

Auckland Council Mediation Disaster

The Association, like many other groups, including lawyers and planners, about 100 in all, assembled by demand of the Commission for the first mediation session of the Unitary Plan Hearings.

It was a disaster! Only two pages of a council draft policy were considered and the Commissioners hadn't resolved the grouping before the meeting. The end result was that there was more debate over the grouping than on the real issues of development growth and policies.

The Association, like others received an 'assessment of mediation' which was written in a form of apology, stating that they will have 'more focussed mediation' in the future - not a good start to the 'Unitary Plan' meeting.

The most up-to-date knowledge we have, is the mediation date on the 'Rural Urban Boundary' (RUB) will be advised shortly, with the substantive hearings on zoning and specific areas requests, being about the middle of 2015.

The RUB argument raises other hidden economic issues in my view.

Once set, the area contained with the RUB will be able to be used to set levies for proposed infrastructure which will be needed for the projected growth of 30 years. In this way development and infrastructure can be incrementally paid for over time. The real question will be, if there will be any difference in costs dependant on unsighted and unknown development densities. I don't believe that the current mechanism of development levies on developments payable when development occurs will be the only avenue for funds for infrastructure for the Council.

At present the 'Rural & Countryside Living' zones are outside the RUB but 'Large Lot' (of which there is no zoning in Kumeu) is included. The 4,000m² Large Lot is about 10 times the size of the 'Mixed Housing' suburban site, so there is a potential problem of fairness in infrastructure levies.

The 'Large Lot' category with limited services and self-contained water & sewerage, is closer aligned to the 'Countryside Living' zoning at 1 hectare. That debate is for the next mediation session.

Auckland Transport and the New Zealand Transport Authority have yet to show how transport needs are going to be handled to service the known 20-30,000 population increase. It has been decided to write to the Prime Minister to see if he can help with the problem.

What is clearly apparent to locals is that the traffic in Kumeu is creating congestion, and we don't have any of the new housing areas operating yet. It is the shop owners and businesses on the Main Road who are noticing the greatest change.

The Association will be expanding its membership in the New Year to accommodate the interest expressed from the business community.

On behalf of the hard working committee, wish everyone a safe and enjoyable Christmas.

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