



**Far North
District Council**



TŪHONOTANGA MINITI ATTACHMENTS MINUTES

Te Hiku Community Board Meeting

14 May 2024

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Minutes for the Houhora Settlers and Ratepayers Association

C/O Eric Wagener 3778 Far North Road Pukenui

12/3/24

The Mayor & Councillors

Far North District Council

Memorial Ave

Kaikohe.

Dear Elected Members,

In a newspaper article in the Northland age paper around about six weeks ago it was stated that there was a housing crisis in the Kaitaia/ very far north region and that the council did not know what the answer was.

This association suggests that you look no further than the proposed new district plan, and previous plans, which completely ignores public submissions made by this association, in there response to the district councils request for their views on a 30 year forward plan, and subsequently also to new plans. The public of the Pukenui/Houhora area, Spent many hours compiling their views of what was required in this area. One of the tasks being identifying areas which could be zoned for residential and commercial development. Almost every suggestion made in that extensive plan has been totally ignored by the FNDC especially those relating to housing and housing development, and the lack of provision within district plans to allow for subdivision of a reasonable size for housing. It is almost unbelievable therefore when one reads that the council is concerned about the lack of areas to develop into.

It seems that the only thing that council is interested in is making things difficult for the general public to use local resources to provide for local people.

The fundamental role of local governance is to reflect the wishes of the public they represent, within the parameters set out by legislation and affordability. It is time that those elected to act on behalf of those who elected them took control of council managers, directing them to fulfil the public's wishes not thiers.

Eric Wagener Chairperson.



Notes Community Board May 2024

The Chair & Elected Members

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express an opinion on the failings of local government to act in matters of local interest.

This is not a new issue it has been round potentially I feel for as long as I have been interested in community matters.

In the mid 1960s I was introduced to the role ratepayers associations could play and should play in local government affairs.

I have continued to take an active part in matters since that period of time.

The fact is that attention taken of the general public's view has diminished as far as elected representatives are concerned and certainly it is the wider public opinion that the Far North District Council management now has no, or little respect for public view at all.

Over the many years I have been involved in the Houhora Riding Settlers and Ratepayers Association I have been party to submissions to many annual plans, to many long term plans, and put many hours along with associates in drafting up public submissions views on where the Far North should head and in particular where development in our particular area of the Far North should be expedited.

On looking back over a short 15 yr period of time It has become quite clear that it has almost been a total waste of time conveying public wants and desires to a council with its own fixed agenda of where and how development should, and would take place.

In fact since 1968 the rate payers association has on at least four occasions to the present day brought up the dire need for sewage provision for Pukenui, Te kao, & Te Hapua. We almost got there as far as Pukenui was concerned however the Far North District Council managers of the day were too slow in putting the proposal to central government for the then available health subsidy, and the subsidy was withdrawn, so the provision for sewage became more onerous and the District Council decided it was unaffordable.

This is only one example of incompetence.

I would like to make it quite clear that I am not berating current elected members as it is my belief that they in turn are being held to ransom by management, just as I came to believe that I was when in a similar situation.

In 2010 this association sent an open letter to the Far North District Council the opening statement of which said the security of all residents relies on employment, community wealth generation, and all sectors of the community working together with the realization that ultimately their contribution however insignificant they may see it, is ensuring that others are able in turn to make things happen. There still seems to be employees within the portals of the Far North District Council who somehow think that they are immune or insulated from this reality and go out of their way to ensure that the simple is made as awkward as possible.

So since then what has changed.

Unfortunately not much.

This association was asked a number of years ago to draw up its vision of where the area should/could develop into in five, ten, twenty years and a long term 30 year plan. As stated earlier this took a group of local people around about six weeks of intense work to prepare they looked at reasonably complex situations and came up with solutions which were put before the public debated and decided upon before presentation to the District Council. To the best of my knowledge none of the significant points in this plan has been reflected in the FNDC's supposedly public driven long term plan.

One of those proposals was for sports ground facilities to be provided where the local Sports ground now is, A District Council manager decided that that area was far too important and valuable a piece of land for a sports ground and so the area was changed without public consultation to council land at the Heads Rd. There was a large amount of money spent on that development at the Houhora Heads Road. Which due to protest from people residing outside the area became totally wasted when the site was abandoned and has now become a wetland reserve.

In a letter you have before you there is another disturbing issue. In a newspaper article in the Northland Age a spokesperson for the far north District Council was discussing the lack of housing and accommodation for the people of the wider Kaitiaki, and outlying districts. Stating that they did not know how to overcome the problem. Yet we currently have a proposed district plan before council with public submission being called for, which has made no provision for commercial or private development in our greater Pukenui area, even though it is recognized that it is growing rapidly, and the need was clearly stated and shown in the previously mentioned long term plans. So have suddenly the managers assumed the authority to dictate to us the public and ignore all the submissions we put forward to put their own spin on where we should be. Not only is this contrary to good governance but if this plan goes through it will mean that every application to subdivide and develop in an area such as Pukenui will cost an enormous amount of money most of which will go to the planning department, and in general residents do not have, and should not have to even consider, if sense prevail

At the moment we are in a rates discussion.

Once again I am absolutely sure that the old management versus councillors game is being played. Management draw up their wish list budget and Councillors and the public are asked to comment on what is affordable and what is not. With the inevitable haggle over a rate rise. In my opinion as has been written in the press the public and our representatives are being misled in the process. The process should be where the last five years of expenditure of each department is averaged out, or carefully examined, and then the elected representatives either agree that that is reasonable or ask management to cut that sum by whatever percentage they think appropriate and then direct managers to either live within that sum or come up with a reasonable argument why they can't. Rather than Councillors spending hours trying to cut items. Remember your fellow citizens have worked to build up assets to retire on which you are in the process of stripping. Through the current district plan proposals they can't even subdivide. What on earth is going on.

We have written to Council expressing our concerns over the lack of fuel at Kaitaia Airport, the need for emergency landing facilities, and our concern over potential sea level rise creating the Far North's potential isolation. The latest letter is tabled for your perusal the NRC has replied but the FNDC as tends to be the habit has not.

Lastly if costs are in fact blowing out in the FNDC where is that occurring, consultants? Increased salaries? Or is it Central Government passing on tasks they were doing to local government to do without supplying the funding to do them. When I sat where you now are the government had passed down by decree some 57 tasks from memory to local government to undertake without providing funding to do them. This is raising the overall national tax by stealth. This is dishonest. I suggested at the time that we should refuse to take on these extras unless we were recompensed to do them.

Personally I thank you for your time and attention, you get little thanks for your efforts. No local politician really has, I would like to believe that change can happen, that the FNDC can be made to listen to the people, change and function along business lines, and stand up for what is right for the people. It will only do so if you our elected reps demand it.