

EVIDENCE Garth Mortensen  
TOPIC DC113  
SUB# 11  
DATE 19 Nov 2013

Introduction.

I am the chairperson of REDG.

REDG is a voluntary group and the committee comprised of representatives from the Northland Port Corporation, a local construction company, the Ruakaka rate payers Association, a large scale manufacturer, the framing and rural sector and 2 elected local council representatives, Councillors Shelly Deeming and Phil Halse. Meeting are also attended by members of the Whangarei Economic Development group and members of the Whangarei District council economic development agency.

The function of REDG is to promote the business and economic growth opportunities of the Ruakaka and wider Bream Bay area. REDG is very focused on ensuring that any development in the area is both economically and environmentally sustainable.

REDG fully supports the application by thee Whangarei Racing Club (WRC) and believe it is essential that the application be granted to ensure the long term viability to the club at Ruakaka.

The WRC is a significant employer in the area and employ over 60 people and in an area like Ruakaka this vital and we need to ensure that these jobs are retained. The proposed development will increase the employment opportunities in the area and increase the overall economic and social wellbeing of the Ruakaka area.

The northland region has very high unemployment and just yesterday the employment figures showed an increase in the number of people receiving the unemployment benefit. We can ill afford to lose any more major employers in the region.

The WRC race days attract over 20,000 visitors per year to the area. This results in a significant increase in the revenue of local businesses and service industries.

The direct income increase is a measurable immediate benefit for the region for the area, however the race days offer a far wider opportunity for the area. The large number of visitors and racing industry people allows the local business and area to gain considerable exposure. There are networking business promotional opportunities.

The Ruakaka area suffers from a lack of exposure and struggles to promote itself as a region. Despite 3 years of work we are not even able to place signage out on state highway 1 to inform tourists and travellers that there is a turn off to Ruakaka. There is no local information centre or any place where visitors can gain information about the area. The race days bring visitors to the area for a specific purpose and the exposure the area gains cannot be underestimated.

Consideration must also be given to the wider social impact of the racing club. It provides a number of fund raising opportunities for local schools and community based organisations, it is not just about horse racing. The race course must be seen a vital community asset and this development must be supported and granted to allow the race course to continue to secure the future of this community asset.

TV COVERAGE