

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 9th December 2023 commencing at 11:22am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby.
Councillors: E. Williamson, D. Cocks, P. Shaw, C. Sherrard, M. Barker, T. Clark,
B. Barnes, G. Dickey, G. Annan.
Staff: B. Wilson, D. Klee, J. Dyer.
Visitor: P. Hardy (DOC).

1. APOLOGIES:

A. Daniel

It was moved;

that apologies be accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

Nil.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 14th October 2023:

Councillor Barnes tabled a revised draft of the Minutes for the Council meeting of 14th October that included substantial changes (attached). After discussion;

It was moved;

That the minutes of the previous meeting of 14th October 2023 meeting as amended be accepted as true and correct records:

Cocks/Barker – CARRIED

The Chairman enquired of Councillors whether they still wanted the Minutes recorded in a concise format. There was general agreement from Councillors that no change was required from the long-standing convention of having the Minutes in a concise format.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Nil.

5. INWARDS COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The letter from Barrie Barnes, Chair, New Zealand Council regarding the 2023/24 Auckland/Waikato Levy was tabled.

The Chairman updated Councillors on the system for determining regional levies. That the levy was the difference between the budgeted expenditure (“the budget”) and predicated income. For example, if predicted income was \$1M and the budget \$900,000, then the levy would be \$100,000. If actual income was less than predicated, then the loss falls with the regional council. Conversely if actual income exceeded predictions, that the surplus income would be kept by the region. Regions whose reserves fell below 20% of budget would be topped up by NZC.

The Chairman explained that Auckland/Waikato had had two seasons where our region was more severely affected by lockdowns than others. This meant that Auckland/Waikato has depleted reserves because our sales were below forecast, but we still had to pay an inflated levy. Therefore, changing the system in a way that inflated our sales targets was unacceptable.

Councils’ concerns were that the predicted income for the 2023/24 year was based on licence sales as of January 2023 with a multiplier used to estimate sales at the end of the financial year (31st August). However, the multiplier used was the increase in sales that occurred the previous financial year and ignored the fact that this was also when the region come out of lockdown for Covid. Consequently, licence sales for 2022/23 had been considerably overestimated and this figure had been used to set the levy for 2023/24.

The Chairman considered that Council’s concerns had not been treated seriously by the NZ Council. Mr Wilson and himself raised the issue with both the NZC chair and NZC CEO prior to, and since the April budget meeting when forecasts were approved by NZC. In spite of knowing about the issue, no action has been taken by NZC to address the concerns. These concerns have been realised with license sales as the season progresses.

Councillor Barker agreed and recommended that Council requests an adjustment to the levy.

Councillor Barnes agreed with the Chairman concerns and advised that the Licence Working Party was not composed of Councillors but managers and NZ Council staff. Forecasting licence sales was difficult but there had to be a better way.

Councillor Dickey asked what was being done to promote licence sales.

Mr Wilson replied that an email newsletter had recently gone to all fish licence holders (previous year licence holders) while an additional email newsletter had gone to all lapsed participants. A new website for Fish & Game would be in place before the end of the year thanks to the considerable efforts of Roslyn Simmonds.

The Chairman reminded Councillors that the Auckland/Waikato fisheries were, until recently, considered to be at full angler capacity. However, due to a relatively recent decline in licence sales it was recognised that more publicity effort was required to boost licence sales back to their previous level.

The Chair suggested three options regarding the dispute over the levy:

1. That no further action is taken.
2. That we inform NZ council that our general reserves are below 20% of budget, and consequently we require a “bail out”.
3. That we write to NZ council seeking external mediation.

It was moved;

That Council writes to the NZ Council and recommends that external mediation is used to settle the dispute over the 2023/24 levy.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

Councillor Barnes abstained from the vote

It was moved;

that inward and outward correspondence be accepted.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Councillor Annan thanked David Klee for his assistance at the Sika show. Councillor Barnes reported the intention of the NZ Council to attend the Sika show annually.

Councillor Williamson asked if additional information can be derived from the Game bird harvest survey. Mr Klee replied that he was working on getting all the F&G regions to report in a standard format so that a single national report could be produced, which could be sent to the relevant ministers and would be publicly available.

The Chairman requested that the excellent spring fishing newsletter be sent out to all licence holders, including game licence holders. He also requested that the preseason fish and game magazines be sent to Councillors.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive’s Bimonthly Report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Cocks/Annan– CARRIED

The meeting rose for lunch at 12:45pm and resumed at 1:10pm.

7. AOG CONTRACTS:

The Chairman noted that not all regions use AOG contracts. However, he considered that it was clear from the financial reports that there are considerable savings to be made

from AOG for purchases where available. He considered that using AOG contracts where available should be Council policy.

It was moved;

That all of Government (AOG) contracts should be considered by staff when making any purchasing decision.

Barker/Dickey– CARRIED

8. UPDATE:NZ COUNCIL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 2023:

Councillor Barnes gave a brief update on the 24th & 25th November 2023 meeting of the NZ Council. A summary of the meeting had previously been sent to all Councillors.

9. WHANGAMARINO WEIR UPDATE:

Section 128 review

Mr Klee advised that the only outstanding issue in regard to the section 128 review of the consents held for the weir, was the sedimentation issues. In particular, whether sedimentation was greater than anticipated at the time the consent was granted. He had not been advised by the WRC as to who were the affected parties.

Mr Klee suggested that a sensible approach to the consent issues would be to modify or replace the flood gates so that they had a dual role of flood control and maintaining water levels in the wetland.

Mr Klee advised that new consents for the weir had to be in place when the existing consents expired in 4 years' time. He emphasised that there could be opposition from adjacent landowners who had seen considerably land subsidence due to peat degradation and were thus more prone to flooding.

In reply to a question regarding the ongoing maintenance of the weir, Mr Klee agreed that there was considerable work required this summer on the weir, stopbank and access road. DOC had allocated \$60,000 for the project with contractors booked for February/March. However, he emphasized that there was no intention to increase the height of the weir, and that the height of the access road/stop bank would be kept at 3.8m mRL.

Mr Klee highlighted that it made no sense going to the Environment Courts over the Section 128 review, when the weir would need to be reconsigned in 4 years' time at a potential cost of \$500,000.

10. COST OPTIMISATION PROJECT:

The letter from Barrie Barnes, Chair, NZ Council was tabled. A decision on the Cost Optimisation Project had been deferred from the 14th October 2023 meeting.

Councillor Barnes advised that the words “Resource Allocation Project” should not be in the letter’s subject line.

Councillor Williamson expressed his opposition to the project as he considered that:

- It was not in the operational work plan for staff who were already overstretched with national issues.
- Staff were already using AOG contracts.
- That there was minimal discretionary spending by the regions.

The Chairman acknowledged that Auckland/Waikato region operates more financially effectively than most other regions, including obtaining substantial external funding, and this information should be shared across the regions.

Councillor Williamson noted that the letter referred to revenue streams, resource allocation and optimisation.

Councillor Barnes advised that Fish and Game was considered by the Minister to be one organisation and not 12 regions. The New Zealand Council would also be reviewed as part of the project.

The Chairman noted that most regions had already been reviewed as part of the project.

Councillor Cocks stated that he required more information about the project before he could make a decision and was concerned at the level of consultation. Councillor Barnes replied that a decision was required.

It was moved:

That Council does not participate in the Cost Optimisation Project.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

Councillor Barnes abstained from voting.

11. 2023 STERILE TROUT STOCKING REPORT:

Mr Wilson highlighted Dr Daniel’s conclusion that it would be premature to make any decision on the success of the project and thus it would be prudent to continue monitoring the fish for at least three years after the final trout release.

12. GOVERNANCE TRAINING:

Councillor Dickey expressed his enthusiasm for the governance course but emphasised that the course should be made available to councillors at the beginning of their term as councillors.

Councillor Barnes stressed the need for governance training throughout Fish and Game. He expressed his disappointment with the low uptake by councillors but acknowledged that some of the poor uptake could be attributed to the way that the project was

implemented by NZC. He advised that governance training was a legal requirement and a recommendation from the Ministerial Review.

In reply, Councillor Annan reported that he had tried to obtain access to the online training but that he had not received the link in time to participate.

GOVERNANCE EVALUTATIONS

The Chairman informed that Auckland/Waikato was one of the few F&G councils that did governance evaluations.

Councillor Barnes requested a copy of the template for the evaluation for the NZ Council. He noted that the NZ Council did not review itself.

The Chair recommended that the evaluation report should include the number of recipients.

13. 2023/24 Audit:

It was moved;

that Council had no intention in cutting down any forests on its properties.

Cocks/Annan - CARRIED

14. OSH UPDATE:

Councillors discussed the potential for liability for health and safety breaches, especially on council land. It was emphasised that as a consequence of the recent White Island prosecutions, liability could be much wider than previously thought.

Mr Wilson advised that OSH procedures for working bees and contractors would be updated.

It was moved;

that the OSH report for December 2023 is accepted.

Annan/Shaw – CARRIED

15. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Councillor Cocks advised that a defibrillator should be available at all working bees on Fish and Game properties. Mr Wilson agreed to investigate further.

Councillor Sherrard recommended that all online newsletters should go to all licence holders. The Chair agreed that this should be done at a regional level. Councillor Barnes supported this move and recommended that all licence holders should get all publicity material.

Councillor Barnes updated Councillors on the Golden Clam issue in the Eastern region.

Councillor Barnes expressed his opinion that the new Minister of Hunting and Fishing would have a much greater involvement in Fish and Game.

Councillor Williamson asked what contribution the Hunting and Fishing stores contributed to the magazine. Mr Wilson replied that the draft annual accounts from the NZ Council indicated that the magazine cost \$405,000 in 2023 with “contributions” totalling \$154,000.

Mr Klee advised Councillors of his recent discussions with MPI over the potential for high pathogen avian influenza to make its way to NZ and the potential consequences if it became established. The most likely pathway was from a border breach.

Mr Klee agreed with Councillors that it looked like it had been an excellent breeding season for waterfowl.

Councillor Dickey enquired whether Income Protection Insurance had been considered for Fish and Game to cover the potential loss of income due to adverse events such as avian influenza. Mr Wilson agreed to discuss this potential with Council’s insurance broker at their annual meeting early next year.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:48pm. The next meeting of Council is scheduled for 24th February 2023.