



Minutes of the Newtown Resident's Association Meeting, 7.30pm 17th May 2021 at Newtown Hall, 71 Daniell St.

Present: Rhona Carson (Chair) Steve Cosgrove (Minutes), Michelle Wolland, Joyce Gibson, Penny Sturgess, Peter Frater, Alan Murray, Steve Dunn, David Jenkins, Sam Somers, Léonie Walker, Marion Leighton.

Guests Jared Corston - Wellington City Council Liaison Officer, Councillors Laurie Foon and Fleur Fitzsimons, Brian Dawson (representing Paul Eagle MP), Solomon Powell (Massey University Journalism student)

Apologies: None received.

Rhona warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the invited guests.

Discussion about Demographics

Jared Corston gave a detailed presentation outlining the work the Council are doing to gather data on, and better understand, the demographics and characteristics of people living in Newtown and other catchment areas. This information will be used to plan for the needs of communities and had a particular focus on the role of Community Centres in delivering Council services and facilities to those in most need.

He noted that by combining data from the 2018 census with other information, that while there are large ranges for some measures, relative to other suburbs, Newtown has a higher proportion of more transient residents, with lower personal income, and that there are a higher proportion of Māori, Pacific, Middle East and African (MELA) residents, and residents with disabilities including some difficulties walking far, seeing and hearing. The proportion of homeowners to renters is also lower than many suburbs, probably reflecting the more transient student population who are linked with the many tertiary education providers near Newtown.

The Council was urged to consider the needs of renters – often harder to engage with due to transience. While students may genuinely want to move every six months, many hope the new protections for renters from no-fault eviction and rent increases, may enable others to stay longer and put roots down in the community. It was also noted that the opening hours of the Community Centres favoured the retired or non-workers and business users, rather than younger renters and those with day jobs.

We also noted that Newtown has fewer facilities such as swimming pools, leisure centres and sports pitches, though we are well served by the Regional Hospital and pharmacists! Newtown also scored well on Parks – though it could be noted that this included the Town Belt.

Jared also noted the relatively high scores for measures of loneliness, particularly for younger people, and migrants.

He signposted the meeting to some interesting sources of information such as commuter patterns. Newtonians largely walk / cycle or take a bus when leaving Newtown, while out-of-suburb residents drive to work in Newtown (and park). See <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/commuter-waka-2018-census-data-visualisation> for more!

Lively discussion followed, with interesting questions about the social wellbeing that comes with dog walking, and the difficulties some migrants – especially those without children - have in making new (non-migrant) friends,.

Any feedback, please contact Jared.

Feedback about the latest Innovative Street parklet at Bebemos.

While some welcomed the additional space (with a question raised about the licence implications of alcohol being carried from Bebemos to the parklet) others felt that the location with its slope and the proximity to a major road junction was again somewhat ill advised. This has made bike parking very difficult when combined with nearby building work. The Innovative Streets project are to be asked to consider bike parking for future parklets.

Noted that the bollards give the impression there is less space for cars going around the corner.

Issues about the 2 waters infrastructure

Solomon Powell addressed the meeting, explaining that he is doing a journalism piece exploring issues with Wellington's three water infrastructure. Discussion of leaks, responsibilities of householders, and of crumbling infrastructure added weight to the calls for the Council to address the long-term maintenance deficits. He was interested to hearing any personal stories.

Other Business

There was a query about the possibility of WCC supporting planting fruit trees in public spaces. We discussed some existing projects, including the fruit trees in Mercy Park. These were provided by WCC and are looked after by a group of local residents.

The meeting also noted the need to follow up with the Council area parking plan, and with the outcome of the Spatial plan consultation which is due out in June.

Rhona told the meeting that the Zoo Bar (currently closed) will likely be the subject of a new license application at some point, and that she will keep the Residents Association informed.

There is still some funding for neighbourly events. This will need to be returned to the council if not spent. Please can anyone /or group who has an idea for an event (and the energy to work to make it happen) contact Rhona. Ideas were floated about shared meal at (possibly at Newtown School,) or even a winter park evening.

The meeting closed at 9.pm, with Rhona thanking all the guests for their time and presentations.

The next meeting will be on the 21st of June at 7.30 p.m.