

## **St Mary's Bay Association Inc/Herne Bay Residents Association Inc**

### **Public meeting**

### **\$44 million St Mary's Bay/Masefield Beach Water Quality Improvement Project**

7pm Thursday, May 31, 2018

### **Minutes**

Attendance: Approximately 120 residents, together with Mike Lee (Waitemata ward councillor), Rob Thomas (Waitemata Local Board member), Adriana Christie (Waitemata Local Board member), Zoe Hawkins (Westhaven Marina), Alison Munro (Chairperson, Board of directors, St Mary's College).

Apologies. Auckland councillors: Ross Clow, Christine Fletcher, Desley Simpson. Local Board members: Pippa Coom (chair, Waitemata), Richard Northey (Waitemata), Kit Parkinson (chair, Orakei). Residents: Christine Cavanagh, Paul Cavanagh, Tony Gavigan, Sheryl Glasse, Matt Heaps, Alison Hunter, Pamela Ingram, Fiona Kelso, Cameron Loader, Alastair McLaren, Karn McIntosh, Sean Molloy, Robin Scholes, Robin Seal, Kate Stanton.

The St Mary's Bay Association and the Herne Bay Residents Association called this public meeting to discuss concerns over the St Mary's Bay/Masefield Beach Water Quality Improvement Project. The Healthy Waters division of Auckland Council has applied for resource consent to construct this project and submissions close on June 19. It was noted that the resource consent application is for infrastructure only, not discharge from overflows.

St Mary's Bay Association chair David Abbott and Herne Bay Residents Association co-chair Dirk Hudig described the project. Its purpose is to capture the mixed sewage/wastewater and stormwater overflows from St Mary's and the eastern end of the Herne Bay catchment that currently are discharging into St Mary's Bay/Westhaven marina and into the harbour off Masefield Beach. In essence, Auckland Council is proposing to build a large underground tunnel from London St, through St Mary's Bay reserve, to a pump station at Pt Erin, from where it will be pumped back to the existing combined sewer pipe, but with a large new outlet pipe leading to a discharge point under the Harbour Bridge as an overflow for the times that the volume of water being collected in the tunnel was too great to pump back.

They mentioned a range of concerns over project, including the route/ground stability, with implications for properties overhead, the aesthetics of above ground pipes and buildings, odour control, and disruption caused by the construction including noise and vibration.

They emphasised particularly, however, concerns over whether or not this project would achieve the projected reduction of overflows and therefore improvement in water quality.

Grant Campbell, was asked to speak. He is a professional engineer by background, and was project leader for the Wellington Wastewater Treatment Plant and Outfall Project in the

1980s. He has also had extensive experience managing the development and construction of major infrastructure projects, both in New Zealand and overseas. He spoke about the lack of information as to the amount of stormwater and wastewater likely to be collected, the relatively limited holding capacity of the proposed storage pipeline, and the limited capacity to pump the captured water back to the existing sewerage system when capacity is available. He considered that there was not enough information in the application to make an informed assessment of the claimed benefits from the project, and highlighted the following major concerns:

- Whilst the scheme reduces the number of combined sewage overflows at Masefield Beach (from 100 to 20), it will significantly increase the volume of these overflows via the proposed marine outfall. Last year Council produced a video model of pollution plumes from overflows, using data from early 2017, that indicates that on the incoming tide, the proposed combined sewage discharge will be carried up the harbour to contaminate Herne Bay, Cox's Bay and Pt Chevalier beaches.
- In the medium term, Council have indicated that they plan to connect the combined sewer system into the proposed Central Interceptor to be extended to Grey Lynn. However, the application does not address this connection, which would require substantial additional investment in major pumping and pressure main systems extending up to Jervois Road or, alternatively, a tunnel from Pt Erin to Grey Lynn.

David Abbott said that another major drawback was that the project left the existing ageing combined pipe system in place.

Is this the best use of \$44 million, Dirk Hudig asked. The key to stopping overflows from the combined pipe system was to manage stormwater. He suggested that a better long-term option could be to replace the failing old combined pipe system with new separated pipes. Separated pipes already exist in many renovated and newer properties in the St Mary's Bay and Herne Bay waterfront catchments – but these pipes end at the roadside where the separated stormwater/wastewater/sewage then flows into a combined pipe which floods during heavy rainfall and discharges directly into the harbour.

David Abbott and Dirk Hudig then queried whether the project was premature, because the key issue of separation is still to be addressed as part of the broader Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Project (WIWQIP) - which was announced 12 months after the St Mary's Bay/Masefield Beach project. It is vital, they said, that this project should not preclude the best long-term solution being sought under WIWQIP.

A video was shown of a hydrographic model of a pollution plume moving around the western beaches with the incoming and outgoing tide after rainfall and overflows.

Both associations believe there are too many unanswered questions and that the project should be subject to peer review, particularly in respect of the concerns that have been identified, before any resource consent for infrastructure is granted. This \$44 million project could become merely a short-term solution driven by council's desire to clean up St Mary's Bay before the America's Cup is staged in Auckland. Longer-term savings from pipe renewal and separation would be a more effective use of public funds.

### Comments and discussion

The meeting was then opened for comments and observations from the floor, and for discussion both on the concerns already raised and on any further concerns.

John McCaffery observed that Watercare (the council CCO responsible for sewage and wastewater) has consent to discharge combined sewage and wastewater for a further 35 years; and Healthy Waters (the council division responsible for stormwater) is currently applying for the right to discharge stormwater for a further 35 years. This consent will not be open to a public hearing, therefore the public must resort to political pressure to prevent such discharges, he said.

David Abbott observed that before the amalgamated “super city” was formed Auckland City had budgeted for sewage/wastewater pipe separation, but since amalgamation there had been a shift in policy and the council should now be asked to justify the reasons for this.

Dirk Hudig referred to a US Environmental Protection Agency report on the desirability of separated pipes. He also commented that council had accepted at community meetings on WIWQIP that the Central Interceptor could only be used temporarily for stormwater (without giving an end date for that use), and that whole of the combined system would be separated within 100 years.

Grant Campbell observed that separation was needed to reduce future loading on the wastewater reticulation system and Mangere treatment plant. He commented that although separation of pipes would be costly and take time, it would be more effective and reduce ongoing operating costs of pumping and treating large volumes of stormwater over the 100 year life of the project.

John Hill outlined the history of the infrastructure and observed that Healthy Waters did not appear to have a full inventory of all overflow pipes or any inventory of the properties with separated pipes to the street. He said that the Healthy Waters resource consent application did not appear to acknowledge the existence of at least one major discharge outlet which is visible only at extremely low tide and he voiced concern that this and possibly other unacknowledged overflows might continue to operate under the proposed project. This plus tidal backflows from the new Masefield Beach pipe would not result in an acceptable level of sewage and other contaminants being removed from St Mary’s Bay and the Herne Bay beaches. He also said that it would be more cost effective to fund separation of pipes and replace the ageing infrastructure than to proceed with the current project.

John Bower commented on the fact that council had required that he separate his stormwater and wastewater to the road, yet had done nothing to carry out that separation in the street.

Rod Inglis queried whether the project could feed into the North Shore sewerage system.

Councillor Mike Lee said it made no sense in the 21st century to be dumping sewage and contaminated wastewater/stormwater into the harbour. He believes that the two council bodies, Healthy Waters and Watercare disagree on the need for separation but the Healthy Waters view that separation is not necessary has prevailed. Why spend \$44 million on this stop-gap project when long-term the need is to separate pipes, extend the planned Central Interceptor and relieve pressure on the Mangere treatment facility.

The planned 10m high ventilation pipes near the corner of New and London Streets drew many adverse comments. Concerns were expressed about lingering odours caused by wind direction, the health effects of the gases and the aesthetics of positioning these large pipes directly outside dwellings and in sightline of the harbour. Chair of St Mary's College board of directors, Alison Munro, said the college would prepare a submission detailing its concerns over the ventilation pipes which are very close to the college.

Referring to lost opportunities, Pawel Gochowicz said there were parallels between the motorway project a few years back and the current St Mary's Bay/Masefield project. He reminded the meeting that of the three options proposed for a version of the Victoria Park tunnel, the slightly more expensive option had been to create a cut and cover tunnel, with a park on top, from the city end of the Harbour Bridge and under Victoria Park, thus removing the visible motorway and the concrete flyovers across Victoria Park. In today's terms the extra cost would not have been great, but the long-term aesthetics a huge boon to the city. The better long-term option was overlooked. We should learn from the motorway project, he said.

Grant Hewison commented that there were two aspects to the concerns. The first was separation, and how best to manage stormwater and wastewater in Auckland, which was a political issue. The second was the application for a resource consent for constructing the project. He said that it was likely that the application would be granted, but it was important to get the community's concerns factored into the conditions on any consent. He said it was important to raise concerns in submissions, and to be in a position to support those concerns with evidence at the hearing of the application.

### Resolution

Two resolutions were moved towards the end of the discussion of concerns about the project.

First, a resolution was moved by Don Mathieson and seconded by Ann Hackett calling for the two associations to write to the mayor requesting that the project be incorporated into WIWQIP so that separation could be investigated.

After further discussion and before that resolution was put to the meeting an amended resolution was moved by Craig Stobo and seconded by Don Mathieson:

*That the meeting asks The St Mary's Bay Association Inc. and The Herne Bay Residents Association Inc. (as the groups who called the meeting) to write to the Mayor calling on him to put the St Mary's Bay/Masefield Beach water quality improvement project on hold until*

- *a business case for separation in the St Mary's Bay and Herne Bay waterfront catchments has been undertaken as part of the Western Isthmus Water Quality Improvement Programme, and*
- *an independent peer review of that business case and other issues discussed in the meeting is completed, and*
- *the independent peer review is made public.*

The resolution was passed unanimously.

#### Submissions

The meeting was reminded that the deadline for submissions on council's application is June 19. Details on how to submit can be found on the council website. [See full resource consent application at https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/have-your-say/have-your-say-notified-resource-consent/notified-resource-consent-applications-open-submissions/Pages/ResourceConsentApplication.aspx?itemId=202&applNum=BUN60319388](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/have-your-say/have-your-say-notified-resource-consent/notified-resource-consent-applications-open-submissions/Pages/ResourceConsentApplication.aspx?itemId=202&applNum=BUN60319388)

David Abbott concluded the meeting by saying that each association would be filing a submission and strongly urging individuals to make their own submission.