**Chairman’s Speech - 19 October 2022**

Tena Kotou Katoa

Welcome to the 2022 AGM of Business Manukau.

It is very pleasing to see people in person as last year’s meeting was online due to the ongoing Covid lockdowns.

The economic turmoil has not settled down over the last year. Firstly, it was the market impacts due to the tail of the Covid pandemic, which impacted every business large or small with increases in absenteeism due to illness. Some of these illnesses were Covid related but others were related to ongoing flu type illnesses due to the low level of immunity of the community because of the isolation in lockdowns.

Added to this there were the ongoing logistics issues which are still being felt, with major disruptions to the shipping lines as a significant part of the worldwide fleet was mothballed during the pandemic. International travel was reduced to a trickle during the pandemic, and we are just starting to see borders open up with airlines reopening their routes and aircraft being recommissioned.

As if this was not enough to cope with then came the war in the Ukraine. The effect was felt immediately with disruption to fuel and gas supplies (a significant amount of which comes out of Russia) and then the threat that food supply lines would be disrupted as Ukraine is a significant supplier of grains to the world markets.

Both these disruptions sparked a round of inflation with fuel and food product prices going through the roof. The talk in the market around inflation further fed the fire with most businesses putting up their prices whether justified or not.

The tool most used by the central banks around the world to dampen inflation is to raise interest rates, making borrowing and spending more expensive and to encourage borrowers to direct funds into debt repayment rather than consumer spending.

Rising interest rates can dampen demand to a point where we run the risk of a recession in the economy. There is a fine line for central banks to tread to slow demand to reduce pressure on inflating prices while at the same time trying not to tip an economy into recession. There is a lot of talk in the market about pending recessions, but I hope we are protected from this here in Manukau.

While our businesses have been dealing with all these macro influences, the team at Business Manukau have had a busy year assisting our members with a business district that is becoming more attractive to visit through enhanced safety and at the same time improving the range of product and service offerings in Manukau.

To this end the CCTV Project is now 98% complete by spend, with 63 cameras installed and active. All key entry and exit points to the business district are now monitored with security cameras, many of which have automatic number plate recognition. The Police have been very supportive in working with Business Manukau by using live feeds and video evidence from the cameras and have just placed a Community Constable in our offices/BID as a three-month trial to work closely with Tess Maunsell and our members. Tess has provided footage from the cameras to the Police which has resulted in a number of arrests. It is pleasing to see that the investment and hard work that has gone into placing the cameras around our district has enhanced improving safety in the area and has built a strong working relationship with Police.

Leigh Auton was engaged by Business Manukau to review our strategic plan and redraft a new one to guide the BID going forward for the next 5 years. In short, as the security issues have been addressed, it is now time to place an emphasis on promoting the BID and its diverse product and service offerings. Our next phase will focus on promoting Manukau as a great place to live, work, study, and play.

The Manukau Bid is second only to the Auckland CBD in retail spend. This provides us with a sound springboard to launch new promotional initiatives and to attract investment into the area. We will be working with key stakeholders who can help influence investment and support the strategic direction of Manukau.

I have sad news. Kerry Burridge our GM who has guided the BID through unprecedented difficult trading times over the last 8 years is now moving on to a great opportunity which is too good not to take up. During Kerry’s time at the helm there have been significant enhancements to the district with improved security through an active crime prevention team and the enhancement of the CCTV project. Kerry has guided the BID through 2 expansions of the district boundaries. These are very technical and time-consuming projects and Kerry’s expertise made sure that they went as seamlessly as possible. I wish Kerry well in her new position.

We are currently recruiting a replacement GM and should have this complete over the week or two.

I look forward to a more settled year coming up with hopefully less economic shocks and using our new strategic plan to help our new GM, Tess and Janene to further enhance our business district.

I wish to thank Kerry, Janene and Tess for their support and guidance during my first period as Chair of the board. I also wish to acknowledge the board who bring a range of expert skills to the table and also to thank Aaron for staying on the board and supporting me after stepping down since the last AGM.