

QUALITY NOT QUANDARY

needed in Hastings

By Bruce Bisset



The trouble with local elections is that very few people bother asking the questions that really matter, while the vast majority seem satisfied to accept rote platitudes that don't.

This applies as much to many sitting Councillors as it does to the voting public.

For example, a primary question that should be asked of all incumbents standing for re-election to Hastings District Council is: Why did it take you so long to recognise and move to protect the wealth of our highly-fertile soils?

Bear in mind most of those currently round the Council table have been there several terms. Yet only in the past two years have they taken positive steps to stall urban creep and entrench some rules to support farming over development. Ditto our wild coastline.

This only surfaced as an election issue last time round, with the hue and cry over the sports park and Ocean Beach, in particular. In other words, because of inappropriate development the Councillors themselves had championed.

So the real question is, do these people not share the values that underwrite this community? Can they not think for themselves? Apparently not, else why are they merely reactive instead of proactive

- or get it arse about face when they do try to be proactive.

On the other hand, a couple of incumbents have a set election mantra which ticks all the obvious boxes: roads, rubbish, footpaths. As if these core services were not going to happen if they weren't re-elected. But the public buys it.

Funnily enough footpath maintenance, for example, has - despite its erstwhile supporters sitting at the table - been consistently deferred for the last ten years, to the point the Council now has to borrow extra money to start fixing them.

I suggest if you stand for something that is a core service anyway, and it still doesn't get done, you really are a waste of space, aren't you. But then if you haven't the wit to have an original or at least progressive idea to campaign on I suppose that's a given.

Another piece of voter-bait empty suits like to trot out is to promise to hold or even cut back rates. Give me a break! Everything costs more by the day, and the way private business sucks up public money, given half a chance at a contract, is frankly obscene.

So why would anyone believe someone who says they can wave a magic wand and reverse this? They can't.

Those spouting this "lower rates" waffle are either naively stupid or liars. Either way, a poisoned vote. Don't fall for it.

However, politicians know most voters don't bother to engage their brains before voting, so they can talk up last week's leftovers as if it were a brand new gourmet meal, and fairly expect a simplistic public to gobble it up.

No, I'm not being harsh; this is what happens, every time. Thus you get the governance you deserve: politicians who let the public do their job for them, because (except when they want to build monuments) they only act when pushed.

This is where Hastings District Council has failed and is failing. Because this is NOT good governance.

That for me is the key issue; the single most important thing that has to change. But it will only change if you, the public, wake up enough to not only ask the right questions, but think critically about the answers you're given. And then vote consciously.

As for the big vision stuff, Hastings has seen plenty of that of late - Cape Kidnappers cliffside hotel, Ocean Beach township, the Regional Sports Park. Two rightly got shot down, the other should have been if only on the grounds it (and the additional strip residential development flatly denied as possible, but now being promoted around it) is destroying some of our most valuable growing land. Do as I say, not as I do, eh?

Cont pg 3.



Partnering with the community

By Martin Williams
Chair, Napier Pilot City Trust

The Napier Pilot City Trust would like to see a real commitment by candidates for the Local Body elections to community development initiatives, and to work in partnership with community organisations to that end. The need for community development in Napier is pressing and real.

We often hear the catch cry that Councils should focus on "roads, drains and rubbish".

And if one of the minor political parties had its way, perhaps that's all local authorities would have responsibility for!

But what many people don't realise is that Councils have a statutory responsibility to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities.

In fact, this is part of the central purpose of local government, as set forth by the Local Government Act.

In 2002, Councils were given a power of "general competence" in place of existing legislation where their duties and functions were very precisely described. Previously, if it wasn't in the Act, Councils simply couldn't do it.

In exchange for this broader power to act, Councils were given a responsibility to ensure participation by the community in decision making and action by, and on behalf of, communities.

This is all very well, but how can Councils possibly perform such broad functions and carry such a heavy responsibility?

The answer is by working with the community and helping ratepayers themselves to share responsibility for community development, and promoting social and economic wellbeing.

The Napier City 10 Year Plan recognises this expressly in its Community Outcomes, which state:

"The broad scope of the outcomes and their highly integrated nature require a great emphasis on co-operative and collaborative approaches to addressing important community issues. The Napier City Council will continue to work closely with other organisations in the City and region as appropriate, in addressing the various community outcomes."

Cont pg 3.

Elections: The cards have been dealt

By Tom Belford

As everyone knows, nominations have closed for this season's local body elections.

The cards have been dealt and the competitors (disclosure: I'm one) will start to play out their hands. A few aces have been dealt, a fair number of jacks and queens, some middlin' 7s and 6s ... and more than a few jokers!

First of all, a round of applause for those who are standing. It takes courage to put your smiling face and 150-word candidate profile before the masses for their possible ridicule! Whatever anyone's judgment, including mine, is about the merits of any candidate, at least these folks are prepared to run the gauntlet and, if successful, devote a significant chunk of their energy to serving the rest of us ... almost 60% of whom won't even bother to vote. Before moving on to the candidates, a few comments about the voters.

The Voters

I've witnessed several debates within our Councils

about voter turnout, usually in the context of whether they should allocate funds to encouraging people to vote. Various schools of thought emerge.

The dominant strain is that "it's not the Council's business to chide people about their public duty and, besides, we can't make any impact on them anyway."

Part of the issue is that Councillors don't agree about whether low turnout is good or bad. Some assert that low turnout is merely a sign that the masses are "fat and happy" ... if they were ticked off, they'd be protesting in the streets, to say nothing of voting.

I've heard this view expressed mainly by the Councillors who already are well-entrenched - for example, Cynthia Bowers, Margaret Twigg and Eileen von Dadelszen. Ironically, this theory leads to a perverse conclusion: Democracy is working best when *no one* votes. I doubt any of these Councillors would give up *their* votes on that basis!

One suspects they're really saying ... the *right*

people are voting, everything's fine.

But of course it matters who does *not* vote, because of the obvious distortions that result in the kind of people sitting around the Council table, sorting Council priorities. It's no secret that the lowest turnout occurs in areas of greatest socioeconomic deprivation.

One wonders how different our Hastings, Napier and Regional Councils' priorities and spending might be if any of these bodies believed they were chiefly responsible to the majority of their constituents who are actually struggling to get by.

The debate is inconclusive. Nevertheless, at the end of it, this year each Council, with the majority convinced it was a pointless gesture, nevertheless voted to allocate \$5,000 to a pooled regional voter turnout fund to try in vain anyway! What does that tell you about the logic of council decision-making?!

Cont pg 12.

From the editor...



TOM BELFORD
editor

Nominations are closed and serious campaigning is underway. For most candidates in Hawke's Bay, "serious campaigning" means two things – put up some signs and write a profile for the voting guide. Some will leaflet. Candidate meetings are too sparsely attended to have much impact.

So, unfortunately, the most many of us will learn about the candidates is what we glean out of their brief official profiles reprinted in the "Candidate Directory" we all receive in the mail with our voting ballots. I call this the "Magic 150 Words" ... each candidate's fateful self-description – who they are, what they've done, what they stand for, why they should be elected.

I say "unfortunately" because: a) 150 words aren't much to work with to sell one's fabulous qualities (try it yourself); b) there aren't heaps of other resources to consult (BayBuzz is trying to fix that).

So back to the Magic 150 Words.

Although they are so very important, we don't actually get much opportunity to scrutinize them. They show up in our mail starting September 20th, and three Saturdays later our ballots must be handed in. In fact, about half of voters will post their ballots within the first week! For those voters, the campaign will be over already in the first week!

Doesn't that place huge value on those 150 words? And, consequently, shouldn't they therefore be credible?

Effectively, a candidate can claim anything about his or her background, accomplishments or positions without fear of being called out. Unless the claim is so blatantly false or erroneous – "I was the former prime minister" – that it smacks our election officers between the eyes (and is therefore challenged before publication), it will be printed as gospel.

Ofcourse, we're all inclined to trust the candidates to not actually lie to us. But how about simply misleading us?

How about the Councillor – or challenger – who makes it sound like he or she has been a passionate champion of the environment or budget restraint, or ran a successful business (or whatever), when a careful reading and debate of the actual record would prove otherwise? As it's now handled, there's insufficient time for that scrutiny or debate to occur. Believe me, a re-read of the 2007 Candidate Directory profiles of

some Councillors who stood then and now serve would raise some eyebrows!

There's a simple remedy. And that would be to publish all of the candidate statements *now*. The Council election officers have them in hand. And there are not so many that the task would be burdensome.

Put those statements on Councils' websites *now*, so they can be scrutinized by other candidates, informed individuals, and the media. That would surely help stir up some debate. It would help bring positive public attention to lesser known candidates – generally the non-incumbents – who might deserve far more consideration. And it might even enhance general interest in the elections!

Think about it ... "Did you read Henrietta Schmetzler's profile? I never realized she was so active in the community. And I like her ideas. I'll email it to you." Soon there's a boomlet for Henrietta, who might otherwise go unnoticed, as voters hesitantly fill out their ballots at the dining table in solitary puzzlement ... wondering, who in god's name *are* these people? Or should I believe that?

To advance this idea, BayBuzz asked each Hastings mayoral candidate for his Magic 150 Words, to publish on the BayBuzz website. Each said Yes. They're now on our website.

Ask yourself ... why would any candidate *not* want to share his or her official statement well in advance of the voting period? I can't think of a good reason ... can you?

I hope our Councils' elections officers will rise to the challenge to publish the profiles now. One thing I can promise you. We'll do our best at BayBuzz to review the profiles carefully when they do appear ... and sound off if anything seems amiss.

Hmmm! Maybe that's a reason in some minds to not publish them early!

P.S. Practicing what I preach, my Magic 150 Words are online now.

One region, one voice for Hawke's Bay

I'm no bureau 'cat'.

And this month I've realised that despite a fleeting desire to join the election race, being a politician in the current Hawke's Bay local body structure just isn't in me.

A definition of a bureaucrat is that for every solution, you create another problem. This really means that once you're caught in the system you start being part of the system, you become stuck in the process, where progress slows down and sadly nothing ever really happens.

Like it or not, you start to conform and you become more toned to grey as your black and white beliefs fade while you protect your political patch. Just look at National's compromise on alcohol reform – a split drinking age, no tax on alcohol and deferring a decision on zero tolerance on the drink driving limit for two more years until we have more research. All of these are about trying to please everyone by appearing to do something, but not quite enough to do anything!

Andy Train, a man I've held in high regard, once told me that if you are standing still Anna, you are going backwards. I've never forgotten those words – I almost live my day by them. The thought of decaying before I'm 12 feet under would be the worst thing that could ever happen to me.

So when I started to consider politics it was like seeing the beginning of the end. If only I could see it as the beginning of the end of our three councils, then I would have jumped at the chance. But I honestly don't believe that the majority of those standing have the same motivation to abolish the very body they'll have gained a seat on.

Another man who had an influence on my make-up was my school principal, who singled me out in front of my peers as mediocre.

At the time I wasn't too fond of him – and reacted by telling him about those who do and those who teach, then promised I would never to return to his class. (I got a job the next week). But in my wiser years I would like to give him the benefit of the doubt ... that maybe he felt that I was coasting along in my 7th form and that



ANNA LORCK
columnist

frankly I needed to do more.

So here I am – refusing to conform in case I get stuck, and determined never to be average. So I raise the bar and look to the future – where I must stand by my words in the last BayBuzz that the next time we vote it will be for a single regional authority.

A strategy I've learnt from working with the Australian Apple Access Group is that, when you really have a passion and want something, there are those who must work with the decision-makers of the day, and then there are those of us who must challenge if we want change. And what better way than by making the opposition look even better. (You may recall at the time of our protest steam train to Wellington, that our two local National MPs were in opposition and were far more willing to fight than their Labour counterparts, who had to toe the party line.)

In local body politics, there is no "opposition" to keep our voted councillors on their toes. We must rely on others to publicly ask the hard questions, to hold them accountable and to keep progress alive.

And this is where I must turn my energy into action – I will work on a "unite the region" campaign. For me, it's a far better place to be because we have no time to waste. I've had some practice at getting in the face of voters. I am happy to confess being behind plenty of the billboards which are appearing everywhere these days.

We've managed to cover the region with some of the best sites to get attention. Once the election's over I'd love to see us paint the region black and white, turning these into an amalgamation campaign, that sends a very strong message to our newly elected politicians that you are all on notice. One region, one council, one voice.

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THINK before you tick the box

QUALITY NEEDED IN HASTINGS cont from pg 1.

Point is, while it's good to be visionary, it's not good to get carried away by those visions when there are obvious excellent grounds to say woah! Yet that's what happened at HDC in each case – and we're lucky it's only costing \$60-odd million (plus a lost park, plus lost land, plus travel costs, plus....) for the one they pursued.

On the other hand, when it comes to the essential but not very sexy stuff – like sewage – the trend is to “do minimum”. Build a new treatment plant that just manipulates the sludge in such a way it looks like we're improving things, when actually the same old manure – and all the chemicals – still goes into the sea.

Add on a filtration station to take the chemicals

and heavy metals out? Nah. Though given those are likely the root cause of the stench Clive residents now have to endure, maybe they'll be forced to bite that bullet. It should always have been in the plans.

Now, the brief I was given for this piece was to suggest questions you should be asking both incumbents and newbies standing for Hastings: what have you done, what would you do.

And there are an enormous number of issues you could ask questions about, other than those few touched on here.

But I prefer to try and give people an overall picture of the prevailing culture, or quality, of governance, rather than the minutiae, and then let them decide which specific bits to query against the background of that culture. And whether it's a culture they support – or one they want to change.

I hope you're getting that picture. I hope it helps you frame those questions. I especially hope it helps you pause and consider before ticking someone's name just because you've heard of them, or seen their photo, or because they happen to be near the top of the ballot list.

Bottom line is, if you don't know a good positive reason why you should vote for someone, then don't vote for them!

And if you do know good reasons for just two or three candidates, then only vote for them – because every other “also” vote you make may mean that “also” person is elected instead of your real choices.

However I will finish by suggesting two major linked issues you may like to quiz candidates on, because they will have the largest impact on the Bay of any in the coming decades – water, and climate change. Ask: how would you best ensure

the district's water supply is maintained, kept or made clean, and allocated in the most appropriate ways so that there is sufficient to go round without over-stressing the resource. Ask: how would you change the District Plan, the economic model, and the infrastructure to cope with the predicted effects of climate change, assuming a worst-case scenario of impacts; and what will you do to ensure the public both understand and appreciate the need for these measures.

Remember, while it's never too late to change, it's easier to change sooner than later. If you don't see the current Councillors delivering the future that needs to be made, then you know what to do. Start changing now.

■ **Bruce Bisset served three terms as an elected representative of Auckland City before moving to Hawke's Bay.**

Don't forget about well being of your community

PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY cont from pg 1.

Councils should put this approach into practice and embrace all of the resources within their districts and regions. The best resources you have as a Council are the very people whose interests Councillors are there to serve. Their skills are many and varied. They know where the needs are most acutely felt, and how they can be addressed.

Everyone is aware of the pressure on the “public purse”, and Councils are very conscious of concerns about increasing rates. But it is not all about money.

Community groups and agencies struggle with other types of resources as much as they do with money. Councils have significant resources in terms of reserves, halls, libraries, administrative staff, computer networks and the like which non-governmental organisations and voluntary groups can only dream about.

Those skills and resources could be more efficiently directed and applied by working in partnership with groups and individuals in the community who are themselves committed to community development, and improving social

and economic well-being, but might lack the management, skills or infrastructure to put their dreams into reality.

If “Public Private Partnerships” are good enough for new roads or even prisons, surely the model is worthy of trial in promoting this central purpose of local government.

Last year, Dr Robin Gwynn presented compelling statistics from census data as to the gross disparity in economic well-being within Napier, and with Maraenui, Onekawa South and Marewa scoring poorly in terms of socio-economic deprivation.

On the face of it, Napier City has everything going for it. It has a fantastic setting, unique architecture, wonderful walkways and parks, and gives every impression of a well-ordered, clean, tidy and attractive place to live. But beneath the surface, real issues arise, as revealed by Dr Gwynn's analysis.

Napier City has recently sought accreditation as an international safe community, citing projects like falls prevention, alcohol accord, work place safety, and community patrols. Heaven knows that in recent times we have all had cause to question how safe our communities in Napier are!

But if we want to reach the real root causes of crime as they affect the safety of our communities,

we need to go much deeper.

Every year, Napier Pilot City Trust facilitates Treaty of Waitangi workshops. We would urge any candidates who are elected to attend and learn what many of us missed out on in our secondary school or even university educations.

Attendance would foster a proper understanding of the extent to which Maori faced social, cultural and economic deprivation as a consequence of colonisation, and then the subsequent economic forces – the drift towards urban centres (the very creation of Maraenui), the economic upheavals of the 1980s, spectacular rates of job loss, resultant dependency on welfare, and everything we see today that has clearly stemmed from that profound sequence of events. Until issues are understood at that level, and we can work out ways to enhance the standing and wellbeing of all sectors of our communities, we cannot have a safe city.

In terms of working with communities to address such issues, we in Napier might envy the fantastic work fronted by Henare O'Keefe and the U-Turn Trust, working collaboratively with Hastings District Council on a range of community development projects centred in Flaxmere.

Napier too has lots of battlers working within

the community who need to be supported and commended. Mayor Barbara Arnott presented Napier Pilot City Trust awards to eight such battlers during Unity Week this year. But the relationship between the Council and the community needs to be taken much further.

So that is what the Trust would like to see newly elected Councillors commit to – working with their communities. Empowering individuals and groups to better look after and serve their own needs, rather than pretending or assuming Councils can go it alone.

Napier was put forward as a Pilot City in 1983 based on the concept that as a city of 60,000, it was not too large to get to know itself. Napier City Council committed to this concept but the interest has since languished. It should be revived.

Candidates, once elected, you should do a stock take within the community of voluntary groups and organisations you could work with. Then help the coordination effort, and work out where Council resources can best be applied working with the community you represent.

That would indeed be action by, and on behalf of, communities – the very purpose of local government.

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PROTECT SOILS AND BIODIVERSITY

Alan Baldock
Candidate, Regional Council
Napier Ward

Alan Baldock's name will be familiar to Hawke's Bay voters – the Pakowhai Road orchardist and horticultural contractor was a Hawke's Bay regional councillor from 1995 to 2004, and an unsuccessful candidate for the authority in the last two elections.



After throwing his hat in the ring in the Hastings constituency in 2007, he's returning to his former stomping ground in Napier for the 2010 election.

Baldock has continued to have a public profile as spokesperson for the Land Protection Society, which led opposition to locating Hastings new sports park on what the society describes as some of the best soils on the Heretaunga Plains.

Baldock, who is Napier born and educated, has completed a Diploma in Environmental Management in recent years and says, if elected, he will bring a sharper environmental focus to the Regional Council.

"I think the Council has an environmental focus but it gets side tracked by other issues."

He's generally uncritical of the current regime, however, saying it has a sound base document to work from in the Regional Plan and is doing a good job of managing Hawke's Bay's air, land and water resources.

"The Hawke's Bay environment is in pretty good shape although there will always be issues. One is the huge increase in dairying – if it grows to the

extent it has in some other regions we may have to look at limiting its impact."

While the Land Protection Society lost the fight over the location of Hastings sports park, Baldock believes the campaign generated huge interest in the soils on the Heretaunga Plains.

He wants to build on that by getting the Regional Council to properly recognise Hawke's Bay's soil resources and provide guidance on using and protecting them. He also advocates putting development of a Regional Biodiversity Plan back on the council's agenda, saying we can't properly manage threatened resources like wetlands without knowing what and where they are.

But his major issue is frustration over poor understanding about the Regional Council does, although he doesn't blame the Council for people's ignorance.

"People can't seem to distinguish between the role of the Regional Council and the territorial authorities (such as Hastings district and Napier city). I can't put my finger on why - it's probably the same all over the country.

"The way I explain it is that we have a natural environment and a built environment and the Regional Council's job is to regulate what happens in the latter to manage effects on the former."

Baldock thinks that role is too important to risk it being neglected if the Regional Council joined a Hawke's Bay super council. "What happens with unitary authorities is that environmental issues tend to go down the pecking order and get less attention. We need to keep them prominent."

Nor does he support the proposed holding company to manage the Regional Council's assets. "I don't have in-depth knowledge about it but I don't see the need for one. I favour

direct ratepayer accountability and, at present, I think the Council is doing a pretty good job of managing its portfolio."

Baldock says he offers voters a common sense approach.

"The greatest thing a councillor can have is common sense, particularly when it comes to environmental questions.

"I will also be speaking up for those on fixed incomes. As an orchardist, I can really relate to those people. They are always having to scrimp and save and have little ability to cope with rate increases."

Prepared by Katherine Edmond

TIME TO GET THINGS RIGHT

Tom Belford
Candidate, Regional Council
Hastings Ward

As BayBuzz editor, Tom Belford already attends around three-quarters of the regional council's public meetings but he hopes to be off the media benches and sitting at the council table after the elections.



Belford migrated to Hawke's Bay from the United States six years ago with his family after a career in marketing and communications, for non-profit organisations and corporates.

He continues to advise groups in the US and Europe through The Agitator blog and consultancy work, but his focus is increasingly on writing his daily Bay Buzz blog and publishing the monthly newspaper.

Better regional council management of core environmental issues is number one for Belford. He says the current team has been 'asleep at the wheel'.

Examples include lack of action over meeting new air quality standards and having to be forced by Belford and other media into revealing information about contaminated sites around the region.

"But the grand daddy issue is water - that's the worst performance of all. They continue to hand out water allocations, even when the regional council's own staff are nervous, and they belittle citizen activists who raise concerns."

While many candidates claim credentials from being locally born and bred, Belford stands on his track record.

"I've demonstrated through my volunteer efforts with BayBuzz that I am determined to make a contribution to this community."

That includes, he says, leading the campaign to get 12,000 signatures on the petition opposing development at Ocean Beach, and putting the spotlight on poor water quality in the Tukituki River.

"I've shown you can influence the direction of events from the outside but I want to go further. It's frustrating to sit and listen to the misinformation and extraordinary lack of insight shown by the current councillors. I know the issues very well and am as informed as any sitting councillor."

Belford warns that 'a whole lot of born again

environmentalists' will be pitching to voters in the coming weeks.

"Watch out for incumbents who present themselves as environmentalists up there with Al Gore or Jacques Cousteau.

"Three of the current Hastings representatives have served a total of 33 years on the regional council. They have had more than enough time to get things right, yet we still don't have a credible water strategy."

Belford has endorsed the other Hastings incumbent, first term councillor Liz Remmerswaal, but says the council needs more champions for the environment. "One person won't get the job done."

While amalgamating territorial authorities (like the Napier city and Hastings district councils) 'makes terrific sense' to Belford, he is cautious about any plan to include the regional council.

"Its role in providing checks and balances in the face of steady pressure to push development and cut environmental corners is too important."

Overall, says Belford, the crunch issue at the election is forming a regional council that is firing on all cylinders and has a clear vision of the future.

"I have fought for efficiency and fiscal restraint as much as anyone, but that's not the nub of the issue.

"Forty per cent of Hawke's Bay's economy is essentially based on wisely using our soil and water.

"And our environment-dependent lifestyle attracts visitors, entrepreneurs and professionals to the region. So responsible environmental stewardship is the fundamental job."

Election to the regional council won't change Belford's commitment to publishing BayBuzz.

"I can only see advantages in having someone like me on the inside, with the tools to rally people on the outside."

Prepared by Katherine Edmond

COLLABORATE AND BUILD COALITIONS

Murray Douglas
Candidate, Regional Council
Hastings Ward

There's competition to represent Hastings on the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, with Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce CEO Murray Douglas drawing on his track record to woo voters.



Douglas credits himself from taking the Chamber from a derelict organisation to one with a high profile 'that people now think of automatically'.

Douglas worked in local government roles in New Zealand and Australia for nearly two decades, including 12 years as a CEO for various councils. After a seven-month stint leading the City of Sydney in 2001, he took time out for PhD study in Australia, moving back to New Zealand in 2007. As well as heading the Chamber of Commerce, he has a small orchard near Havelock North.

Smartening up the Regional Council's act and

It makes sense to re-elect

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to the HAWKE'S BAY REGIONAL COUNCIL

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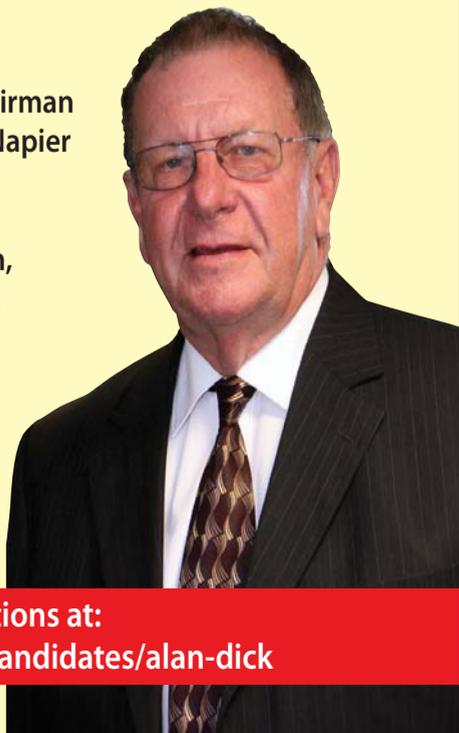
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www.elections2010.co.nz/2010/candidates/alan-dick

getting Hawke's Bay moving are top priorities for Douglas if he's elected.

The Chamber CEO says the current Council is failing to manage its core business efficiently.

"Discharges and consents should be the Council's primary focus but its track record is littered with examples where it has moved too slowly, too late, or made errors."

Instances cited by Douglas include the Regional Plan being found to be out of date, lack of action over compliance with national air quality standards, and prolonged arguments over the state of the Tukituki River.

Also worrying Douglas is how the Council manages its asset portfolio and business units like Venture Hawke's Bay. "It's simply not good enough for an organisation (Venture Hawke's Bay) with a budget of \$1.2 million, to lose half a million dollars and not know it for nine months. I'd be bankrupt if I did that in my business."

He supports the proposed holding company to oversee Regional Council assets but wouldn't want councillors being directors.

While acknowledging that Regional Council rates are modest overall, Douglas says increases should be below the level of inflation. He says between the 2001/02 and 2008/09 financial years, Regional Council rates rose 83%, employee costs 67% and civic costs (including those of councillors) 59%, while the consumer price index went up by only 21%.

When it comes to economic development, Douglas believes the Regional Council should be leading.

"I know we've had a recession, but this place has every ability to have sustainable wealth. All the elements are there but we need to link them up and be more visionary.

"You've got to have passion and leadership to get a region moving – Tim Shadbolt's done it in Invercargill and both Michael Fowler and Fran Wilde did it in Wellington.

When asked if he is the person to inspire Hawke's Bay, Douglas doesn't rule out seeking the council's chairmanship in the future. But he says the immediate job is to empower and empower both staff and councillors to do a better job.

Douglas favours local bodies sharing services and getting good at working as one unit in the back office before considering amalgamation. "If we achieve the above, and we can see if 'over and above' shared services there is a demonstrated benefit from merger, then I would support it."

Douglas says his experience and style make him a good choice for the Council.

"Hawke's Bay undersells itself and I can help change that. I'm pretty articulate and my style is to collaborate and build coalitions."

Prepared by Katherine Edmond

COUNCIL CO-OPERATION KEY TO REGIONAL FUTURE

Tim Tinker
Candidate, Regional Council,
Napier Ward

The Regional Council needs to be more transparent with ratepayers and work more co-operatively at an operational level with other local councils, says Tim Tinker, who's contending for a Napier seat.

The qualified hearings commissioner with a background in farming and produce marketing, says in his former role as a Hastings District councillor, dealing with the HBRC was a frustrating process. "If there was something you needed they wouldn't be interested unless it was on their existing agenda."

In 2007 he was involved in a submission to the



HBRC recommending they 'loop' their plans in with the other councils. "Initially they were fairly cynical and didn't seem to have the vision that we all need to be working as one group." The success of the Regional Land Transport Committee, which considered the priorities of all councils, eventually encouraged all councils to agree on the Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy.

Tinker is convinced regional plans are the key to ensuring councils work together, even suggesting the HBRC chief executive's job description should contain performance incentives to ensure this happens. "Amalgamation is an evolutionary thing. If you can work together there's less need for political amalgamation with all the fears of people losing their identity. You get a lot of the benefits and the best of both worlds," says Tinker. Currently he says decision-making within the HBRC is too piecemeal and fails to refer back to a clear strategic plan and specific long term outcomes, for example the clean up of rivers — a situation that seems to get worse every year.

Tinker has difficulty with the fact that HBRC continues to invest a stash of cash outside the region. "I've always maintained it's quite dangerous for councils to have too much money because they can do big things without the scrutiny of ratepayers. Putting it before ratepayers is a good acid test." Unless it's for disaster relief, he says council money should be invested back into the region.

He also wonders why there's been hardly a squeak from local representatives when central government decided about three years ago to redirect about \$30 million of regionally-targeted petrol tax away from the region. He says this tax was meant to deliver \$70-\$80 million to the region over ten years, but the balance has been siphoned off for roads of significance that aren't in Hawke's Bay. While it might not be illegal, he suggests its unethical because road users are still paying for it.

And withholding the findings of the independent report into the performance of the HBRC hearings committee continues to ring alarm bells. "I'd like to see a lot more openness and it seems the Regional Council has a problem with this."

Tinker, who's been a commissioner at over 150 hearings, says Hawke's Bay's coastal erosion is another major issue likely to plague the region for some time, but concedes he doesn't have all the answers.

Lack of firm data for comparison of longer cycles of "weather patterns, coastal change cycles and oscillations" that affect sand and shingle at

Westshore, Tongioia and other areas, adds to the uncertainty. "Even the experts don't necessary know the full process."

Tinker remains opposed to the 'user pays' approach adopted by the HBRC regarding coastal erosion. "I don't think it's fair that the people living on the beach should foot all the costs for fixing erosion. That's like asking people who live by the roadside to cover the cost of fixing the road in front of them. If you live in a community the community should contribute."

Prepared by Keith Newman

TNO PINK GIRLY GIRL

Michelle Pike
Candidate, Napier City Council
Mayor and At-large Councillor

Toppling Napier Mayor Barbara Arnott at the upcoming election is a big ask, but outspoken community worker Michelle Pyke thinks she has a chance.

She freely admits she says 'some outrageous stuff' to provoke debate and wouldn't change her style if she wins the mayoralty, but she also says she would be an inclusive, encouraging and solutions-focused leader.



Pyke is also standing as an at-large candidate for the Napier City Council – she stood once before in 1998 - with voters able to tick twice for people contesting both races.

Since 2003 Pyke has been contracted by Work and Income to transition local people off welfare and into employment, but her community work goes back more than two decades. She has lobbied for groups like sole parents, beneficiaries, women, youth and, at the top of the list, Napier's leaseholders, the plight of whom, she says, is her biggest election issue.

Her views on residential leaseholders are well documented – she says many of them have little money to spare, have more than paid for their land over the years, and are being used as a 'cash cow' by the Napier City Council.

But she's also calling for commercial and industrial leaseholders to be given the option of free holding their land.

"The social impact of leasehold land is a big concern but I'm also angry about what it's doing to business. Exorbitant ground rental increases are crippling businesses that Napier needs.

Pyke is also campaigning on the need for a youth venue in Napier and has suggested Marineland as a possible site.

She says the former "State of It" facility in Napier was one of New Zealand's best youth venues, although it never received support from the Napier City Council.

"They stalled us for years by saying they didn't have a youth policy. So we helped them write one, but they have continued to ignore Napier's young people. There's more to life than Art Deco – our young people are our future and they need a permanent facility."

Pyke is using the social networking site Facebook to drum up support for her campaign and says even if she doesn't get to be Mayor, she will bring up the vote count.

"There are lots of people in Napier who don't feel represented by anyone and lots of young people who have never voted before. People think it is a waste of time voting because no one listens ... but I am listening."

It's not the right time for local body amalgamation, according to Pyke, who says our communities are concerned about losing their identity. "We should all sit back and watch what happens with the Auckland Super City before going ahead with amalgamation."

She's got no complaints about financial management of the Napier City Council but says the credit should go to the team rather than Barbara Arnott.

"Barbara's achieved what she set out to do 12 years ago. It's time to let others achieve their goals through me. I don't profess to have all the answers, but I will have an open door and consult and listen.

"Barbara and I come from completely different backgrounds. I'm comfortable dealing with people from all walks of life, from Ministers of the Crown to patched gang members and everything in between."

Michelle's deliberately chosen pink as the colour of her Keeping It Real mayoral campaign. "I've never been a pink girly girl but I know some people see me as hard and bitter because I have been so vocal over the years, so pink helps to soften that."

Prepared by Katherine Edmond

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COMMON SENSE GOVERNANCE NEEDED FOR BALANCED GROWTH

Richard McKenzie, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Heretaunga Ward

After 30 years working in diverse roles across in the horticultural industry, nurseryman Richard McKenzie believes he can bring experience, balance and common sense governance to the Hastings District Council.



McKenzie, who's standing for Heretaunga Ward, has a strong interest in protecting good rural and horticultural land from urban sprawl but also recognises that Hastings must develop and grow as a city or face stagnation. The greatest challenge for the future he says, is finding the right balance between the two.

"We've got to continue growing or we'll stagnate. In another 20-years there'll be crops we probably haven't even thought of which is another reason why we're got to look after our horticultural land," he says.

McKenzie grew up on a farm in Dannevirke and has been involved in the horticultural industry since he was a youth. He completed his apprentice as a nurseryman at Anderson's Nurseries in Napier before becoming nursery manager for Hastings District Council, responsible for looking after the John Holt Memorial Display House (The Begonia House).

He returned to Hawke's Bay after a period as superintendant of parks and reserves in Wainuiomata and remains heavily involved in the nursery side of the horticultural sector. Today he supplies the industry with trees and root stocks from his Peakview Nursery.

He's been on a number of nursery and fruit growers committees, and was part of the New Zealand Budwood Selection scheme devised to improve the quality of fruit growing varieties.

"Some people might say the horticultural industry isn't doing well at the moment but we don't know what is going to happen further down the track. If our apples get into the Australian market and then into Asia that's definitely going to be good for horticulture in Hawke's Bay and the related service industries which are the lifeblood of the region."

That's another reason he believes there needs to be a strong voice for the horticultural and rural sector on council, from someone who 'knows how things work'.

McKenzie has a strong interest in parks and reserves and was concerned recently when there was talk of closing down the Begonia House. "It's important we have more open spaces, parks and gardens where people can go and relax. I want to see better use of our open spaces."

While the new Sports Park is going to be "fantastic" he says it's a pity it's being built on such good land, and that decisions were made before people really had a chance to have a say on the location. "I'd like to see greater transparency in future planning."

McKenzie's other involvement in the community is in the administration side of scouting, and as a volunteer fire fighter and brigade training officer for Havelock North, who often presents the New Zealand Fire Service's Firewise programme in schools.

He believes his involvement in scouting and youth programmes will be valuable at the council table. "It's often a difficult thing to keep youth organisations like scouts and guides running, and a credit to the Hastings Council that it helped the Air Training Corps get re-established."

McKenzie wants to see even greater engagement by council in supporting healthy youth focused pursuits.

He says he's a relatively quiet person and a good listener who likes to think things through before making rash decisions and is an advocate of common sense governance.

"I like to talk to people and find out what they think before making up my mind and speaking up about issues. I'm a team player — you have to be if you're involved in scouting or the fire service."

Prepared by Keith Newman

WE SIT EQUALLY

Des Ratima, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Mayor and Heretaunga Ward

When I left a message for Des Ratima he replied by e-mail from his iPhone. When we met for our interview, he could have as readily conversed in Maori, as in English.



I'd never met Des before.

Very soon I realised I was listening to a man with the rare gift of having an intimate understanding of both Maori and Pakeha cultures, and one who steps effortlessly between the two.

Des Ratima is standing for a seat on Hastings District Council in the Heretaunga ward, and the Mayoralty.

What will you bring to the Council table?

"Five years on the Council's Maori Advisory Standing Committee, as Chairman for most of that time, has given me a look at the inside, at the relationships between the officers of the Council, between the Committees and Councillors. I know how things work, and the language and the processes."

Will you bring a Maori perspective to Council?

"All over the country Maori are developing their own relationships with Councils. Part of my job in the last two years has been educating Council to what Maoridom looks like, how it's an evolving society with structures and mechanisms, that's been defined and redefined over centuries. For instance we don't like using bureaucratic language. We like to talk face-to-face."

Is this the 'partnership' relationship?

"Yes. We need to get to the position where we sit equally, and at ease around the table as partners. Not in a forced relationship brought on by needs

to resolve a situation, but because that is the natural way we do business together, as partners."

Is there a unique Maori perspective to doing business?

"I think so. We bring a different perspective. Westernised thought is all about the money, whereas Maori want to see what is good for the community. Take work for instance. It's not just about people getting a job. People need work that gives them mana; that makes them feel good about what they do, and who they are. I'd like to see Council involved in developing infrastructure for small businesses so people can become self-employed and create their own work."

So you want to encourage entrepreneurship?

"Sure. Maori traded with the West Coast of America, owned the flour mills, and the biggest farms in the country. We lost all that. Maori are historically very entrepreneurial and we're not capitalising on it. Take flax. There's a whole industry waiting to be developed where you take out the moko and get a fibre softer than cotton."

What are your views on the environment?

"When you mention environment many people think of green spaces and trickling water, but Maori don't isolate it that way. We don't separate one part from another. Maori see the environment from the heavens to the earth, and everything that goes on in between, which includes people. When Papatuanuku and Rangi were separated they left this space for their children to grow. Everything in that space is connected and interconnected with everything else. I will bring a holistic view of the environment to the Council table."

Listening to Des Ratima talk of the interconnectness of all things, I thought of William Blake's 'To see the world in a grain of sand, and to see heaven in a wild flower.' And I'm reminded that Des Ratima has a worldview both ancient and modern.

Prepared by Mark Sweet

ERADICATE OBSTACLES TO VISIONARY GROWTH

Ru Collin, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Heretaunga Ward

If Heretaunga ward candidate Richard (Ru) Collin gets his way, Hastings district could be instrumental in championing an integrated scheme to promote the wider region as the 'food basket' to the nation and its nearest export neighbours.



Collin feels strongly that Hastings and indeed the wider region needs to improve the environment for producers and work in conjunction with the Wine Country brand. "There are producers dotted all over the Bay and it's a matter of joining the dots into a much wider picture."

Part of that might be preparing for the positive impact the lifting of the Australian ban on apples will have. His visionary approach is partly inspired by his involvement as an independent advisor to the large Maori-owned South Island agribusiness, Ngatahi Partnership.

"They have a very sound strategy that looks well out into the future. They're focused on leaving a legacy for others. That's something we need to do in Hastings which should be based on key values." Collin is currently a director of HorticultureNZ.

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and the New Zealand Fruitgrowers Federation, HortNZ's representative on the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers Association and a trustee for the New Zealand and Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers charitable trusts and the Horticultural Industry Training Organisation Trust.

He worked with the pip fruit industry during the "deregulation debates" of 1999-2002, which gave birth to Horticulture New Zealand, bringing together 22 product groups across fruit and vegetable growers.

He was determined the strategy didn't simply become "bookends on the shelf to gather dust with no follow through," saying he tends to get into things and stick with them until they're done. What he learned in achieving that consensus and new strategy will be invaluable in a council role, he says.

Collin wants to engage in "the environmental and developmental" area of Council and build "strong and active liaison" between Hastings and Hawke's Bay Regional Councils. "If we want a strong Hastings district we've got to have effective governance across regional and local."

While the Heretaunga Plains Urban Development 30-year plan is a step in the right direction, he says more planning needs to be done to determine how the region will look in the future. That will require striking a balance between growth strategies and careful management of existing resources. "We need a planned and pragmatic approach to things. You can't choke one for the benefit of the other."

Collin says Hawke's Bay needs to be on the front foot and seen as a positive place to be a part of. He's clearly concerned about the role of Venture Hawke's Bay, claiming different names, faces and structural changes have confused people as to its true role and purpose.

"There have been ongoing issues and problems for years. It needs good governance and to know why it's doing what it does. There's a lot of criticism from the sectors it's dealing with, particularly tourism, because it struggles to get things right."

In terms of demographics Collin says the population is aging and there's a need to retain and attract more young skilled people by making the environment more attractive, particularly through economic development.

The number one issue though, is cashflow. "Manufacturing and primary production are the predominant drivers and we have to find out how to stimulate the economy. We can't let business stall; we need to create an environment where good business can continue to be done."

Part of the solution is ensuring Hastings, Napier and regional governance functions are "enabling rather than disabling" for business because there's a lot of grumbling about unnecessary compliance costs.

"I want to see businesses as unencumbered as possible and to make it simpler so we don't get the cost of compliance and the cost of misunderstanding mixed up."

Prepared by Keith Newman

LISTEN AND NEGOTIATE

Adele Mohi-McGoverin, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Havelock North Ward

If candidates were judged on their cooking and hospitality skills, Adele Mohi-McGoverin would be a shoo-in. She's one of those people whose sincerity makes you feel very welcome, and her vegetable soup with home-made flat bread was tops.

Mohi-McGoverin is standing for Hastings District Council in the Havelock North ward.

When I asked how long she's been associated with



Havelock, Adele rummaged through a drawer and pulled out a brass key tab.

"This was my grandfather's. It was inscribed P. Mohi. PO Box 112. "As a child we got our groceries in Havelock in a shop near the cenotaph, and there was a jewellers across the road, and that's from our old Post Office box. Havelock's always been part of my life."

So what issues do you think concern Havelock people most?

"I'm going into this with an open mind and asking people. What I'm hearing is, it's the little things that affect people's lives, like safe footpaths, provision for the increasing use of mobility scooters, parking spaces where there's enough room for a mother to get her baby out of the car, and clearly marked pedestrian crossings. B

"Boy racers are upsetting some residents. Then there's the youth drinking problem at night."

And McDonald's golden arches as the gateway to Havelock from Hastings?

"Well that's a done deal. We can't stop that now. But Council should be strict with the design, and include public input. It could be planted out with shrubs on the Council side coming from Hastings so you don't see it. The signage could be limited."

Amalgamation will be a big issue for the next Council. What's your stance?

"I've been involved in amalgamations in the private sector that have become scrambles for assets. It could be the same with the Councils. We have to be very careful.

"Some duplications don't make sense, like payroll, and planning and building regulations. There should be a unified District Scheme. But how to keep communities involved is the important thing."

So what skills will you bring to the Council table?

"I've had my current job in Human Resources for 8 years and before that ran my own Employment Agency for 8 years.

I deal with people everyday, all day, and I have to reason with them. It's about working through issues with people so you come to an agreement. We establish, this is what we want to achieve, and we have to find ways of working together. I know how to listen and negotiate."

How will you go about the job?

"As a Councillor it will be my responsibility to listen to what people want, then find out all about the issue, ask questions, and follow it through until I can make an informed decision."

How do you think you'd get on with Lawrence Yule?

"I'd get on fine with him. He knows he can't bully me. There'll be things we agree on and things we won't. And that's the way it'll be with everyone on Council. I know he's got his followers. I'm not there to be anyone's best friend. But hey, Lawrence mightn't get in. There could be some surprises."

Prepared by Mark Sweet

YOUTH ISSUES, UNTIDINESS SPOILING IT FOR THE REST

Scott Henderson, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Havelock North Ward

The look and feel of both Havelock North and Hastings business areas requires some fresh thinking to help change youth behaviour and lift business presentation and profile, says Scott Henderson, a contender for the Havelock North ward.

Henderson, a retired bank manager, believes he will bring "experience, maturity, sanity and level-headedness" to the Hastings District Council and wants to help sort out the issues that are



spoilng it for the majority.

Economically Hastings is the prime city but doesn't get the same publicity or recognition as its sister city; even the national weather and news invariably point to 'the Napier situation', he says. Hastings could do with a better profile, but needs to sharpen up its presentation to become more appealing.

"It could do with a bit of a brush up. Its buildings are looking dowdy and while they do a wonderful job with flowers during the summer period, there's still a lot of untidiness," says Henderson.

Meanwhile Havelock North Village, which has a unique character that he's keen to see retained and developed, is being spoiled by groups of youth, drinking and acting out in the early hours of the weekend morning.

"Rubbish carts are overturned, stuff is left around the churches, people living in the annex to St Luke's Church claim they have to move out of their bedrooms to sleep because of the racket and the nonsense and streets have to be sluiced down the next morning."

He notes that Havelock North has developed a reputation as 'the place to be' on a Saturday night and it's not just locals causing problems. "This has to be sorted out. We're getting outside influences with people from Taradale and Napier coming in and this distracts from the otherwise good reputation the village has," says Henderson.

He says there is clearly a lack of things for young people to do.

In conjunction with the Hastings District Council he wants to talk with local young people and come up with a plan for alternatives, including new facilities and options for entertainment.

"They need to realise this is their village too and they're wrecking it and upsetting other residents. We need to do something about that so they don't simply keep getting boozed up on a Saturday night."

Henderson has a strong record of community involvement being on the Hastings Alzheimer's Committee, has been part of the fundraising team for Cranford Hospice for the last 24-years, and is past chairman of Radio Kidnappers Community Trust.

As a member of Havelock North Rotary he was also part of the Peak Project which developed Te Mata Peak from a paddock with a trig station to its present state.

He sees also himself as something of a watchdog to ensure rates don't continue to skyrocket, something he says, has a detrimental impact on old and young families and pensioners in particular. "With the increase in GST coming up, for example, I want to make sure the Council doesn't take advantage and put rates up unnecessarily."

Prepared by Keith Newman

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FAMILY FRIENDLY FOCUS AND OPEN CITY CENTRE

Sandra Hazlehurst, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Hastings Ward

Opening up the Hastings central business area to through traffic, more family and youth-focused facilities, and telling the world what a great place Hastings is, are high on the agenda for Hastings council hopeful, Sandra Hazlehurst.



Hazlehurst, currently president of Hastings City Marketing, wants a shot at moving things forward from the inside, after having worked on the city's marketing and central business growth strategy for the past two and a half years.

She's become so hooked on promoting and raising the profile of Hastings as a great destination to live, work and locate businesses that she wants to help make the big decisions.

Hazlehurst was involved in attracting the five-hectare multistore Home HQ centre to Hastings. And in recent dealings with an Auckland hotel chain which decided to come to Hastings, she found it was the passion of the people that won them over.

If she gets to become a councillor she'll be encouraging Hastings people to work together toward common goals, be proud of who they are, and to own the new 'Heart of the Hawke's Bay' brand. "We need to tell our story and get it out there so the rest of the country knows about us."

While Hastings has "some of the best water and food and wine in the world," it needs to become more family friendly, expanding its facilities beyond Noddy Town, Miniputt and Splash Planet.

"To have Splash Planet closed for eight months of the year seems bizarre. I don't expect the

pools to be heated all the time, but we must be able to open the park for families throughout the year." And she says it's crazy that families have to go to Napier on a weekend to enjoy playground style activities. "We need more safe outdoor and family facilities."

Hazlehurst is also campaigning for a skate bowl in the CBD across the road from the Police Station. "At the moment our young people board down the footpath on Heretaunga St and that's not a good idea."

She says Hastings has been trading above the national average for the past three years; with good infrastructure and all the major trading banks now established in the CBD, it's a good business centre.

The biggest challenge, however, is to get rid of what she calls the east-west divide in the central city. "A lot of New Zealand cities trialed malls in the early 2000s but they're now pulling them out. We need to get our city pumping on both sides of the railway line."

She says the mall gives the impression that access to shops ends at the cluster of art works on the Market Rd side of the railway line, making it difficult to attract new tenants on the east side. "We've had three developers who walked away because there wasn't the foot traffic to support them."

She says people should be able to drive down the full length of Heretaunga Street. "We need to open up our central streets so we're not sending people around the outside."

Part of the plan to revitalise the east side, apart from the proposed food precinct, could involve the Hastings District Council working with a developer to transform the old Albert Hotel which could be tenanted with an information centre, a café and a 'people's museum'.

She says Hastings is probably also one of the few cities in New Zealand without a museum. "We have a great group of historians who meet on a monthly basis in the Hastings Library, but we've got no place to house and display our city's history. Even Waipawa has a museum."

Prepared by Keith Newman

A MORE BUSINESS-FRIENDLY COUNCIL

John Roil, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Hastings Ward

The overwhelming impression I got from talking to John Roil was his enthusiasm. He's charged up and itching to bring some changes to Hastings District Council. And he seems to be sticking to what he knows -- land use, consent process, and business skills.



There must be a good dollop of integrity in the man too.

Not long after starting a new business eight years ago, Roil was asked to serve as a Peacekeeper in Bosnia/Herzegovina. It was bad timing. But he trusted his employees to run the business and served six months. He's also had postings in Bougainville, and Lebanon/Israel, all part of a 28 year career with the Territorial Force Army, where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Roil is standing for Hastings District Council in the Hastings Ward.

What can you bring to Council?

"With my business, Cottages New Zealand, I have worked first hand with a range of Council officers to streamline some of the processes that businesses and local residents have often found to be frustrating. I also have a close understanding of the Resource Management Act, having applied for numerous consents either for our business or for clients over the last decade. I don't think business has a strong voice on the current Council, and business is where economic growth starts. Therefore it's very important that there are people around the table with business acumen."

So you think you might help reduce the cost of building consents?

"We've managed to reduce inspections of our cottages by working with Council, and one of them is a code of compliance. With some of the inspections, like a brazed sheet, and there might be three of them in a building, it takes longer for the inspector to get out of the car than do the inspection. That's crazy. Saving on time is saving money for the client."

What about the sale yards?

"It's obvious that I do have a personal involvement in this issue, but first and foremost I'm advocating that the sale yards should be moved to a more appropriate site. Just because they've been there for 100 years doesn't mean it's still the best place. They're past their use-by date, and either need to be redeveloped, or as I'm recommending, moved to a more ideal site that could also have other rural sector businesses."

Roil owns the land he wants the sale yards moved to; obviously he's an interested party, but he's upfront and honest about that, and it sounds like a good idea.

"The focus on the rural sector will continue for years to come and it's important that we are well set-up for the future with improved technology; more modern facilities, including a sale yards; centralized, shared core facilities, such as shearing and drafting yards; agricultural training services; animal welfare

services, including electronic ear tagging. There's been a large increase in consultants and advisors within the rural sector and perhaps it would be a great idea if they were all in one area -- a hub for the rural community."

Sometimes the most effective and determined leaders of change have a degree of self-interest to fire them along. Roil is such a man, but the changes he might bring to consenting costs and land use could benefit everyone in Hastings District.

Prepared by Mark Sweet

INCLUSIVE APPROACH WILL INVOLVE PEOPLE

Kevin Smith, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Hastings Ward

Kevin Smith is a banker with a community conscience, eager to support events and strategies that give people a sense of involvement and pride, and determined to build better relationships between the twin cities for the benefit of the Hawke's Bay brand.



Smith, a keen 4-wheel drive enthusiast who has been involved in the Hastings City Marketing Group, the Vintage Car Club and Hawke's Bay Rugby Union, worked for Postbank for many years and after retiring from the ANZ seven years ago, took on the role of funding and community support manager for Hastings Building Society (HBS).

Smith is a supporter of outdoor and community events everyone can attend or participate in, including the HBS-backed '12 Days of Christmas', Summer in the Park and free concerts, as this builds a 'feel good' sense of belonging.

He's helped create seven floats for the Blossom Festival over the years, and he and his wife were successful in helping bring Art Deco events to Hastings. "People might say that Hastings is more Spanish Mission, but there are actually more Art Deco buildings in Hastings than there are in Napier."

He's not being sectarian; he'll always vote for a united council and would like to see the twin cities and the province working more closely together, for example renaming the Napier Art Deco Trust as the Hawke's Bay Art Deco Trust.

"We have the Hawke's Bay Opera House, Hawke's Bay Rugby Union, Hawke's Bay Racing club and a lot more labels around the regional title. That's the way we've got to go," he says.

"Hawke's Bay Regional Park is not only for Hastings, but Hastings has to go cap in hand to the other two councils to get funding. That's crazy." People who come into Napier enjoy the wine trail in Hastings and we all enjoy the spoils of it, he says. "There's too much lost opportunity."

Even the simple rules businesses operate under differ between the cities. "If we were united and softened the red tape and regulations it would be good for growth in both cities. The variations are frustrating."

The recent very public spat over determining the breed of a dog was just pettiness, he says. "There needs to be a lot more consistency."

Smith says he's not a one-track candidate ... he's got the skills to get involved in all the

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issues, and if he doesn't have the information needed he'll talk to people and do the research. His ears would be particularly attuned to issues that involved the majority of people, for example anything do with safety ... "whether it was biting dogs or dangerous footpaths."

He is also concerned that the one fixed cost residents have no control over continues to rise, despite difficult economic times. "I would be working to keep rates down, with rises only relating to essential needs rather than what Council decides it wants."

Again, part of the problem is duplication of resources across the region. "I stand for better communication with people about how their rates money is being spent. In my banking career I've dealt with millions of dollars of people's money so I know about financial responsibility. I know what's involved."

He says he'll be responsive to the concerns of voters. "I'll be extremely visible and approachable. I'd also like to see more openness and responsiveness from Council so people get a better idea of what goes on."

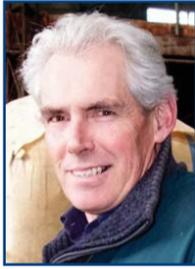
If he's successful Kevin Smith says he'll retire from his role with the HBS so he can give undivided attention to Council work.

Prepared by Keith Newman

ONLY GROWTH WE CAN AFFORD

David Mackintosh, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Kahuranaki Ward

Sitting Hastings District councillor Mick Lester may have thought getting re-elected would be a shoo-in after switching to the vacant Kahuranaki ward (Derek Brownrigg is retiring), but he didn't bank on David Mackintosh putting his name forward.



Mackintosh is well known in the ward, having grown up on a family farm at Waimarama which he describes as his tūrangawaewae.

He's had a varied career, enrolling for teacher training and then working as a sheep farmer, horticulturalist and in sales and marketing roles in Hawke's Bay before establishing the Kiwi Wool business at Stortford Lodge 11 years ago. His most recent community work

was initiating the Freemasons Charity Walk, which raised over \$130,000 towards the Little Elms Project to provide accommodation for children with cancer.

Mackintosh says proposed development of land at Ocean Beach, the sale of Nelson Park, and planning for the Hawke's Bay Regional Sports Park were issues that triggered his interest in standing for Council.

"I was dismayed to see the Council get involved with a private developer and commit substantial sums of ratepayers money to their plans for Ocean Beach.

"I was also opposed to the sale of Nelson Park and, when the sports park project came along, I thought here we go again. I think it is an absolute scandal that the council went on to pay another developer, Kelt Capital, \$685 thousand to carry out fundraising for the new sports park, irrespective of results. This Council seems to think we are a bottomless pit - it has a cavalier attitude to ratepayers' money."

He's also concerned about the amount the Council's paying out each month to support facilities like Splash Planet and the Hawke's Bay Opera House.

"I think the Opera House is a great asset and the proposed Velodrome could be a huge drawcard for Hastings, but it has to be self-supporting. I am all in favour of growth but only if we can afford it."

If elected, Mackintosh says he will be keeping a close eye on all development plans to ensure they are not a drain on ratepayers.

Mackintosh describes Lawrence Yule as 'a good fellow who does have Hastings at heart' but says the Mayor has let business get too close to him and been compromised as a result. He also believes the Council has become stale.

"I'm suspicious of some councillors. I think a lot of them stay there because they need the income."

Re-engaging a community that 'feels disengaged from the Council processes is a high priority for Mackintosh, who promises more sincere and open consultation if he becomes the Kahuranaki representative.

He will also be focused on protecting productive land and resources, such as Hawke's Bay's rivers which 'are not being well looked after', and on addressing erosion and reserve issues at Waimarama.

Mackintosh says he's been through the 'rough and tumble' of life and would bring a balanced perspective to the Council table on 'how we should grow according to what we can afford'.

He says the timing is right for him to enter politics, in terms of his age and life experience, and he is well qualified to represent Kahuranaki.

"Kiwi Wool is a family business, so I will have plenty of support to free me up to concentrate on Council work, but it will also be a great asset in my role as a councillor. The business interfaces between the rural sector and town, giving me valuable insights into the dynamics of both communities."

Prepared by Katherine Edmond

YOUTH FOCUS IMPERATIVE IF HASTINGS IS TO GROW

Daniel Hoskins, Candidate, Hastings Council, Hastings Ward

Keen sportsman, youth advocate and Hastings ward candidate, Daniel Hoskins reckons there's too much duplication between the various Hawke's Bay councils and too little focus on making the place attractive and safe for youth and young families.



Hoskins, who missed out on a seat in 2007 when he was 18-years old, says his will be a voice for positive change with a strong leaning toward meeting the needs of young people and keeping them in the region.

A lot of young people go to university and return to Hastings for the summers, but after they've finished their studies they don't bother, he says. "The beaches are great, some stay for the sports, but if there's not enough to keep them here they won't hang around will they?" He'd like to see better use of council assets that serve young families. For a start he says Splash Planet is a major failure. "They have to make more use of it. There's so much there that could be available all year round, like the indoor heated swimming pool, the café and the Mini Putt."

And he's concerned for the safety of people venturing out at night, as there's a growing likelihood they might "run into a bit of trouble". While there are certain neighbourhoods where you have to be careful, people are becoming less comfortable in

the centre of Hastings, where there's now a growing tagging problem.

While often the source of the youth problem begins at home, he'd like to see the Council become more involved in possible solutions. "Sports is a good outlet where troubled youth can get involved in a team and build a sense of relationship. If that happens they'll feel less of a need to go out and drink, get involved in vandalism and beat people up."

Hoskins admits that when he was 16-years old he was a bit of a "loose unit", but after becoming involved in a rugby team he was set straight. He'd like to see Council engaging with the community to ensure there are more opportunities for at-risk youth.

"The Council owns most of the sports parks and I would like to see them encourage and get behind more Saturday sports like touch, get referees and coaches involved and organise a few teams and keep everyone active."

Hastings District Council's internal and external debt also raises his eyebrows. Hoskins believes that building better relationships between the three councils in the region, and ultimately amalgamation, would be one way of reducing costs and duplication of resources.

He wonders why Hastings has less development than Napier and is not growing as fast. While he applauds the airport extension, Hastings needs to do more to be prepared for the growth that might bring. "Although the airport is in Napier, it will help with the development of Hastings and it won't only be tourists that it attracts. Retailers, hotels, motels and others will benefit from it."

Hoskins raises the erosion issue at Haumoana, Te Awanga and Clifton. "I want to see a seawall at Te Awanga to protect the houses there from the erosion that is threatening them. And if the sea keeps coming back at Clifton you'll lose the road and access to the gannets."

The Colts rugby player, whose team reached the finals of the national play-offs, says he's a team player with leadership skills who likes to ensure those who might feel on the outside are listened to.

"While councils have to make decisions that are best for the whole community, its important to listen to minorities who might be affected by the decisions you make. I want to hear what everyone has to say."

Prepared by Keith Newman

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CONDUIT FOR THE COMMUNITY

Jacoby Poulain, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Flaxmere Ward

“Youthful passion” is the term that comes to mind upon listening to Jacoby Poulain describe her ambitions as a councillor. “I could have all the skills in the world, but if I’m not passionate about it, what’s the point?”



At age 26, she holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Otago, where she was a scholarship student, and her Professional Legal Studies Certification. She has worked as a case manager for the Maori Land Court. “But right now, the community is where my heart’s at, not legal practice.”

She confesses to having a “commitment to the underdog and those who need help speaking up” and believes that serving on Council will give her more opportunity to do that.

Jacoby argues that her legal training will enable her to master and navigate the Council “system” and to appreciate the various sides of issues, mentioning in particular the Hastings Council’s new policy and enforcement regarding dog control.

“It’s vital that Flaxmere is represented by a professional councillor who is familiar not only with the issues and the area, but also with legal, government and council process. I have a very strong grasp on process and procedure ... how to work the system.”

This Flaxmere-raised young woman says, “I’ve come back to a community I’m very passionate about and that I can see needs help with certain issues.” She plans, if elected, to throw herself into the role of councillor ... “It will be a full-time endeavor, at the beginning anyway.”

Daughter of retiring Councillor Keriana Poulain, Jacoby resists the view that she is running for election on her mother’s coattails.

“No, no way I’m riding on her coattails. I’m all up for getting out there and meeting the people, and letting them decide after they’ve met me if I’m the right person for the job. What I have in common with my mother is her passion and her willingness to stand up for the people. Everything else I intend to do all on my own merits.”

As for issue priorities, she says: “My issues are the people’s issues. I don’t have my sole agenda or cause.” As a councillor, Jacoby would see herself as a “conduit for the community, helping the residents of Flaxmere to voice their needs and advance whatever they need help with.” As she hears that community today, Jacoby identifies these priorities: community safety, youth development, employment opportunities, and services and facilities for the elderly.

Some of her insight into community safety issues stems from her service as Youth Advocate on HDC’s Safe Hastings Advisory Committee, and as Chair and Youth Advocate on the Heretaunga Maori Focus Forum, created by NZ Police to advise on crime prevention initiatives aimed at reducing “Maori representation in the criminal justice sector” and improving Police relationships with Maori.

She notes that nearly 50% of Flaxmere residents are under 25 years of age, and sees this group as a constituency that “deserves more attention.”

What would she like to have accomplished after three years in office?

Rather than delivering a particular facility or program to Flaxmere, Jacoby hopes to inspire other people in the community, especially young people, to take charge of their lives, “feel energized to fulfill plans of their own” and “advance themselves or the community of Flaxmere ... I’d love to build people and develop them to get involved in their own way.”

Asked a final question: How would you feel about defeating Henare O’Keefe? A distressed “AAAW!” Then after a pause ... “The voters would do that ... it’s all up to them.” A born politician!

Prepared by Tom Belford

DOING WITH PEOPLE

Tracee Te Huia, Candidate, Hastings District Council, Flaxmere Ward

The term that comes to mind on meeting Tracee Te Tuia is “savvy and seasoned.”



Her present position as Director of Maori Health for the Hawke’s Bay DHB culminates eleven years of increasing responsibility in the health sector. During the three years of her Director role, Hawke’s Bay has seen improvements for Maori in the areas of immunization, increased fruit consumption, greater access to GP services and declines in suicides.

Tracee has a history of community involvement, presently serving as a Councillor at EIT and a Trustee on Te Rangihaeata Problem Gambling Services HB. With prior service in the Flaxmere branch of the Maori Women’s Welfare League and as a Trustee of both the Te Aranga Marae and Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga.

She grew up in Hastings, residing in Flaxmere for thirteen years. Members of her family live there, as does Tracee on weekends. She’s a landlord in Flaxmere. And much of her work occurs there.

Why run for Hastings Council?

“It’s pretty scary,” she admits. But starting with her health perspective, she considers that Council plays a large role in promoting social wellbeing – from cleaner waterways and quality drinking water to walking and gambling strategies.

Tracee sees her role as an advocate and negotiator for Flaxmere ... “My job is to bring the voice of Flaxmere to the Council chambers.” Adding, “We need to recognize that people in the community have solutions, they can deliver against their own needs and aspirations.”

But she is mindful of the broader context of Hastings’ overall priorities.

The more Flaxmere’s needs are presented as

aligned with the District’s existing plans and programs -- “what makes the Council tick,” as she says -- the more responsive the Council will be, and “the more traction Flaxmere will get ... The whole machine has to be working toward the same objectives.”

Yes, Flaxmere is the district’s highest priority need area, says Tracee, but we should stop presenting ourselves as merely victims. “If all I do is sit around the table beating the drum about Flaxmere issues, not understanding the context in which I’m sitting, all I’m going to do is turn people’s backs. I’ll just become a squeaky wheel, and one that won’t get oiled.”

In Tracee’s view, “the key stakeholders and players are not working well together. The Hastings Council should be the hub for getting them together and making them click. With better partnerships, we’ll get better outcomes. The approach from Council needs to be doing *with* people, not doing *to* people.”

As Tracee hears the Flaxmere community, its number one priority is a safer environment – addressing everything from family violence to burglary to bullying and street fighting.

In her view, focusing on families is the starting point. “Families first’ is a strong values base I have ... Safer and healthier communities start at home and are enabled through active community and business partners such as the Council.”

Along with community safety, other priorities include economic opportunity and building a stronger community identity. “A lot of Maori people living in Flaxmere don’t feel they *belong* to the community” for historical reasons (e.g., many came as seasonal workers and they and their families didn’t have the connection of growing up here).

The marae could play a bigger role in the community, she says.

Tracee backs-up her professional experience with plenty of academic firepower. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, with Diplomas in business management, health promotion, and social services, plus a Masters of Management.

Prepared by Tom Belford



ANNE WILSON-HUNT HASTINGS WARD, HASTINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Skills I Bring to Council:

- ✓ Hardworking and community focused
- ✓ Three years experience as Councillor
- ✓ Current Commissioner for Resource Management Act Hearings
- ✓ Tertiary qualifications in Science and Social Policy
- ✓ Strong advocate for sustainability
- ✓ A good listener with a practical work ethic and common sense logic

My Goals for the next 3 years:

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- Community:** A safe and vibrant community that is inclusive and empowers responsible residents
- Economy:** Support new and existing businesses to grow so they positively contribute to both local communities and regional economies



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Authorised by Tony Jeffery, 3 Sixty-fifth Street, Napier

Connecting with people

By Wayne Bradshaw

Every three years the local body elections roll around with great gusto, creating excitement in the communities that councils affect with their rates bills, town planning, community project development, vision for the future and so forth.

Yeah right! All most people see are the billboards that pollute our roadsides for a couple of months, adverts and pamphlets in our mailboxes. And then we all vote for who we believe will represent us best around the Council table.

In a perfect world most people would vote; but we don't live in a perfect world.

At the local body election in 2007, the voter turnout was 28% in Flaxmere, 38% in Hastings, and 53% in Havelock North, with an average across the District of just over 41%. Over the past several elections this figure has been declining.

Voter apathy is a major concern and should be addressed if the aim is to get Councillors who truly represent the community.

The best ways to address this, I believe, have not been fully explored. Just to spend \$20,000 on an advertising campaign might be useful, but certainly will not fix what some consider to be structural issues.

For whatever reason, the voter appears to have a major disconnect to local Councils and their elections. Some steps that need to be considered include:

Ratepayer Engagement

In its interaction with ratepayers, Council should ensure that meaningful engagement is undertaken early in the development of policies, strategies and implementation plans, so that communities have a real input into their own future, and their views and aspirations are understood from the start.

Council Meetings

Council Meetings are held principally between 9 am to 5 pm. This limits the opportunity for persons with full-time employment to be Councillors. This needs to be addressed. Perhaps meetings from 4pm to 7pm would provide a solution, and also assist members of the public who want to be heard, or hear what is going on.

Ward Committees

In Hastings District, in addition to two Councillors, the rural community has a Rural Community Board with four members. This Board acts as a coordination point for the rural ratepayers to present their views and needs. In place since the "rural revolt" of the early

1990s, this arrangement is established under the Local Government Act. Whilst not seeking Urban Community Boards, the urban areas within the Hastings District have some distinct characteristics and needs whose representation deserves a structure that is formalised and documented.

I suggest "Ward Committees" to protect and promote the interests of the wards (Havelock North, Hastings Central, etc), assist Council in prioritising the needs of the ward, develop engagement between the Council and the ward, help develop local liquor plans, and build a community vision for the ward. They would provide an open conduit between Council and the community, enabling ongoing discussions. This would help Council focus on what the communities want and get their practical support in achieving the best outcomes.

Electoral Term Limits

In most organisations and businesses, the regular influx of new and diverse participants helps drive these organisations to recognize and address issues that they regularly face. It is important that new participants are encouraged and given the best opportunity to contribute.

Local government is no different and this

is recognized, for example, in the Local Government Act requirement Chief Executives must re-apply for their jobs on a five-year basis. The idea is to bring fresh eyes and ideas to the operation of Councils. The same philosophy should be considered for the governance of local Councils. A term limit for both Councillors and Mayors might be three terms of 3 years, making a maximum of 9 years in each role.

Arguably, a negative of such limits might be the loss of experienced Resource Management Hearings Committee Councillors. However, having Councillors serve as the policy and rule-makers, and then as the decision-makers for applications made under these policies and rules, seems to introduce an inherent conflict. It would be more transparent to have all Resource Management hearings heard by independent Commissioners.

Few people in our community can afford the time currently required to be a Hastings District Councillor. If we wish for more active engagement between Council and our community, we must improve the opportunities for broader representation around the Council table, and get more of our eligible residents voting in local body elections.

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CLEARVIEW ESTATE

Community development? Yeah right!

Let me confirm the worst kept secret ... I am competing for the honour of being the first Maori Mayor of Hastings and a councillor for Heretaunga Ward. I am sure you would all agree I have had plenty to say in the past, so it was a matter of talking and walking; doing not just saying; being a part of the solution and not a part of the problem.

Regardless of the outcome, I want to invite you all into a discussion about community development.

I am sure that we have heard with almost monotonous repetitious melody ... community development this, and community development that! It seems to me that much is said about community development. However, I suspect that the knowledge level of community development is sparse, in a practical sense at least. Community development is still very much an experiment in social cohesion, in how communities identify themselves and coexist. How multicultural interactions occur.

Community development in this country has been largely a matter of circumstances and need. The need to have a labour force to service the freezing works, canneries, fruit orchards, industrial needs and agricultural harvesting led to the construction of communities like Whakatu, Flaxmere, and Camberly, to name a few. Social cohesion, coexistence, cultural diversity was never included in the development of these communities. Without wanting to appear negative, and cognizant of the fact community development was not a concept at the time of our forefathers, they did okay.

Today the awareness of community development and community ownership, is a much-debated issue. Communities such as Flaxmere and my home town of Whakatu exist at the whim of those that live outside of their communities. Community decisions and initiatives are controlled, administered and funded by local government.

The final ignominy of community aspirational achievement is that, through rates, you give the power for your development over to your council.

Today that approach is out of date and in need of repair. The part that needs fixing is the engagement and harnessing of the community's passion, energy, loyalty and ownership of their own development.

Let me illustrate my point with two examples.



Des Ratima
columnist

Example 1. Whakatu community a few years back desired to purchase a block of buildings which the Whakatu Community Trust believed would be beneficial to future residents. The cost of purchase was estimated to be about \$900K. Residents were approached for their support to make a credible offer to purchase. Twelve home owners agreed to mortgage their properties for this purpose. Amazing! We were unsuccessful with our bid, which saw the sale price reach \$1.2M. The point being the community made a decision to purchase, it had the assets, it had the vision ... it acted.

Example 2. At a recent Flaxmere community meeting the idea of purchasing the village was raised. Someone quoted a figure like \$6M would purchase the assets. Someone else asked why we can't get the money ourselves, as a community.

Well, the light bulbs certainly started flashing in my head. What if we were to establish community chests? Community chests where community funding is held and managed by community trusts, and then applied for the benefit of community agreed projects and outcomes. These could have already been identified in a community plan through community consultation processes, and the means to achieve placed directly into the hands of the community. The funds for the community chest would be raised by a targeted rate applied on the community, similar to targeted rate charges now in place, except these "chest" funds go directly to the community.

Community chest is the way to deliver on community passion, energy, commitment, and independence. It would change the mindset of community ownership for the things that matter. Imagine community development at the hands of the community. Think about it, just don't take too long. Funds raised by targeted rates that end up in your community and in your Trust. Community development *with funding* – YEAH RIGHT!!

Race now on for council competitors

The cards have been dealt cont from pg 1.

Only for the simple reason that the incumbents – some of whom have served 9, 12, or 15 years – have all the advantages going into the campaign. They've had heaps of media exposure over their years, pictures of their faces smiling at us regularly in official Council publications and websites, rivers of Council-issued media releases, invitations to all the "be seen" events ... and even plenty of time to actually have accomplished something for which they might deserve public acclaim.

With all this exposure, if a given incumbent representing you does *not* already have your vote – right now, even before you see your voting papers and learn about the challengers – then they probably haven't done a very compelling job!

So let's look at the hands that have been dealt, focusing on the challengers ... the "New Faces" as profiled inside.

Hastings Council

Of Mayor Yule's three challengers, only Des Ratima is really new to the mayoral contest. The other two – Simon Nixon and Peter Nee Harland – ran against Yule in 2007 ... with Yule garnering a 4,000 vote margin over Nixon.

With Lawrence asserting that he is "Proven", Simon obviously seeks the "Yeah Right!" vote, as he did previously. He can reasonably assume there's a sizable protest vote out there; whether it is "for" him is another matter. I'm not sure what Peter looks to accomplish, attracting less than 1,800 votes last time.

So the new face – and potential game-changer – is Des Ratima, who is strong on the environment and well-known in the Maori community. Neither of these groups would likely flock to Nixon in a one-on-one contest, so to the extent Ratima catches on, that's probably bad news for Yule. On the other hand, with Nixon also standing for a Council seat, "protesters" might well decide they'd prefer to sit him in the bleacher seats, as opposed to the mayor's chair.

For the Hastings Council, thirteen new candidates are challenging, leaving only Tania Kerr's Mohaka Ward uncontested. With four incumbents – Brownrigg, Poulain, Burnside, Spears – not running, and Councillor Mick Lester jumping out of the hotly-contested Hastings Ward into the greener pastures, he hopes, of the vacant Kahuraniki Ward, there are effectively five HDC seats "open". These would be the ones most up for grabs.

All are contested by new faces. Obviously two of John Roil, Sandra Hazlehurst, Kevin Smith or Simon Nixon will pick up the two vacant Hastings Ward seats (eclipsing young Daniel Hoskins). But will any incumbent get beat? Perhaps a third new face might win if Councillor Anne Wilson-Hunt, the lowest Hastings Ward vote-getter last time, slips from her previous performance, or, if voters sense "tired blood" in Twigg or Watkins.

With Robert Burnside standing down from his Heretaunga Ward seat, we're guaranteed one new face there. Of the three challengers, Des Ratima and Ru Collin have the profile advantage over Richard McKenzie.

With Keriana Poulain standing down in Flaxmere, we'll also see a new face there – either Keriana's daughter Jacoby Poulain, or Tracee Te Huia, who runs Maori health programs at HBDHB. Will either of these ladies beat Henare O'Keefe? Not likely.

And with Derek Brownrigg retiring, his Kahuraniki seat is up for grabs. Incumbent Mick Lester, shifting in from Hastings, will get a stiff

challenge from new face Dave Macintosh.

That leaves Havelock North, where both incumbents – Bradshaw and Kimber – are standing. Bradshaw has the higher profile of the two. In any event, two challengers have jumped in – Adele Mohi-McGoverin and Scott Henderson. Neither start with high visibility; both have a tough climb to dislodge either incumbent.

Regional Council

Here, each of nine incumbents is standing for re-election. Any newbie will need to claw their way in.

In the Wairoa and CHB Wards (both outside BayBuzz's usual coverage), incumbents Tim Gilbertson and Fenton Wilson face credible challengers. But Gilbertson tends to his fences and Wilson's three opponents will probably nullify one another. So, Wairoa and CHB, surprise me ... change horses!

In the Napier Ward, challengers Allan Baldock and Tim Tinker vie for the seats held by three incumbents, each standing for re-election, Alan Dick, Neil Kirton and Christine Scott. Neither of the challengers is new. Baldock has been a regional councillor and Tinker served on the Hastings Council. So, both are experienced and credentialed. But do they represent change compelling enough that Napier voters will "retire" an incumbent. I'm dubious ... but let the campaigning begin!

In the Hastings Ward, all incumbents – von Dadelszen, Rose, McGregor and Remmerswaal – are standing again. They are challenged by Robert Burnside, Murray Douglas and myself. I hesitate to comment, other than to say the competition will be fierce. On the one hand, the challengers each have visibility and constituencies. However, the incumbents – three of whom have served 33 years – are established vote-getters who have had a long time to secure their bases.

I suspect the outcome in this Ward will have the most impact on the future direction of the Regional Council.

Napier City Council

You couldn't ask for circumstances more discouraging of voter participation than exist in Napier.

Unlike other councils, NCC didn't seem fit to publish an evolving list of candidates on its website (hence no ability on BayBuzz's part to prepare profiles for this edition; and more importantly, no ability for head-scratching candidates to have assessed the unfolding scene – and their own prospects – leading up to the close date). Napier's wacky part-at-large, part-ward representation scheme seems expressly calculated to confuse voters. And every single incumbent is standing for re-election, under the politically invincible wing of their protector Mayor and 85% vote-getter, Barbara Arnott.

Hats-off to Michele Pyke for at least jumping into the mayoral race. But talk about an uphill battle! Maybe the added visibility of tilting against Mayor Arnott will help her win the at-large seat she is also contesting, dislodging one incumbent.

I've written previously that Napier should just save the ratepayers money and not bother with elections. Just re-crown The Queen, show the Royal Courtiers to their customary seats, and have a party.

Sorry challengers, there won't be much nail-biting in Napier on Election Day!

And that's the way Napier voters seem to like it.

Committed to Hawke's Bay

Vote Simon Nixon Mayor



Hastings District
Council

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