

Louis Toorenburg members report to Kaikohe Hokianga Community Board – June 2019

Mike Edmonds Chair of the Kaikohe – Hokianga Community at yesterday's Kohukohu meeting challenged me to write a report for the next Community Board meeting, I don't think this is what he had in mind.

I go to many meetings in our community, dealing with all sorts of frustrations and I am seen as part of what appears to be a very ineffectual council, as things are always going wrong or are not being done or community not being consulted. There are always challenges from the community for me to do better or get things happening.

I went to a Climate Change meeting in Rawene on 27 April. The issue of Glyphosate being sprayed in large quantities along our roadsides and other areas which is showing links to cancer and other illnesses. Community plans encouraged by Council, with communities being supported by council staff in preparing the plans, so that Council, Community boards have some guidelines about peoples aspirations for the areas they live in. Many plans ask for friendlier options than spraying to be used. However I was challenged yesterday at our monthly CB meeting about the costs of alternatives and whether the whole community was prepared to pay higher rates. It is an option for those communities to have alternatives methods used, but there has to be a will from the whole community to pay for it, as opposed to just the wishes of a few.

I went to community organised meeting in Rawene on 30 April, about contract now up for renewal for the Vehicle Ferry in Rawene. But again community interests are being ignored and council and the consultants hired are opting for a commercial venture. Concerns were expressed by the community that this profit motivated option, could seriously impact on the community and those that use the service with increase in fares, reduction of services and opportunities for improvements. Council took a long time to act on the suggestion from Community to provide Eftpos facilities for ferry fares, that little change has made life so much easier and safer for users and staff.

I have been to lots of meetings in both the Rawene and Opononi areas with regard to water and sewerage, communities are concerned that there has to be a better way than what Council is doing now. Rawene with Te Mauri o te wai group is having the opportunity to research options for a landbased system, it was part of their resource consent and outside consultants have been meeting with the group which includes the wider community and hapu, hopefully their wishes can be accommodated and afforded. Janine McVeagh has for Te Mauri o te wai and for FNDC has done an excellent report on wastewater schemes around the Hokianga Harbour. There is a push to get more of the work funded by Central Government as ratepayers pay for the services used by visitors to the area.

Opononi has a similar group, they too have concerns about the treated waste going into the harbour adding to the toxic sludge already in our harbour from not only human waste but also animal waste. With test results showing bovine waste probably the largest contributor, forestry waste and soil runoff also adding to the mess. The Opononi group is pushing for a peer review of the work done so far by independent engineering group and work needing to be done. They are also asking for a state of our harbour survey. The Opononi scheme requires a new Resource Consent for its discharge in August, but FNDC has to have their application in by the end of May, otherwise the NRC consent expires at the end of August and a whole new process has to begin, FNDC has already missed its first deadline which was at the end of February, if it had been done FNDC would have been able to continue work on the renewal until such time the work was completed, if it misses the May deadline even NRC will not be able to help

with extensions. The Opononi Scheme has been in breach of its consent conditions and NRC had in place since 2016 an abatement notice on FNDC to do something about the high E-coli readings, so high that the method they use to record is not able to show how far off the chart it is. FNDC has been trying to make changes by improving maintenance on the plant, removing sludge, replacing equipment. The liaison group wants all the wetland cells reinstated, the larger one being taken out for dealing with sludge removed from the ponds. The replanting the last time wasn't very successful, and better stock proof fences are needed to keep wild cattle out of the wetland cell area. The group doesn't want a battle between FNDC and NRC and hopes the issues can be sorted amicably, as it will be our rates to both councils that will pay legal costs, fines and potential daily fines that maybe imposed for everyday FNDC is in breach.

A recent report to Council on sludge shows that the treated waste for 30,000 Northland people enter our Hokianga Harbour from schemes not only from Rawene, Opononi and Omapere and Kohukohu but also from Kaikohe, with Kerikeri and Russell sludge being trucked to Kaikohe plant for treatment added to this is the Septic tank waste for much of the mid north which gets emptied in Kaikohe and Rawene treatment plants.

<https://www.fndc.govt.nz/your-council/meetings/record-of-meetings/2018/2018-07-31-infrastructure-network-committee/2018-07-31-Infrastructure-Network-Committee-Report-5.2-A2121718..pdf>

People from the Hokianga don't want this to happen anymore, a Hikoi to Waitangi about the state of our Harbour this year was quite successful, getting lots of attention from media and ministers. Our foodbasket is threatened, with tests being conducted on several shellfish beds that have died, also our beaches have been closed over recent summers seasons because of health concerns, not good for communities so reliant on their beaches for economic wellbeing.

Central Government is also looking at the issue of 3 Waters and looking at bringing it all under their umbrella. I went to their workshop in Kaikohe recently, very informative, but I worry about who pays the bills as the Far North has so many issues, these have to be paid for from somewhere.

A Resource Consent application has gone in for taking bore water from Smoothy Road for Opononi and Omapere, tests done shows ample good quality water (although concerns being expressed that tests were done during an extremely wet summer), Hopefully Council will need less reliance on the Waiotemarama and Waiarohia Streams which get severely impacted during dry summers, consent conditions also require FNDC to let more water pass down stream, increased from 10lps to 14 in August this year. It is now up to NRC to decide whether or not it is publicly notified. There are concerns that it may impact on nearby springs from which a number of houses and farms draw water as well as taking more water out of the Waiotemarama Catchment. FNDC is asking for it to be non-notified.

At a recent meeting of CB we had a visit from the Chief Executive, Shaun Clark, he also attended a meeting of the Opononi and Omapere Ratepayers Association, message was largely the same, apologising for not getting all the work done there is just too much off it, so changes has been made that all work targeted through the long term plan and paid for by our rates, gets reviewed in October to see what can be achieved, only about 60% is being done around the district at present. I want to put it to our CE, staff and to Council what percentage of the work is being done in Kaikohe or Hokianga, it would be great if it was 60%, I hazard a guess 5%, I think a huge rate reduction is in order, we have paid the rates, let's get the work we paid for done. Part of the problem for Hokianga is that it is so far away from

contractors to do the work and that local contractors find it difficult to meet requirements to become a Council contractor like insurance and safety requirements.

The issue of much needed footpaths in our ward comes to mind, over the last 5 years I have been on site with 3 or 4 different staff members, contractors and community leaders, looking at proposals for work to be done, being told yes this will be done before October, Christmas, June in 2014, 2015 etc, Money for footpaths and rated for has been accumulating for almost 6 years at \$150,000 a year, only to be told by the latest staff person at a recent CB, that there is a new system in place, one that is subsidised by NZTA at 66% so we would get more work done on footpaths in our district pity very little or any are in the Hokianga. So what happened to the money already budgeted and rated, previous staff person at another CB meting said it was safe and the work will be done. New guy, nah sorry I haven't been told about this. Come on FNDC, how about throwing some of the crumbs out Hokianga way. I won't repeat the comments our Chair Mike Edmonds made at the now disbanded Footpath group and repeated at yesterday's CB meeting.

Tomorrow I go to a meeting in Rawene with NZTA, hopefully they will have some answers for some of the community's concerns, speed limits, footpaths, State Highway status for Twin Coast Highway, ferry etc.

I wonder why the Mayor used his casting vote to bring down the rate review I have been pushing for many years, firstly through submission process to annual and long term plans, and later through CB after being elected. There appears to be an imbalance there, with smaller communities now having to pay for their infrastructure through various targeted rates, with depreciation added to the mix, with infrastructure being revalued upwards every couple of years and then depreciation now being charged over the increased value with the view of future replacement, what happens to the many millions now stashed away in the depreciation accounts for our sewerage plants, water infrastructure, halls etc., one estimate I was told \$60 million, it is used to pay debt, and what happens then when something is replaced, money sought through subsidy and increased rates and loans and then the whole process begins again, the ratepayer forever being asked to pay more for something that has been paid for over and over.

I recently went to the bi annual conference of Community Boards in New Plymouth, this was well attended and the things that came through strongly were to give Community boards more power and resources to achieve the aspirations of the people they have been elected to advocated on their behalf, this has been done in Coromandel-Thames area, with great results and costs savings.

And to encourage the youth of our area to stand for community boards, it was great to see so many younger people at our conference. So I would like to make the following recommendations.

“That the Kaikohe Hokianga Community Board asks that Council investigates what has been achieved by Coromandel Thames when community board has been given more responsibility”

“That the Kaikohe Hokianga Community Board, invite or co-opt to our board one or more members from the Far North District Council Youth Council, to participate in our meetings”

2 May 2019