

Council

**Wednesday, 25 November 2009
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**This report is dedicated to Prof Roger Green, BA , BSc , PhD , ONZM , FRSNZ , member Nat.
Acad. Sci.(USA) , Hon. Fellow Soc. Antiquaries (Lon.)
Pacific pre-historian and long time Titirangi resident**

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT
WAITAKERE CENTRAL, 6 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON, WAITAKERE,
ON WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2009, COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council resolve to:

Receive the Report of the Mayor.

Keeping our heritage

I'm absolutely delighted that the City has committed to the restoration of the Chapel of Faith in the Oaks in Waikumete Cemetery. It's a glorious gem that has never reached its full potential as a community venue.

Its problem has been management. The trust formed to oversee the chapel disintegrated into a tragic farce. Stories of the meetings were Monty Python-esque and would be incredibly funny if one of our precious heritage buildings wasn't at stake. The Council is now charged with bringing together a new future and a trust that will be functional and dedicated to the building's future.

I have followed this chapel's fate with close interest as I think it is one of the best places for music, weddings and performance in the Auckland region. My hope is that it will be restored and used well in the future.

A hundred metres from the chapel is another unfortunate heritage site – the Sexton's House. May I state a disclaimer: My wife is on Friends of Waikumete. she and I both walk there regularly and I fear for the safety of this beautiful wooden building. It has had a history of bad tenants. Now it sits empty and prone to vandalism, with an inappropriate fence around its uncut lawns. I hope that a suggestion made during this year's Annual Plan deliberations which would see this house become a venue for functions (including after funerals) comes about sooner rather than later. I'm raising this issue as I believe we are not paying enough attention to our Waikumete heritage sites. Action to conserve the Sexton's House must be given serious and urgent attention. It needs to be restored to its original design and character. We must treat it as a community asset for future generations to enjoy. There are so many groups that could look after this treasure and use it. Organisations are begging for space and usage would ensure its safety through this century.

I am joined in these sentiments by the Friends of Waikumete, the Historic Places Trust, the West Auckland Historical Society, Western Leader editor Matthew Gray and the people of the West.

Negotiating a crisis

One of the most important phone calls I've ever received came in early November. On the line was Building and Construction Minister, Maurice Williamson. He wanted to talk about the leaky homes crisis.

His proposal was an attempt to properly apportion the estimated \$6.5 billion repairs bill this disaster has dumped on New Zealand. It's a conversation I've been waiting 10 years for.



The roots of this national disaster go back to 1991, when National passed the Building Act. It left the door open for developers to cut corners. Within a few years we were feeling the consequences. House after house, apartment after apartment, school after school were found to have severe weathertightness issues brought on by shoddy construction.

People were left looking for someone to blame. National escaped the worst consequences of their decision by being voted out in a landslide. Construction companies collapsed. Builders went out of business. Worst of all, the incoming Labour Government washed their hands of the crisis. The stock response was to deny all responsibility and pass the buck back to councils. We were left as the last man standing.

So I'm not going to complain when the Minister owns up and puts an offer on the table. True, it's too light. Home owners are still paying too much. But we have to remember how good it is that we're talking to Government. We haven't been for a decade, while our people have remained in limbo over what's going to happen to their damaged homes.

Now the hard work of negotiation begins.

The cities most affected are Waitakere, Auckland City, North Shore, Manukau, Tauranga, Christchurch and Wellington. We have met in parliament with the Minister and we have had subsequent calls with the Minister and each other. We are greatly concerned that if this issue drifts into 2010, the deal could be lost amid the clamour to set up the new Auckland Council.

I'm also worried that the mayors of other cities do not have the knowledge that is brought to this city by our Legal Services Manager, Dennis Sheard. He has added his diligence and understanding to the debate. The solution to this problem is far more complex than simply striking hammering out percentages of liability with Government.

There is a great need to understand how any deal will affect up to 55,000 home owners. For instance, it is not clear whether the deal on the table is available only to owner/occupiers or all home owners including those who have purchased properties for investment purposes. I can imagine ratepayer angst at subsidising another ratepayer's investment risk.

It also needs to be clear that the scheme is going to be voluntary and the consideration for entry is agreement by the owner not to sue the Council and the Government. Presumably owners will still be able to sue third parties such as construction companies and builders.

Mayors are seeking a meeting with Prime Minister John Key in order to try and get some agreement on this crisis. It will be a difficult, complicated and painstaking process but it's not one we can back away from. The stakes for this country are high. We now have to work together to hammer out a deal that works for the nation, councils and in the interests of the 55,000 people with leaky homes.

Banks must come to the play with low interest arrangements for those repairing their leaky homes.

We also have to get the best possible construction deal possible.



Over the last few years, I've been in contact with the former MP for Tauranga, Bob Clarkson, known affectionately as Bob the Builder. He's no fool when it comes to leaky buildings and says to me and anyone who will listen that many of the houses can be repaired for a fraction of what has been estimated. His argument is that that the estimated repair bill for many of the places are overstated. He believes the leaks can be repaired by good building techniques so long as they haven't damaged the timber.

On radio and television I have stated that in attacking this problem head on, we could also be restarting the building industry in New Zealand. I have no fear or favour in saying major Kiwi companies like Fletchers or Carter Holt Harvey should be approached to join us in a grand coalition to help put right the anguish and tragedy that has arisen on our watch as politicians. It would be a contract worth billions of dollars. Now that's what I call a bulk buy. There are companies out there willing to seize that opportunity at a discount to home owners.

In a time of recession, it's the biggest job on offer in New Zealand.

Farewell to a Pacific icon

M1-M2 The patriarch of Pacific scholarship is gone.

Roger Green died on 4 October, aged 77. A Titirangi resident, he was the eminent Pacific archaeologist and anthropologist in Auckland.

Born in New Jersey and raised in Albuquerque, Roger came to New Zealand in 1958 expecting to embark on nine months of fieldwork in French Polynesia. The young Fulbright Scholar fell in love with the country and the Pacific. It was to be the start of a career spanning 50 years.

In 1961, he began his research and writing with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Auckland. He was prolific. His name appeared on dozens of journal articles. Many detailed the archaeological records of Polynesia and Melanesia. Others made important discoveries on the historical linguistics of the Pacific. His field research was equally robust, eventually covering the whole of Oceania. He shed new light on the culture, food, politics, religion, rituals and genetics of the pre-historical Pacific.

M2 Roger was awarded the title Emeritus Professor after his retirement in 1992. It simply spurred him to more writing. His bibliography extended to more than 300 journals and publications. There were two new papers published in the week prior to his death. More are on their way.

In 1995 he received one of the ultimate academic honours when his colleagues and former students presented him a *festschrift* titled *Oceanic Culture History: In Honour of Roger Green*. Its 700 pages are a tribute to the width and breadth of his influence in the lives of academics across the Pacific. Roger was an ardent supporter of hundreds of young scholars, many of whom have gone on to become prominent intellectuals. He was a pioneer, a leader and finally a learned elder statesman, passing on his lessons to those who would succeed him.

The tributes flowed freely after his death. Former student and distinguished scholar Andrew Pawley called him:

"The most influential figure in the field of Oceanic prehistory in the last 50 years."



Others applauded him as:

“The father and grandfather of archaeology and anthropology at the University of Auckland.”

“A teacher, mentor and backer to countless younger scholars.”

To us he was, quite simply, a great Westie. A humble, thoughtful man, he was a sheer delight to know. Much of his work was done from his home in Titirangi. Roger was internationally acclaimed as a scholar, but his roots were always in Waitakere.

With his death, we say goodbye to one of the greatest intellects our city has ever known. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family on behalf of the city and New Zealand. But we know there are many out there still living the lessons given to them by Roger. Though he is no longer here to guide them, they will continue to expand our knowledge of the Pacific and its history.

That’s the way Roger wanted it.

Milestones

Inspector Scott Webb will be leaving us soon to take up a position as a Band Two Inspector in Auckland Central.

Scotty, as he’s affectionately known, has been one of the most dedicated members of the Waitakere police force and a great support to senior police. He is extremely well liked and respected by the Waitakere force. We wish him well in his promotion and thank him on behalf of the people of Waitakere for his service.

On November 4 all branches of the BNZ closed and worked for the community. ‘Closed for Good’ is a fantastic concept and a huge boost to our community, clubs and charities. I can’t thank them enough for giving their knowledge, skills and time.

Major international awards have gone to Waitakere superyacht designers.

Hobsonville based Yachting Developments’ superyacht ‘Bristolian’ won the ‘Best Sail – 24 -40m’ section at this year’s Ft Lauderdale International Boat Show. The award is judged by the International Superyacht Society. Congratulations to all Yachting Developments staff, from designers to apprentices, who contributed towards ‘Bristolian’ gaining this prestigious honour.

Henderson based Alloy Yachts managing director Tony Hambrook was also honoured with an ISS Leadership Award. It goes alongside his Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit award for service to the New Zealand export sector.

It’s great to see Westie businesses winning on the world stage.