

Wellington City Council and ICA Meeting notes 24.4.12
Comfort Hotel Cuba Room 3.

Q. Resident

He feels there has been no action on the part of WCC on the Leaky homes problem, but the new flavour of the month of earthquake strengthening comes along and they appear to be spending time and money on this – he has no confidence in the WCC

A. Iona

Said Financial Assistance Package (FAP) was available for Leaky Homes and suing the WCC was an option.

Earthquake issues were not the flavour of the month – but the WCC have been learning from Christchurch and she is confident in the capacity of WCC to rise to the challenge with Central Govt. support.

Q. Resident, multi level apartment.

Do we wait or proceed with EQS?

A. Neville Brown:

Can't second guess – doesn't know the outcome of the Royal Commission (RC) but could be worth waiting as there could be an amendment to the Unit Titles Act with a possibility of loans to Body Corps – they are in discussions with the BNZ – but he would advise to go to 67% if strengthening now.

Statement Re. Market forces are tenants likely to abandon buildings that are less than 50%? Tenants now ask what % is the building – Residents can't pass on costs.

A. Council is aware of these issues.

Statement Building values have dropped as soon as notice was issued – there is the cost of EQS but the value is back to where it started (with the capital injection)

Q. Resident, Dominion Building

Time frames for RC report?

A. WCC

Interim report due out June 2012 – Final report based on this due out late 2012. This will influence and guide new building law and WCC EQP policy in parallel.

Q. / Statement: Resident – Tea Store

In 1999 the WCC helped fund the strengthening of this historic building – but they need more earthquake strengthening and the fund set up for this is now paying for insurance.

A. WCC – Perception of risk – risk is related to insurance problems and driven by overseas insurance industry. Wellington building stock is ahead of other cities.

Q. Engineer,

He acknowledged Wgtons building stock is stronger than other cities in New Zealand. He mentioned the precious heritage buildings.

Asked re. Heritage buildings Public v. Private as public buildings have the advantage of communal decision making.

A. WCC - Prioritizing heritage buildings of which there are 835 registered half residential half commercial.

Q. What services are WCC offering re the process going forward

A. WCC - A forum is being set up with QS/Engineers etc to give preliminary advice. Some formal structure to be put in place next month.

Q. Egmont St resident

What can be done regarding insurance issues?

A. WCC – WCC is engaging with the insurance council

Q. Residential Apt Building.

What plans for assistance and guidance to get going and adopt an attitude?

A. WCC - to set up an advisory group forum to put in front of an engineer and QS. Advice on where to start is required. Facilitate a start to a solution.

Set up a forum of council officers with no decision-making abilities but for guidance only for resource consent.

Q. Development on the Waterfront-

Feels because the WCC is opening up more land for commercial development there will be more buildings for lease making less demand for existing buildings in the CBD – he suggested a moratorium on future development. And any buildings on leasehold land he believes would not get funding from banks for EQ strengthening - so will the WCC enter into negotiation to release the land for sale and to raise capital?

A. WCC - this maybe a possibility and worth a submission.

Statement Historic Places Trust spokesperson Anne Neal

They will take a pragmatic approach re demolition of heritage buildings.

On the national register Wgton has only .1% of registered heritage buildings. i.e Wgton has only 99 buildings. What matters is the streetscapes. New technologies encouraging.

Statement: Resident

A huge amount of capital is being spent on insurance and that is not being spent in NZ. In Los Angeles it was not uncommon for buildings not to have earthquake insurance. The NZ law as it stands gives control over to Insurance companies.

Q. Architect

Stated that 1/3 of the strengthening cost was in the 'making right'.

And there were no chance of claiming for retrospective work. (Though this was disputed by costs given to a resident)

A. WCC – suggested there could be tax rebates and R&M could become a business expense.

Q. Resident, historic buildings

What options are available to strengthen or demolish?

A. WCC - District plan defines Heritage Building.

Q. Resident, Egmont St.

Re. Costs, bringing the % up from 34 to 67% was significant – not affordable therefore possibility of foreclosures.

A. WCC - wouldn't tolerate mortgagee sales or Demolition of buildings.

They want a balanced, staged approach and will investigate public funding.

Q. Resident

Re. the notification process or 'sticker' of buildings – without consultation or meeting with the Property Managers prior to applying the stickers onto the buildings. Creates fear among tenants and visitors

A. WCC Roger Gurnsey.

He said he was following due process but apologised – Iona also said better process possible.

Q. Geotech information - How is the WCC going to find out what the ground conditions are like (ie, soil types)?

A. WCC - needs to understand the soil conditions and is doing some work around this.

ICA advised meeting that a request had been made to the Minister of Building and Housing (Maurice Williamson) to meet with him and discuss concerns of residents, particularly costs of insurance and uncertainty in strengthening requirements. Minister had directed ICA to meet with a Dept of Building and Housing official.

Grant Robertson- Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Major issue re mitigation of the effects of the laws and provide support for ICA

Public good vs. private – what role does Govt. have?

Grant can ask questions to ministers.

Loans to BC an issue but Govt could support more.

Next steps

Strong support for future meetings. Likely topics are a panel discussion with technical experts and following the Royal Commission report.