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Notes from Zone 4 Meeting – Lower Hutt Little Theatre – 27 June

Ray Wallace, Mayor of Lower Hutt welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced the Chair, Jenny Rowan, Mayor of Kapiti. Also in attendance were Celia Wade Brown, Wellington City Councillors, Lower Hutt City Councillors, Zone 4 Community Board members, GWRC councillors and other council staff.

John Hamilton, Director of MCDEM spoke on the observations and surprises of 22 February, and to a lesser extent, last September and December earthquakes. Work is being done to prepare Wellington better, and he explained the status of the various councils.

He spoke about the four R's, Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recover. Initially in the rescue phase, is medical care, and provision of basic services, then 7-10 days to recover deceased, and restore services, next focusing on community, housing services, business and economic recovery.

Wellington in the same scale of an earthquake would be much, much worse than Christchurch, mainly due to the geographic location of Wellington, the transport networks, water, sewerage, hospitals (access), centre for government, and he considered any response would be fraught.

He spoke about the media issue, the tendency to go where the cameras are, and the risk in concentrating on efforts near them. He likened the media to a beast, demands to be fed, if not it goes looking, so it is better to feed information to the media, who will bring elements of concern back. There is the opportunity to use the media to provide assurance, give confidence. The role of mayor, and community leadership is vital, and separate control of CD and Mayor must be coordinated – absolute critical. Also after a few days adrenalin runs out, people become tired, and dubious judgement calls are made. It is important to pause and plan, and work is being done on planning and the way it is being implemented. It is impossible to control all range of things going on, delegate areas of responsibility. Also use the local MP – find a mechanism to brief them, and give them a role which then gives cohesion.

It was clear that Christchurch made a mistake in its reluctance to use the community boards, and missed an opportunity.

Wellington's preparedness is low – personal preparedness is about 25%, however if you add business preparedness into the mix, it drops down to about 10%. There is a moral obligation for firms to make sure people are prepared, cannot rely on personal resilience (bravery). It is clear that the less well off need more assistance. One of the issues is the elderly – stoic – veneer of bravado. The rest homes, unable to get fresh water and sewerage, some having 3 months of sponge baths is not good. Christchurch was lucky to have only two major collapsed buildings, and no hospitals, along with few fires. Research in the past few years on seismic activity has paid off, but it is a wake up call for councils and business owners to have building codes applied. Far too many businesses suffered continuity loss (i.e. access to hard drives, laptops, and had a major effect on

business operation). The geography of Christchurch was easier, flatter, with accessibility to alternative routes. Wellington will not be the same.

Communications survived surprisingly well, and also the electricity companies did well, with Orion as a benchmark for success. Water and sewerage was not good, and lessons are being learnt on this.

Again he mentioned that Christchurch Civil Defence was highly centralized, so he would like to see community boards leading the way, local groups/residents associations, neighbourhood groups, youth groups, churches, in a geographical area to be involved in knowledge of the basics, water etc, how many are affected in houses and schools. He hopes that councils will empower local community to use their initiative, use maraes, community halls, and put in place structures and training with an orientation on response.

One last thing for Wellington to consider is where is the demolition material to go? With Christchurch, after last September work was done on a tip site, but with Wellington it would be a whole different story (sea/valleys came to mind) but serious work needs to be done by councils in preparation, because the day will come.

Iain Dawe, Senior Hazard Analyst also talked of issues facing Christchurch and what Wellington could expect, and showed some slides to indicate. He suggests at least 12 months of aftershocks will occur.

The main areas of concern, are

1. Fault rupture (up and down, and sideways)
2. Groundshaking/amplification
3. Liquefaction/lateral spreading
4. Slope failure/rock fall
5. Tsunami
6. Related effects – i.e. fire/flooding

Suggestions for some preparedness and mitigation of buildings might be:

1. Setback zones –if fault line known (don't build on faults)
2. Shaking intensity – vertically and horizontally, bedrock and silt – movement much greater. Wooden buildings stood up reasonably well.
3. 75% of Christchurch has some liquefaction, and there are ongoing flooding issues to consider for the future. Places in Wellington area are known and work should be done.
4. Roding issues – to consider when cutting into hillsides.

Wellington needs to upgrade, fire/tsunami/flooding. Identify the hazards if possible, and implement improvements.