

## **Chairman's Report to AGM**

**June 2021**

First, let me introduce myself to anyone who does not know me. My name is Laurie Slee and for the past 12 months I have been Chairperson of the Cockle Bay Residents and Ratepayers Association. Now is the time for accountability – which means telling you what we have been doing to advocate your interests.

### **Cockle harvesting**

This is a major achievement, after a number of years of trying! Other people also played a part, but, as an Association and as individuals, we presented some compelling evidence to the Ministry of Fisheries on the depletion of cockle numbers at Cockle Bay beach, and increased sedimentation. Miriam Clark and Fiona Rankin, assisted by Julie Mitchell, did some excellent research and analysis on the subject, and masterminded our submissions. We are pleased to report that the Minister has placed a 3 year ban on cockle harvesting. Barry Wood and fisheries protection officers were present at the time that harvesting usually commences, in order to ensure compliance. The situation will be reviewed at the end of the 3 year period. In the meantime we are debating what monitoring of cockle populations needs to take place, so that we can keep our fingers on the sustainability of this important resource.

### **Proposed Sandspit Road Apartments**

At our last AGM there was a lot of debate on the proposed apartment block at the Steward Motors site on Sandspit Road. It has continued to be a time consuming activity for Fiona Rankin, Julie Mitchell, Graeme Lane – who then stepped aside to focus entirely on the topic – and Grant Taylor, who provides us with a more objective level of oversight to our debates. The current status is that:

- i) The Council referred the consent application directly to the Environment Court. This imposes some rather more vigorous procedures on both the applicant; the Council and submitters.
- ii) Submitters to the application were given an opportunity to become Section 274 registered parties to the Court Action. Registered parties include CBRRA, Reydon Place Residents Society Incorporated (RPRSI) ; Howick Ratepayers and Residents Association (HARRA) and about 55 individuals.
- iii) The Court process places a lot of emphasis on the qualifications and expertise of witnesses. This is much more so than in the case of the earlier application for 71 apartments held before Independent Hearing Commissioners. The Court also takes a dim view of people wasting their time. As a result of this some 36 individuals (including couples) have agreed to support the CBRRA submission.
- iv) Council now have a QC representing them, as does the applicant (Box Properties Investments Ltd). RPRSI have engaged a QC and a Town Planner. Probably based on the fact that this is a precedent setting case they have received a legal grant towards the cost of their QC, and are fund raising towards the cost of a very experienced town planner that they have engaged. They have started fund raising towards these costs. Our Association will be providing some financial support. We encourage individual donations to their fund. Their bank account details are included on our Membership form. They are likely to need at least \$10,000.
- v) In addition to the initial submission to Council on the application, we have so far been required to provide a submission to the Court; a statement of issues to be considered and a detailed submission / evidence. All quite time consuming!
- vi) There has been one relatively short hearing before Judge Kirkpatrick, the Chief Environment Court Judge. At this he basically set a timetable for the early stages of the Court case. This was followed up by a deadline by which all submitters had to respond to the applicant's and the Council evidence. That deadline date was 30 June 2021. We do not yet have a timetable for the remainder of the Court Hearings.

- vii) The appeal to the Environment Court case against the rejection of the original application to build 71 apartments has been withdrawn. We and HRRRA were both awarded costs – but eligible costs were only Court filing fees.
- viii) The overall approach we have used has been to put a lot of emphasis on the Single House Zone description, objectives and policies as set out in the Auckland Unitary Plan, and the different criteria for interpreting these definitions, including the Evidence Act; and clauses in the AUP. Our second key thrust has been around the environment, and how well, or badly, these requirements have been addressed by the applicant. RPRSI have focussed on the definition issue and effects. HRRRA have put particular emphasis on stormwater issues, including evidence from a retired water engineer. We spent several hours discussing his submission with him. In this way there has been only minimal duplication of effort.
- ix) Our final submission ran to some 35 pages of very evidence-based information. It will have been circulated to all parties to the Court action, but is not available to others as the Court regards submissions and evidence as confidential.
- x) An underlying concern is that the Howick Local Board – in this case through no fault of their own – were not consulted on the application.
- xi) On a different front completely Fiona and I made a presentation to the full Council Planning Committee expressing our concerns about Integrated Residential Developments. In preceding months we had talked to Sharon Stewart and some other Councillors on the subject, and corresponded with one of the Orakei Local Board elected representatives and local citizens. It is good to report that the Planning Committee is considering a Plan Change on the subject. I do not yet have a timetable.

### **Roundabout at Alexander Advene and Avoca Roads**

Many people will be aware that Auckland Transport (AT) proposed to spend nearly \$300,000 on a raised roundabout at this road junction. On enquiry we established that there had been no reported accidents at the site. We suggested to AT that the money would be better invested in safety improvements where there was a history of accidents. Alternatively that if their objective was to minimize risk to pedestrians then there are many other road intersections along Sandspit and Litton Roads where foot traffic – and therefore safety risks – was much higher. Basically they ignored this point. We are left with the strong feeling that they simply wanted to dust off an earlier engineering driven proposal for a roundabout, and listened with closed ears. It is interesting to note the debates now occurring around Half Moon Bay on roundabouts being installed there.

### **Submissions and “Official Discussions”**

We have been involved in a number of submissions or official correspondence with Council, the Howick Local Board and Council Controlled Organizations. Examples include:

- xii) Integrated Residential Developments (mentioned earlier). In this context I would like to thank Adele White, Bo Burns and John Spiller for their implicit support, whilst recognizing that they have to some extent been muzzled by the Council itself;
- xiii) As a result of some of our discussions with the Local Board we were invited to contribute a series of questions on water, and these were posed to various officials and the discussion was documented. HRRRA was also involved. The presentation got termed “20 Questions on Water”.
- xiv) A submission on the sale of reserves. We expect to make verbal submissions at the proposed hearings on the subject;
- xv) Budgets and 3 year plans
- xvi) Parking at Cockle Bay Beach (in particular to support Barry Wood, who had expressed concerns with AT about incorrect parking).

- xvii) some involvement with the very poor road repairs at Evelyn Road. A lot of this was driven by local residents, but one of our Committee attended an initial meeting. The issue has still not been resolved.
- xviii) We have also provided some assistance to a local resident on the issue of “boy racers” and dangerous driving.
- xix) We are following up on the status of the Howick Information Centre.

## **The Future**

Quite a lot seems to be happening in local government at the moment. Central Government has published new urban development policies. A Commission on local government is being established, although I have not yet studied the Terms of Reference. Only this week the Minister for Local Government has announced proposals for a massive overhaul of water institutions.

We are in a somewhat special position of having the Shadow Minister of Local Government as our local MP, and also a responsive Labour Party list MP, Naisi Chen, from within our wider geographical area.

We have already sat down and had some preliminary discussions with Christopher Luxon about future directions for local government. This gave us an opportunity to develop some themes we discussed a long time ago with the late Dick Quax on issues such as the role and scope of local government including the so called 4 Wellbeings, (social, economic, environmental and cultural responsibilities imposed by central government on local government); opportunities for cost reductions; benchmarking comparative council performance, and what performance indicators could be used; strategies on what I call the “privatization continuum” which evaluate outcomes from alternative options for future development; whether Public Private Partnerships can reduce costs for residents etc. Whether we participate in substantive submissions to any government consultation processes, and so on is a topic for discussion by the incoming Committee.

So some of these latter points are what I would term “big picture” considerations. Other issues are much more local. I have not forgotten that we received a clear direction a few AGMs ago that this is to remain a focus for your Association. If the incoming Committee feel that over the next 12 months we should also be pursuing some big picture reform opportunities we will probably carry out some informal survey of members, so we can be sure our own views reflect those of our wider constituency.

## **Finance and Membership**

I will leave it to Grant Taylor to talk on this. I will only say that I have been encouraged by the many messages of support we have received during the year.

## **Communications**

We continue to do our best to improve our communications with members. Fiona Rankin is doing a great job updating our web site , and placing Facebook posts with relevant material. We can now track our Facebook posts into “hits” on our web site.

## **My thanks to Committee**

Of course none of the above would have been possible without the work of a very dedicated committee. Let me finish by paying tribute to these people.

- Barry Wood has been able to provide expertise in fisheries, and developments at Cockle Bay Beach. He has worked hard to improve the walkway from the beach to Pah Road.
- Fiona Rankin has been a hugely important contributor to the work of the Association, with particular emphasis on both the proposed development at Sandpit Road and the preservation of cockles at “our” local beach.
- Grant Taylor has continued to work faithfully in the role of Treasurer, as well as bringing decades of local knowledge and well developed community networks and contacts to our work.

- Julie Mitchell has been another well informed, reliable and steady researcher and contributor to debates on all the topics we discuss, from the proposed development, to cockles, to local facilities
- Phil Snookes has been a useful contributor, and a valuable conduit to those responsible for monitoring safety in the area through the Howick Community patrols
- Roger and Miriam Clark co-share a role on the Committee. They bring a useful youthful perspective to the Committee. Miriam's background qualifications have also been very helpful in the "cockles debate".

During the year we lost the services of Graeme Lane, Roger Brookes and Margaret Fannen from the Committee. Graeme wanted to focus entirely on the proposed Sandspit Road development. We have continued to collaborate closely with him on the subject. Roger has moved on to new interests in new areas, and felt he could no longer focus in detail on the issues that have taken up our time. Margaret found that it was becoming harder to make the commitment she had hoped to the work of the Association. We support her desire for a well earned break from contributions to the community. Phil Snookes has found that his many other commitments mean he has less time to contribute to the Association, and has decided to step down from the Committee.

### **Future Committee membership**

Having told you how hard these people have worked, and how we have lost some Committee members, I am now going to contradict myself and say we want more Committee members; that the work is not too difficult; and to ask people to join us! In truth it is as time consuming as you wish to make it. It can mean a couple of hours once a month, when you contribute your wisdom and knowledge to discussions on a range of topics, through to much more detailed research and contributions to the debate. If you have a passion – or only an interest – in local issues, please put your hand up to join the Committee when we vote on appointments. I think the other Committee members will all say that the meetings are, if not fun, at least enjoyable and stimulating, and an opportunity to try to make things better for everyone. What we are looking for first and foremost is ideas that contribute to getting results. Supporting this view is the fact that all the remaining Committee members are standing again. For this I thank them.

Finally, thank you, our members, for your ongoing support and trust in what we are doing. Remember, we are here to help you