

## Report of the Economic Summit held at Memorial Hall on Wednesday, May 20th, 9.00am - 1.00pm

*Report by David Armstrong*

This event started out as the cornerstone event of the Motueka 2030 programme, and it largely lived up to that hope. A total of 147 people registered to attend, but 37 name tags were not used, making the official list 110 people, plus the four of the speakers who didn't register, plus a handful of known unregistered attendees. We will work on the total of 115. That number worked well, as the discussion groups at the end would have been more difficult to manage and less participatory had there been another 5 - 10 at each of them.

The format was different to the August 2014 summit, with the emphasis on fewer topics but interactive discussion groups and feedback. All comments we received afterward indicated satisfaction with this format - for listeners who were able to contribute and broaden the topics, and for the speakers who received extra input on issues relevant to their work.

The four presenters spoke for about 20 - 25 minutes each. All used projected material, and PowerPoint files for all presentations except that of Wakatu can be obtained by an emailed request to Vision Motueka or the speaker.

A sumptuous morning tea, put together by the craft group Crafty Tarts, was provided after the third speaker. After the fourth presentation all attendees had the choice of which of the four topics they would like to discuss with presenters, ask for more information, et cetera. About halfway through that 65-minute period of discussion, attendees were encouraged to move to another group that they were also interested in, but in fact only about 15 people changed groups.

At 12:30pm, everyone re-gathered in the hall and each of the four presenters gave a short summary of the discussions that they just had. The meeting ended with a short address by this reporter, urging people to take advantage of the momentum that was building around this event and looking for ways in which collaboration and partnerships may be advanced as a result of what had been learned.

Following is a very brief summary of what was presented by each speaker, including what was added in the summing up period after the discussion groups.

### **Motueka High School Trade Academies**

The presenters were Scott Haines and Patrick Smith. They began with a brief overview of the goals of Motueka High School, and the challenges faced by teachers and administrators to meet the demands of the curriculum as well as the expectations of the community. Scott saw education as part of the economic value chain in the town. But he said the biggest challenge of the curriculum is preparing students for jobs that don't exist, using technologies that haven't yet been invented, for problems that have not yet been met.

In order to make education more relevant to the community, the school has engaged a human resources consultant, Patrick Smith, to expand on industry relevance of the curriculum and to develop discussions with the business community.

In 2011 the school created a Primary Industry Trades Academy. The team that have built this program include many top industry leaders in the District. Patrick said that the Trades Academy curriculum is modified to work around industry cycles rather than around classroom times.

Scott and Patrick then detailed how the Academy works over years 11 to 13, working on the 4 F's - fishing, farming, food and forestry. It is set up to provide a dual pathway for achievement, with NZCE qualifications and industry qualifications being gained over the three years. During this time students build relationships with employers which can then be extended into full-time work.

Such has been the success of the Trades Academy that the school is working on a second Academy for Construction and Related Trades. They have two others in their sites further down the track, around Health and Road Transport.

Later discussion focused on the possibility of a Health Academy, with participants suggesting a full range of health options beyond just doctors and nurses, including alternative health and jobs related to the Friendship Hospital. It was also suggested that, rather than struggling to get students to go out into businesses in the community, the community come into the classroom.

### **An ageing population**

Marion Edwin provided disturbing statistics about the demographics of the Nelson/Tasman region. Right now its average age is higher than the national average, and all projections for the 15 year-plus future is that that difference will grow further. Nelson/Tasman, she said, is at the leading edge of the ageing population trend. Not only will there be a higher percentage of the population in an older age bracket in 15 to 25 years, but relatively speaking there will also be a squeeze in the number of younger people who will be working in the area to support the older population.

She pointed out that older people should be seen as an economic driver and not a drain on the economy. Many older folk want to continue contributing to the community and economy, and some employers need to start rethinking how they can make better use of older employees who have experience, skills, and a work attitude which can complement those of young employees.

Discussion later brought up the view that resources can be developed in the District for more holistic ageing, not just the health issues, and use this as a highlight that the town offers, a kind of selling point. Marion's group also debated how to link younger people with older people, with more interactions which will result in more mutual respect.

### **The Motueka West development**

Kerensa Johnston and Iain Sheves provided details of the planning for the development on the west side of High Street, between Pah Street and King Edward Street. Kerensa began by summarising the history of the "tenths" agreement between the first European settlers and the indigenous Maori, which after being run down led in 1977 to the estate being vested in Wakatu Inc. Since then, Wakatu has sold some of that land which was in perpetual leasehold and used the proceeds to buy other land which could be developed. She emphasised that Wakatu is very keenly interested in the long-term future of Motueka.

Iain explain how 12 years of planning resulted last year in the final implementation of Plan Change 43, which rezoned and set out future development plans for the almost 100 ha of land. 80% of it is owned by Wakatu or linked organisations, and 40% of it is in perpetual leasehold. The plan was needed because it was expected that within the next 60 to 80 years, there will be a 30% increase in the population of Motueka.

Challenges include competing land use and providing public services. At the same time, the opportunities were having a structured development (rather than ad hoc growth), the ability to attract investment, and a diversification of the economy.

About 500 new homes are to be built in the area, with the remainder to be zoned for various purposes including commercial, industrial and mixed business, plus greenway buffers between zones. It is expected that some of the housing will be "affordable" and on smaller sections, and that there will be some innovative apartment-type designs.

Much of the later discussion was on challenges around services - trying to have a bit of both public, centralised services and local services using new technologies which would take the load off public services such as sewerage. Some suggested that the opportunity was there to encourage organic crops, which would attract more people to come to the area. Iain said that this was big aspirational and exciting stuff but also very challenging.

### **Business in an online world**

The final presenter was Johny O'Donnell, who set about showing that, no matter what we might think of it, the commercial world is changing rapidly and unstoppably thanks to the Internet and related technologies ("digital disruption"). The world is shrinking, but Motueka will benefit, not lose from that if we so choose. While it is good that we can get goods and services from all over the world, our own businesses are now competing with overseas competitors. How can Motueka take advantage of these changes?

We need to change our way of thinking. Some of the world's largest firms in the last century have now gone under as new technologies make their services irrelevant. We do not need an ideological debate on the pros and cons of the Internet age; it's is going to happen regardless, he said.

In order to take advantage of it rather than to lose as a result, Johny said the town should set some goals. First, make sure that young people "don't need to leave to achieve", and that we can attract them back after they do leave, with jobs that are relevant but enable them to live the Motueka lifestyle.

Motueka could be home to a hub of people who could work using online tools but based in town. Already there are many highly skilled people here who are working globally, including photographers, designers, website people and so on. One way of doing that is to set up collaborative tech-enabled spaces in town for these people to work while still living the lifestyle.

But the biggest problem at present is the huge disparity in Internet connection speeds around the area. None of us yet are getting ultra-fast broadband (UFB), but many of us are not even getting adequate broadband, and the town supply is very patchy. Access to UFB could be a decider for people to stay here, and to attract more young people and young families. Johny then went on to

describe how Motueka is trying right now to persuade government to get UFB installed in this area, with a proposal being prepared by TDC by the end of June.

In his later discussion group they talked about how they as individuals and businesses could support the town's effort to get UFB, and to ensure that Motueka is central to this, rather than a small part in the application to include the whole Top of the South. The immediate goal is for people to gather ideas on how UFB would be utilised here in Motueka to bolster our own application. Another meeting on this is being planned in the next few weeks.

