

Council

**Wednesday, 29 April 2009
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

From Marcus Aurelius:

**Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current;
no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by
and another takes its place,
and this too will be swept away.**

**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 APRIL 2009,
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

Receive the Report of the Mayor.

They say that *“all politics ends in failure, and all politicians too”*. I remember sitting with David Lange in the last few months of his life and listening to him tell anyone who would listen what had not worked in his terms as Prime Minister of this country.

Last week that quote and that moment came to mind again as I sat and I looked around the Mayoral gathering with the Minister of Local Government to discuss this astonishing restructuring.

Around the table were the Mayors of the region who had taken a hiding in the last month for disagreeing with each other - guilty of patch protection, loving the job, loving their cities. The elephant in that room was: who is going to go for the new Number One position. So far, there's just the one contender.

The week before we had stood in the galleries of Parliament and listened to Helen Clark make her farewell speech, and then exit the debating chamber in a swirl of Kiwi feathers. Soon after, we heard that Michael Cullen would be doing the same. Exiting is a hard thing to do for politicians and actors. We all have to have a good Stage Right.

Those of us who have similarly dedicated our lives to the community, can understand the feeling - and the restraint - funnelled into a single moment of farewell.

In Parliament you can walk the corridors and see portraits of previous Prime Ministers from the beginning of the state of New Zealand. All have left a legacy, some more than others.

So it is in Waitakere City.

Sane and sensible people might very well ask how can this happen in a first world democracy. You can do so because this country lacks a constitution. We have no framework that protects our government's behaviour and our rights. Although we might believe we have rights to be respected, and that politicians that work for us, not the reverse.

Wasn't this Royal Commission appointed by the Governor General on behalf of the Sovereign Queen? The report - and I'm sure you've all read it - was elaborate and ritualised, paying homage to the Sovereign of New Zealand. Well, that's yesterday's paper shredded like Peter Salmond's excellent reputation and legacy.

The breakdown of democracy is apparent where one third of New Zealand is not being considered worthy of consultation and the debate of law.

So New Zealand becomes like Israel as countries that have no constitution for democratic redress.



This is something that is now punishing us, as Aucklanders and citizens of Waitakere City. This government - enjoying a rosy honeymoon - is showing with the governance issue what's in store for their tenure in office.

We need to get this right. The Government is determined to create a bigger entity, and nothing will dissuade them. We need to persuade them, and never abuse the mind of the person that you hope to persuade. Politics is the art of the possible.

By the time this report is read by the Council, there will be growing unrest across the Auckland region. Also, the government will have introduced the urgent legislation to start dismantling our town.

They won't be doing it with bulldozers and wrecking balls, but they will be doing it.

For me as Mayor, rests a very complex responsibility: to stay in the tent, working with this government. And also to work on the barricades in the streets. I have no choice but to do both.

Therefore, I have tried to broker peace and cooperation with the media and with government so that they cannot accuse us of disunity and will therefore listen to our concerns. At the same time I am more than able and willing to tell the government when they are wrong.

This government is well aware that getting it wrong could create a tidal wave of unrest. On the surface, the Minister is more than willing to listen to the Mayors of the region. He also seems to acknowledge the professionalism of the Chief Executive Officers. He has agreed with me that our close colleagues in all of this - our Deputy Mayors - would also be part of the dialogue.

The next meeting will be held on the eve of ANZAC Day - a fitting time to gather.

People have often asked how would you fix Auckland? Well friends, the fix is in. Maybe it's the economic climate, the quick rise in unemployment, the mass redundancies, the onset of winter. But it seems to be getting darker and cooler all of a sudden. A darkness has come to the edge of our town.

My previous report anticipated the Royal Commission findings, presupposed somewhat on the assumption that they would be largely followed. They were not. We are now all aware that the durable and effective institutions known as City Councils set up in 1989 will be pulled apart.

The legislation to set up the transition process has been indicated by Minister Hide as being ready to go into Parliament. This is the beginning of the end for Waitakere City.

There is real sadness in that.

There are many things left undone here in Waitakere, where we simply ran out of time or will or money to complete. Some were victims of timing in the property market, such as Waitakere One in Henderson. Some, victims of central government changing its mind as elections changed, such as social housing in Hobsonville. Some were incomplete and could only be passed on for others to complete, such as Westgate.



There are two paths I want us to avoid at this time. Firstly, that there is someone to blame for this. At the end of it, our job is to stand tall and serve the people who did and did not elect us for the betterment of the whole. Forget the blame part of grieving, continue supporting each other, continue the good work that we do.

Secondly, that we could have done more with more time and that there is a tragedy to unfold in that loss. We have faced astonishing odds and won in so many areas. Our reputation as a political centre that pulled together a rag-tag bunch of suburbs and gave them pride, town centres, and a whole new brand and identity, will never be lost.

Perhaps the best moment for recording all of that is the history of Waitakere, a book which is due out later this year.

We will of course stand valiantly before the Select Committee in the months ahead as the various legislation is passed to seal our fate and those of the other Cities and regions in Auckland. As Waitakere has done more than all others, we doggedly follow the processes laid out and expect everyone else to honourably follow them with similar dignity.

Maori passions will be heated in the months ahead - they feel betrayed and slighted, and rightly so, and I will certainly join the hikoi if it is going my way. As for our communities, they have fought for sustainability and for this wonderful, magnificent ecocity that we have created. They will forever have my undying gratitude.

Politics is a changing beast, and a friend in politics is always a friend lost. I would like to think that I am a friend of the City first and foremost, and that goes beyond my tenure in this job.

Milestones

Sandra Coney's book Piha Guardians of the Iron Sands

This book celebrates 75 years of the Piha Surf Lifesaving Club. It's lavishly illustrated and so full of anecdotes and candid social club shots close to the action that it is definitely a collaborative labour of love from the whole crew. There are boards well over 20 feet long, and more walnuts in glad wrap (Speedos) with well-toned athletes than you will ever see in any single Cosmopolitan magazine. On page 75 there's even a shot of yours truly with an experimental motorised device to pull people out of the surf like something Jacques Cousteau would use.

There is indeed a whole chapter to the "use and abuse of ale" as Sandra calls it, and indeed as much as it charts the rise of a whole masculine culture, it charts attitudes to smoking and smoking sponsorship, drinking and athletics, cross-dressing parties and all other manner of hijinks.

It makes for a great, rich photo album of three generations of dealing with the wildness of the surf there. So congratulations to Sandra - perhaps the book launch was not as large as it should have been, so hopefully we will see it get greater publicity in time.



The plastic bag campaign

Some may have thought that starting a campaign on this scale was the wrong idea, but I am here to report progress against the automatic use of plastic bags. Foodstuffs has now just introduced a charge of 5 cents for every plastic bag. This means the Pak'n'Save, New World and Four Square supermarkets will all assist in leading the charge to lower use. Foodstuffs are to be congratulated in this major effort.

The Big Picture comes to town

It must be something in the surf club air, because Phil Parker the winemaker and entrepreneur with this brilliant idea came from the North Piha Surf Club, via Gisborne. He was my second string PR honcho when I was the PR office for the Auckland Surf Association. Together we created great stories around the helicopter and set in place the success of surf lifesaving that stretched all the way from the sponsorship of the helicopter to the television programme Piha Rescue.

The Big Picture is a grand idea. Phil and his investors have turned the Auckland Fish market bidding room which sees images only of the fish each morning, into a day and evening theatre.

The audience watches a massive screen which is 'The Big Picture', and before them on the table are six or twelve wine tasting glasses. The film magnificently flies the viewer over the Auckland isthmus, down Waitakere's stunning west coast, over Waitakere to the cluster of vineyards, right to the winemaker and the cellar door.

Once the helicopter has landed, each winemaker emerges and introduces the wine, and as the audience picks up that glass, smells its aroma, the winemaker takes you through the tasting notes and suggests some food that would go with it. There are five wineries detailed, all from the Auckland region. It's a compelling experience, and John Key was in good form when he opened it early this month.

There is already a tasting room in Otago and Hawkes Bay, and the presentation will soon be open in Australia, with other countries follow. Our landscape will accordingly draw the acclaim and hopefully the tourist dollar will follow. For more information go to: www.bigpicturewine.com.nz

Valedictory address of Helen Clark

This was an astonishing event, with standing room only in Parliament, and senior delegations from Maori and Pacific people from around the country. It was also followed by a great evening event in Parliament where political colleagues from all living eras were regaled with war stories from the political battlefields.

She was a great friend of Waitakere City knowing nearly all the Councillors by name in history - she opened our building, our pool, our stadium, indeed she was part of our great years. They may not come again for quite a while.

Her years in leadership also saw the strongest relationship evolve between central and local government that we have ever seen in New Zealand. Her leadership into the local provided Waitakere City with a confidence to take on projects and social dimensions to local government that we had always thought local government was capable of, yet we really needed common partnership with central government if they were to be achieved.



M1-M8

Because it is such a moment for New Zealand, and because it charts a particular view of our history over the last four decades, I have included her full speech as attached at pages M1 to M8.

It is quite possible that there will never be an opportunity for us to give such speeches to mark the passing of a whole political order as we are seeing dictated by government fiat through the governance reform process.

But what we did have for now was something even better.

Deputy Mayor Penny Hulse's 50th Birthday

Two great dames of the west combined for a 50th birthday bash at our film studios. The theme was Outrageous Fortune, and no-one let the team down.

The event was the birthday of a half-century of deputy mayors Penny Hulse and Former Deputy Mayor Carolynne Stone. Both are no strangers to working with me, so they know what Outrageous Fortune is like first hand.

It was no coincidence that this epic evening took place on one of the film studio buildings, because this is indeed an astonishing epic to be in. One to mark down, a cathartic moment of weeping and gnashing, a few good fights and make-ups. There will be more information leaked in the weeks that follow - in some ways it's an antidote to the seriousness of the super-city.

We wish Carolynne and Penny - who have remained great friends through the years - both being elected in 1992 and serving this City well, every good wish and success in the future.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE