

Dog un-friendly city

9 September 2009

WELLINGTON City Council treats dogs and their owners worse than violent offenders, says a Brooklyn dog-owner.

Mary Ellen Gordon says dog control in Wellington is over-the-top, and says statistics show that. In 2007/2008 there were 44 dog attacks reported in Wellington, compared with 2,346 violent crimes towards people. Relative to the population, you are twice as likely to get attacked by a human than a dog, Gordon says.

She made a submission to the Draft Dog Policy, and her impression of a negative attitude towards dogs is echoed in many other submissions to the draft.

Having lived in the USA and Christchurch, Gordon was shocked when she moved to Wellington.

"I was taken by surprise about attitudes towards dogs, which is why I looked up the statistics. I thought, 'Are there more dog attacks here?'"

The rate of dog ownership in New Zealand as a whole is two-and-a-half times as great as in Wellington, and based on her experiences, Gordon says it's no wonder.

Recently she was involved in an SPCA fundraiser day. Despite wearing the SPCA vest, holding the bucket and stickers at an officially approved location with her dog on a lead, she was approached by a dog control officer who demanded to see her exemption.

"It seems like harassment. [The council] doesn't seem to pursue other things like litter or alcohol bans as strongly."

Gordon says dogs in Wellington also have second-class facilities.

Most of the dog exercise areas aren't fenced, contrary to the requirement of a fenced house for Responsible Dog Owner status.

Gordon says an unfenced off-leash area that is close to the road is dangerous for dogs and cars.

"Why is it that dog-owners in Wellington pay some of the highest registration fees in the country and are forced to subsidise indoor sports fields and artificial turf through their rates, yet are left with dog exercise areas that turn to mud pits as soon as it rains?"

To top it off, the \$300 fee for having a dog off-leash in an on-leash area is not proportionate to the crime, says Gordon. That fine is twice the amount someone is slapped with for running a red light.

Dog Policy spokes person Iona Pannett agrees, but says the fine is unlikely to be lowered.

"It's set by legislation. We are hamstrung, essentially," she says. "If people felt it was too punitive we'd have to get rid of the bylaw that all dogs must be on a leash in a public space, and you'd have to start specifying particular areas."

A dog-owner herself, Pannett says the draft policy is a step in the right direction, but it still has a way to go.

She says the fencing of dog off-leash exercise areas is an important step.

"I'm interested in whether there are some solutions that don't involve lots of money, like getting local Rotaries or dog clubs involved. If it's close to the road, it's crazy - you wouldn't put a children's playground there."

Pannett says the future of dogs in Wellington could take a lead from many places in the world, and it would be nice to see dogs on public transport.

"That's not under the city council's control, but I think we should have a discussion about it. It's not that radical an idea. I've lived in London where people bring dogs onto the tube."

Gordon says Wellington needs to lighten up.

"I can't think of anywhere else where it's so restrictive."

The Draft Dog Policy will be discussed at the Strategy & Policy Committee meeting on October 8, and finalised by council on November 11.

Public input doesn't fly

9 September 2009

IT'S another example of millions spent behind closed doors, say opponents to the proposed Basin Flyover.

Protestors at the Green's save the Basin petition say Wellington City Council is living in the past and taking Wellingtonians down with them.

"The flyover will create problems, not solve them. It will create more traffic, rather than ease congestion," says Cycle Aware Wellington member Patrick Morgan. "There's evidence that if you build more roads, you attract more traffic. It's a huge misallocation of resources, it's a terrible use of the Basin Reserve, and it's not what Wellingtonians want."

Morgan refers to statistics collected from submissions received by Greater Wellington Regional Council on the issue, of which 79% did not support the flyover construction and preferred to invest in public transport, walking and cycling.

Alana Bowman moved to Wellington from Los Angeles four years ago, where she worked as a prosecutor

and policy advisor. She is shocked at the way Wellington City Council disregards public opinion. "The main issue is the manner in which decisions are made and then facts which support those decisions are accumulated. It seems to be conclusions without providing full information about other alternatives," Bowman says.

She says her native LA council is far more transparent than Wellington City Council, despite the huge difference in size.

"What seems to be not evident here is any results from the submissions, like Manners Mall and the bypass, where public opinion is strongly [against] the decision."

As a Mount Cook resident, she opposes the construction of a flyover.

"It's an amazing thing to go to LA and hop on a subway or light rail. It's an expensive commitment, but it was undertaken 30 years before the full need. It's just that sort of parallel process that is needed here – to look at the next 50 years," Bowman says.

Councillor Iona Pannett has an inside view of council, and she says it's sad that the decision about constructing a flyover seems to have been made.

"The New Zealand Transport Agency will start the design process for the flyover by February next year. What they're saying at the moment is they've got technical experts looking at a variety of solutions, but it's basically under the road or above it," she says. "There's \$41 million allocated for construction in the National Land Transport Programme, so I think they've made their decision before consultation."

Buses in Manners Mall

12 August 2009

MANNERS Mall fans can still stop buses going through the area.

The legal revocation of Manners Mall has yet to be publicly notified in order for the project to get underway in 2010.

In the late 1970s Manners Mall went through a legal process to change it from a road into a mall. For it to revert to a road, the process needs to be revoked by the Wellington City Council.

Legal revocation means the public will need to be notified, which gives Wellingtonians a further opportunity to make submissions on the issue.

The City Is Ours is inviting Wellingtonians to sign an ePetition on the council website to drum up support against the proposal.

"Some people are more into cars, some more into sustainable transport or public transport," councillor Andy Foster says.

"If there was a massive number of people who clearly showed they had a view that Manners shouldn't be opened or had a brilliant alternative – then great."

The City Is Ours group which organised the I love Manners Mall campaign, will have to come up with ideas to make the bus system work or it will choke, says Foster.

Wakefield Street was one of the alternative bus-route options, but Foster says Manners was the best by a reasonable margin.

Councillor Iona Pannett voted for a Manners Mall bus lane, and hopes those who are against it understand the council is providing an alternative public space.

"Submissions [should] take into account the compensatory space on lower Cuba Street. I think councillors have to take into account the numbers because it's reflective of feelings, but the quality matters too. If we get the buses working better we can avoid road working at the other end of the city like the [Basin] Flyover."

Pannett says no detailed design work for lower Cuba Street has been decided yet, but one idea "is quite radical where you allow pedestrians and motor vehicles to mix. It's definitely useful to try it".

She's interested in whether residents against the proposal value the mall as it is, or want it revitalised.

"For me, [the bus route] has opened up the possibility of revitalising that part of the strip because businesses may relocate there."

The council will discuss the legal revocation at the Strategy and Policy Committee meeting on September 17.

Noise control

RE: "Noise control can't help" (Capital Times, August 26).

Richard MacLean (WCC communications person) was speculating when he told your reporter that he thought councils can seize stereos but that they have no power to control excessive "people noise". The fact is that noise control officers can, and do, take action against unreasonably rowdy neighbours.

Complaints of excessive "people noise" are normally associated with parties late at night with groups of people drinking, talking and playing music outside or beside opened doors very close to neighbours. If necessary we can call for police assistance to convince people to quiet down and stop annoying the neighbours. In terms of the issue you covered in your story about alleged noise problems between neighbours on The Terrace, we have received five complaints in the last eight months. We served two

notices to reduce the noise from music and loud "people noise", while on three occasions there was no noise when our officers arrived.

Matthew Borich, Compliance Manager, Wellington City Council.
(abridged)

Letters, August 19

19 August 2009

WCC spending

Trish Janes obviously has some experience/knowledge of the Wellington City Council (Capital Times, Aug 12). I was recently interviewed by Radio NZ seeking the reason for my withdrawal from further participation at Wellington City Council meetings. The only content broadcast a week later however, was an assurance that my disquiet would ultimately be conveyed to higher authority. That time begins now: there is nothing higher than the Court of Public Opinion when we, the public, are deliberately treated like mushrooms. Being kept in the dark and fed by political spin merchants, where BS is their specialty, is not my understanding of transparent democracy. The recent release of the approved Long Term Council Community Plan 2009/19 is comprised of two volumes of incomprehensible burble and numbers. Informing us, the ratepayers, how we are to benefit from their spending around \$4 billion of our money, has once again become an exercise with smoke and mirrors. In resignation at being left with no other alternative, I will pay only for those services I will be using, and no others. Those who impose rates because lobbyists, self-serving politicians, and ignorant bureaucrats actually believe they have the coercive powers to achieve their objectives will, of necessity, meet the inspection of the relevant statutory authority charged with protecting us from such abuse. That's a promise.

Bernie Harris, Brooklyn

Letters, Aug 12

12 August 2009

Council elections

I have every sympathy with people not voting in the (Wellington City) council elections. Only those who follow local politics very closely know if a councillor has done a good job or is conscientious, as Councillor Gotlieb says should be the test (Capital Times, August 5). The real problem is that individual councillors cannot be held accountable for their promises because they can be out voted by others elected from the other side of town over whom we can have no influence. At least with party tickets we could support a coherent policy. With the present Wellington council it is impossible to predict what they might do next week, let alone vote to give them another three years. If the councillors' role is to apply common sense before approving proposals put forward by staff, or to judge between public submissions and the officers' plans, I seriously suggest that we randomly select 12 people off the footpath each month and let them decide.

Trish Janes, Wellington

Island Bay wet hostel

RE "Island Bay for the drinkers" in your 22-28 July edition. The Island Bay Residents' Association has never discussed the issue of a "wet hostel" being set up in Wellington City, let alone in Island Bay. The Residents' Association was completely unaware that there was any proposal to establish such a facility in our suburb. This issue will be discussed at our next meeting in August.

Anne Brunt, Island Bay Residents' Association
(abridged)

Letters, July 22

22 July 2009

An ageing councillor

Christine Swift makes some good points (letters July 15). Several councillors are well beyond their use-by date, and have never held a meaningful job in their lives. They lack the experience to be the equivalent of a board member of the largest corporation in Wellington. Andy Foster has been a councillor about 20 years, and has never had a meaningful job in his life. He has made being a councillor a career. He certainly will not get an equivalent paying job once he leaves council, nor will councillors Wade-Brown, Cook, Ahipene-Mercer, Morrison, Mayor Pendergast - to name but a few. Councillor Swift refers to "a risk

that ageing councillor may cling to his office solely to keep himself at his current salary level, because he knows damn well he'd never get an outside job at the same rate as he does in council". Apart from being ageist and sexist, (which really doesn't concern me), Christine Swift has highlighted the most serious problem undermining this whole council – namely patronage. As long as the mayor and her council cronies have the power to appoint each other to higher-paying posts, so will the concept of the council being democratic be a myth, and there will continue to be infighting between the haves and have-nots. That's why some of us never got/get lucrative appointments, but at least our integrity remains intact!
Jack Ruben, Wellington City Councillor

Citywide parking

Of course a citywide parking coupon would be a great idea. Many's the time I've parked, say, at the northern end of Lambton Quay and paid for a full one hour (or even a full two hours) parking – in anticipation of an appointment nearby taking up all of that time – only to find that the meeting was cancelled at the last minute or if it did take place it never took anywhere near as long as I thought it would, etc and thus I'm left with a heap of unused time that I've paid for on my ticket. Now if I could reuse that ticket in another part of the city then I could jump into my car and go and find a park near where I need to go and use the time I've already paid for! The comment by Richard MacLean indicates that the council is merely out to collect revenue from overpaid and unused parking tickets and not to in any way to make the city a friendlier place for motorists.

Trevor W.A. Morley, Wellington South

I can see no argument against a citywide coupon scheme (whereby you can move streets in the same rating zone on the one ticket) except that it offers a mean-spirited source of extra council revenue.
Penny Brander, Berhampore

The city, for residents living on the fringe of the CBD, is their local shopping centre. Parking charges for this "local shopping" is a deterrent. I park at multiple locations to use the chemist, post office, stationery, hairdresser etc. I would be in favour of citywide parking. Just as I am in favour of having a five-minute parking zone outside Panama Street post office so I can collect my mail. I was ticketed \$40.00 as I parked on the service delivery zone. A call to the council office to request a split between service delivery zone and five-minute parking for mail collection, as is the case in Marion Street was met with disinterest. Council appears out of touch with the practicalities of fringe city residents using their city as a local.
Carol Oliver, Wellington

Yes, it is a good idea, where do I sign up? I'll sign any petition to that. I think the whole idea of having different streets is to monitor revenue on zone but I think zoning with street names and the same rate has got no harm at all. It is just the tweaking of the system that is costly and inconvenient for the council to perform.

Minh Tran, Tawa

Citywide scheme makes sense for the areas that are charged at the same rate. Otherwise it just seems pedantic – another way to extract more money out of city visitors. With the old parking meters, at least if there was time left on the meters others could benefit. Now if we leave early we still pay for the parking, as does the following parker. And if we stay even just a little over time we're fined... How about a refund system? That would be innovative and great PR!

Karen Smith, Lyall Bay

Council infighting

After reading this week's letter page I put on my thinking cap. (Also, recently there has been some publicity about the conduct of an eastern ward councillor). I am beginning to see the wisdom in a policy whereby any one councillor can hold office for a maximum of six years (or two terms). It seems to me that long-term councillors begin to behave like spoilt brats. Also there is a risk that an aging councillor may cling to his office solely to keep himself at his current salary level, because he knows damn well he'd never get an outside job at the same rate as he does with council. This would ensure fresh blood and ideas would keep circulating in the council's chambers and perhaps solve the issue of infighting we hear so much about.

Christine Swift, Southgate

Capital's lack of transparency

The Dominion Post reported last week that Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast had been subjected to a threatening phone call, resulting in the deployment of security personnel to protect her health and safety.

Though I cannot support any threat or act of violence toward another human being, I wonder if Ms Prendergast has bothered to wonder why somebody might have become exasperated to the point that a desperate crank call became a feasible option.

Many citizens in our fine city have long expressed discontent formally or otherwise at the self-serving actions of local councillors, as most recently evidenced by outrage over the lack of transparency regarding the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) and the manufacturing of statistical support for new bus lanes through Manners Mall.

Ms Prendergast described recent circumstances surrounding disgraced French rugby player Mathieu Bastareaud's false claim of assault as "clearly collusion" with French rugby management and teammates. I wonder if she's willing for details of any political "collusion" involving her own benefit to be made public?

JACK SHEPPARD

Newtown

Who among us is without sin?

I have just withdrawn, after 10 years, from further participation in any Wellington City Council meetings where the true principles of city governance are ignored. Self-interest and political convenience now predominate.

Leadership by fiat is ever present. Conduct unbecoming was nothing short of sanctimonious in being judge, jury, and executioner-elect of a councillor whose main fault was using certain words in describing a process that reeked of political (m)paternalism. Historical references were irrelevancies.

When the LTCCP can be reinterpreted to suit politicians' continuity of appointment, it calls for extreme measures to circumvent such an outcome. That seems to have been only one reason for councillor Rob Goulden's "tirade".

Police intervention and mayoral protection were condiments to this media brouhaha.

A code of conduct exists, designed to effect decisions to benefit all Wellingtonians. It is not there to be enforced; it sets guidelines: it seeks the practice of free expression with respect for others.

Just as an afterthought, has anyone not used the words, described as foul language, in this 21st century? It is a political bearpit, after all.

BERNIE HARRIS

Brooklyn

It compiled the LTCCP from its own business plans and submitted the draft to a large-scale process of consultation combining many different methods. The consultation was targeted around key issues of either service cuts or new council initiatives. This produced a large amount of participation from the Wellington community, but an experienced submitter feels that the LTCCP, being chiefly a financial tool, is not the best means for discussing the future of Wellington City.

145.

The Audit requirements of the LTCCP places some demands on WCC. There are some concerns around the threshold for undertaking amendments and the performance measure required. However, the council's management is loathe to give up the benefits of transparency and rigour that the audit requirement bring.

Wellington.Scoop

By Peter Brooks

I have always thought that Waterfront Watch did a pretty good job for the citizens of Wellington. I don't always agree with them and I do not think they are right to oppose new buildings on Kumutoto when the alternative is a ratepayer bail-out of a heavily indebted waterfront company.

But yesterday I learned from the National Programme's Sunday Morning with Chris Laidlaw that the Mayor does not think that Waterfront Watch is a very effective organisation. That was a

surprise, considering that in cases before the Environment Court they were leading the Council two wins to one!

Kerry Prendergast's case is that even in respect of one of the organisation's key objectives it has not achieved much. According to Kerry, the first waterfront designs subject to public consultation provided for 76 per cent public open space. Now after all that consultation, she says, the percentage has risen to 79 per cent. All that investment in meetings, letters to the press and submissions and only a 3 per cent return?

She is wrong – very wrong.

I have a press cutting from the long-gone and much-lamented City Voice. It is dated 9 May 1996. It is an article by Malcolm Woods, Chair of the council-owned Lambton Harbour Management Ltd. He states:

“Many people may not be aware that the 50/50 split of open spaces and commercial projects provided for in the original plan has actually been increased, so that 60 per cent of the total development area is now set aside for public space.”

So, if the Mayor's figure of 79 per cent for the current amount of planned open space is correct, Waterfront Watch has been instrumental in achieving at least 19 per cent more open space for the city.

If we recall the building projects that were planned and then scrapped because of public pressure it is no surprise that the percentage increase is so large. There was the 31-storey Lambton Tower and its associated Victoria complex of buildings, the Sheraton Wellington Hotel and Towers for the Taranaki/Cable Street area, the Chaffers Beach residential area (which would have covered the entire area of Waitangi Park), the buildings to be placed on the Jervois Quay edge of Frank Kitts Park, a ten-storey building in place of the Circa Theatre, and two Gateway Buildings on the Outer-T.

The Mayor appears to be very happy with the waterfront we now have. Funny that, because, thanks to Waterfront Watch, it is not the waterfront she championed in the 90s. Perhaps she should give our watchdog a pat and not a kick.

1. All we need now is cameras in committee room 1.

New cop on the beat Andy Foster should have a badge?

1. These cameras were erected originally to deal with safety issues around the behaviour of pedestrians and particularly those who over imbibed. They were not put in there to generate an income for Government or the council. Moving away from the safety issues relating to pedestrian behaviour raises a whole lot of issues. One hopes that Council will comply with the Privacy Commission guidelines when they come out in the next few months.

regarding the parking of vehicles on bus stops and double parking: A zero tolerance by enforcement officers on the street would help. If you park on the bus stop or double park (other than perhaps dropping someone off or picking the up) then a ticket, issued by a person.

At \$60 a pop repeated during the night for taxi drivers will soon hit at the profits of the taxis and change behaviour.

Surely the only benefit that the use of cameras is that it saves the salary of the enforcement officer on the street.

1. The council has not explained the conflict between opening up Manners Mall to speed bus journeys and the proposal to reduce the speed limit to 30kmh in the suburbs.
2. No say, no pay: WCC rates can be paid to a legal professional so as to avoid the 10% penalty fee for paying late. Citizens with unattended complaints which need to be resolved by WCC can pay their rates to a lawyer until complaints are dealt with to their satisfaction.

The reason why your rates are rising is not only because of the increase but the transfer of the burden from commercial to residential.

Only one councilor votes against the increase and transfer of the rates burden every time.....Pepperell rates well

1. Honestly, how can WCC be so flippant with our rates money? We have a massive problem with our stormwater and sewage infrastructure, and yet they seem hell bent on redirecting every cent in the wrong areas.

Is this what our Mayor wants to be remembered for? Is this her attempt as an outgoing Mayor to make her personal mark on our city?

I am astounded and becoming somewhat angrier by just how dismissive our local Government is of the opinions of the people that voted them in. I'm at a loss to see how we can prevent it. A boycott on rates will only incur penalties that will not be overlooked if we don't pay, but our money is misspent if we do.

It seems that as our rates continue to rise our expectations of elected local Government can only diminish.

What can we do to save our city from people blinded by misdirected power?

1. This is a scandal. Why doesn't WCC come up with ideas where it can save money?

The LTCCP was an open book for the spendthrift WCC to throw my money away, in particular the MEC, Wellington wharf piles, and Manners Street, without my being advised of the amount of money being considered. A casual remark in the LTCCP without an estimated sum against those projects is making a mockery of the entire process. Shame on you WCC.

1. They say that if you want to know what is happening in your city you listen to your taxi driver. Lindsay's driver would not have bothered about money to be spent on trees along Taranaki street if he had known about the debts mounting up on the waterfront project. Officers told the Council yesterday that if the waterfront company cannot find developers for its six or so building sites (and so far it has failed to do so) the company (and that means the people of Wellington) will find itself in debt by \$41.1m, with an annual interest bill of \$2.8m. The company has spent large on public open space and will soon have to spend heavily on wharf maintenance. It needs to get revenue from selling site leases to offset that expenditure.

It is just as well that our taxi drivers do not know everything about our city. If Lindsay's had known about the debt and that his passenger was strongly against the company's plans for new buildings he might have had to complete his journey on foot.

1. Why does sewage go into the sea when it rains? Instead of wasting money on grandiose waterfront dreams, the WCC should spend some money checking the state of sewage and storm water compliance.

People are happy to eat out of the sea and spew crap back in return. Joke.

1. Thanks, Lindsay, for bringing attention to another plan by WCC which fails to provide a clear description of what is intended to be built on the waterfront. The Council has failed to provide an opportunity for public comment on its new plans – one building or two? – and has chosen to hide its intentions yet again.
- 2.
3. Well said Mr Coburn. I attended one of the two meetings held to discuss the lack of Civil Defence and Disaster Preparedness in Wellington. I can say I was totally unconvinced by Councillor Ngaire Best and have no faith in either Local or Central government looking after or preparing me or my community for a disaster.

I have looked at the NZRT web site and applaud the concept.

It's a shame the WCC can't see the value in what the NZRT is attempting to achieve. But as it's not their idea and they can't control it so they won't support it.
Would you expect any thing less from bureaucracy?????

1. It would be interesting to see whether a \$50k campaign would ignite sufficient public opinion enough to change this policy. It seems that apathy is the biggest issue here.

Public policy: saying one thing, doing another

August 25, 2009 [Education](#), [Politics](#), [PressRelease0](#) comments

Press Release – Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Bob Gregory thinks its time to remove the mask on public policy and reveal what is really going on.

Professor Gregory, from Victoria University's School of Government, will discuss the nature of the political, rather than technical, rationality that lies at the heart of most public policymaking in his inaugural professorial lecture at Rutherford House next Tuesday.

“There is a strong tendency in liberal democracies to fudge the realities of political power and disguise them behind technocratic approaches to policymaking which appear to be politically neutral.”

He says this technocratic approach—the idea that all public policy problems have solutions which can be provided by theoretical knowledge—is largely an illusion.

“Public policymaking is essentially a political process and outcomes are a product of political interaction, bargaining and negotiating, which in itself is a function of political power.

“There’s a tendency to disguise that, to believe we can always generate good public policy through the application of theoretical knowledge. But politics is not for ‘curing’. It never goes away, even when governments profess to be sticking to policies that have the blessing of theoretical experts.

“In my view, the study and teaching of public policymaking is enlivened and made more relevant by a full and open recognition of its political dimensions.”

Victoria University Vice-Chancellor Professor Pat Walsh says Professor Gregory is an outstanding researcher and teacher in the area of New Zealand politics.

“Professor Gregory has been at the forefront of analysing New Zealand politics since he joined Victoria as a lecturer in Public Administration in 1974. His insights into public policymaking over the last four decades of tumultuous change in New Zealand have contributed immensely to our understanding of society and politics.”

Professor Walsh says Victoria’s Inaugural Lecture series is an opportunity for new professors to provide family, friends, colleagues and the wider community with an insight to their specialist area of study.

“It is also an opportunity for the University to celebrate and acknowledge our valued professors.”

The public lecture is at 6pm in Lecture Theatre 1, Rutherford House, Bunny Street, Wellington on Tuesday 1 September. To RSVP, email rsvp@vuw.ac.nz with ‘Gregory’ in the subject line.

1. After so called “consultation” on the draft Long term Council Community Plan, what a surprise to receive notification that “the final plan is not the same as the outlined one in the draft” and that key new features of the plan include “funding necessary to acquire land for widening and upgrading the Adelaide corridor” at I understand a budget of \$12 million... .. and a number of other items not consulted on... .. However I am meant to be assured “that the Council is providing rate payers value for money”
2. Again Citizens’ Engagement, the latest trick in the council’s books to give the impression they are listening to what seems a selection of a wide range of citizens, all of whom decided there was no need for them to submit in writing to the LTCCP.

Less than 500 submissions to the LTCCP were received as a result, compared with 722 for the Golden Mile proposal. They, the council, ignored the 74% of interested parties saying NO to the idea of opening Manners Mall to buses.

Hello.....anybody there?