

NEWS FROM YOUR WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

I would like to wish you all a **Happy New Year**. The summer holidays and relaxing at the beach are now a distant memory. We have a bumper fruit crop this year being enjoyed by extended family (and our sheep, and the bird and 'possum population!).

As you are all aware the dry weather is starting to bite, and I hope those of you who are farming can keep milking until the rains come, which hopefully isn't too far away. As I write this newsletter, we are all sweltering in 30+ degree heat so it is a good time to remind you to check your water pipes for leaks. For those of you connected to the Southern Districts Water Scheme; I have just had a first-hand experience of how water leaks can go undetected. My eldest son noted that there was no water coming into our tank. After some hours of searching we discovered a pipe hidden under long grass on our boundary had disconnected near our water meter and the water meter was also leaking. Soon fixed and fortunately didn't happen while we were on holiday.

I have mentioned in a previous newsletter that the impact of growth on our district is significant. You may have received information on our Blueprint initiative. Information is on our website and in the FAQ section is an explanation of this initiative - *Throughout the Long-Term Plan consultation, it became evident to Council that a different approach to planning was needed to help us manage these growth impacts on our communities. This is now reflected in Council's new vision and the recognition that more detailed master planning was required. This has resulted in Council's decision to undertake a **Blueprint for our district**. The approach will help ensure that our communities' aspirations are integrated into Council's key strategic and planning documents and that as our communities change, we update our Blueprint.*

Workshops were held in 10 of our towns between July and November 2018 where we heard from nearly 400 people. The information from these meetings has been studied and we've now put together a draft district-wide Blueprint and draft Local Area Blueprints for each town/area. The draft Blueprints might not include every idea raised at the workshops and it might include ideas that Council is not yet in a position to implement.

These drafts are now being circulated and will be available at a **Drop in Session for Matangi and Tamahere residents to be held in the Hall foyer, Tamahere Model Country School on 26th March: 2pm – 6:00pm. Hope to see you there.** *The feedback will be captured and where appropriate incorporated in the final Blueprints which will identify the top priorities for each town. A final report will be going to Council's Strategy and Finance Committee in May before being formally adopted by Council in June.*

If your family or friends host overseas visitors or are Airbnb hosts; Hamilton & Waikato Tourism (www.hamiltonwaikato.com) have recently put out a new, very comprehensive **Official Regional Visitors Guide 2019**. Containing an easy to follow Waikato map, events calendar, regional cycle trails, what to do, where to eat etc in all the Waikato towns and surrounds it is an excellent 'one place' guide for visitors. I suggest you email info@hamiltonwaikato.com to ask where to source copies.

Council has been meeting again since early February with our monthly round of committee meetings and briefings on various matters including the Hamilton to Auckland **rail corridor**. The rail service plans are progressing with a Transport Connections Working Party overseeing the delivery of a business case. A proposed project governance structure and terms of reference are now ready for approval. WDC Council will appoint a representative to the proposed Governance Working Group along with the other Councils involved and Auckland Transport, MOT, NZTA and KiwiRail. The start of a service is anticipated for mid-2020.

The Waikato District Heritage Forum met recently at the Mercer Museum; Mercer was the home of the Roose family who were instrumental in developing the Waikato River as a sand dredging business and a thriving river based commercial shipping enterprise ferrying goods and passengers by river from Auckland to Port Waikato. It was very interesting to learn how the river was used and how this family made a huge impact on the development of the Waikato we know today. In 1986 Margaret Stuart, then resident in Matangi, wrote a history of the family and their businesses and community enterprises, **Grand Old Man of the River – Caesar Roose** in collaboration with Jeanette Thomas (nee Roose). It is a fascinating book – I have a copy that will be made available through the Eureka/Tamahere Heritage Committee archives.

There is a rail project being developed in Mercer that will use steam trains and carriages imported from England. Whilst mentioning steam trains – don't forget the **Glen Afton Heritage Railway**, 12km west of Huntly, that runs 10am – 3pm on the first Sunday of every month – you can take a picnic lunch and there is a café on site. For more information see their website <http://www.bustramwayclub.com/visitus.html>

I represent Waikato District on the **Hauraki Gulf Forum**. Made up of Councillor and technical staff representatives from all the Councils that border the Gulf, local Iwi, Gulf Islands Community Boards, DOC etc the Forum meets quarterly at the Auckland Town Hall. Our recent meeting was attended by two Ministers of the Crown – Ministers Sage and Mahuta who discussed with us Marine Reserves to further protect the fish and shellfish stocks and other conservation measures.

On 1st July last year Fire & Emergency NZ took over responsibility from Council for dealing with fire permits and fire related issues. On 4 February Fire and Emergency NZ announced that a **restricted fire season** would start. This means a fire permit is required to light any fire in the open-air. Exemptions are barbecues, traditional cooking fires, braziers and outdoor gas heaters. However, it is the responsibility of the person lighting the fire to ensure there are sufficient resources on site to manage the fire and that the fire is contained at all times. The person lighting a fire should have public liability and fire suppression insurance because if a fire gets out of control the person lighting the fire is liable for all the costs for damage and fire suppression. An out of control fire can incur costs of many thousands of \$'s. To check fire status at any time and/or get a permit, go to the website <http://www.checkitsalright.nz>



Contact me anytime

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