

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 20 – December 6, 2019

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Parents desperate
for toilets... p3

Catching up with
Mae Everett... p5

Neglected Sunnynook
playground a hazard... p9

Old Takapuna fire station for sale again

Negotiations are taking place over the sale of the now derelict former Takapuna fire station, which was purchased four years ago by a company intending to build a retirement village.

The property is advertised as a “lakeside trophy” with a deadline for a private treaty

sale of 14 November. However, CBRE real estate agent James Fraser refused to confirm whether it had sold, saying it was a complicated sale and not simply ‘sell and settle’.

McConnell Clearmont Limited Partnership purchased the decommissioned fire station and property for \$14.3 million in 2015.

It intended to build its first own-brand retirement village with hospital care.

Since then, no work has been done and the building has become increasingly derelict.

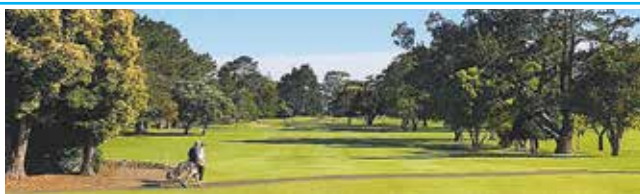
The fire station and section, zoned for

To page 2

Vest in show: silk and smiles at Forrest Hill



Finest threads... Jian Shin (6) in traditional costume at the Forrest Hill School Cultural Festival on Saturday 23 November. Photo: Keeley Watson. More on page 7



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Apartments prove too pricy: new project planned

Plans for multimillion dollar apartments in Takapuna have been scrapped and buyers refunded, after a shortfall of purchasers forced the developer back to the drawing board. However, developer Raymond Jarm plans to come back to the market with less expensive options.

Around 10 purchasers buying the luxury apartments at 3 Campbell Road off the plans have been refunded in full, with interest, and another two have stayed on with new agree-

ments, Jarm says.

Originally, the 30-apartment development, Summer Gardens, was due to be completed by the end of 2018, but not enough units were sold.

Based on feedback from agents, Jarm now plans to relaunch revised plans, without the most expensive three-bedroom units.

These were priced from \$1.8 million, with a 'sub-penthouse' option at more than \$2.59 million.

Instead there will be 37 apartments, including studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom options on offer, with marketing resuming in the next month or two.

Summer Gardens was launched three years

ago, when the Unitary Plan cleared the way for the six-storey development on Campbell Rd. It was Jarm's first apartment development, though he has done other residential projects.

Ten per cent of the units have to be 'affordable', as Campbell Rd is in a special housing area. The one-bedroom units in the original plan were priced from \$619,000 to meet this requirement.

Plans for the sustainable apartments included solar-heated hot water, edible gardens, a solar-heated swimming pool and eco-friendly fittings, such as LED lights and heat pumps.

Jarm is planning to live in a penthouse at the top of the building.

Medic and police oppose late opening

A contentious liquor licence hearing is under way, with police, the medical officer of health and a district licensing authority inspector all opposing the application.

The Elephant Wrestler on Hurstmere Rd is applying to extend closing hours from 1am to 3am from Wednesday to Saturday.

Opponents are concerned about noise, order, litter and disorderly behaviour. The hearing, expected to finish on 9 December, drew 65 objections and four supporting submissions.

2 The Strand: empty for 633 days

The former Takapuna Library building at 2 The Strand has been vacant since an earthquake notice was issued in March 2018. The 1956 heritage-listed public building has now been unoccupied for 633 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.

Apartments put squeeze on parking

A disability centre, croquet club and Playcentre are feeling the parking crunch in Takapuna due to new apartments and business activity.

The Takapuna Croquet Club appealed to the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board to help sort out the lack of parking at Auburn Reserve, where the 60 three-hour parking spaces are reportedly all gone by 7.30am.

Users of the reserve "don't get a chance to find an empty park and use their permits," club president Anne Mortimer told

the board.

She said around 20 parks should be set aside for the reserve users, which would still leave parks for the general public.

Board member Jan O'Connor said the Red Cross had used the Girl Guides hall at the reserve, but had "given up" due to the lack of parking.

Board chair Aidan Bennett said the issue needed to be investigated as it was likely to be more complicated than it seemed on the surface.

From page 1

Old fire station for sale

terrace housing and apartments, with a rateable value of \$11.85 million, is being marketed along with a neighbouring property, which has an RV of \$1.555 million and zoning for 'mixed housing urban'.

In June this year, McConnell Clearmont's business manager, Charlotte Seath, told the Observer the company was still planning to go ahead with the development in 2020.

Now Seath says the company is unable to discuss the sale.

The 5407sqm site has a resource consent for a five-storey, 96-unit retirement and aged-care village, granted in 2018, after an earlier notified consent application for a larger facility was abandoned.

When the Fire and Emergency NZ first put the property on the market, a group of residents lobbied Auckland Council to purchase it and annex it to neighbouring Killarney Park. With apartment developments, they saw a need for more open space and the site would offer views to Lake Pupuke.

Councillor Chris Darby says the council considered the property in 2015, but the vendors' price expectation was too high.

A neighbour says residents are dismayed by the dilapidated state of the former fire station building. Over the past four years, it has been increasingly graffiti bombed and vandalised, with windows smashed and boarded up.

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Council washes hands of toilet issue



Nowhere to go... Sunnynook's Dilli Bhattarai says his children, including Briana, 3, need toilets and a drinking fountain near the Tonkin Drive playground

Children are having to relieve themselves in the Sunnynook Park bushes, after a popular council playground was built with no toilet facilities, but the council is pushing the responsibility onto the local board.

The playground at the edge of the park, next to the Tonkin Drive car park, was built about two years ago as part of flood-prevention work.

Parents spoken to at the playground said the 700-metre walk across playing fields to the nearest council toilets is not practical when toddlers are busting. They often have to head home, use the bushes or ask at nearby shops.

Sunnynook Community Association chairman Peter McNee says the playground is busy every day after school, because there are two kindergartens and a school nearby.

McNee has spoken to more than 40 parents, who signed a petition calling for toilets near the playground.

He has also spoken to nearby shop owners, who say people come in with children asking to use their toilets.

The results can be embarrassing for parents and children.

"Children wet themselves or go in the bushes," he says.

McNee says he has been lobbying Auckland Council for facilities for at least a year.

All of the parents the Observer spoke to

at the playground agreed about the need for facilities, saying young children often leave it too late to say they need a toilet when they are playing.

One mother recalled arriving at the playground only to have to go home again.

Sunnynook parent Herman Grobler said he has generally been able to get his two girls home, but it's "a real nuisance".

Grobler and other parents would like somewhere for children to wash their hands and a drinking fountain.

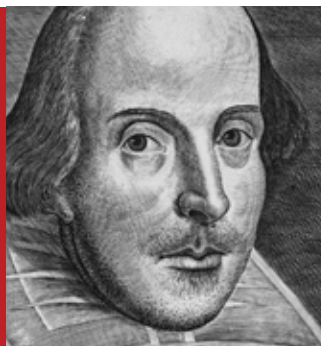
Auckland Council provided a statement saying the nearest toilets are a five-minute walk away.

"The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board's annual and three-year planning has begun and new facilities may be considered as part of this.

"The board will be seeking community feedback on these plans between February and June 2020."

• **Another Sunnynook Park playground is becoming a hazard, the community association says: story, page 9.**

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Busy teen proudest of exploits in the gym

Ever outspoken, Mae Everett decides to “put it out there” that the thing she is most proud of this year, even more than her newly minted AIMEs award for Takapuna community work, is success in a gym challenge.

As someone who hadn’t exercised since school, Everett, 19, said coming fifth out of 70 entrants in an Ultimate Body Challenge involved losing weight and gaining muscle. Participants had to get up at 5am daily – a huge challenge. The key was hard work and resilience.

“[Resilience is] waking up in the morning and resisting going back to sleep, then training your best at the gym, even though you’re tired.

“When I do something, I put my head in the game and I just do it. It’s something that’s important for everyone to do, I think.”

Everett now works at the Ultimate Body gym in Wairau Valley, while also doing two hospitality jobs, studying business law full-time, holding down a role as a youth adviser at youth innovation hub Shore Junction and starting a thesis on community work.

Juggling it all has been “really hard”, she admits.

“It has been all about organisation and keeping it together and, when I am stressed, focusing as much as I can.”

Everett, who lives at home in Forrest Hill, plans a career in arbitration, but she also wants to stay involved with Shore Junction.

“I think it’s a life-long thing. I just love Shore Junction and I have been with it from the start.”

Building has started on the youth centre on Takapuna’s Mary Poynton Drive, after a huge number of fundraising events and activities, led by Everett and others.

Seeing young people grow through their involvement has been incredibly rewarding, Everett says, and that will continue when the hub opens. The plan is to create a place for young people to develop and fulfil their goals, through courses, mentorship and networking.

While both her parents work for the Auckland Council, Everett says her own involvement, since 2014, with the work of the Takapuna North Community Trust was something she instigated.

From the age of 14, when she was at Westlake Girls, Everett supported community facilitators Rachel Bro and, subsequently, Sarah Thorne, to organise events, such as an ‘Amazing Race’ for school students on Takapuna Beach, annual intergenerational dialogues between young people and older people and Charlie’s Play Dates, inclusive play days at the Takapuna Beach playground.

Everett was also a member of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Youth Board



Full schedule... Mae Everett has been recognised for the community work she juggles with three jobs and full-time study

and chaired the associated youth group YouNite, which helped organise the same community events, as well as a candidates meeting to help inform young people about the local body elections in 2016.

These activities have been recognised with an AIMEs award for emerging talent, from North Harbour Club.

Judging chair Sue Stannaway says Everett showed sustained commitment to charitable and philanthropic work and looks set to continue. In addition, the North Harbour Club sees Shore Junction as a great space

to assist youth.

Everett plans to spend the \$7500 award on educational resources to support her thesis.

She enjoys writing and says she has already written six books – on “all sorts of things” – that she has only shown her mother.

She tells of a “spirituality”, passed on from her mother, that is all about empathy and using that understanding to solve problems – something she intends to do more of in the future.

A promotional banner for Age Dare to Dream. It features a background image of a modern school building with a glass roof. The logo for "Age" is in the top right corner, with the tagline "DARE TO DREAM" below it. The text "Dare to Dream" is written in a large, stylized, pink font across the middle. Below it, the text "a better way of learning." is written in a smaller, white font. At the bottom, there is a pink bar with the contact information "info@age.school.nz | Ph (09) 218 7771" and "LIMITED SPACES FOR 2020" in white text.

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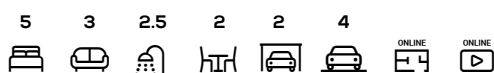
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Konnichiwa from Forrest Hill School



Culture club... Children dressed up and gave traditional cultural performances at the Forrest Hill School Cultural Day on 23 November. Above: Stella Oh and Miya Aitken (both 9) wore kimonos. Below: Lucas (5) and Leila (7) Lee practise their Japanese yo yo Fishing. Photos: Keeley Watson



Greatest Show makes great fundraiser

A new charity set up to provide grants to people with complex disabilities, so they can participate in enjoyable activities, has raised \$40,000 from a fundraising show.

The Liz Soper Foundation of Care launched mid this year and is actively seeking donations, as well as organising the 15 November event, The Greatest Show on Earth, at Onewa Arena.

The foundation has evolved out of the work of Creative Abilities, which runs 16 houses on the North Shore where people with severe disabilities can live in the community, but under expert care at the same time. Email ashley@creativeabilities.co.nz for more information.

Tree 'vandalism' criticised

The council is defending its pruning of an oak tree on a Milford berm, which a resident describes as "vandalism".

Angela Antony says the tree outside 28 Wolsley Ave has been trimmed before, but she has "never seen such butchery".

Council tree bylaws need to be amended, so tree branches must be cut evenly and the crown of the tree maintained, Antony says.

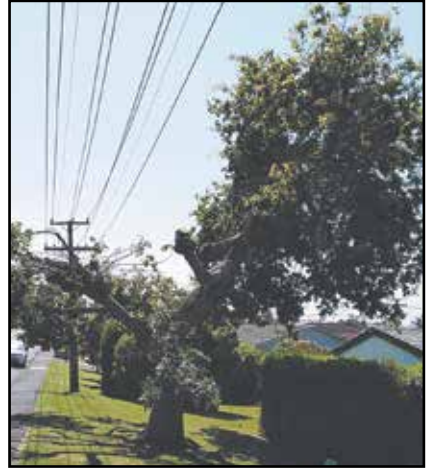
Auckland Council confirms its contractor, Treescape, trimmed the oak on 20 November, after an audit found it was too close to the overhead powerlines.

"The trimming was undertaken by professional arborists and the result of the trimming is not expected to affect the tree health," head of operational management and maintenance Agnes McCormack says.

Where trees are located near or under powerlines there is a legislative requirement

to keep the branches within a certain distance of the lines, McCormack says.

"This is to ensure the power supply is not interrupted during a storm or should parts of the tree fall."



Savage blow... An oak tree's pruning upsets a resident

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Playground 'neglected and dangerous'



Unhappy parents... A new playground with a fence is on the wishlist of Bianca Fallon-Northcott (left) with son Vlad Northcott (4) and Alana Bellizzi with daughter Taylah (18 months) and son Callum Richardson (3)

A Sunnynook Park playground that has been due for renewal for a decade is becoming a hazard, according to a residents group.

The playground, outside Sunnynook Community Centre and its early learning centre, is mostly boarded up, with a remaining bridge in a poor state and dangerously low levels of bark, says Sunnynook Community Association chair and centre board member Peter McNee.

"This is the busiest community centre on the Shore. It's extremely disappointing the length of time it is taking to get this playground renewed," he says.

"Nine years ago, before the super city was formed, the playground was up for renewal and money was available. We are still waiting."

The community centre has around 60 children attending its school holiday programmes, plus there are several daycare and early learning centres nearby.

The last Devonport-Takapuna Local Board funded a design by landscape firm Isthmus for a small civic area outside the community centre, including a new playground, with an estimated cost of \$300,000.

However, when McNee has pleaded with the council to build the playground, he has

been told there is no budget.

He plans to lobby the new local board to include the playground in its three-year plan.

Another critical project for the association is lighting for a popular path cutting through trees in Sunnynook Park, which McNee says is dark and dangerous at night.

Auckland Council head of project delivery John Schermbrucker confirms the community centre area is being considered for a renewal.

"Although the playground alone was initially due for renewal, it became part of the wider development project which would be delivered at the same time.

"One of the reasons for consolidation was to ensure both the renewal and development work well with each other. For example, part of the development is likely to include more hard surfacing in the outdoor areas, and the play space would need to complement that.

"Consultation on the design of the playspace and the development of the surrounding area has taken place with the key community members, including Sunnynook Community Hall management, Sunnynook Community Association and the rugby league club. A budget of \$280,000 is estimated for the playground renewal

component.

"The project is scheduled for the 2022 work programme. It is yet to be approved by the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board work programme, which will determine when it will be delivered."

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Business people not necessarily suited to local-body world

It is not surprising that Aidan Bennett in these early days seems to be running the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board like a personal fiefdom. I had him on recently about his photo appearing about a dozen separate times in a recent publication of his own Channel magazine.

School-field use makes sense

Contrary to the tenor of your article (22 November) on Forrest Hill United football club having to use the Westlake Girls High School fields because of delays to upgrading fields at Becroft and Sunnybrae Parks, this must be an 'elegant solution' and common sense approach to the increasing pressure on council sports fields as the population continues to grow.

The \$25,000 a year the club pays is not an insignificant amount but, under the current commercialisation and sponsor focus of sport generally, and the council's charging policy for the use of community facilities, it may not be unreasonable, the offset being a welcome financial contribution to Westlake Girls.

The use of under-utilised school fields for broader community use for youth sport has been a discussion point for some time, and Westlake Girls has clearly established a very useful precedent.

The 'fresh approach' of our new local-board team should pick this up as a very valuable community co-operative concept, and initiate an equitable joint venture between clubs, council and local schools for the use of the school fields for our kids' sport.

Bill Rayner

This is the danger when silly residents foolishly vote for high-profile business people with vested interests to elected positions and don't consider the possible consequences. History has shown on many occasions that successful businessmen do not necessarily make good local-body politicians, particularly when they are used to getting their own way, without community participation. It is generally "my way or the highway". They usually don't last long when they don't get their own way, or quickly get bored with dealing with dog licences.

It would be interesting to know how much he and his team spent on advertising and lobbying. I have first-hand experience, as an Independent, of local-board elections not being a level playing field. Perhaps it is about time this Government placed limits on how much

teams and individuals can spend on local-board electioneering and lobbying, particularly when they have the backing of their own publishing empire blatantly behind them. Does Donald Trump ring a bell?

These vested business interests need to be somehow balanced with community interests. Jan O'Connor, Trish Dean and Ruth Jackson may sadly be largely irrelevant and impotent for the first six months.

It sounds like it may be a long three years until the next election, but the damage may have been irreversibly done. As they say there is "no fool like an old fool".

Bruce Tubb

Personal attack unnecessary

Bruce Tubb's attack on Aidan Bennett is unnecessarily personal [above, first printed in the Flagstaff on 29 November] just because Bennett voted to exclude the public from council workshops. To suggest that this decision is a threat to democracy is a nonsense. Workshops for whatever organisation are usually in-house and the chance for staff to be better informed and to test out opinions, free from any public scrutiny. I often disagree with decisions made by the council (and will do so again), but in this case they should be free to have workshops behind closed doors.

Roger Hall

Council should buy fire-station site

The land previously the site of the Takapuna Fire Station on Killarney St is once again for sale. Plans for a retirement complex have been consented but a new owner is needed to take this idea further.

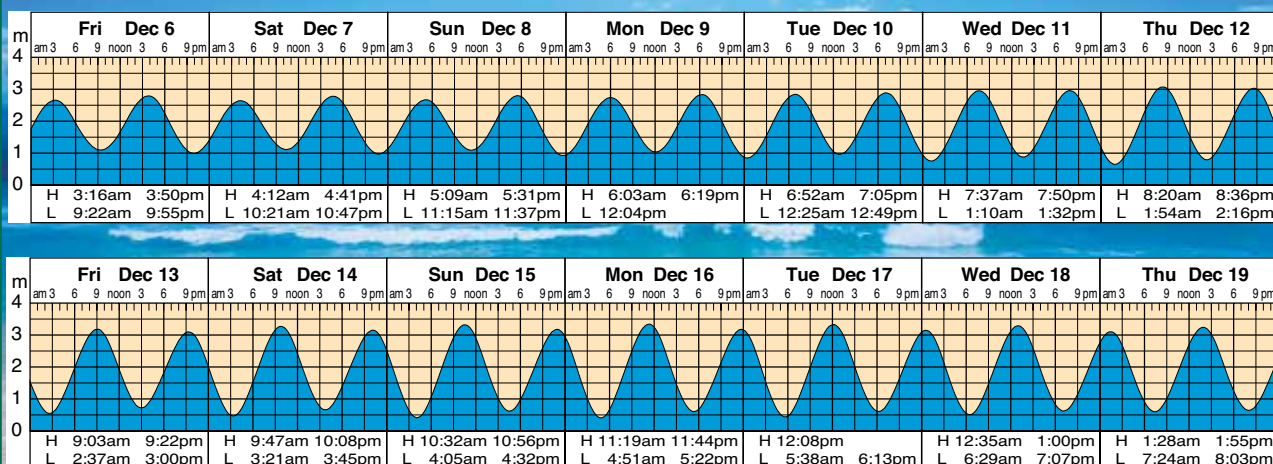
Takapuna has nearby retirement options, and plenty of apartments but very little open space.

Environment Takapuna is calling on the Auckland Council to purchase this site, remove the derelict buildings and make it part of the adjoining Killarney Park.

It is a golden opportunity to increase the usefulness of the park with an area of flat land, and restore the wider view of the Lake Pupuke for the weary commuters who pass by.

Ruth Ell
Environment Takapuna

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Formal warning after fireworks fire

A man has been formally warned by police for accidentally setting off a scrub fire with fireworks on a Castor Bay property.

Two appliances attended the 10sqm blaze that spread to a neighbouring property, raising fears it could damage a house.

The fire service received multiple calls

about 10pm on Friday, 22 November. They were at the property for two hours.

Police confirm they attended the Beach Rd incident, spoke to witnesses and established the man who caused the fire also called the Fire Service. They gave him a warning and took no further action.

Onward and Outward Bound for Tayla

Westlake Girls student Tayla Woolley has received an award for outstanding leadership – with a 21-day course at Outward Bound as the prize.

The AIMES awards are presented by the North Harbour Club to recognise talented young people on the North Shore who make a contribution to the community.

Year-13 student Tayla was this year's North Shore Youth MP, working alongside Maggie Barry MP and attending the 'Youth Parliament', a mock government, where she was 'elected' chairperson for the social services and community select committee.

Among other interests, she was a fundraiser for Cure Kids New Zealand, on the organising committee for the Auckland schools' strike for climate change, and attended a Rotary-organised Model UN Assembly in Auckland.

Tayla plans to study law and politics at Victoria University in 2020.



Tayla Woolley



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Comment

Early lessons about the new board

The first meeting of the new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board was held on Tuesday 19 November.

- The board is likely to be split down the middle on many issues, with Aidan Bennett, Toni van Tonder, and George Wood on one side, and Heart of the Shore members Trish Deans, Jan O'Connor and Ruth Jackson on the other. Chair Aidan Bennett had to use his casting vote four times on what was a light agenda.

- Wood, the only member of his five-strong ticket to be elected, appears to have allied himself with Bennett and van Tonder of Fresh Approach, rather than carry on as an independent.

- Bennett showed the ability to be a good chair, using an easy humour to defuse some of the passion emanating from fellow members. It's early days though, and it remains to be seen how patient he will be with the often confrontational style of Jan O'Connor, in particular.

- Bennett has built up a successful business and community involvement legacy on the Shore based on "relationships". He hopes to translate this ability to build relationships with the likes of Panuku, Auckland Transport and the Tupuna Maunga Authority to get projects moving in the area. How he navigates this against the often diverse wants and pressure from community groups will be key to his success or failure.

- Trish Deans is perhaps the "slow burner" on the board. Without much fuss or fanfare, she presented an in-depth analysis of the environmental shortcomings of the \$2.7 million Patuone Reserve Walkway in Takapuna. Her report could markedly influence discussions over the project.

Press table goes missing on dark day for democratic scrutiny

The lack of a press bench at the new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board rooms in Takapuna was perhaps an ominous sign as I entered a meeting where media freedoms, transparency and public access to information were about to be discussed.

Provision of a press table is a long-held tradition among local authorities – a symbol as much as anything that these meetings and the activities of local-body politicians and council officials, funded by ratepayers, are open to scrutiny.

For its first official meeting of the new term last week, the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board moved to its new public home in cramped, reduced premises downstairs from the former North Shore City Council chamber.

No press agenda was on offer, either. Board member Jan O'Connor lent me hers.

Temperatures rose as staff struggled to get the air-conditioning working, while board chair Aidan Bennett drove through his motion to close workshops to the public and the media.

With the board split, he used his casting vote, as predicted. An eleventh hour attempt to mollify opponents was also passed – with all documents at the workshops to be put on the board's website, and a planned monthly drop-in session where the public can discuss the material with council staff.

This could cause more trouble than it's worth, as the workshop material is often raw, with detail and context fleshed out in the discussion between board members and officers.

Wouldn't it have been easier just to keep the workshops open?

Yes, there is grandstanding. Yes, there is point-scoring at the public workshops – but welcome to politics.

The proponents of the closed workshops and council staff say that no decisions are made at workshops, only at full public meetings.

This is legally correct, but practically wrong. No resolutions are made at workshops, but decisions are made by the board on the directions projects take, and on what ideas are given air or snuffed out.

In fact, it could be argued it is in the workshops where the critical decisions are made that influence key projects in our area. Board-meeting resolutions are often rubber stamps, which follow lengthy arguments in workshops.

Bennett and some board members seem surprised at my opposition to closed meetings. Why so? I've been seeking transparency and accountability from local authorities and politicians for almost 40 years, in an attempt to bring plans and changes to the attention of the public as early in the process as possible.

A resident who lives on Lake Rd has contacted our business expressing concerns about the impact of a \$47 million upgrade on the carriageway and surrounding homes.

Why shouldn't this person be kept abreast of developments and options as soon as they arise created by Auckland Transport?

My surprise is that Bennett – the publisher of a monthly magazine on the Shore – would seek to restrict media freedoms at all.

Rob Drent
Managing Editor
The Rangitoto Observer

Postscript: The one-sided communication I was concerned about from the new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board raises its head in its latest website posting.

Board chair Aidan Bennett is quoted extensively on the reasons behind the board decision to close workshops.

None of the opposing views of dissenting members is included in the post.

Jan O'Connor, Trish Deans and Ruth Jackson are only mentioned as voting against the move.

Local board divvies up responsibilities

Incoming members of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board have been allocated specific areas of interest and responsibility.

The individual board members will be able to make minor decisions in these areas on delegated authority.

Items of higher importance or wide public interest will be referred to the full board, and all correspondence circulated to all members.

The delegations are:

- Land-owner consents (except filming): Aidan Bennett and George Wood.
- Land-owner consent for filming: Aidan Bennett and Ruth Jackson.
- Events: Toni van Tonder and Jan O'Connor.
- Liquor licences: George Wood and

Ruth Jackson.

- Resource-consent notifications: Toni van Tonder and Trish Deans.
 - Hearings presenters: Toni van Tonder and Trish Deans.
 - Park benches and memorial applications: Jan O'Connor and Ruth Jackson.
- Members appointed to external organisations:
- Devonport Peninsula Trust: Trish Deans.
 - Takapuna Facilities Trust: Toni van Tonder.
 - Takapuna Business Association: George Wood.
 - Devonport Business Association: Aidan Bennett.
 - Milford Business Association: Jan O'Connor.

Letters to the Editor

Topics should be local.

Noms-de-plume or submissions without a name will not be printed.

Email news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz
or post to Rangitoto Observer,
PO Box 32 275, Devonport.

Public and media shut out of local-board workshops...

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board workshops will be closed to the public and media, the new board decided last week.

As predicted, the issue split the board, with chair Aidan Bennett using his casting vote to get the motion through.

Earlier, he and fellow members George Wood and Toni van Tonder had supported closing the workshops to public scrutiny.

The previous board was one of just two of Auckland Council's 21 local boards to hold open workshops. Nearby Kaipatiki Local Board is the other.

Local board services relationships manager Eric Perry said after discussions with wider council staff, "It is our view the board has been disadvantaged" by having open workshops, in terms of the information provided and relationships with officers.

Aidan Bennett's key reason for closing the workshops was "good governance", meaning the board getting the best information it could from council officers, who felt constrained from speaking openly before the public and the media. Relationships needed to be rebuilt to get projects moving ahead and this was easier in private workshops, Bennett said. He was wary of the disruption caused by the "rent a crowd" who turned up to workshops. "Our job is to provide good governance for our community and we need a good structure to do that." He hoped communication with the public would in fact be better than in the past.

George Wood said he had been uncomfortable with open workshops for some time. He felt long-term board projects such as Lake Rd, and the redevelopment of Takapuna, had taken much longer and become more fraught due to the public scrutiny of officers at workshops. As a result, he often found out more up-to-date information came to the Takapuna Beach Business Association than the board. Officers were trying to do the best job they could, and private workshops would "change the atmosphere, change the environment... it's better for officers."

Toni van Tonder said she had been elected to do a "bloody good job" and the board would be foolish to create an atmosphere where it was not getting the best information it could. As Devonport BID manager, dealing with the likes of Panuku, Auckland Transport and other council departments, the organisations were "damning" about the local board, and the open workshop process, she said. "Do not take the moral high ground – do your job," van Tonder told the board.

Jan O'Connor said council staff appeared to be scared to front up to the public, but this should be part of their training. The fear of facing up to the public seemed to have spread to board members, she said. O'Connor criticised the moves to make information at the workshops available on the board website and said sessions to explain it to the public were a waste of staff time.

Trish Deans said New Zealand operated within the Westminster political system where "robust debate is always public debate". The culture of Auckland Council staff was to "close things", and just because 19 other local boards had secret workshops that did not mean it was the right path. The media also had the right to report information directly from meetings and not rely on the council or local-board members for updates.

Ruth Jackson was adamant the workshops should remain open, as it was the board's job to serve the public, not council staff. The previous open workshops had worked successfully and were "a great way for the public to be aware of the issues". She rejected claims that information was withheld by officers as the meetings were public. Workshops could temporarily go behind closed doors if confidential information was to be heard. Any poor behaviour at public workshops could be addressed by the chair, she said.

O'Connor accused Bennett of being afraid of public scrutiny and likened him to a "little boy running home to mummy after school".

Bennett said he was aware the move was unpopular with some, but if he was afraid of the public he would not have proposed the motion at all.

...but they will likely reopen in 2021

The closed local-board workshops will open again in the second half of the board's term, says Ruth Jackson, who will then be chair.

Arguing against the closing of workshops last week, Jackson pledged to reopen the meetings when she takes over from Aidan

Bennett as chair.

By voting with her Heart of the Shore colleagues, Trish Deans and Jan O'Connor, to reinstate open meetings, Jackson will be able to use her casting vote in a similar way new chair Bennett did to close the workshops.

New local board will meet earlier

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board Tuesday meetings have been brought forward from 4pm to 2pm.

Chair Aidan Bennett had wanted the meetings to start at 9.30am, while other board members wanted midday, 4 pm or 6pm – to allow more members of the public to attend outside work hours.

Bennett used his casting vote to push through 2pm as a compromise.

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FROM THE TEAM AT VIC ROAD KITCHEN

Winning problem-solving nationals 'no stress'



Under pressure... Westlake Boys' senior division team topped the nation for its action plan on solving the problem of stress: (left to right) Sam Huang, George Yang, Andy Wang and Bruce Bian.

Coping with stress was the topic students from all over the country grappled with at this year's Future Problem Solving nationals, with Westlake Boys and Girls students winning several categories.

The national competition was held from 1-3 November at west Auckland's Carey Park camp, where 170 school students, aged 11 to 18, had to solve problems presented to

them, as well as presenting their projects.

Westlake Boys won two age-group categories (middle and senior divisions) for the 'presentation of action plans' solving the problem of coping with stress.

A team from Westlake Girls won the senior division of the 'global issues problem solving' category. The team members were Serena Chen, Raeanne Leow, Jumana

Maash and Megan Meng.

Sophie Dykgraaf won the middle division (individual) award in the same category.

Sarah Penny from Westlake won the on-site scenario writing competition.

Teams and individuals from schools in the Takapuna-Milford area also placed in various categories. See the Future Problem Solving website, under 'news' for details.



Bright sparks... Westlake Boys' middle division team won the same category for their age group: (left to right) David Choi, Henry Pinder, Hunter Haynes, William Huang and Stirling Bennett.

Walkway plans fall short environmentally – new board member

The \$2.5 million Patuone Walkway proposal looks set to be revisited by the new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board after a new member raised concerns.

The walkway needed to be upgraded, Trish Deans told the board in a report, but plans fell short of best practice for a “Significant Ecological Area”.

“The mangroves provide a significant habitat to a number of native bird species, including the banded rail which are an ‘at risk-declining’ species,” Deans said.

The removal of mangroves, building of a

wooden bridge, the removal of between 12-20 mature (6-8m tall) karaka trees and the laying of a concrete path next to the water’s edge was, more than minor activity, Deans said.

“These works will have a significant adverse effect and will have a long-term impact on this environment. The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board has not been informed of these impacts,” she said.

The Resource Management Act offered protection to Significant Ecological Areas and the board had a responsibility to uphold these. “The Patuone Reserve is primarily a

conservation area and all plans to upgrade the access and paths must include strong conservation objectives and methodology. A detailed plan for the integrated management of natural resources within the Patuone Reserve area must be established.”

An investigation was needed to check if the walkway was on a marginal strip. If it was it would be administered by the Department of Conservation.

The pathway should be for walkers, not cyclists, which would remove the need for concrete, Deans said.

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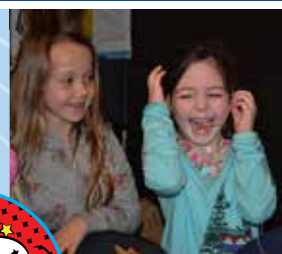
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Primary schools turn on cultural showcase



Sunlight, cultures, action... Children from 60 schools across the North Shore performed songs, dance and kapa haka at Northcote's Onepoto School Cultural Festival on 22 November, including Milford School (above), led by Marunui Davis



Sounds of the Pacific... Sunnynook School pupils dance elegantly to the strumming of ukulele



Kapa haka... Takapuna Primary School commands the stage

New owners 'getting a feel' for holiday park

New operators started at the Takapuna Beach Holiday Park on 1 October and will spend summer getting a feel for the park, before implementing changes next year.

Designs and consents will be submitted over the next year for future park upgrades in line with timing agreed under the lease, a spokesperson for Panuku said.

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Heavy hitter... Former All Black and Rosmini College old boy Anthony Boric prepares to tee off

Rosmini College tees up funding with Golf Day

More than 120 golfers turned out for a day of fierce fun and fundraising at the Rosmini College Golf Day.

Held at Waitemata Golf Course on 28 November, the event raised over \$40,000 to go towards a new building and general school equipment.



Taking the wheel... Rosmini College principal Nixon Cooper keeps an eye on the playground from a golf cart, accompanied by Parents, Teachers and Friends Association member Jane Sheridan



The Pink Ladies... (left to right) Georgina O'Sullivan, Juliet Hyatt-Brown, Gina McKolskey and Sarah Porter, all mothers of Rosmini College students



Old Boys... Former Rosmini students Matt Casey, Mark Casey, Robbie Tindall and Giles Laville

Landfill gas-rise prompts checks

Closer monitoring of gas emissions from the closed Barry's Point landfill has occurred since elevated readings were recorded in February.

More than 150 locations are monitored across open grassed areas of the site, including around the Lakehouse Arts Centre.

In February four sites produced readings which triggered warnings, according to Auckland Council reports released under the Official Information Act.

Some of the areas had dead grass and cracks, which were "not typically observed" at the site.

"Elevated gas concentrations have not been recorded during the two previous surveys.

"The current results may be a reflection on the recent hot, dry weather, which may have caused the cover material to shrink and

profile more pathways for the landfill to discharge," the Tonkin and Taylor report said.

"The site has been classified as having high gas generation potential.

"These results indicated that the site is actively generating (gas), and so ongoing monitoring is considered to be required."

Some surface water flooding had occurred at the site over the past year, after heavy rain.

Water monitoring showed low levels of leachate draining from the site.

Fashionable fundraiser

A fashion show in Milford Mall will raise money for Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Aotearoa from 12pm on 15 December. New season's clothing, gifts and refreshments. RSVP 021 686 516 or aucklandnorthshore@zonta.org.nz

Green apartment project abandoned

Plans for a luxury Takapuna apartment development, complete with a fleet of shared electric vehicles, have been scrapped, with the site now on the market.

Legacy Property designed the seven-storey block, apartment block at 3 Burns Ave, after coming up with a similar, eco-friendly development in Panmure, both under the banner of 'rethinking.space'.

However, the Takapuna company, Legacy Property, did not get enough pre-sales and decided to sell the site and focus on other projects, managing director Gary Gordon says.

The property is advertised as having a resource consent for a 7-level apartment building, with 42 units.

There was a deadline for tenders of 5 December.

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