

MINUTES OF THE AGM OF THE NORTHERN ACTION GROUP JULY 2021

Held at Totara Park Hall, 5 Melwood Drive, Warkworth on Monday 19th July, 2021 commencing at 7.30. p.m.

1. WELCOME

The Chair, Bill Foster, welcomed all attendees (31 including the Committee and guest speakers) to the AGM. It was an excellent turnout. Bill identified the speakers: Chris Penk (National MP for this electorate), Greg Sayers (Auckland Councillor for Rodney), Sue Crockett (Fight the Tip) and welcomed them to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

The Secretary (Hugh Briggs) read out the apologies and received more from the floor: - Julie Cotton, Colin Smith, Elizabeth Foster, Carol Greenwood, Brian Mason, and Angela HughBuckton. The apologies of both Marja Lubeck (Labour List MP) and Phelan Pirrie (Chair Local Board) were also accepted. The apologies were moved and accepted.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous AGM meeting on the 20 July 2020 were taken as read. Copies were available at the meeting but no questions were raised.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising and Bill Foster indicated that most of the matters in the minutes would be covered in his Chair's report later on and in subsequent discussion. The minutes of that meeting were then accepted as being a true and accurate record of that meeting. Moved Mona Townson, seconded Bill Foster. Approved.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair, Bill Foster, then read his report supported by Powerpoint slides. A copy is attached to these minutes.

The key points made were:

1. The need to unify the communities/groups/organisations in the Rodney region to ensure that Rodney residents (and businesses) can make decisions to meet the needs of their own community though better governance at a local level. We need a fully coordinated approach to achieve the common goals.
2. In doing so, we need to persuade Auckland Council (and the Government) that Rodney is not a resource that should be taken advantage of without recognizing that it has its own issues that need to be resolved.

3. The present local government structure is not working for the benefit of the local community. Rodney has limited ability to resolve major issues in its region or to determine how these can be funded and attended to.
4. There needs to be a more equitable sharing of funds, using a more balanced approach that will enable Rodney to undertake much needed projects within its own community.
5. This will require a change of legislation to ensure that this will happen. We need to support both our MP's in their attempt to present a Private Member's Bill.

Bill then identified the significant work that NAG had done over the year, making submissions on a variety of matters – on better representation to the Local Government Commission; on better subdivision of the local area; on the Landfill application; on the Council's 10 Year Plan. Some of these produced limited results but NAG has to continue to promote and fight for much needed change. One successful achievement has been the billboard campaign which NAG will continue with, as it clearly gets the message across.

He ended his presentation with thanks to all the supporters for their generous donations, without which NAG could not continue its fight on behalf of the Rodney communities.

A motion to accept the report was moved (Hugh), seconded (Maurice) and approved.

6. TREASURERS' REPORT

Maurice Purdy presented the brief financial statement (copies were made available and was also shown on the Chair's presentation). The financial statement is attached to these minutes. The Society relied upon generous donations from supporters, as it had not sought grants or funding from any appropriate agencies. The bank balance plus income less outgoings was \$290.71, a slight increase from that in 2020. The main expenditure was on materials and the printing of the signs and billboards.

Being an Incorporated Society, NAG was liable for GST payments. However, after the changeover last year, the GST payment was late and a penalty had to be paid. This raised the question as to whether NAG should continue to be GST registered. A question from the floor suggested it would be beneficial to continue. Given the small amount of transactions, it was considered appropriate to continue as such.

It was then moved (Hugh Briggs) seconded (Peter Buckton) that the accounts be accepted as a true and accurate record, as attached and signed off by the Chairperson. The motion was carried.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Bill then moved that the nominations as shown on the Chair's slides for the three officer positions could be accepted, unless there were more coming from the floor. As the Chair was the only nomination, Bill stood down whilst the Secretary, Hugh, acted as Chair to undertake the voting for the Chair position. Bill was unanimously voted as Chair. He thus resumed in his role as Chair to complete the selection process. The nominations for Secretary (Hugh Briggs) and Treasurer (Maurice Purdy) were moved and accepted, as there were no others presented. Lance was re-elected onto the Committee, and Peter Buckton offered himself to the Committee and was duly elected.

8. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Bill advised the meeting that there was no annual subscription provided for. Any person from the area that made a donation was considered to be a financial member as per the Constitution. Members had to fill in the membership form and indicate their donation. A motion to maintain this process was moved by Bill and seconded by Hugh and carried.

9. DISCUSSION

Bill opened up the discussion session by reiterating the main points of his report. His main question to the meeting was to ask how could we unify the Rodney community to get better governance and more equitable funding. NAG wanted positive ideas and possible solutions to achieve this.

He referred to the main points in his presentation:

- Rodney had 46% of Auckland region's area but only 4% of the population
- North Rodney's rate rise was 24% - but what was spent in the district?
- North Rodney could support itself from its own rates – in same degree as rate rise – projects in Rodney would be paid for from these
- Council imposed targeted rates to pay for local projects not being paid from overall Council funds
- There was no real planning for urban growth in rural areas of Rodney which required significant expenditure on infrastructure (roads, services, facilities, schools etc).
- Lack of funding for these and management of natural resources
- Too much bureaucracy
- Rodney being taken advantage of – Dome Valley Tip as prime example
- Advantages of amalgamation overemphasized – empty promises
- Lack of local funding allocation to Board – need a more balanced funding model as recommended by staff
- Lack of services/facilities for growing population

He concluded by saying that there is a need to bring communities together to resolve these issues. NAG's role to coordinate this with urgent action.

Before giving the opportunity for the floor to have its say, he invited the 3 speakers to comment on these issues.

10. GUEST SPEAKERS

All speakers spoke to the topic: "Solutions for Rodney Going Forward"

Greg Sayers: Ward Councillor

His main points were suggestions for NAG (and others) actions to get a fairer deal for Rodney. They would have to pass a 3 way test that Council uses in being a mandated solution, one with significant value for the ratepayers; and one with low risk!

Some of his suggestions included:

1. Getting greater financial transparency – need to see how money is actually spent
 2. Focus on what Council's core business should be – need for it to be more specific
 3. Seek binding public consultation – Council do not listen to public concerns
 4. Get a People's Panel that actually can resolve issues and disputes between Council and the public
 5. Get Council to act on recommendations and promises to make changes
 6. Get Boards to have greater power and financial capability
 7. Establish a Northern Initiative by bringing many groups together, including iwi
- His thoughts were very well received and his hard work for the Rodney communities was gratefully acknowledged.

Chris Penk: Kaipara ki Mahurangi MP

He reiterated that MP's can (and should) be involved in local issues. His main points were:

1. A review of Auckland Council is essential – there has to be a broad term of reference which will lead to real action and change.
2. Rates calculations need to be changed as Rodney (and other rural areas) is disadvantaged.
3. Ring Fencing of funds has to occur to ensure locally raised funds are spent locally
4. Need to develop better relationships between all parties – Council (staff and Councillors) including Watercare and Auckland Transport with Local Boards and community organisations.
5. Need localization – local decisions to be made by the locals. This is to be the theme of his Private Members Bill
6. In developing the Northern Initiative, reach out to the others (particularly the South).

Again, his thoughts were gratefully received and acknowledged.

Sue Crockett (Executive Member Fight the Tip campaign)

Sue outlined the tremendous task that was the Fight the Tip (FTT) campaign. The history was long and complex. She identified the tremendous impact that the protests, billboards and social media had on getting people engaged. They created a membership of between 1500-2000 members. They also got the local MP's (Matt King and Marja Lubeck) involved to submit the petition to Parliament. A petition of 15,000 signatures. The task was to keep the community focused in the key issues. It gained more support because it was not just a local issue but a national one – wastes minimisation and disposal!!?

FTT was very disappointed with the decision on the Resource Consent but took support from the Chairperson's minority disagreement. There are 9 appeals on the RC decision and all parties are working together to fight it at the Environment Court. There are some very strong arguments relating not just to the Dome location but to the whole concept of waste disposal through better waste minimization.

From this whole process (to date) there are important lessons to be learned:

1. Need to have a national (and hence regional) waste minimization strategy which tackles waste reduction as well as recycling
2. Needs legislative change that requires alternative technologies to be assessed and used

Sue was given very real support for an excellent presentation.

Written Statements were submitted by both Marja Lubeck, List MP and area advocate; and Phelan Pirrie, Local Board Chairperson.

Marja Lubeck: Labour List MP Kaipara ki Mahurangi

As the very local MP, she is very aware of the local issues and has been fighting for many causes - the Landfill, the Mahurangi River restoration, and getting local contractors involved in the major projects. As a local rural dweller (on an unsealed road) she has been pushing Council for more funds. She has brought Ministers up here to see the issues for themselves. She supported the need for the governance review and suggested NAG and other groups to make submissions the Local Government Review. She wished us well in our deliberations.

Phelan Pirrie: Chairperson of the Rodney Local Board

Phelan provided NAG with a copy of his Board Chair's report of the activities of the Board over the year. He was disappointed in Rodney's inability to provide the level of service and facilities that it deserved - mainly because of the Covid reduced Council budget overall. He indicated some success with the River Restoration, the Transport subsidies, some Warkworth town centre improvements. He indicated that Council's next year's budget has been set with

few opportunities for realm improvements. He reassured the community that the Board did oppose the Landfill proposal.

The written contributions from Marja and Phelan were received with appreciation.

11. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Bill opened up the discussion for the floor to participate.

Maurice Purdy requested we all thank Sue, Michelle and the Fight the Tip team for wonderful work in getting to the present position. There was strong applause.

Bill F asked whether Facebook produces results. **Sue C** stated it was very successful in getting information out and keeping all involved with comments and information.

Glen Ashton (who started the Facebook page Rodney Community Voices with Julie Cotton) wanted all groups to join up, as suggested by Bill. They now had over 1300 followers (up from 200), which showed the power of social media! It will support all group initiatives and will pass on information. There is a need to engage people and to allow freedom of speech (regardless of their viewpoints). He indicated there is strong discontent throughout Rodney. We need to get one area of governance for the rural area.

Greg Sayers asked why there was no involvement from either Greenpeace or the Green Party in the key Rodney issues (eg Water allocation and the Landfill).

Sue Crockett replied that she had a chat with Chloe Swarbrick with no positive response forthcoming!

Bill asked Greg about the other Initiatives (South and West) as to how they were formed and managed. They were apparently a combination of Council, Local Boards and local organizations and were funded by Council (\$3m was available!). Greg recommended NAG to seek to form and coordinate such a Northern Initiative.

James Addis (Mahurangi Matters) asked Sue whether she had taken up Watercare's invitation to visit Redvale landfill. She replied had been there 3 times for various reasons, but was still not satisfied that the technology being used was adequate to protect the natural environment. Sue could not reconcile the difference between the two landfill's environments. The Dome was in a natural setting.

A person from the floor said that our democracy was not working and no one in government was listening to the communities.

Bill summed up by saying that is why we need to change the legislative framework to enable things to change in Rodney. The Local Government Act is not being operated as it was meant to be – set up for smaller Councils, not the mega cities which did not cater for the local communities. It needs to be reviewed.

Lance Taylor said that the only way that we can achieve any change is by working together. On that note, **Bill** declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm with an invitation to share tea/coffee and finger food.