

11. Notice of Motion Councillor M R Williams

Reporting officer C Brindle (Senior Meeting Co ordinator)

Date of meeting 28 August 2013

Vision, mission and values

This item is in accord with Council's vision, mission and values statement.

Notices of motion

3.10.1 Notice of motion to be in writing

Notices of motion must be in writing signed by the mover, stating the meeting at which it is proposed that the notice of motion be considered, and must be delivered to the Chief Executive at least 5 clear working days before such meeting.

Notice of motion Cr Williams – Future of the Whangarei Railway Station

Cr Williams in accordance with Standing Order 3.10.1 has given notice that he intends to move the following motion:

- “1. That the information be received.*
- 2. That Council approve the sale of the Old Railway Building to the 'Whangarei Men's Shed' incorporated for the sum of \$1.*
- 3. That a lease over the associated land be formalised with the Whangarei Men's Shed for a period of 10 years, including performance measures specific to the preservation of the building, buy back option to Council and type of activity permitted.*
- 4. That the Chief Executive be given the delegated authority to finalise terms and conditions to complete the transaction.”*

Background

The attached item presented to the 24 July Council meeting (subsequently withdrawn) outlines the proposal in detail.

Attachment:

[Council agenda 24 July - Item 8 Future of the Whangarei Railway Station](#)

8. Future of the Whangarei Railway Station

Reporting officer Mike Hibbert (Property Manager)

Date 10 July 2013

Purpose of Report

To seek resolution of Council to sell the Old Railway Building to the Community Group known as the 'Whangarei Men's Shed' to preserve the structure of the Whangarei Railway Station and provide secured interim occupancy of the building.

Introduction

The Whangarei Railway Station is situated at the end of Railway Road at the rear of established businesses on Commerce Street. No significant maintenance has been completed on the building since 2007, resulting in the slow demise of basic structural integrity accelerated by the poor condition of the roof, petty vandalism and graffiti. Approximately one third of the building internally consists of training rooms, offices, kitchen, community group facilities and other shared spaces established initially through initiatives of the now in recess Prince of Wales Trust. The remaining two thirds again lends itself to established workshop space, rooms and storage however the condition is very poor and some what inhabitable.

The Whangarei Men's Shed incorporated have approached Councils with an aim of acquiring the Railway Building to ensure future tenancy and provide external funding opportunities to future preserve the structure.

Brief History

Council purchased the site in 1997 from the railways for the purpose of extending Railway Road as part of a larger roading objective to link Okara Drive to the CBD. The site was formally leased from Council by the Prince of Wales Trust until late 2006 when the trust went into recess. The National Trust Board agreed to transfer all assets, contracts and interests to the Whangarei Railway Station Charitable Trust (WREST). In accordance with this a Deed of Assignment of License was duly executed by Council. In late 2007 the WREST secured a \$40,000 contribution toward the replacement of the roof and internal structures and asked Council for a further \$20,000 contribution so the project could be completed in its entirety. An extension of the lease was also requested to allow the continued internal upgrade of the facility to maximise the efforts of the roof replacement to fully renovate the remaining two thirds of the building. The recommendation was to support the initiative, however the Council at the time resolved not to extend the lease and the WRSCT folded in December of that year.

Current use

The building has effectively been empty since December 2007, however due to escalating vandalism, repeated reports of antisocial behaviour and the constant risk of fire, security breaches and safety of the structure, an interim month by month agreement now exists with 2Meke training. 2Meke training pay for all outgoings including security monitoring, painting over graffiti and clearing broken bottles etc, in return for use of the building at no cost.

In mid 2011, ground maintenance work was initiated to clear the rear of the site and extend the existing car park. Additional lighting and the removal of the aging bus stop structures was completed to accommodate the recently adopted changes to the Parking strategy. The site was also used to capacity as an overflow space for the World Cup events at Toll Stadium. Council staff painted the exterior of the building on a shoe string budget to help lift the presentation of the building, to lift the feel of the environment and to improve safety perceptions to the public and visiting world cup fans.

Heritage Building Status

The building is not a registered Heritage building in the District Plan. Council decided not to support such a recommendation as this would restrict any future potential development. However the building has been recognised as a significant building through the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) and such support was formally addressed in the agreement to lease the building to the Prince of Wales Trust until late 2006 with WRSCT to complete a renovation programme to establish the building to its original glory.

Community Interest

The Whangarei 'Men's Shed'

In the past twelve months Council staff have been approached regarding a new initiative for the district called The 'Men's Shed'. This initiative appears to be gaining momentum in other parts of the country with now up to 50 different Men's Sheds being formalised including Christchurch, Masterton, Auckland, Blenheim, Palmerton North, Ashburton, Levin, Kaikoura, and Devonport to name a few. Their over arching mission is to establish an environment for men to socialise, work together, learn new skills, and to share their skills, talents and knowledge with others and the wider community. This is based around sharing companionship, a sense of purpose and support networks.

The Whangarei Men's Shed is recently incorporated with 30 registered members from a variety of backgrounds. Letters of support have been received from the NZ Police, Work and Income NZ, Age Concern and the Disability Sector Reference Group. Business entities are also on board with a growing number of business showing interest and allowing fundraising opportunities and the donation of tools. The initiative is now reaching its 12 month anniversary and has already out growth space currently occupied at Heritage Park.

The available space at the Railway Station provides a suitable, accessible space to store equipment; facilitate a workshop, rooms for administration and support services. The disrepair of the building provides a working project to accommodate the initiatives of the group while providing a home base. As a charitable trust the Men's shed will be eligible to apply for community funds from a variety of sources. The organising committee has an entrepreneur focus and can see numerous possibilities for community fundraise.

2Meke Training Limited

Currently 2Meke Training Limited occupy a third of the building on a month by month basis. Established in 2005 their vision is to meet the education gaps of a large community of the youth, adult and early childhood groups, who for various reasons are not accessing education services.

The organization is an accredited tertiary education provider with a four year New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) performance cycle. Programmes include Youth Hospitality Training and Adult and Youth Numeracy Literacy. In 2011 the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) provided wages to employ 14 students for 6 months in the Bay of Islands/Whangarei area, while travel, tools and other outgoings were provided through fundraising. Students experienced real hands on work, employment commitments and motivation. Each student was signed up in compulsory saving schemes and driver learning to achieve their own financial sustainability, drivers licence and 40 NZQA unit standards.

The Railway Station office, kitchen, classroom and toilets has become the hub for the free tertiary education/social/pastoral care services that are provide to people of all ages throughout Te Tai Tokerau.

Recent meetings with 2Meke have indicated a willingness to work with the Men's Shed in ensuring workable opportunities.

Considerations

Status Quo

To do nothing will eventually see the buildings condition deteriorate to a stage where the premises would have to be condemned. Although a time frame can not be accurately predicted, the risks associated with fire, structural failure and continued vandalism during this time would greatly increase. The cost to dispose of the structure would also incur unnecessary cost.

Purely from a Council asset management perspective to simply allow the building to deteriorate to such a stage that it could not be salvaged may be perceived to be a failure of Council from a rate payer point of view.

Roof Condition

Although patches and waterproofing of the existing roof has continued through the contributions of 2Meke training, a recent inspection through by Councils Building Compliance staff have identified a number of major leaks, rot, damage to flashings and barges, internal valleys and gutters. The renovations completed during the time of the Prince of Wales Trust and later the Whangarei Railway Station Charitable Trust have been compromised further due to the roof condition. The Men's Shed are aware of the current condition and relishes the opportunity to make such necessary repairs in parallel with the use of the building as a multi-use community asset.

Heritage Places Trust

Council Staff have recently discussed the future of the building. Although not the preference support would be given to the Whangarei Men's Shed owning the building in order to fund the future preservation.

Community Tenancy

The nature of the building and the current internal space lends itself to community activities. To date 2Meke training has maintained the current facility at a level to accommodate classroom and administrative requirements to facilitate their youth programmes. The empty and somewhat in need of repair remaining two thirds also presents a huge opportunity to use the facility as a project itself to support the initiatives of the 'Men's Shed' in transferring skills and bridging gaps between generations.

Each group is currently in need of securing longer term agreement to help further expand and invest in their current programmes and contribution to youth and youth employment, or to establish a home to instigate a nationally growing initiative to help contribute to the social and community development of individuals and the community while preserving traditional skills. To sell the structure to the Men's Shed would protect the asset and further upgrade and preserve the facility, similar to other community groups that currently manage Council owned community halls and buildings.

Future development

The Roothing division has indicated the current Long Term Plan does not have any funding allocations for any roading links to occur from this site within the next 10 years. The recently completed Porowini Ave extension in effect has superseded the need for Railway Road to be developed further. The Parking Strategy has identified the location as a prominent site.

Any agreed sale would need to reflect a buy back option for Council to purchase from the Men's Shed at the same price. This would ensure flexibility for any future development and or assurances to Council if the Men's Shed disband.

Summary

The future of the Whangarei Railway Station has not been determined as a Council priority in the Annual Plan or the Long Term Plan (LTP). Options to relocate or upgrade are expensive and can not be justified against more pressing Council projects and spend. From an asset management perspective obligations to ensure the continued integrity of the building with further deterioration avoided remain with Council.

An opportunity has arisen to allow the building to secure occupancy with Community based groups, to management and maintain the building. This will allow Council time to formalise a plan to address the future of the building, while at the same time, ensure the structure remains secure, weather proof and with a purpose of allowing such groups to contribute to the wider community. Selling the structure to the Whangarei Men's Shed will provide better opportunities for future funding and the preservation of the structure.

Recommendation

1. That the information be received.
2. That Council approve the sale of the 'the Old Railway Building to the 'Whangarei Men's Shed' incorporated for the sum of \$1.
3. That a lease over the associated land be formalised with the Whangarei men's Shed for a period of 10 years, including performance measures specific to the preservation of the building, buy back option to Council and type of activity permitted.
4. That the Chief Executive Officer be given the delegated authority to finalise terms and conditions to complete the transaction.

Attachment

[Consultants Brief](#)

Consultants Brief
In respect of the acquisition of the
Whangarei Railway Station

1st July 2013

The Whangarei Community Mens Shed.

This incorporated society was constituted by resolution on 5th March 2012 and subsequently registered with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies in April 2012. (Ref. No. 2558523)
It forms a part of a world wide movement which currently has 800 sheds in Australia and 40 spread through New Zealand.

The Whangarei "Shed" was officially opened on 1st September 2012 at the Whangarei Museum & Heritage Park Trust site in Maunu, Whangarei.

At the end of the first financial year of operating it had 44 paid up members.

The society is managed by a committee of seven elected members with three officers i.e. a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

The society is a member of the National Association of Mens Sheds in New Zealand.

The purposes of the society are laid out in the "Rules" lodged with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. The main principles are to create a place and a sense of purpose for men whereby they connect with each other and the community.

The major means of achieving these principles are by providing an all purpose workshop and recreational facilities whereby men can become involved in projects for the community at large and also be free to follow their own requirements in respect of personal creativity.

The aim of the society, at this time, is focused on the future provision of a 'custom' shaped shed which would revolve around woodworking, metalworking and a collection of pastimes e.g. modelling, information technology equipment and training as well as an attractive area for social interaction. These are pursuits we are unable to cater for in our present restricted space, which only allows a maximum of six members working at any one time.

The measure of the flexibility of the Shed operation and acceptance of a wide section of the public and non- profit agencies has been established in a remarkably short time frame. This is exemplified by (a) the doubling of the society's membership in the first twelve months and (b) the volume of projects initiated by outside sources.

We have carried out projects for worthy individuals in need of assistance e.g. building a footstool for a handicapped car driver in order to gain exit and access to his vehicle and repairing an elderly lady's table leg as well as carrying out larger projects for :-

- (a) The Northland Health Board
- (b) The Northaven Hospice retail store
- (c) The Whangarei Museum
- (d) The Whangarei Homeschoolers organisation
- (e) The Maunu Primary School
- (f) The Whangarei District Council
- (g) The international SISTEMA group, devoted to attracting children to musical instruments.

Every week we are approached by some non- profit body enquiring if the Whangarei Mens Shed can assist with a worthwhile social task that would benefit the public. In many instances we have both the skills and appropriate equipment but do not have the physical space to undertake yet another contract.

The Whangarei Railway Station with its size and scope is an ideal building to expand not only our working space but the accommodation for a greater number of men with varied skills who would be given a fresh lease of life by working and socialising with other men.

As the General Manager of the Australian Mens Sheds Association is quoted as saying - ***"Mens Sheds are not just about building wooden toys and fixing furniture - they are about building communities and fixing men"***

The Whangarei Railway Station.

In searching for a benevolent property owner, in our quest for larger long term premises for our society, we have reviewed the potential of our local railway station, which no longer performs the function of a passenger rail terminal and is of no further use to Kiwi Rail.

The size of the building, the central location and its historical significance to the Whangarei community indicate that this building would be an ideal facility for the expansion of our operation.

The very necessary repairs to make this almost derelict complex tenable and the medium to long term return to near original condition is a task that the Whangarei Mens Shed would relish, running as it would, in parallel with the use of the building as a multi- use community asset.

The obvious win / win outcome of restoring a decaying iconic building to its former position of community focus and redirecting its usefulness as a community hub in the centre of the city is one of the most exciting projects to be undertaken in this region for decades.

With the transfer of title to the building from the Whangarei District Council to the Whangarei Mens Shed, with conditions to be decided, both the incentive to carry out the works necessary and the availability of funds to carry out such work will be greatly enhanced.

The entire emphasis of the restoration will be directed towards totally remaining within the external design of the railway station and retaining the embodiment of a functioning railway facility whilst reconfiguring the interior partitions to adequately accommodate the various activities that the Mens Shed can offer its members and the community.

Ongoing costs and proposed funding

Whilst the society has been the grateful recipient of a \$5,000 Whangarei Council grant towards our first year cost of overheads (which includes insurance, rent, power, water, telephone and administration expenses) we have been able to return \$1200 of the grant by reason of our efforts to generate funds with the object of being self-sustaining as quickly as possible.

To date we have operated successful "Sausage sizzles" regularly at the Produce Market held in Whangarei and also twice a month at the local Mega Mitre 10.

Apart from this form of trading, we are producing bench seats and picnic tables for resale as well as "planter" wheelbarrows for Garden Nursery outlets.

We are currently negotiating with our Council to take over the administration and maintenance of a Public Hall which, on present Council provided accounts, will net us in the vicinity of \$9,000 per annum on a continuing basis. Volunteer labour within our organisation will assist in this endeavour.

Entry charges to our existing Shed are currently netting the society \$1,500 a year

Our trading budget for 2013 /14 is set to raise approximately \$15,000 to cover all overhead costs.

In respect of the Railway Station funding we can only determine two fixed sums at this stage.

The first is the nominal sum we pay to Whangarei District Council for the acquisition of the building title (Estimated at \$1)

The second is the assessment / feasibility study to be carried out by an architectural consultant which will be the sum we approach the Lottery Community Facilities Fund to finance (Estimate at this time \$10,000 - \$12,000) .

The reconstruction and improvement costs necessary for the Railway Station will only emerge once our feasibility study is concluded and the timeframe associated with Stage 1, that being the successful application for the grant to conduct the feasibility study and the completion of that study, is assessed at the time of this brief as being January 2014.

Summary of requirements for feasibility study.

To be added after further consultation with our consultant architect