



The President's Report to the 2020 Annual General Meeting, 21st September 2020:

outlining the main Association activities since the last AGM on September 16th 2019.

In Memoriam

We are sad to have lost three notable past members of Newtown Residents' Association during the year. RIP to -

Nick Jennings died on 5 December 2019 in Palmerston North, aged 89. He was a long term member and past President.

Chris Renwick, passed away 20th March 2020 aged 59. Chris was a Vice President of our Association for about 10 years in the 1980s and 1990s, and had many other roles in the community throughout his life.

Frances Acey, died 9th July 2020 aged 82. Frances was a longtime member and past secretary of Newtown Residents Association, who also had many other significant roles in the Newtown Community, including being the first coordinator of the Newtown Community Centre.

2019-2020 Activities, month by month

From September to March the year proceeded on its expected course, but then, for us as well as for the rest of the world, the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic upended our usual way of life.

September 2019

We were busy with Meet the Candidates Meetings for the Local Body Elections. We had three meetings, one for the Greater Wellington Regional Council, one for the WCC Paekawakawa/Southern ward and Mayoral candidates, and one for Capital Coast District Health Board candidates. This last one was a joint effort with the Mt Victoria Residents' Association and the Berhampore Community Association. The three meetings –and three suppers! – were well received. Many thanks to all the members who helped put them on. Thanks also to the three people who chaired the meetings – Yadana Saw for the GWRC meeting, Patrick Morgan for the WCC one and Ellen Blake from Mt Victoria for the CCDHB meeting.

October 2019

Newtown Residents' Association joined other local organisations to host a Community Dinner – 'Newtown Stands Together' – at Newtown School on 24th October. This was the second such event, the first was on March 21st and organised specifically to support members of the Muslim Community and to strengthen connections with the wider community. This was a follow-up event, and like the first was a great success.

The monthly meeting was a general discussion about what was going on in the local area. A major topic was the redevelopment of the Carrara Park Playground – we were able to report that after an initial round of consultation and submissions in July and early August the WCC designer Sam Malaulau was working on a plan incorporating the Community feedback, such as a protected area for toddlers, and keeping the grass area open for unstructured play. A further round of consultation would take place when the plans were a little further advanced.

November 2019

The topic of the monthly meeting in November was the next stage of the Planning for Growth Consultation, presented by WCC Officer Diane Livingston and her colleagues. They reported on the initial round of consultation - 58% of submissions supporting high density, and 66% development around suburban centres. They outlined the process of developing the Spatial Plan (at that time in its early stages), and then moving on to reworking the District Plan. There was considerable discussion about the place of character homes, noting that currently Newtown, Berhampore, Thorndon, Te Aro and Mt Victoria have protection and the reasons for this are important.

December 2019

The second round of consultation on Carrara Park took place in early December, as foreshadowed in October. The plans met with general approval, and were essentially the same as the playground that was eventually built in June 2020

There was a series of Christmas markets in the Pop-up Shop at 199 Riddiford St, run by the Wellington Latino Collective, the African Market and the Timebank No Sh*t Gift Shop.

The traditional Christmas Sing-along with the Mighty Ukes, in Carrara Park, was on the evening of 14th December.

There was no formal Association meeting in December but there was an open invitation for members to come to my place for a pot-luck BBQ on 16th December, and we had a very enjoyable evening.

January 2020

January was a holiday month, with no Association meeting and little business that needed attention.

February 2020

February was quite a quiet month for Association business, although busy for those of us involved with Newtown Festival.

The monthly meeting was on 17th February. There were no external speakers, but our local ward councilors Fleur Fitzsimons and Laurie Foon talked about WCC consultations on Planning for Growth, Parking Policy and the Annual Plan, all due to start in March (although they were later delayed).

March 2020

The Newtown Festival went ahead as planned on March 8th. At that time the Ministry of Health guidelines acknowledged the Covid-19 epidemic (not yet pandemic) but advised that there was no need to cancel events - and it was a very successful day.

By March 16th when we had the Association monthly meeting the pandemic had been declared. The meeting talked again about the Parking Policy consultation, and heard that the Planning for Growth consultation had been delayed. However the main topic was a discussion of the risks of Covid-19 and recommended protection measures, led by Dr Marion Leighton and Eileen Brown.

At that stage the restrictions involved recommending no more than 500 people at any event. We were keen to keep the Newtown Market operating and on Saturday March 20th, with the guidance of Marion Leighton and the help of the Student Volunteer Army, organised to have Association members at every market entrance administering hand sanitiser to everyone coming and going, and to have other volunteers monitoring social distancing and reminding people not to crowd together in queues. This was a one-off effort as later that same day the Prime Minister made the first announcement of the COVID-19 levels system and we were only a few days away from the level 4 lockdown.

The Residents' Association then helped to organise a meeting of the Newtown Collective, a group of local organisations and social services. This was on 23rd and had a good attendance including the

Newtown Residents' Association, Newtown Festival, Salvation Army, City Mission, St Thomas's Parish, St Vincent de Paul, Newtown Business Association, the New World Newtown owner, Newtown Community and Cultural Centre, Wellington Timebank, Wellington City Council and Kia Ora Newtown. I didn't go myself as by then we were in Level 2 and people aged over 70 were advised to stay home. Attendees shared their plans and ideas for how to respond to look after the community during lockdown. This was the last face-to-face meeting, and although the collective did meet again during the next months it was by Zoom.

April 2020

At the beginning of April there was a new development – Eugene Doyle from Owairo Bay Residents' Association made contact with all the Associations on the WCC database and invited representatives to a zoom meeting to share information about life in lockdown. The first of these was on April 3rd, and from then on they were weekly until the end of May, and monthly thereafter. The initial concern was about the lack of direct information or support from Wellington City Council. I realised that in Newtown we were in a fortunate position because of our link with Jared Corston, the WCC Newtown Community Liaison Officer, as we heard through him about the WCC activities supporting the vulnerable during lockdown. Other communities don't have the privilege of this sort of connection. However during the zoom meetings Mayor Andy Foster, Richard MacLean (WCC Communications Advisor), Mike Mendonca (WCC Resilience Officer) and other Councilors and Officers joined the meeting to hear the concerns. This resulted in Residents' Associations being included in WCC press releases and other information, and added to the WCC Resilience Plans.

We had our first Association meeting via Zoom in April, and talked about our experiences of lockdown and shared information about the different services available.

Towards the end of April a shift to COVID-19 level 3 meant that business could start selling online, and takeaway food was available. The Association joined with Newtown Festival and Newtown Community and Cultural Centre to set up a Newtown Loves Local spreadsheet, where local business could advertise the goods and services they were now able to provide.

May 2020

The WCC Annual Plan consultation opened this month with a series of Zoom meetings with the Mayor and Councillors from each Ward for a Q&A webinar session on the Draft Annual Plan.

Our Association meeting was again via Zoom. and the primary agenda was a discussion of WCC draft Parking Policy and the draft Annual Plan. We agreed that we would support the rates rise that the Council were proposing, with the proviso that rates dererrals would be available when needed.

June 2020

June marked the return to COVID-19 level 1, and a lot more freedom! We were again able to have our monthly meeting in person. We started to plan for our Meet the Candidates Meeting for the general election, and we heard about progress on the long awaited refurbishment of the Carrara Park Playground,

We made written and oral submissions on the WCC Draft Annual Plan and the Parking Policy this month.

July 2020

The main topic at the July meeting was the Kainga Ora developments in Coromandel St. A number of the Coromandel St residents were unhappy with aspects of the two planned developments, and wanted more dialogue with Kainga Ora about these. The Kainga Ora team were going to be at the meeting, but

at the last minute were unable to come because of illness. There was still a robust discussion and sharing of ideas, and Cr Fleur Fitzsimons offered to facilitate a meeting between Kainga Ora and the affected residents at a later date.

August 2020

The long-delayed Planning for Growth – Draft Spatial Plan consultation started this month. When the draft was released we were surprised and shocked at the extent of the removal of the pre-1930s protections, and the wide areas zoned for 6 storey buildings.

By the time of our monthly meeting we were again in COVID-19 level 2 and we elected to meet by zoom. The Draft Spatial Plan was the meeting topic, and has taken most of our attention from then till now.

An informal group – We Are Newtown – sprang up in the Newtown community, a mix of Association members and other Newtownians. This group has been very active and has set up a new Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/weAreNewtownPoneke>) and printed and distributed flyers to inform as many locals as possible about the plans, and to advertise the Public Meeting for 16th September which the Residents' Association sponsored.

September 2020

The Draft Spatial Plan continues to be our main concern. Our Vice President Martin Hanley has been a regular source of advice and assistance, and he, Anna Kemble Welch and James Coyle have been particularly helpful in mapping out alternatives for building zones in Newtown.

The Public Meeting took place as planned on 16th September. As it was under Level 2 restrictions we had a maximum of 100 and had to turn people away, but it was also live streamed on Facebook – many thanks to Sam Somers for organising this, to Yadana Saw for expert meeting facilitation and to all the speakers on the night.

Other Activities.

Our Town Newtown Project – Community Facilities Upgrade

Jane Patterson and I have continued to represent the Residents' Association on the steering group for this project, along with the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre Trust and the Wellington City Council. This time last year we said that it was in the final stages before construction begins, but since then many delays, including the COVID lockdown, have meant that work still hasn't started on the Community Centre building.

However the upgrade to the Constable St toilets and the establishment of the Tool Library in the same building, have been successfully completed.

Wellington South Community Liaison Group

I have also been the Association's representative at the monthly Wellington South Community Liaison Group meetings, organised in turn by the coordinators at the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre, the Berhampore Community Centre and the Island Bay Community Centre. I have valued the closer connections that have been established through being part of this group.

Wellington City Council Support

I am pleased to acknowledge the Council's continuing support of the Newtown Residents' Association.

As well as financial support through the operating grant and funding other projects, Newtown has benefitted greatly from having the role of WCC Community Liaison Officer, currently held by Jared Corston, based in Newtown. Thank you, Jared and the rest of the Community Team, for all your help!

Conclusion

I have now been President for five years, and have continued to find it a very interesting and satisfying activity. I am very grateful to everyone who has assisted the Association, by helping with events, responding to emails, contributing to submissions, attending meetings, and in many other ways. My particular thanks to Jane Patterson, our Treasurer, and to Steve Cosgrove for taking notes at our meetings.

Rhona Carson

President.

21st September 2020