare who was a successful National Party list candidate. Despite losing his seat Dover Samuels goes back into Parliament as a list MP so it is good to know he is still around. We also welcome Dover's 'replacement' in Te Tai Tokerau (which takes in some of Waitakere), Hone Harawira.

Last but certainly not least I would like to take a moment to acknowledge our 'caretaker' Prime Minister Helen Clark. While we still are not 100 percent sure exactly how things will shake out (at the time of writing) I am confident this experienced and competent leader will succeed in putting together a strong and effective Labour led government which will ensure continued stability for New Zealand and our continued valued presence on the world stage. Helen Clark has been a great friend of our City and on the eve of the election attended our Moon Festival. She attends as many events as she can in the west and it's always great to see her whether it's at a pre-school opening in Ranui or at one of our major events such as Trash to Fashion.

I am more than confident Ms Clark, who has undoubtedly secured an historic third term, will embrace our own Pita Sharples and the Maori Party and I look forward to the bright future and working partnership that will bring.



Awarded # 1

Huge congratulations to our two senior managers Ann Magee and Graeme Campbell. Last week they were awarded gold medals and the Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award from the New Zealand Geographical Society. The award recognises the outstanding contribution they have made to geography. And the award came hot on the heels of another honour bestowed on Graeme - he was made a Companion of the Royal Society of New Zealand which acknowledges his exceptional contribution to this country. It is wonderful to have such clearly fantastic people working for Council.

Awarded # 2

A life member of Bethells Beach Surf Club since 1986, Ross Bethell has now been awarded a New Zealand Service Award - a combination of tenure (at least 10 years) and significant service to Surf Life Saving. I was proud to be in the audience when Ross received his award at a special ceremony in Wellington. Ross and his family have a long history in the club. He joined in 1964 and qualified with his Surf Lifeguard Award in 1970. Ross has more than 34 years of active lifeguard service to his name and has held many committee positions including secretary and president. He received a Meritorious Award for the rescue of three people at Bethells in 1981.

100th Birthday

It was with pleasure I visited, in the Dutch Village, Tom Finer who was born in Ponsonby 100 years ago. We sat and talked about the Ponsonby of the 1950s where I grew up, K Road and the Newton area. Tom's wonderful ability to recall times, people and places from a bygone era was absolutely astonishing. We had much to talk about and I was able to convey to him the Council's respect and acknowledgement of his long and fruitful life. He is the oldest male member of our community and I have asked him to join us at the opening of the Civic Centre as a special guest next year.

Medal Win

Sara Runesten-Petersen was a little put out following her bronze medal win at the world badminton championships in Los Angeles. It was one of the year's biggest sporting achievements but she got little public attention according to her comments in the Western Leader. Well Sara, don't feel put out any longer. We at the Council think your medal is an outstanding feat and we are proud of both you and your mixed doubles partner Dan Shirley. Congratulations to both of you and we wish you further successes in the future.

Young Entrepreneur

Congratulations also to Paul Manning, a category winner in the 2005 Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards. Now 28, Paul is a former Massey High School student who started Metromedia advertising agency when he was 22. The business now has a multimillion dollar turnover, employs 28 people and Paul has plans to expand his business over the coming year. Paul now competes for the overall young entrepreneur title to be announced next month. The winner will go on to represent New Zealand at the World Entrepreneur of the Year Awards in Monte Carlo. We wish Paul all the best.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Report of the Mayor be received.
2. That the Chief Executive Officer and Council officers arrange a workshop to discuss and debate the bird flu issue and subsequently continue with urgency to develop the already commenced programme for action in terms of health and safety.
3. That Council officers investigate how best to protect our archival material following the move to Henderson and implement the best possible option.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE CITY