

BAY VIEW



Issue 83

May 2024

Official Bulletin of:
**THE ORIENTAL BAY
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION Inc.**

Wellington

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Notice is hereby given that the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
of the
Oriental Bay Residents Association
will be held at the
Copthorne Hotel (7th floor)
Oriental Parade, Wellington
at 5.30 pm on Wednesday 8 May 2024

5.30 Get together

- 6.15
- President's report on behalf of the committee
 - Financial report
 - Confirmation of committee members
 - Other business

All residents of Oriental Bay are welcome

Contents

President's Report — <i>Andrew Meehan</i>	5
A live wire at the Bay — <i>Ann Mallinson</i>	7
Wellington's new District Plan — <i>Felicity Wong</i>	11
Helen Seresin — <i>Jackie Pope</i>	14
Reports — <i>Nicola Young, Iona Pannett, Geordie Rogers</i>	15
Safety and emergency information	19

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President's Report

April 2024

So much has transpired in Wellington since we last published *Bay View* that it's difficult to know where to start. The really good news is that we have had a cracker of a summer with Oriental Bay almost full to capacity on any decent day, which ensures that our local small businesses live to survive another winter. It is good to see the beach humming and evening gatherings just like they used to be.

From my observation, Wellington City Council appears to be on top of the rubbish issue, walkers and cyclists have co-existed with relative peace, the police have only occasionally had to deal with undesirables, dogs have largely been where they are supposed to be, and water safety has been to the fore, at least in the Bay.

The good news, however, pretty much stops there. A residents' association is of course primarily focused on matters of local importance, but I believe it does have an obligation to express views on the myriad of matters currently having an impact on Wellington as a whole.

This includes traffic, the long-term plan, the district plan, insurance costs, priorities adopted by the council, and the overall financial health of the city as this will ultimately determine decisions on rates, which will affect both ratepayers and residents.

In mid-February we had the by-election for the role of councillor caused by Tamatha Paul's elevation as a Green Party MP. Karl Tiefenbacher, standing as an independent, appeared to have won on the night, only for his 600-odd vote lead to be overturned by special votes in favour of the Green candidate, Geordie Rogers.

So, congratulations to Geordie, which will undoubtedly result in the status quo remaining in terms of council decision making. The fact that the voter turnout was around 25% highlights that old saying 'democracy gets what it deserves'.

Oriental Bay traffic in the weekday mornings and evenings is on par with parts of Auckland, with 20-minute trips from Grass Street to Taranaki Street being not uncommon at peak times. Clearly the combination of water works repair and the new cycleways is creating the problem. The

council needs to improve traffic management or the frustration will ultimately drive people elsewhere.

The long-term plan, which is currently being debated by the council, will reflect the political views of the council (by virtue of the ridiculous party block vote policy) and, consistent with other major policy planks, will have little or no input from Wellington residents and ratepayers. The district plan will fall into the same category and is covered further in this edition of Bay View by Felicity Wong. The Reading Cinema proposal, which has been widely criticised as uncommercial, will undoubtedly proceed as proposed, notwithstanding a sensible, commercial offer from Sir Mark Dunajtschik, which would relieve the need for the council to fund the transaction and instead allow them to focus on funding the basics that we all need and want.

The Wellington water issue has been widely publicised so there is nothing further to add, other than we are fast becoming an embarrassment as a capital city, given we seem unable to focus on the absolute priority which is a working infrastructure.

One of the other absolute priorities is personal safety. So many of our members complain about the state and danger of walking through Courtenay Place and Manners Street. Apart from the safety, it is a dirty and frankly unpleasant walk. We welcome tens of thousands of cruise passengers each year and from those I've spoken to, they often feel threatened in this area, and as we all know, word of mouth is one of the most effective marketing tools, but, as with all unintended consequences, it works both ways.

Pleasingly, the newly appointed building and construction minister, Chris Penk, has indicated he is prepared to consider relaxing the harsh earthquake standards, or to provide an additional timeframe for compliance for existing structures. Any such relaxation will be welcomed by many of our residents who, apart from strengthening requirements, are also facing significant insurance cost increases.

Finally, there is considerable concern regarding the overall financial health of the council, particularly with the myriad of urgent, partly unfunded infrastructure obligations. This has a direct impact on our members, particularly with the current rate and levy increase projected to be 18%, which will need to continue for the foreseeable future to ensure we have a city that works.

It is not in my nature to pen a note that is largely negative about this city we all love. But unless we collectively advocate for a back-to-basics approach, then I suspect future notes will be along similar lines.

— *Andrew Meehan ONZM, President*

A live wire in the Bay

In a very old house in Oriental Bay, in a house that was built in 1866, live Gareth and Jo Morgan. The house is amongst the oldest in Wellington. It is large and has a chequered history including being a well-known boarding house, Glenalvon, from 1920 to 1953. These days the house is back pretty much to its original condition.

Gareth and Jo are both remarkable people – but this is an article about Gareth.

Gareth was born in 1953 in Putāruru. He went to Oraka Heights Primary School, and then to Putāruru High School, and was bottom of his class until his School Certificate year, when the light came on and he discovered how to pass exams. His father must have been a very good influence as he went to Oxford University at the age of 17.



Once Gareth realised that he enjoyed studying he made huge strides. He went to Massey University for four years, gaining a B.A.(Hons) in Economics. On graduation he got a job at the Reserve Bank. He then went to Victoria University of Wellington, studied under Professor Brian Philpott, and got his doctorate there.

Not quite everything that Gareth touched turned to gold. In 1985, with Andrew Gawith, he purchased a racing guide, which was published twice weekly. They were very lucky with the first issue they published but fell flat on their faces when the punters didn't understand their advice and left in droves. After several years of desperately hard work, with Jo

driving buses to keep bread on the table for their three children, they sold the publication. At the time Jo said to him, ‘That was a lot of effort for nothing!’

In 1987 his career took a new turn. He started Infometrics, which succeeded immediately. It quickly became one of New Zealand’s largest independent economic consultancy businesses. In 2000 he set up Gareth Morgan Investments, a personal investment management service, followed in 2007 by the Gareth Morgan Kiwi Saver Scheme. This was sold to Kiwibank in 2012.

Gareth and Jo were early investors in their son Sam’s Trade Me venture. They were able to benefit from the tremendous uplift in value when Trade Me was sold to Fairfax Media in 2006.

There is nothing pretentious about the Morgans. Their great loves have always been their children and motor cycling. And they decided to use their money to help the work of UNICEF. They have been major donors since 2007 and have travelled the world on their motorbikes, spending a considerable amount of time at projects in Africa, South America,



Gareth and Jo at UNICEF project in Vanuatu.

Bangladesh and East Asia. But their generosity didn’t stop there. They have helped numerous health and environmental projects in New Zealand and the Pacific as well. It is not surprising that in 2007 Gareth was *North & South’s* New Zealander of the Year.

Gareth is also well known for setting up The Opportunities Party for the 2017 general election. His aim was to try to lift the level of political

*Gareth and Jo
motorcycling
in Turkey.*



discourse – to involve politicians who would encourage best practice policy right across the board irrespective of their political partisanship. His party got 2.5% of the vote, which was pretty good for nine months’ effort, but not enough to get a member of the party into Parliament.

Declaring at the time that his was a once-only, take-it-or-leave-it proposition to the electorate, Gareth immediately withdrew from politics and ended the 35 years he had been in the public eye. Yet today he is busy working on another exciting project that won’t be able to avoid the public’s attention. *Bay View* will be watching with interest.

— ***Ann Mallinson***

ORIENTAL BAY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
Committee

President: Andrew Meehan

Vice-President: Felicity Wong

Treasurer: Tore Hayward

Committee Members:

Claire Campbell, Peter Cullen, Ann Mallinson,
Jackie Pope, Nicola Saker

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What the new provisions in the Wellington District Plan mean for Oriental Bay

Some residents met recently to share information about the new provisions in the Wellington District Plan for Oriental Bay.

Readers will recall that Wellington City Council (WCC) staff earlier recommended retaining the status quo heights for the Bay. The heights in the old operative plan vary from site to site as a result of earlier Court-ordered assessments about the local impact on the amenity values in 'the environment'. The former Labour Government's mandated upzoning has had political and legal impacts.

During last year's Independent Hearings Panel (IHP) process, many individual and government agency submitters asked for the central business district's 'walkable catchment' to be extended from the notified 10 minutes to 15 minutes, and for all height limits within that bigger zone to be raised. Waka Kotahi, for example, and the NZ Housing Corporation (Kāinga Ora) were well-resourced advocates for such local upzoning.

Although residents participated in the process to support the status quo zoning, the IHP reported it was 'hamstrung' and 'forced' to recommend raising heights in the long-standing Oriental Bay Height Precinct, which extends along the Parade itself (the 'front row'), if the walkable catchment was extended. This was because the WCC had not submitted the necessary new assessments on a site-by-site basis which would have enabled the IHP to recommend that status quo heights be retained.

As a result, all sites within the existing Oriental Bay Height Precinct along as far as Grass Street were recommended to be classified as a Medium Density Residential Zone (MRZ) and raised to a blanket 21 m (including sites such as those occupied by the popular Beach Babylon cafe).

At the same time, the IHP recommended that a band of sites behind the front row (the 'second row') also be upzoned to a separate High Density Residential Zone (HRZ) (22 m).

A majority of councillors voted on 14 March to extend the walkable catchment to 15 minutes which had the above consequences for Oriental Bay. Those in favour were: Whanau (G), Foon (G), Abdurahman (L), Apanowicz (I), Matthews (L), McNulty (L), O'Neill (L), Rogers (G), Wi Neera (G), Holden (Pouivi) and Kelly (Pouivi).

Councillors opposed: Brown (I), Calvert (I), Chung (I), Free (I), Pannett (I), Randle (I) and Young (I).

As a result of the vote, this will be gazetted in April as the new district plan rules for Oriental Bay (please check our reading with your own legal advice). The key points to note are:

Front row along Oriental Parade (within the walkable catchment):

- The front row is zoned medium density but modified by the height precinct provisions.
- The height limit is raised to 21 m, unless the existing height limit for a site is already higher than 21 m (in which case there is no change).
- It's unclear what impact the specified height limits will have. There are some provisions within the rules for the height precinct where WCC would have what's referred to as 'restricted discretion', but these do not seem to apply to the height limits.
- Rear boundary setback rules seem to be retained.

Sites in the narrow band behind the front row (within the walkable catchment):

- This is zoned high density.
- The height limit is 22 m, but this is not a binding 'limit'. There is scope for the various limits, including height, to be exceeded under WCC's restricted discretionary regime.
- Consent applications to exceed the limits cannot be publicly notified, but it seems limited notification isn't ruled out for height limit exceptions.

Hay Street:

The IHP recommended the new HRZ extend up Hay Street to include numbers 7 and 8. WCC staff had recommended that the zone extend further to include sites up the Hay Street (private road) extension. During the hearings residents presented evidence about the steep and narrow nature of Hay Street which makes it less easily 'walkable', eg when returning home with heavy shopping or for elderly people, given that by numbers 7 and 8 you have already climbed the equivalent of three flights of steps. Labour Councillor Matthews described the IHP's judgement as

'bizarre' and moved an amendment specifically aimed at Hay Street as part of the 'package of amendments' to reject IHP recommendations. The same councillors voted as above that the HRZ should extend further up Hay Street to include numbers 9 to 23.



Inappropriate upzoning by WCC of narrow Hay Street to high-density zone with 22-metre height limit.

The same councillors opposed the very specifically targeted amendment, which was supported by all Greens, all Labour, both Pouiwi voting representatives and Councillor Apanowicz. The last-named explained that his business interests were in 'activating the inner suburbs'. Because it departs from the IHP's recommendations, this Hay Street decision is now referred to the Minister for the Environment (likely to be delegated to Hon Chris Bishop).

Sites further up Hay Street, and otherwise behind the HRZ band, remain medium density under the new Medium Density Residential Standards which took effect in 2022. These permit three townhouses of three storeys with a height limit of 12 m on every site. That has been in place for all suburban sites across Wellington since 2022 but replaced the previously existing 8 m height limit for residential areas.

The former Labour Government legislation removed the right of appeal to the Environment Court for any of these district-plan zoning changes.

There might be grounds for a judicial review (given the fact that the required legal reports were not delivered), but the ultimate outcome of such litigation is uncertain. What is certain is how costly each action is for individuals and community groups. Right now, of course, there are harsh economic conditions (interest and building costs remain high and consents have been halved from 2022 to 2023). The Hay Street sites are also very steep and slowly slipping into the sea.

It was unfortunate that both *The Post* and *The Spinoff* writers were advocates for upzoning all over Wellington, particularly in ‘areas where people want to live’ and that includes Oriental Bay. Disturbingly, Joel McManus (*The Spinoff*’s Wellington editor) had a series of articles and news emails, entitled the ‘War for Wellington’, and encouraged his readers not to put trust in the careful evidence-based IHP process. A big thanks to the councillors who understood the many hours put into (and evidence prepared for) the quasi-judicial IHP process, in which we trusted.

Check your property on the WCC map: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0645dd8999c0492faec0f46e11df1779>

— *Felicity Wong*

Helen Seresin

A retrospective of Helen Seresin’s work at The Academy of Fine Arts in May – June 2023 showcased a woman artist who once lived in Oriental Bay.

Helen Seresin, whose home was at 22 Grass Street, made a valuable contribution to the Wellington art scene in the 1960s and 1970s. She was a member of a very creative family and along with her two daughters, husband Harry and his son Michael formed part of a formidable artistic group. Their home was a base for Helen’s painting classes.

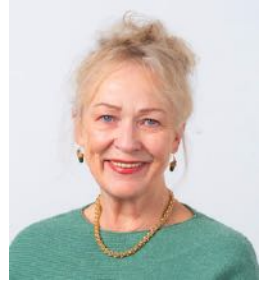
Helen’s earlier exhibitions were held at a studio incorporated into The Settlement, a building in Willis Street designed by Peter Bevan, reflecting Michael’s vision for an artistic meeting place for Wellingtonians.

Other artists, including Avis Higgs and Janet Paul, also used the studio to exhibit their work at this time.

— *Jackie Pope*

Nicola Young, Independent councillor for Pukehīnau/Lambton General Ward

I've always considered myself cheerful, but that's not easy for a city councillor in these difficult times. In the last edition of *Bay View*, I warned about the need to make tough spending (saving!) decisions, yet there is little appetite for that at Wellington City Council. And of course, there are the contentious debates over the district plan, long-term plan – and now the Reading Cinema.



At the time of writing (mid-March), the contentious Reading deal is proceeding despite a group of councillors trying to stop it – led by Iona Pannett and me. Many owners of apartments and commercial buildings are facing costly seismic upgrades – and ever-increasing insurance and rates; they would love a deal like the one being negotiated by officers with the USA owners of the Reading. The council should not be involved in corporate welfare, even more so when it looks likely residential rates for 2024/25 will increase by an average of 16.4%. This excludes the levy for the (much-needed) Moa Point sludge minimisation facility, which will add a further 1.6%. It's worse for commercial ratepayers, who pay 3.7 times the residential amount – we're putting more costs on to business owners while the rest of the country is trying to help businesses.

To date, the council has not made any meaningful cost reductions and my suggestion of a 'sinking lid' for council jobs was ignored (since 2017 there has been a 27% increase in full-time equivalent staff). Many aspirational projects remain in place, such as the Karori connections cycleway, which about 80% of local residents don't want, and the proposed kerbside food scraps collection which requires a new organic processing facility – in the meantime, the food waste will be trucked to Ohakune or Hawke's Bay!

This is all the more galling when the council is proposing to cut spending on core responsibilities such as community services and asset maintenance. One example is the proposed reduction in the monitoring of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at a time when people are

concerned about safety in the central city. For years the cameras were monitored by a team of 40 volunteers, including Oriental Bay residents, at the central police station; then the council abruptly ditched the scheme in favour of a full-time, paid security team. The sudden decision generated considerable ill will. Now the council is planning to scale back the service (together with graffiti removal) to save money.

The council needs to focus on ensuring the liveability and safety of our city. The overwhelming feedback I receive from Wellingtonians is a plea to make water infrastructure resilient and fit for purpose. I'm concerned that high rates, insurance and mortgage costs will make Wellington unaffordable, and some people will move to other regions.

Helping residents is a core part of my role. If you have any council-related queries, please don't hesitate to contact me: 021 654 844 or nicola.young@wcc.govt.nz.

— **Nicola Young**



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Wellington's new district plan: a let-down for Oriental Bay

As I write this piece, I'm still digesting the impacts of the vote to massively upzone or increase building heights in many parts of the city through our district plan. Whilst there is a desperate need for more housing, the approach taken was one of ideology over common sense. Increasing building heights on their own will not make housing more affordable.



I would like to thank all the submitters from Oriental Bay who appeared before the Independent Hearings Panel to talk to commissioners about the walkable catchments and the impacts on the Oriental Bay Height Area which residents had worked hard for so many years ago. I want to particularly acknowledge Felicity Wong, who has done a fantastic job over a number of years of advocating for heritage and Oriental Bay. Felicity's arguments were largely accepted by the Commissioners.

I'm very disappointed that the walkable catchment was extended to Hay Street in spite of compelling arguments from residents that it would be very difficult to develop. In extending the walkable catchments and increasing building heights, from my point of view, the Oriental Bay Height Precinct and the impacts on it were not properly considered by the Commissioners. On a positive note, they did at least accept evidence from residents that Baring Street and most of Hay Street were too difficult to develop.

Minister Bishop will be the final decision-maker on this issue. I hope he will consider all evidence that was put before the Commissioners.

This is not the last word on the district plan. It is a living document and can be changed through a variation. I hope in time that some of these changes will be looked at again and a more nuanced and balanced approach taken.

For more information, contact me at iona.pannett@wcc.govt.nz or on 021 227 8509.

— *Iona Pannett*

Meet Geordie Rogers – new councillor for Pukehīnau/Lambton ward

Kia ora koutou, my name is Geordie and I'm humbled to be your recently elected councillor for the Pukehīnau/Lambton General Ward. For those of you I didn't bump into throughout the election campaign, I've been renting in Wellington since I moved here in 2017 to study computer science at Te Herenga Waka. I've lived in damp flats on Boulcott Street, rented briefly on Ascot Street, lived in an earthquake prone building in Aro Valley and in a home with a collapsing deck in Island Bay.



While I moved here to write code, I've found I spend a lot of my time in the community. I spend most of my free time helping people with their renting issues, volunteering at places like The Free Store at St Peter's Church and helping our taura (students) get their first jobs in the city. I stood for council because the communities I've spent so much time with wanted their voice at the table.

As I'm writing this, I'm reading over the draft long-term plan consultation document. Wellington is facing many crises, and I'm looking forward to hearing from you about where you want to see us investing so we can balance the issues we're facing now, and ensure we don't face them again in the future.

Our water infrastructure is a major focus for me. We need to be pulling every lever we can to ensure we're not only fixing our water issues now but looking at ways to avoid them in the future. We need to get the basics right, but we need to be doing more to ensure we're not in the same position in 10 years' time. I'm working with officers to make sure we can learn about new ways of stormwater management that reduce costs to ratepayers, reduce the risk of flooding and allow us to invest more in our freshwater network.

Every line of the long-term plan will need to be weighed up to balance spending now and spending in the future. The climate crisis and the chance of a catastrophic earthquake are placing massive strain

on the city and I will make sure that in our decisions we don't lose sight of these very real problems.

I've always been a strong believer that the best solutions are the ones that come directly from the community, and I want to support you all the best I can through the long-term plan process. Your voice is incredibly important and whether you have just started renting here or owned your home for 30 years, I'd love to hear from you. The best way to get in touch is by email at Geordie.Rogers@wcc.govt.nz.

— **Geordie Rogers**

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

(Information that you can print out and have available in an emergency)

The website of the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) provides links to information and guidelines relating to hazards. The links to a selection of pages are as follows:

- **Earthquake:** www.wremo.nz/hazards/earthquakes
- **Fire:** www.wremo.nz/hazards/other-hazards/#Fire
- **Landslide:** www.wremo.nz/hazards/other-hazards/#Landslide
- **Storm:** www.wremo.nz/hazards/severe-weather
- **Tsunami:** Tsunami zones for various regions in the Wellington area are provided on the following page:
www.wremo.nz/hazards/tsunami/tsunami-maps/wellington
The link to a map for Oriental Bay is:
www.wremo.nz/assets/Tsunami-Maps/Wellington-/037-Roseneath-Oriental-Bay-CBD-Lambton-Harbour.pdf
- **Utility failure:** www.wremo.nz/hazards/other-hazards/#Utilityfailure

Other emergency information that may be helpful to Oriental Bay residents:

- **Ambulance:** In an emergency dial 111. The Wellington Free Ambulance website is: www.wfa.org.nz
 - **AED (defibrillator) locations:** The following site allows you to identify AED locations in any region in New Zealand: aedlocations.co.nz
Type in 'Oriental Bay' to get nearby locations.
-



Oriental Bay Residents Association

Become a member or renew your membership

We welcome all households and businesses in the Oriental Bay area.

Annual membership: \$25 per individual member, \$35 double (annual subscription period ends 31 March).

New members

If you are a new member, we encourage you to follow the instructions on our website: <http://orientalbay.org.nz/renew> This will enable us to include your name and contact details in our membership records.

If you don't have internet access, please make payment through your bank to Westpac: 03 0510 0719293 01, and also send your name and contact details to OBRA Treasurer, 16 Hay Street, Oriental Bay, Wellington 6011.

Existing members

Online banking

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