



CHAIR'S REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Michael Higgins, Environment & Planning Committee Chair

REFERENCE: S611

SUBJECT: **CHAIR'S REPORT – REPORT EP09/08/11** - Report prepared for meeting of 27 August 2009

Great News! Today's meeting will conclude decision making on the Richmond West Development Area submissions. It has been a long journey, and meetings over recent months have centered around individual properties and making the best of issues that will affect them. It has not been easy for Councillors or staff, with so many details that inter-relate and need to be right. I am hopeful that the decisions, when released will demonstrate the effort we have made to get it right.

As a Council we have confidence in the end result and believe in it as the best way forward both for now, and for the long term. Following today's meeting, there will be a period for the decisions to be collated into a package that become part of the TRMP.

As E&P Chair, I have provided opinion to Manager Dennis Bush-King on a number of issues to do with actions of the Department. This communication is appreciated, because it helps to achieve positions that we can all have confidence in. I have also been involved in advising ratepayers on compliance issues, resource consent process and the relationship that exists between staff and resource users. I have chaired a meeting at Spring Grove of residents who are concerned about the potential impact of a proposed water storage pond of 30,000 m³. The concerns are genuine, and the applicant responded by paying highly qualified consultants to explain the issues. People become very anxious at times about these issues, and I want to mention one resident who came to the TDC counter prior to this meeting, demanding information and printed copies of the application. The request was handled politely and efficiently, but the aggression was such that the staff member was reduced to tears and was given time out. As Councillors, we can stand up to aggression, but counter staff are not there for such a purpose. If residents want to have a go at somebody, have a go at Councillors so that they can work through it.

I attended Eco-fest, and with Cr Reese of Nelson City, judged the commercial stands. The standard of all exhibitors was high without exception, and good effort made. The day was very wet and the outside stands (under canvas) included Bunnings who focused on environmentally sustainable products, A group from Golden Bay with a Yurt, Bowater Toyota with the solar powered racer from Australia, and the Highbred Electric/petrol car. TDC had two stands focusing on Pest Control and Environmental Education. Both stands were excellent.

I was one of five speakers in a forum debate in the afternoon. "How to integrate sustainability, and the Economic needs of our region" was the subject. I focused on Carbon as the foundation of the materials and foods that we use, and the process of making carbon sustainable. It differentiates between Carbon and Carbon Dioxide and the debate follows through to a choice between a "Carbon Tax" and an "Emissions Trading Scheme" (ETS). It follows through further to the simplicity of a Carbon tax, and the efficiency in delivering many of the sustainability outcomes that Central Government and Councils are endeavoring to regulate. If Scientists can settle on the fact that greenhouse gas emissions are not the critical factor in climate change, then sustainability going forward will be much easier to achieve because individuals will have greater freedom to change their actions towards that sustainability

I want to wish Rob Smith well during his tenure as acting E&P Manager, and invite Councillors to come up with curly issues so that he can get some experience.

I have included an appendix from the NZ geological society as a perspective on climate change. It makes interesting reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Higgins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Higgins
Chair, Environment & Planning Committee