

Council meeting erupts into shouting match

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A Kapiti Coast District Council meeting erupted into a shouting match yesterday as mayor Jenny Rowan refused to apologise to regional councillor Nigel Wilson for accusing him of making unfactual statements.

Mr Wilson asked her for an apology at yesterday's meeting after a council press release last week accused him of making "infactual statements and needlessly upsetting a number of Kapiti residents on a very serious issue".

The release said Mr Wilson claimed in a local radio interview that the council would withdraw services to coastal properties within new shoreline hazard zones.

"It is totally unacceptable for someone in his position to make factually incorrect statements ... we have no plans, and never have had plans, to withdraw services from coastal properties.

"Mr Wilson has needlessly upset a number of Kapiti residents on a very serious issue," Ms Rowan said in the release.

Mr Wilson asked for an apology for the "wrong and false" information, saying the radio host made the statement about withdrawing services, not him.

He said he contacted the council to clarify the situation, but it did not alter its position.

"That is completely unacceptable, corrupt practice, when you set out to deliberately deceive," he said. "I do not like my position completely misrepresented.

"An apology is due and should be given."

Council chief executive Pat Dougherty read a transcript of the interview in which the radio host said he understood the council was going to withdraw services from properties in coastal hazard zones, to which Mr Wilson replied, "Yeah, right".

He told yesterday's meeting that, although he believed an apology was due, he had no expectation of receiving one. Ms Rowan then shouted: "You are not getting an apology from me, councillor Wilson.

"Now you are walking along the line of corruption. You completely misconstrued what I said in September."

Coastal Ratepayers United put a full-page advertisement in a local newspaper this week, quoting Ms Rowan's September statement that "council's policy is to maintain and protect roads and public health structure ... however, we will progressively move public infrastructure away from areas of high risk".

Councillor K Gurunathan said that, if the council's statement was wrong, there should be an apology, sparking applause from the gallery.

Mr Wilson walked out of the meeting but returned.

After the meeting, a council representative said that, if pipelines or sewage services were undermined by erosion, the council was legally bound to protect them.