

Council

**Wednesday, 17 December 2008
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**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, 17 DECEMBER 2008,
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

Receive the Report of the Mayor.

2008 - The Year Of The Rat - With A Sting In Its Tail

In this the final report for the year I have a chance to reflect, acknowledge and predict - always a difficult and dangerous task. But why not? Someone's got to do it.

This has been a full year for this council and local government in general. We started the year with the farewell of long standing Chief Executive Officer Harry O'Rourke, the second Chief Executive Officer of the City of Waitakere. And we welcomed Vijaya Vaidyanath from Rodney District Council who was appointed in 2007 but who had a rather long gestation period as she waited for the departure of Harry and to get her feet under the desk. She did that in rapid time and has become an outstanding and successful Chief Executive Officer for the City. She brings a sense of passion, vision and sustainability to us. I have enjoyed working with her enormously. I've liked her style and her commitment to business as well as the environment.

There was a great deal of nervousness in the first few months of the year as we prepared for the Waitakere Heritage Area Bill to become an Act of Parliament. It was thwart with danger. There was one vote in the first reading and we needed the support of the Mangere Member of Parliament, Taito Phillip Field - vital. Behind the scenes there was much persuasion going on. Negotiations and consultation were a pre-requisite for this Bill. It had had a 40 year history. But looming was a general election and the bill had stalled three years before for this very reason. It was my personal belief, given the National Party's opposition to the Bill, it would not pass in the form we wished it too. We also worked the Maori Party through the process. The final reading succeeded in giving us this Bill with one vote.

The Bill's passing into legislation by the New Zealand House of Parliament on the 2 April 2008 was the culmination of a life long mission for me. I stood for public office in October 1992 for just this reason - to save the Waitakere Ranges from rampant development. This act is a true milestone in the country's past and for its future. Again, my congratulations to all involved.

By March 2008 the Council elected in October 2007 was coming together and feeling, I think united on a number of major issues. I would like to think the New Lynn development was at the heart of this. Three years before we had gone to Subiaco in Perth and had been impressed by the undergrounding and decided we wanted such a groundbreaking project in our city. We had always been committed to rail and to me the New Lynn development echoed not only the new Town Centre but also a commitment to public transport and the future electrification of the system.



New Lynn is the largest rail project this city has seen since the 1880s. Indeed it's the second largest in the whole of Auckland, since Britomart was built. This project has gone from another of Waitakere's fanciful ideas that everyone else opposed to a transformational project that is the catalyst for the full regeneration of the New Lynn Town Centre that will continue for decades to come.

This project has continued throughout the year. There have been some very dangerous twists and turns in funding and I'm pleased to say most of the hurdles have been overcome. The Auckland Regional Council proved to be an excellent partner as did ONTRACK and Auckland Regional Transport Authority. And in the last dying weeks of the Labour government we had support and energised enthusiasm from the local politicians and representatives. This was led by former Deputy Prime Minister Michael Cullen who realised the urgency and importance of this project.

The oil crisis started to bite about July with escalated prices swinging the Auckland motorist into public transport. This swing would continue until petrol prices fell in November and Aucklanders returned to their beloved cars. As Professor Peter Newman said to us last week this is understandable and unfortunate but this will continue to happen until someone grabs the public transport network and produces a better and viable option. It needs to be an option close to the Vancouver model I saw with Ann Magee five years ago - new, more user friendly and more appealing than the present system. Not that the present system is a failure. It just needs to be better. Better trains, better service, more marketing, more advertising, more style and more fashionability. The car is a very seductive style of transport and when it's cheap it's even more appealing and hard to give up.

I was very proud early in the year to launch another Mayoral Taskforce against Family Violence billboard campaign featuring actor and Waitakere resident Annie Whittle, former All Black great and wonderful community contributor Michael Jones of Titirangi, actor and television personality Pio Terei from Henderson Valley and Outrageous Fortune star Tammy Davis. All were quick to lend their support to the cause and it seems the billboards nationwide are making a difference with higher reporting. But we still need the statistics to come down nationwide and in Waitakere. Later in the year we kept the momentum going with another billboard featuring ordinary westies including some Council officers and people who work in the community. I can't stress enough how much we need to increase our efforts in this regard. I was pleased to see so many people at the White Ribbon March last month but we have to continually find new and creative ways of dealing with this issue. It's not going to go away.

This year our arts programme, which I am so proud of, continued to showcase the City. Our Going West Festival was an outstanding success. Its World Around Us programme featured a vast array brilliant presentations from writers to theatre and it really was a fantastic line-up. As Naomi McCleary said in her programme introduction Going West was, literally, the 'little engine that could' and it's a huge credit to her and Murray Gray that the festival is 13 years old and still on track. I think this festival is truly amazing and showcases the very best this country has to offer right here in Waitakere. I particularly enjoyed the keynote address by Chris Price which I featured in my mayoral report last month. My congratulations and thanks go to Naomi and Murray and the rest of the team.

I was also very pleased to see the return of the Titirangi Music Festival which offered sell out performances over a week. This festival is a credit to David Parker and his creative and imaginative programming.

Also on the arts front, our orchestra continued its fine concert schedule although audiences have not met expectations. To me this is because it has changed venues and failed to market and merchandise itself as a regional treasure. I am in awe of the talent of Brigid Bisley, not only a conductor of merit but a composer in her own right. In the recent New Zealand film Jinx Sister, Ms Bisley composed a very fine score.



After a hugely successful inaugural Heroes out West at Falls Park it was with much sadness I dedicated a mayoral report to Waitakere Arts Laureate Mahinarangi Tocker. Mahinarangi died on 15 April 2008 at just 52 and her death was a tragic loss to her family, friends, fans and this city. She was the main attraction at the Heroes out West gig. A singer-songwriter and Glendene resident, Mahina began recording her original compositions in 1982 and her last performance was at the Titirangi Music Festival just a few weeks before her passing. Later in the year we planted a puriri tree at the Falls in Mahinarangi's honour and a plaque will be unveiled at the Heroes out West event on 28 February 2009 at the Falls.

We also paid tribute to Mahinarangi and her work at the laureates' event in the Council Chamber. Everyone was still in shock and it was very sad however there was cause to celebrate - our four new Waitakere Arts Laureates - soprano Patricia Wright, artist Fatu Feu'u, painter Peter Siddell and Mau director Lemi Ponifasio. I was absolutely delighted and honoured to announce the new laureates who, like this city, display a unique verve and panache.

M1

A personal highlight of the year for me was receiving the LivCom Personal Award for best practise in the management of the environment. Endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme, the LivCom Awards recognise individuals, groups and cities who are improving the lives of ordinary citizens through the creation of "liveable communities". We're certainly doing that in Waitakere. I received the award in Dongguang, China and in the process presented our eco city from its inception in 1992 to its sustainable agenda of the present to a world audience. In receiving the award I acknowledged the support of successive councils as well as our team of dedicated and talented staff and I do that again now. I also acknowledge our community at large. It has been incredibly important that every step of the way we have consulted and taken the community with us. As I've said many times before this has never been about tree-hugging. It's been about smart, sustainable thinking and being focused on the outcome and delivery. I have attached at page M1 a congratulatory letter from Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI).

The awards were not the only place I talked up Waitakere and what we've achieved. Wally Thomas and I went to Washington and Alexandria. I was the keynote speaker at a summit aimed to develop a plan to turn Alexandria into an eco city. Before the summit I made a presentation to senior staff at the Alexandria City Council and, afterwards, to council members and staff at neighbouring Arlington County. The eco summit attracted hundreds of people from the community, business and so on and gave me the chance to show how Waitakere did it and convince them they should do it. And they did. We received news just a month or so later that Alexandria voted unanimously to adopt the city's and the region's first eco city charter. Very good news indeed.

I made the first of my two trips to China this year in May 2008, my eighth visit to Ningbo, to commemorate 10 years of our sister city relationship with this extraordinary place. I attended the opening of the massive and truly awesome sea bridge linking Ningbo and Shanghai - a bridge between two Chinese super powers. To be at this opening was to be part of Chinese history in the making. Waitakere's friendship was acknowledged at the opening banquet and the whole event was a huge opportunity for Waitakere and New Zealand businesses to do business with China. Subsequently we signed a Free Trade Agreement with Ningbo and I look forward to reaping the fruits of that. The other visit to China in October 2008 was to pick up the LivCom award which as I say was a personal highlight but one we all should be incredibly proud of.

And on the subject of China I felt that following the start of the New Lynn undergrounding project something extra special was needed for the area and indeed the region. My concept of a Chinatown, the first in New Zealand, was worth discussing and debating widely and openly.



I think this is really exciting retail option and there has been as expected a mixed reaction. The fact is that New Lynn and indeed Waitakere has been underperforming badly in retail. Many of our major retailers are struggling. The west has never been a shopping destination. Henderson particularly suffers from a mall that under performs and lacks a fashion and style focus. AMP fares better with Lynmall but could do so much better with film and other attractions. New Lynn simply does not have a focus that lifts it into any category other than suburban intensification.

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 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 concept is simple. We start by putting up 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.

Don't get confused or sidetracked. This is not a cultural or social move. This is a marketing idea which will help the local economy and give Waitakere residents, as well as those from further a field, a fantastic experience of great food and a buzzing town centre. This project will help distinguish New Lynn from other town centres in the region and Waitakere from other cities in New Zealand. It's an idea that stacks up in cities like Melbourne, London, Seattle and Sydney. It's all about tourism and marketing. And Chinatown would become a focal point for Asian cultural events such as the Chinese New Year and Moon festivals and for visiting exhibitions. I will address the local business community and present to them the concept of New Lynn as a new town centre with a possible Chinatown connection and / or link bridge to the transport hub. I think this is necessary as the project needs a robust submission from myself, the architect of this idea.

I think there's been a lot of niggles from my Council colleagues about it and I want a clear buy in from the community whether they feel it's something worth pursuing. New Lynn needs a lightness and it needs some flair. I envy Newmarket and to be honest I have a slight envy of Ponsonby and Kingsland. New Lynn is dreary and sluggish and there's simply no good reason to go there if you are not a local. I believe Chinatown, with festivals, exhibitions and weekend events is perfect. There is a lot of dated thinking that is simply deadwood and I want to either hear it laid out, not from xenophobic letter writers (who simply don't like the Chinese resurgence), but from people who can see the economic benefits of the theming of an area. In New Zealand theming is done by fancy shops, money and branding. Examples are Nuffield St, Mt Eden Village, Parnell and Devonport. New Lynn has none of the historical quaintness or old class that is so appealing in other areas. It has no street culture bookshops or antique shops. There's nothing of high interest. I will spell this out to the business community who I think need help to see what can be achieved beyond McDonald's and the mall. Because these things are simply not good enough. Everywhere has them. I will connect with the business community and anyone else who wants to raise objections or support for this retail concept in February 2009.



In June 2008 I once again made mention of some outstanding locals who received Queen's Birthday Honours. I am proud to do it again here: Ross Jewell, MNZM for services to business, Va'aiga Tuigamala, MNZM for services to rugby and the community, Peter Posa, MNZM for services to entertainment, Beverley Ann Magee, QSO for services to local government and the environment, David Lawrence, QSM for services to the community, Ronald Pennell, QSM for services to the New Zealand Fire Service, Vaoga Lelefua Watts, QSM for services to the Pacific Islands community and Sharon Young, QSM for services to the community.

I paid tribute to the late Bill Moller of Moller's Barn and another remarkable person, Yvonne Dufaur, in the July 2008 Mayoral Report. Bill was one of those characters bigger than life who gave the Oratia of the 70s its very own unique place in the region and Yvonne gives a great deal to the community. I wanted to acknowledge that. In the same report I also paid tribute to the Croatian community of the west. Croatians have made a huge contribution to this area and our part of the world.

In August 2008 I gave notice this City would, by the end of 2009, be the first city in New Zealand to have paper and cloth bags for our shopping purposes. In other words – goodbye plastic bags. I can't stress enough how much I want to see this happen.

Towards the end of the year my focus was on writing a chapter for our history book project. I won't say too much here, you'll have to wait until the book is published in March 2009, but I will just say I am really looking forward to that publication and indeed a whole year of celebrations of this City becoming 20 years of age. As you know we were 'born' following the amalgamation in 1989 of a number of boroughs and now look at us. A modern 21st century city. It hasn't all been plain sailing but we have achieved an incredible amount in terms of forwarding the eco city strategy and making this city a great place to live and work. Of course the work will continue but next year I think we should stop for a moment and acknowledge the achievements over the past 20 years.

I would like to think that once we 'come of age' so to speak everything will run smoothly but that's not going to happen is it? It seems it doesn't matter how hard we try or how good we are something will come up to bite us on the bum. Not something that is necessarily our 'doing' but something that affects our people.

I'm talking about things like the leaky home saga and now we are embroiled in a drama over substandard timber being used to build houses when really it should just be being used for chicken coops. As I said to the media the building timber issue is another scam and I want to thank our building inspectors for alerting me to it so we could go public with a warning and start to redress the totally unacceptable situation. In short, Waitakere took the lead before we could be engulfed in a tsunami of complaints and angst and rest assured we are not going to let this pass. The full extent of the problem will be examined and already we are issuing notices for repairs where there is a problem. We are also reviewing historical consents over the past two years and are working closely with the Department of Building and Housing.

Details of exactly how we will celebrate our coming of age are yet to be worked out however there is already one exciting event on the calendar. Our sister city in Japan, Kakogawa, has offered to contribute something big - a peace bell. A delegation will come to Waitakere led by the mayor, Mr Shoichi Tarumoto and accompanied by the former mayor Mr Seiichi Kinoshita and councillors in August 2009.



Of course a big part of the year has been taken up by the Royal Commission on Auckland's governance and here's the sting in the tail. Although this council and North Shore made an excellent submission it is my feeling there is a major change looming. The recent articles by Ewan McDonald and Edward Rooney in the Aucklander were a result of an interview with the Chairperson of the Commission. It shows the Commission's compelling interest in Vancouver. I have also had a chance to speak with Peter Salmon and I get a pretty clear impression the Commission was very impressed by Metro Vancouver which draws its membership from local elected municipalities across the greater Vancouver area. I might remind councillors this political leadership is drawn from the directors making up three major boards appointed by the municipal councils.

I believe this is a good guide to the way the Commission is leaning. At the reception for mayors and councillors last Wednesday evening at Government House, the Governor General of New Zealand, while disclaiming any knowledge of what the commission may be thinking, urged Mayors, Chairperson's and Chief Executive Officer's to support the findings and the delivery of those. He said it was up to the region's mayors to show leadership and to ensure New Zealand saw a united Auckland supporting the Commission's findings. He mentioned that in 1989 the reluctant boroughs were the losers and the cities made up of boroughs which supported change were the winners, Waitakere being one of them. North Shore of course with its disparate and angry borough links took years to sort itself out. Waitakere emerged from the 1989 amalgamation strong and very powerful, able to grow, develop and transform itself from the wild west.

I guess this is what the Governor General, and as I understand it the government, is feeling. It is believed the new government will have only one month from the delivery of the recommendations to bring this into being. There will not be a six to nine month consultation period. Parliament will bring into legislation the recommendations by the end of April 2009.

So the next year will be one which local government in Auckland is, I believe subject to transformation and challenge. This government is looking to take a major role in this transformation process. It is a government that I know is supported by Councillors and that is in itself is positive. In acknowledging the past and the excellent relationship with the previous relationship it is up to us as Councillors to ensure this City is to the fore in this new government's thinking and that our delivery and what we wish is at the top of mind. I would like to congratulate Paula Bennett on her large portfolio and her promotion to the front bench. I would also like to acknowledge Tim Groser and congratulate John Key who represents a large part of Waitakere. We now have a Prime Minister in our City. Only Michael Joseph Savage in the 1930s represented the west. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the Local MP's for their incredibly hard work and support for the west over the past nine years. I think this government has a strong agenda for the west and that can only be to our advantage.

And so this report, like the year, is drawing to a close. I would like to thank the Deputy Mayor Penny Hulse and my council colleagues, the directors and staff.

Thank you too to our Chief Executive Officer, Vijaya Vaidyanath. Thanks also to my office staff - Vanessa Sherer, Alan Rodgers-Smith, Irene Shepherd and Fiona Cunningham. As always these people make things happen and I am grateful for their excellent support, advice and hard work. It has been, for myself and this City, a very fine year. I wish everyone and their family and whānau the season's greetings and a safe holiday period.



Passing Parade

Mahinarangi Tocker, Waitakere Arts Laureate passed away on April 15 aged just 52.

Colin Kay, former Auckland Mayor, Chairman of the former Auckland Regional Authority, died on June 5.

Frank Grubisa, in July. Frank worked for the Council many years ago and donated a large cabinet and many China plates to the City which are now in the archives at the library.

Whero Nahi, a man of outstanding mana, kindness and integrity and one of the great kaumätua of the Kaipara passed away in early August.

Colin Brookes, whose father Claude founded the Tui Glen Motor Camp, died in August aged 92.

On October 7 a mighty kauri fell - Ross Bethell. A sudden death while working on his tractor, the loss of Ross was a sad and tragic event for not only his family but the Bethell's community.

Tainui kaumätua Haare Puke on November 14. Haare had been a regular visitor to Waitakere with our friends from Hamilton.

Michelle Bacon, principal of Rutherford Primary School, died on October 31 after a long battle with cancer.

Bill Moller, died on June 19 aged 87 and it was the end of the party.

Those that passed away at Ons Dorp were:

Florence Roycroft, Elizabeth Smith, Alice Barry, Geertrude Roggeveen, Doris Martin, Willem Verrijt, Jannetje Megchelse, Margery Eddy, Leonard Bean, Antonia Offenbach, Nora Thomson, William Goody and John Henderson.

The world will miss the likes of:

Heath Ledger, Roy Scheider, Charlton Heston, Bo Diddley, Estelle Getty, Isaac Hayes, Paul Newman, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Arthur C. Clarke, Merl Saunders.

10 Questions

Ready for your coffee at the Piha café yet?

Will you be sitting next to Sandra Coney?

Would Henderson like Chinatown?

Or is it wrong place wrong time?

Are Tau Henare and Paula Bennett related?

How would we know?

Has Chris Carter actually realised the government has changed?

Missing Helen Clark yet?

Spotted John Key shopping in Massey yet?

Seen any councillors on bikes on cycleways?

RA Harvey, QSO, JP

MAYOR OF WAITAKERE