W’bool Mayor Herbert stays put, but council still wobbling

Description

Warrnambool Mayor Tony Herbert has avoided the chop, despite breaking C19 laws, traffic and local bylaws.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Sooo, as has been reported by the ABC and The Standard earlier today, our Mayor Tony Herbert will remain Mayor, having not offered his resignation, despite his recently breaking one, two, three…no, four, laws, and taking a hit for the biggest fine, which was breaching the C19 distancing rules.

Cr Herbert was also not officially challenged to step down by Cr Sue Cassidy despite some tub thumping at the weekend.

There are no real surprises here, because:

1. the Mayor was never going to step aside (having come up with a palatable reason for his brain fade);

2. he was never going to be asked to resign (as the majority of his fellow councillors were happy to let this one slide) and;

3. his only challenger – Cr Cassidy – had two votes at best in herself and maybe Cr Robert Anderson.

(Crs Gaston, Neoh and Owen were never on board and Cr Sycopoulis and Cr Herbert are politically close as a part of the same faction in the Liberal Party.)

The W'bool City Council also craves at least some modicum of stability, in what are unstable and uncertain times and not just because of the C19.

As was drawn to my attention today – by a reader who runs a forensic eye over such things – there are FIVE senior management positions on the council that are either vacant or have 'acting' staff in the role, starting with the Manager of Governance, that reports directly to the CEO.

The head of tourism – remember him? – has seemingly not been replaced since he resigned last July.

The Manager of Community Planning and Policy, who resigned last year, is still listed as being in that role.

So is the Manager of Economic Development and Investment, who resigned in January.

As the reader pointed out, how does this affect the council's ability to do its day-to-day business?

Well one area, I can tell you, is updating its policies, some of which are years out of date.

One example, again offered by this astute reader, is the council's whistleblower policy, you know, that little thing that should have protected people like Dr Bernadette Northeast from speaking up about bullying within council.

The document was supposed to be updated in 2016.

The anti-corruption guidelines from IBAC posted on the WCC website are from 2013.

Jeeps. As we know, it is the small stuff that affects the big stuff. You let one thing go, then the next thing falls over, and then the next.

It's a bit like how one coffee on the council credit card morphs into eye fillet and bottles of cab sav.

Or stuffing up the way people have to pay their pet registrations, which I hear is still causing grief for pensioners who now have to go to great lengths involving forms and Centrelink (two things that are enough to make me want to take to the couch) to prove they're eligible for a discount.

Let's not forget that it's only a couple of months since Cr Mike Neoh went rogue and declared to The Standard that he had "had a gutful of raising issues and not seeing any progress."

What this means in plain speak is that certain councillors wanted the CEO gone.

Before the C19 descended, I doubt the CEO would have survived a no confidence vote.

So the Mayor will stay on as the figurehead, but the wheels were wobbling within the council itself well before this detour.

The real work starts once the virus lifts and we have to get back out onto the highway. Strap yourselves in.

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