

CENTRAL SOUTH ISLAND FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of Central South Island Fish and Game Council held on Thursday 30th November 2023 at 7:00 pm.

Present: S Bannister (via Zoom) L Koevoet (Chair)
P Centofanti C McKenzie
J DeWit A Simpson
J Henry (Ngai Tahu)

In Attendance: S McKnight (CE).

23-063 APOLOGIES:

D Rattray.

Resolved (Simpson/McKenzie

23-095

THAT THE APOLOGY OF D RATTRAY BE RECEIVED.

23-064 HEALTH & SAFETY:

CE pointed out exit points of the building and assembly point for evacuation of the premises in case of an emergency.

23-05 COUNCILLOR INTEREST REGISTER:

Chair queried if Councillors had any new interests, conflicts, or perceived conflicts to add to the register? S McKnight advised that he had gained his Fish and Game rangers warrant and is now the Chair of the Opihi Environmental Flow Release Advisory Group.

23-066 COUNCILLOR REPORTS:

Chair advised that each Council member was requested to make an undertaking to abide by the Standing Orders and Governance Policies and drew attention to those particular policies. He further advised that as per an email request from J DeWit he had a personal statement prepared responding to the question asked of him by J DeWit as to where he got particular information regarding the alleged privacy breach pertaining to J DeWit. Chair then read to Council his personal statement. Council thanked Mr Koevoet and advised him that they accepted his statement and now considered the matter closed. Mr DeWit addressed the Council stating his views on the matter.

23-067 RELEASE FROM PUBLIC EXCLUDED:

Resolved (Centofanti/McKenzie) at 7:19 pm

23-096

THAT THE PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THIS MEETING.

THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF EACH MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED WHILE THE PUBLIC IS EXCLUDED, THE REASON FOR PASSING THIS RESOLUTION IN RELATION TO EACH MATTER, AND THE SPECIFIC GROUNDS UNDER SECTION 48(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT



OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND MEETINGS ACT 1987 FOR THE PASSING OF THIS RESOLUTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

General Subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter [i.e., OIA interest protected]	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
Councillor Report (Confidential Matters)	OIA section 9(2)(a)	To protect the privacy of natural persons.

067. Release from Public Excluded

Chair advised that he would allow J DeWit to stay in this part of the meeting as it was material to John also.

CE advised that two members of this current Council have declined to sign off on the Affirmation of Commitment that was provided to all Councillors in March 2023 by the Chair. Each Councillor was requested to affirm their commitment to the governance policies and standing orders, specifically Clause 8(3) *Members must speak and act respectfully toward other Members and Staff.* Clause 9(3) *Each Member must respect a decision lawfully made by Council as representing the decision of the Council as a whole and must not criticise, denigrate, or disparage a decision, or those that supported the decision, or take steps to undermine or obstruct the implementation of that decision.* Clause 14(2) *A member must not disclose any confidential information or record, or allow it to be disclosed, in breach of a duty of confidentiality, (e.g. disclosing it to a person other than a member).*

J DeWit stated no other F&G Councils have had to sign and claimed that it was something dreamt up by “*a federalist lawyer working for Donald Trump*” (referring to Dr Simpson). Chair and Council objected to Mr DeWit referring to a Councillor’s profession in a derogatory manner and requested him to withdraw his comment. Mr DeWit refused. Chair again requested that Mr DeWit withdraw his comment and apologise, or he would be asked to leave the room. Mr DeWit withdrew his comment and wished to change it to a “*federalist advisor to Donald Trump.*”

Dr Simpson responded that he has heard of other Councils who require members to make some commitment to how they will approach their duties. He felt it was not a matter of Standing Orders or Governance Polices to require a member to sign but was more of a Councillors personal commitment to do the right thing and abide by the rules.

Chairman clarified to Mr DeWit that when he was elected on Council he undertook a duty that he would abide by the Standing Orders and Governance Policies. What this Council is asking of Mr DeWit is to acknowledge the fact. There is no power to make him sign or compel him to resign but Council does have the ability to indicate to Mr DeWit that his current behaviour is not up to standard of the Governance policies. Mr DeWit responded that he will take legal advice on the subject.

Mr Bannister responded that he agreed with Dr Simpsons statement that there is no compulsion about signing the Affirmation and it was his understanding that Council is telling Mr DeWit that his conduct is not up to the standard one would expect of a Councillor.

CE advised that NZ Council have a Draft Governance Code of Conduct that will be provided to CSI's February 2024 Council meeting.

Resolved (McKenzie/Simpson) (4 for and 1 abstention) 23-097

THAT THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT FROM THE MAY 2023 PUBLIC EXCLUDED MINUTES BE RELEASED INTO PUBLIC.

IN REGARD TO RESOLUTION 23-046 THERE WAS A DISCUSSION AROUND WHICH COUNCILLORS HAD SIGNED OFF ON THE 'AFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENT'. COUNCILLOR J DEWIT AND S BANNISTER DECLINED TO SIGN OFF ON THE AFFIRMATION. ALL OTHER COUNCILLORS HAD SIGNED AND RETURNED TO THE CHAIR.

Resolved (Centofanti/McKenzie) 23-098

THAT AT 7:33 PM COUNCIL MOVE OUT OF PUBLIC EXCLUDED.

PUBLIC MEETING RESUMED:

Council resumed in open session at 7:33 pm.

23-068 COUNCILLOR NOTICE OF MOTION:

Moved (Centofanti/Simpson)

That CSIFGC requests that Steven Bannister resign from membership, on the grounds that he has refused since April to commit to comply with Council's Governance Policies.

A Simpson and P Centofanti spoke to the motion stating that S Bannister has declined to affirm his commitment to adhere to Standing Orders and Governance policies and felt that if he is not committed to abiding by Council's policies it would be appropriate for him to take a voluntary step and remove himself from the Council. Some expressed concern on a potential perceived Conflict of Interest in Mr Centofanti moving the motion so P Centofanti withdrew his motion with the agreement of A Simpson. It was then:

Moved (McKenzie/Simpson)

That CSIFGC requests that Steven Bannister resign from membership, on the ground that he has refused since April to commit to comply with Council's Governance Policies.

C McKenzie spoke to the motion agreeing with A Simpson and P Centofanti. J DeWit indicated that after hearing the discussion he would sign the Affirmation. Chair recognised that Council cannot force S Bannister to resign but under the circumstances hoped that he would consider his position. A Simpson re-iterated that by not signing S Bannister is not prepared to observe the rules that the rest of the Council are committing to on working together on the same set of principles so therefore he should resign.

S Bannister responded that the Affirmation of Commitment is not part of Standing Orders or Governance Policies and was put together by the Chair. Further the document is not part of the electronic record for audit. The Affirmation also had a clause that is not part of the governing act that Council have to follow and therefore has no legitimacy. In proposing this motion members presume that he is not committed to Governance principles, and nothing could be further from the truth. He noted he has affirmed his commitment to Governance policies in person before and after April 2023 via verbal assurance to Council. He confirmed he would be prepared to sign an official NZ Council Code of Conduct when that is available.

Resolved (McKenzie/Simpson)

23-099

THAT CSIFGC REQUESTS THAT STEVEN BANNISTER RESIGN FROM MEMBERSHIP, ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAS REFUSED SINCE APRIL TO COMMIT TO COMPLY WITH COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE POLICIES.

Resolved (Centofanti/Simpson)

23-100

THAT CSIFGC REQUESTS THAT JOHN DEWIT RESIGN FROM MEMBERSHIP, ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAS REFUSED SINCE APRIL TO COMMIT TO COMPLY WITH COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE POLICIES.

J Henry noted that over the years that he has sat on this Council he's witnessed the goodwill of people coming to meetings being destroyed by misconduct with statements being made that shouldn't be made. He attends to listen to the work being done by Fish and Game and finds it frustrating to be hearing of Councillors not wanting to sign a simple piece of paper to affirm they are on the same page as Council.

P Centofanti expressed concern at J DeWit speaking to the media. J DeWit stated he did not go to the media and that the media approached him. P Centofanti responded J DeWit spoke to the media as he was quoted in an article which goes against Standing Orders and Governance policies. It was noted that only the Chair and the CE are spokespersons for the Council. If the media approaches a Councillor he should not comment and refer questions to the Chair or CE.

J DeWit responded angrily, stating Council can do what it likes, he didn't care, and Council could go to NZ Council and tell them what they like. He was unhappy to see a statement of repeated misconduct when he was seeking information. He stated the Conservation Act has no definition of misconduct.

A Simpson felt it was disingenuous for members to say they will sign something from NZ Council when they haven't seen it yet. He stressed the members have had seven months to sign the affirmation and demonstrate by their personal conduct that they are committed to governance policies, and he hasn't seen that. Therefore they have not demonstrated they are team players. He hoped that Mr DeWit will take on board that the resolution is a genuine signal from Council that if members aren't prepared to work properly within the Council then they should resign. S Bannister responded that when you are a part of a team a person's word should be a person's bond and shouldn't have

to sign a piece of paper and he didn't believe Council needed to be group thinkers as Council needs independent thought and respect.

Resolved (Centofanti/Simpson)

23-101

THAT CSIFGC SEEKS THE ASSISTANCE OF NZFGC TO APPLY TO THE MINISTER OF CONSERVATION FOR REMOVAL FROM CSIFGC OF JOHN DEWIT, ON THE GROUNDS OF HIS REPEATED MISCONDUCT AND INABILITY TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE.

P Centofanti referred to 3.4.1 of the Standing Orders on Disrespect where it states:
"No member of the council or its committees may speak disrespectfully, or use offensive or malicious language at any meeting, including in reference to the council, a committee, any other member or a staff member. In addition, no member may impute improper motives or make offensive remarks about the private affairs of any other member of the councils or staff."

P Centofanti then referred to page 990 of the CSI minutes where it states:
Chair requested that John DeWit leave the room for the Public Excluded part of the meeting. Mr DeWit verbalised strong resistance at leaving the room. Chair asked Mr DeWit to leave the room on two further occasions before Mr DeWit left. In doing so Mr DeWit, pointing directly at Councillor A Simpson in a threatening manner, yelled that "Ms Thomas was going to act against your kangaroo court".

P Centofanti stated this was another example of J DeWit's failure to follow Standing Orders, commit to showing respect to Council members, and displaying repeated misconduct at meetings. C McKenzie added that Mr DeWit showed a continued pattern of this behaviour and referred to a previous letter from the Minister. He added that almost immediately after receiving the Ministers letter J DeWit released confidential information to a member of the public therefore showing he cannot be relied upon to be a Councillor, so he agreed it was time seek the assistance of NZC and go back to the Minister.

J DeWit angrily responded with the following statement.
"With all respect make my day. Ok? I will go to the media because I do have every right under the Bill of Rights to talk about myself. Ok? You need to understand that. People around here have got no idea of the Bill of Rights. I do not need to come here and by the way parliament has to take due account of the Bill of Rights and all other Councils below it are bound by it. If I want to talk to anybody about anything regarding myself I am entitled to do it.

P Centofanti responded that the issue wasn't that Mr DeWit was talking about himself. It was that he gave out confidential information to another person. At this point J DeWit was yelling in an angry manner. The Chair requested that Mr DeWit calm down, but Mr DeWit continued to yell. Chair reminded Mr DeWit about disorderly conduct and if necessary would exercise his powers to resolve the disorderly conduct. J DeWit continued to respond angrily.

S Bannister contributed that after all the years there looked to be a difference of opinion as to what transpired involving the privacy of Mr DeWit. He accepted that Mr DeWit had released confidential information, but it was released in confidence to an expert on the matter. Mr DeWit was seeking information and a sense of what was going on with

embargoed material and self-reported the release of information and S Bannister felt this demonstrated in part a commitment to the team in terms of honesty but may have been a little naive.

A Simpson supported the motion and believed it will be the best thing for both Council and Mr DeWit. L Koevoet supported the motion and added that he was mindful of this issue not becoming an issue of 'Council against J DeWit'. He felt that involving the NZ Council would bring in an independent body who can review the application and obtain legal advice for them to then decide on whether this matter proceeds to the Minister.

23-069 PROFESSIONALISM IN COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:

CE advised that the intent of this document was to hold up a mirror and look at what other people outside of this Council see, feel and say. In doing so he hoped to outline a pathway for the CSIFGC to repair its damaged reputation and regain trust with staff and stakeholders.

Councillors thanked the CE for his paper and spoke of their dismay at hearing comments the CSI staff are being subjected to from others about working for the CSI Council. It shows the actions of the Council is having an impact on staff and our stakeholders and it was clear that Council needs to work on improving its performance.

Council held a full discussion on what it could do collectively to improve over the next 12 months with varying views being bought forward. It was recognised that the culture of the Council needs to change

J DeWit wished to be provided with a number of specific details from the paper. The CE declined to name people citing privacy of individuals. Council responded to Mr DeWit that no one individual is being named as this paper relates to the Council as a whole. CE asked the Council what they were going to change going forward over the next 12 months? CE questioned J DeWit if he understood the disrespect that people hold this Council in? CE and Councillors continued to explain to Mr DeWit that this paper was not about him but was about the Council as a whole and that if one Councillor behaves badly it reflects on the whole Council. The only way to change that is to treat each other in a respectful, professional and polite manner. It was further noted that staff no longer attend Council meetings as a protection to them from Councils behaviour.

S Bannister added that he wanted to make it clear that he has not sworn, not been aggressive or physically threatening nor made snide remarks or been overbearing and shouting in meetings. Further he has not released or been involved in the release of embargoed documents nor made disparaging comments. He felt it's the culture that must change, not particular people and you don't get a good culture from shaming people into signing a piece of paper. He believed one should co-operate and inspire.

J Henry added that he found it frustrating that so much time is lost in discussion and Councillor arguments and misconduct within the Council, which means that the Council doesn't get a chance to deal with the issues they are here for.

1. COUNCIL COMPLETES A SELF-ASSESSMENT BASED ON THE GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICE GUIDE FROM OAG.
2. COUNCIL ATTENDS NZIOD ONLINE TRAINING.
3. COUNCILLORS REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO THE GOVERNANCE POLICIES AND STANDING ORDERS. IF THEY CANNOT CONFIRM THIS COMMITMENT, THEN THOSE COUNCILLORS SHOULD RESIGN.
4. COUNCIL SETS AN OUTCOME FOR ITS REPUTATIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND IMPLEMENTS AN IMPROVEMENT PLAN TO ACHIEVE IT.

23-070 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT:070.1 2024/25 Gamebird Hunting Recommendations (9.1)

CE acknowledged the work that M Webb has put into this report. Council held a brief discussion, and it was:

Resolved (McKenzie/Koevoet)

23-103

1. THAT THERE BE NO CHANGE TO GAME SEASON CONDITIONS CONTROLLING HARVEST OF GAMEBIRD SPECIES IN THE CSI FISH AND GAME REGION FOR THE 2024/25 SEASON.
2. THAT THE FOLLOWING ARE RECOMMENDED AS STANDARD CALENDAR CHANGES –
 - I WATERFOWL SEASON, 4 MAY TO 28 JULY 2024,
 - II UPLAND GAME, 4 MAY TO 25 AUGUST 2024, AND
 - III MID-SUMMER SEASON, 1/2 AND 8/9 FEBRUARY 2025.

070.2 CSI/ Salmon Riparian Support Trust Incorporated Five-Year Management and Enhancement Agreement (9.2)

P Centofanti declared his conflict of interest as a committee member of the Trust. CE acknowledged the work that M Webb had put into getting the Agreement in place and responded to general queries.

Resolved (Simpson/Mckenzie) P Centofanti abstained.

23-104

THAT COUNCIL APPROVES THE NOVEMBER 2023-2028 CSIFGC AND SALMON RIPARIAN SUPPORT TRUST INCORPORATED FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT.

070.3 2022/23 Performance Report (9.3)

CE advised that the auditor has been unable to complete the audit for approval at this Council meeting, but they have advised that we can present a draft Performance Report 'subject to audit.' CE expressed his appreciation for the work that B Dolan has put into this report and noted she had provided the information to the Auditors in September. Chair advised that other regions are also experiencing delays. Councillors further expressed their appreciation to both the CE and B Dolan for their work. CE responded to queries and explained what the future structure of the SSP will look like moving forward.

THAT COUNCIL ADOPT THE DRAFT PERFORMANCE REPORT SUBJECT TO AUDIT FOR THE 2022/23 FINANCIAL YEAR.

23-071 PUBLIC EXCLUDED SESSION:

Resolved (McKenzie/Centofanti) at 9:29 pm

THAT THE PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THIS MEETING.

THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF EACH MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED WHILE THE PUBLIC IS EXCLUDED, THE REASON FOR PASSING THIS RESOLUTION IN RELATION TO EACH MATTER, AND THE SPECIFIC GROUNDS UNDER SECTION 48(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND MEETINGS ACT 1987 FOR THE PASSING OF THIS RESOLUTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

071.1 Confirmation of Public Excluded Minutes: Meeting of 28 September 2023

General Subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter [i.e., OIA interest protected]	Ground(s) under section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
Approval of Public Excluded Minutes.	OIA section 9(2)(j)	That the public conduct of the whole or the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under section 6 or section 7 or section 9 of the Official Information Act 1982.

PUBLIC MEETING RESUMED:

Council resumed in open session at 9:31 pm.

23-072 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:

Resolved (Centofanti/Koevoet)

THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 BE ACCEPTED AS A TRUE AND CORRECT RECORD.

CE gave an update on regional ranging advising that B Harper has been employed until mid-January to assist with ranging efforts in the CSI region.

23-073 BUDGET & FINANCE:

CE spoke to his report noting that whilst CSI finished in a strong position at the end of the last financial year. LEQ's are approximately 4.5% down for the first 2 months of this year compared to last year. He advised that expenditure is generally on track noting an increase in insurance premiums this year.

THAT COUNCIL RECEIVES THE FINANCIAL REPORTS AND RATIFIES THE SCHEDULES OF PAYMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2023 IN THE GST INCLUSIVE AMOUNTS OF \$100,529.00 AND \$63,334.58, RESPECTIVELY.

23-074 NZFGC MATTERS:

074.1 Update from 24/25 November NZC Meeting (13.1)

L Koevoet gave an update on the 24/25th NZ Council meeting advising that policies will be coming to regions for consultation at the February 2024 meetings.

074.1 CSI Representative for February 2024 NZ Council Meeting (13.2)

L Koevoet advised he was unable to attend the 16/17/18th February 2024 NZC/Chairs meeting. It was agreed to appoint a new CSI NZ Council representative to enable them to vote at the meeting. A Simpson advised he was willing to go if he was available on those dates. P Centofanti advised he could go if A Simpson wasn't available.

23-075 NZFGC MATTERS:

General queries were responded to on Inward Correspondence.

23-076 OPERATIONS AND STAFF REPORTS:

Council asked CE to pass on their best wishes to M Webb and wished him a speedy recovery.

THAT THE OPERATIONS AND STAFF REPORTS BE RECEIVED.

NEXT MEETING DATES:

Annual Public Meeting: Thursday 7 December 2023 at 7 pm.

Council Meeting: 1 February 2024 at 7 pm.

Meeting closed: 10:18 pm.

Signed



Date

1 Feb 2024