

*Whangarei District's
First Annual
Council Awards
2012*



**Smile - you are
on council cam!**

*"Never smile at a crocodile
No, you can't get friendly with a crocodile
Don't be taken in by his welcome grin
He's imagining how well you'd fit within his skin
Never smile at a crocodile"*

*Adjudicator: Wayne Deeming
The adjudicator's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into*

Santa Claus's "Coming To Town Award"

And he knows who's been naughty and who's been nice!

We have witnessed the morphing of Mr Simpson who was at pains to impress upon anyone who was listening (and there weren't too many!) that, since his heart attack, he had turned 'nice'. It didn't, however, stop him talking to some of us in baby like language. To his credit when I told him to "*grow up*" and "*if you don't want to carry out a proper conversation shut up*" he sat down and we discussed heart disease which is, apart from us both having lived in Gisborne, likely the only topic we have in common.

His newly expressed respect for his family is laudable; but remember, he didn't give a damn, about the effect it had on my family, when he and a couple of others sat by while lies were published about me in the news media. I'll believe nice when I actually see it.

To his credit, Mr Simpson is now starting to act like a CEO on the odd occasion and not just like '*one of the boys*'. My hope for 2013 is that he will address his behaviour – but then I am an eternal optimist.

One thing we did learn is that his wife's family came from Nova Scotia. Apparently it is somewhere big and important {try Google maps}.

Winston Churchill's "I've Been Insulted by Experts (but not this time) Award"

The mayor, who has no idea what I contribute or have contributed to the communities I have lived in, and couldn't be bothered finding out, was moved to write: "*While you may think you are doing God's work scrutinizing all that Council does, I think you would get more satisfaction giving your skills to the community but maybe this is a bridge too far*". (My emphasis)

I don't know about **God's work** – I'll leave that to those who profess to be Christians.

But the statement "*scrutinizing all that council does*" is a bit rich when the mayor, who claimed that under his mayoralty, "*When you vote for me you are voting for an open transparent Council where nothing is hidden or covered up. I am honest and trustworthy, someone you can put your confidence in*" chooses to carry out anything of significance far from the public gaze often through motions of secrecy, most of which have no validity whatsoever.

"*Nothing is hidden or covered up*" – give me a break!

"*Honest and trustworthy, someone you can put your confidence in*" - Mr Mayor, just where are the answers to the questions you undertook to give me but chose not to?

And just what does the Code of Conduct mean by the term *respect*?

Fair dinkum, is it any wonder I don't stand for him?

The Mary Poppins' "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious Award"

Council's legal advisor started it all off when she referred to me as **vexatious**. Since she later decided to label the entire *Voices 4 You* group as **vexatious** she probably confused **vexatious** with **contagious**. I was hoping that she would come and wish us Merry Xmas at the last council meeting but she probably thought that she may catch something nasty. I guess using classy words like **vexatious** exudes a sense of self righteousness albeit being a little pathetic when it's the **vexatious** who pay the bills.

I couldn't be outdone so I labelled the mayor's delusional attempt to subvert standing orders, by inventing a "*Council Meeting Protocol*" and banning my recording council, as **egregious drivel** which must have had some effect as council is now recorded thanks to Standing Orders which the mayor, clearly, hadn't heard of. I'd heard of the word **egregious** but had no idea what it meant. It clearly impressed the mayor because I had a response within days.

And the winner is: **egregious**, of course. At least it had some effect.

The Heart Foundation's "Watch Your Blood Pressure Award"

Not, of course, that many at council are too keen on the idea of being recorded if reports I have heard of the almost apoplectic reaction of some councillors are true. Will council be recorded in 2013? It would be a fair bet that there will be some busily scanning rules over the break to figure out how to ban it but time will tell. Maybe they'll find some reason, when Area Commander Phillips isn't there, to kick me out! Or maybe they'll just 'secretize' every meeting.

You'd think the mayor or someone else could sit down and talk sensibly about filming the mayor if he 'appeared to be asleep' during a presentation from guests of council or 'appeared to be reading' the *Endless Summer* brochure while Cr Morgan was telling us about dusty roads {see clip on Facebook}; but to talk sensibly to decent citizens would appear anathema to this council. Maybe the council could get a run of T Shirts printed similar to my grandson's – "*Sisters are the Enemy*". Maybe, "*The Public Gallery are the Enemy*"?

This award is shared by all those who contributed at various gatherings when I was being discussed in less than hallowed tones. That'd probably be the entire council and senior staff! Oh well, you can't please all of the people all of the time when you are doing **God's work!**

The Mother Teresa "Unquestioning Service to the Public Award"

There are two contenders this year: Cr Syers who replied to me, in relation to council's code of conduct (here we go again!) with this little gem: "*That I will not take up a fight on your behalf which would achieve nothing and discredit me in the eyes of persons at council*" and Cr Williamson, a well known road safety advocate, who told me that pedestrian crossings outside schools were not the preserve of the district council (possibly he should have told council's roading engineer and NZ Police as well) and that, in any case, he wasn't going to help me. He later had an apparent epiphany and determined that they were council's responsibility after all – at *Totara Grove Primary School* in fact. The cynical may suggest that there are potential votes in Tikipunga and just potential grief in Maungakareme. Who would know?

And it seems, from Cr Syers account, that those who would, heaven forbid, stoop to actually help one of those doing **God's work** are forever consigned to a state of council purgatory possibly by joining the few, who consistently showed a little respect to **God's workers**, in being locked in a windowless room listening to Barry Manilow records.

Or worse; maybe there is a council version of Dante's ninth circle where they are frozen in ice with **God's workers** and sit suspended watching their colleagues, who trash their codes of conduct and council policy, get all the fun by harming decent people, throwing Viv out and enjoying a cup of tea without **God's Workers** within cooe – "*tee hee*".

The award this year is shared.

The Maxwell Smart "Trust me I Know What I am Doing Award"

This would have to be awarded to the Mayor and his trusty council when they tried to get Viv kicked out only to be gazumped by the Acting Area Commander of NZ Police, who showed more gumption than the mayor and entire council combined. The loyal councillors dutifully followed the mayor out of the chamber to let the blood letting start in earnest. It didn't help that the council also tried to kick out members of the public who were causing no nuisance at all. Nor was Viv for that matter, she was just telling the truth! Shock, horror! Being new to the area, Acting Area Commander Phillips, wasn't au fait with the silly games that this council plays and, p~d on the mayor's parade by negotiating with Viv (and gained the respect of the public gallery from the outset of her new appointment).

So what was Viv's crime? Pointing out the bleeding obvious – that this is a council that couldn't give a rat's about its codes of conduct which seem, from the outside, to have the status of low grade toilet paper {somewhat coarse, like sandpaper}.

Seeing the CEO nodding and looking pensive right in front of the public gallery (see angel photo) was an uplifting experience. As it was when the mayor poked his head around the corner,

presumably looking for the trail of blood, but got no further when he saw Viv alive and well – and apparently discussing the quality of toilet paper with Simmo!

Here's what the mayor said in his election campaign *"I will listen to the people who agree with me and disagree with me, and I WILL LISTEN EVEN HARDER TO THE PEOPLE WHO DISAGREE WITH ME"*. Get that Viv? (*Emphasis is the mayor's*)

Question: What is a public forum?

Answer: Is it a place where the mayor can show off? I don't know, but it doesn't appear to be a place where the public can have their say without fear nor favour.

Basil Fawlt's "Slap me in the Face With a Wet Fish Award"

This is difficult since so much of what goes on at council qualifies.

But after careful thought it would have to be the mayor's ham fist attack on the integrity of those who sit in the public gallery {and have no speaking rights so can't defend themselves} and do not stand when he walks in adorned with his chains.

He mumbled some convoluted gibberish about standing for the 'Office of the Mayor' and showing disrespect for the 'Office of the Mayor' when, ironically, by sitting we are showing respect for the office because it is the mayor who is showing disrespect to it {if you get all that}. Probably not too many of the illustrious former mayors would have called Vince a w~r but there you go.

In any case he wasn't able to satisfactorily explain why, he claims that one is standing for the *"Office of the Mayor"* and yet the invitation given is to stand for *"His Worship the Mayor"*. Like so much at this council, it makes no sense.

And just a word of wisdom to the mayor; drawing attention to something that annoys you doesn't do anything but offer encouragement. Ask Cr Syers who tried the same stunt before.

Derren Brown's "Poof, Where did it go Award"

With this spendthrift council there are many opportunities for such an award. This year, however, it goes to Simmo for a rather comical chain of events.

Cr Williams, to Cr Syers disgust it must be said {not surprisingly, he was visibly miffed that it all had not been done in secret}, seemed to have discovered that Simmo had (figuratively speaking) dumped 300 grand of ratepayer funds down a (fairly large) hole in a car park. Nothing unusual there; this council dumps ratepayers' money into big holes all the time, often at rugby grounds and the like. But what raised the councillor's blood pressure was that this expenditure had not been authorised by council.

Which raises two questions: Is Cr Williams still taking his blood pressure pills? and

It's a bit of a story: from time to time council is asked {"*purely procedural*" claims Simmo} to validate the contract amount approved by council being increased (always within budget of course). Why? "*Because*", explains Simmo, "*our computer system won't let us pay above the amount approved by council*".

You have to hand it to Simmo; clearly he is cleverer than both the computer and council because it seems he has found a way to get his hands on 300 grand to pour down a large hole, without involving either the computer or council!

Never fear; all will be revealed in a secret meeting. You can bet your life the public, whose 300 grand is sitting at the bottom of a hole in a car park, will be none the wiser.

It's a bit less than 300 grand but don't tip your chocolate fish down a hole, Simmo!

Mrs Malaprop's "Slip of the Tongue Award"

"We're stuck between a hard and a rock place". Speak for yourself Cr McLachlan!

John Bank's "I Don't Remember; Who is that Fat Guy Award?"

It is reassuring that a few councillors are beginning to realize that they have been spending ratepayer money like it was confetti and the day of reckoning is nigh. It doesn't help that those of us doing **God's work** have been banging on about this for about five years but finally, it seems, the penny has dropped for some. (Maybe it's not the public gallery who are 'slow learners' this time Cr Syers?). For some of the big spenders on council, lead by well known supporter of rugby union 'rights', Phil Mayor (the mayor's pet, and disarmingly accurate, name for his deputy) the penny will never drop.

So who is *Councillor of the Year*?

And the winner is {*knock me over with a feather*} → Cr Sue Glen!

Yes Cr Glen has finally seen the light and has made some telling contributions around the debt mountain recently. But not only that: Cr Glen was the ONLY councillor who had any regard for Viv when she had, clearly, been shafted by the mayor and his council. It was a difficult situation but Cr Glen had the courage to confront it and the decency to offer support. Her generosity did not go unnoticed. I've also heard that Cr Glen often takes courageous positions in secret meetings, She also often acts as an advocate for the council 'mushrooms' in public meetings.

The Stephen Cook "What Goes Around Comes Around; Truth is Stranger than Fiction Award"

Councillors will all be aware of *Truth Weekender* – Mr Simpson's essential weekly read and the preferred vehicle used by council and its staff for attacking decent citizens. Who could forget the filthy lies told about me but, more importantly in this context, Mr Slater, in articles engineered by this council and which no councillor has seen fit to correct or to hold the CEO to account for. Code of conduct? What's that Viv?

It's probably fair to assume that council will have a little more difficulty in spreading their filth now, certainly in respect of Mr Slater. And it may transpire that this august publication could return to bite them in the bum. Time will tell.

This year the award goes to a staff member – the CEO's Personal Assistant no less. Take a bow, Mr Ford Watson.

Standards NZ "Book of the Year Award"

There is nothing quite as riveting at council as a point of order. The mayor seems to become faint and as Mr Slater puts it "*moves his head from side to side like one of those clowns at the fairground with his mouth open waiting for someone to put a ping pong ball in it*".

So the Book of the Year is *Standing Orders* and the hope is that the mayor will read it over the Xmas break and perhaps will be able to figure out what the public can and can not do and figure out the difference between a point of order and speaking twice during a debate (among 101 other things).

The David Copperfield "Did I Just Disappear an Elephant Award?"

You know David Copperfield – he's the guy who disappeared the Great Wall of China! The mayor seems to fancy himself as a magician and likes to think that he disappeared a reported gift of \$200,000 and a reported loan of \$100,000 to "a sporting organization in Ruakaka" by allowing his council to vote for this in one of his secret meetings. Not too many 'community' (or is it 'commercial'?) organisations capable of easily absorbing this amount of disappeared funds in Ruakaka you'd think. Naturally, council will neither confirm nor deny the existence or non existence {this boxed trifecta about covers the field} of such largesse nor why it has higher priority than the safety of children.

But, despite the mayor's predilection for smoke and mirrors, elephants are terribly difficult to disappear without leaving a large (and often smelly) trace behind them. Methinks, one for the Problem Gambling Foundation?

The Marx Brothers' "Day at the Races (Whoops) Award"

Well, who from council will be at the starting gate for mayor in October? You'd have to say the present mayor is so out of touch with reality that it wouldn't surprise if he should (heaven forbid) have another shot – maybe **God's work** is not yet finished. Then there is Cr Christie – a sort of long service award. And Cr Edwards, a short service award – "youngest mayor in NZ". Cr Syers was a favourite a while ago but he blows hot and cold – he appears disillusioned with some of his colleagues.

Phil Mayor will probably have another shot. But the dark horse is Cr Deeming whose anti Hundertwasser stand could seriously impress the ignorant and those who haven't suffered her outrageous conduct – "*tee hee*".

I'd like to see Cr Morgan have a go as well. That would make over half the 'team'.

Strictly speaking an 'outsider', but given the banality of his coverage of this council most likely an 'insider', Craig Cooper is spoken of as a contender – at least the election coverage would be interesting for a change albeit possibly a bit one sided - it would make a change from reading about his son buying a pie.

Add in a few other well known names and there are likely to be so many candidates that you would only need Uncle Joe, Aunt May and the family dog to vote for you and you'd be mayor.

The winner here, by a short head, is Cr Christie for optimism, if nothing else.

The Dilmah "Time for a Cuppa Award"

Try the Regional Council; they invite the public to join them for a cuppa and chat informally to the councillors and staff without their suffering seizures or being torn limb from limb by deranged members of the public.

Perhaps council's legal counsel has convinced WDC councillors that being associated with **vexatious** people is **contagious** and injurious to their health. Or maybe we just smell bad. Whatever; there is no cuppa for the seriously disturbed.

It would be a bit iffy in any case – you would wonder what they'd put in it!
"No, no not that one – this is your cup".

The joint winners: the two councillors who told Simmo to tell Mr Slater he wasn't welcome!

And finally, Sleepyhead's "Dreamer of the Year Award"

Yes folks this award goes to me for the following wish list for 2013:

- That councillors and senior staff will regard their Codes of Conduct as a minimum standard of behaviour and not as a low grade of toilet paper;
- That council will treat people who take some interest in their district with a little respect and not continue to treat the public gallery as a refuge for the seriously disturbed;
- That the mayor will bone up on Standing Orders (available from Standards NZ for some huge amount of ratepayer money) so that he can tell the difference between a point of order and a recording device. He could also bone up on the LGOIMA and figure out what confidential and open and transparent actually mean and what official information actually is.
Actually, come to think of it, there's not much he could not bone up on;
- And {wait for it}: The mayor will finally discover an election promise that he made and is prepared to honour.
{Wasn't it helpful that I took a copy of his web site before it rapidly disappeared after the election? Maybe he would like to check through it.}
However, as the mayor himself has observed, "*that may be a bridge too far*".