



Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Tararua District Council held in the Council Chamber, 156 High Street, Dannevirke on Wednesday 21 May 2025 commencing at 10:15am.

## **1. Present**

Her Worship the Mayor - Mrs T H Collis, Crs E L Peeti-Webber (Deputy Mayor), N L Chase, A K Franklin, S M Gilmore, P A Johns, M F Long, K A Sutherland, S A Wallace and S M Wards

### **In Attendance**

Mr B Nicholson	- Chief Executive
Mrs K Tani	- Group Manager – Strategy and Information
Mr H Featonby	- Group Manager - Operations
Mr P Wimsett	- Chief Advisor (via Teams)
Mr M Dunn	- Three Waters Manager (via Teams)
Mrs S Walshe	- Finance Manager
Mrs B Fowler	- Senior Financial Accountant
Mrs A Dunn	- Manager – Democracy Services

## **2. Apologies**

*That the apologies from Councillor S M Wards for lateness be accepted, and leave of absence approved, noting that Councillor Wards was absent on Council business, attending a meeting on behalf of the Council.*

## **3. Reports**

### **3.1 Hearing of Submissions on draft Annual Plan Consultation**

**Submission 041 – Colleen Cotter:** spoke to her submission, highlighting the unsealed Ridge Road Central and the number of submissions they had made in favour of sealing the busiest part of Ridge Road Central. She spoke about the traffic volumes on that road, with 16 residents on their section of road, and 5 others coming to work on farms on the road. She spoke about the traffic travelling to the airstrip, and stock trucks using that road. She expressed concern about the potholes on the road. She noted there were some limestone surfaces, and rough and stoney parts. In summer there was a nuisance with the dust

created. Despite planting trees on the westerly side of their property, they experienced a significant amount of dust on their roof affecting their water supply and spoke about the health issues from the dust that they are experiencing. She believed it would be more efficient and practical to seal the most used part of their road, to 480 Ridge Road central.

Questions for clarification were asked regarding whether the potholes had been reported, and in response it was advised that these had, but not yet fixed. Her Worship the Mayor committed to providing a copy of a report that was done regarding the dust levels and provide that to the submitter, however noted the dust levels did not reach NZTA requirements for funding for sealing, which meant any sealing works would need to be 100% funded from rates. A further note was made regarding a previous discussion related to residents contributing towards the cost of sealing the road, however this did not eventuate.

**Submission 036 – Philip Cotter:** expressed concern about rumours he had heard that the Pahiatua town hall and library building could be sold and the library co-located to the Pahiatua service centre. He spoke about the value from the services provided by the library, including having a Justice of the Peace regularly on site, the children's area, and noted he did not think this could fit in the existing service centre. He spoke about the warm and welcoming atmosphere and the use by different groups in the community. He said he saw the library as a wonderful asset to the town. He asked who made the cost cutting suggestions, and when would a rumour be a thing to be taken seriously, when did decisions become binding, was this before or after consultation. With regard to any proposal to sell the town hall, he believed it was a strong building and spoke about its previous use prior to and since becoming the town hall. He noted that events were tending to be held at other venues, and wondered what the reasons for this were, for example whether it was the kitchen, or cost to hire. He felt that nothing should be changed.

Clarification was provided that the community had indicated a need to reduce costs and look at duplication of services. There needed to be an understanding of utilisation levels, and if utilisation was not high, he was asked whether he would be supportive if council could provide a cost effective solution to co-locate services together if we could make it functional. He responded that they prefer the library to be on the main street, and would prefer the service centre to move to the library if change was to be made, as the library has good parking, and was sunny and airy. Would not like it moved to the back of the service centre.

**Submission 039 – Susan Lyford:** spoke to her submission, noting her support for the increase in funding for the footpaths, noting there was a lot of moss and lichen growing on footpaths. She raised an alternative solution of spraying the footpaths outside churches and schools for safety reasons if not able to afford doing all footpaths. With regard to the proposal for the Wai Splash car park, she noted the property had a house on it and wondered whether Wai Splash would be charged maintenance costs for the car park. With regard to the draft annual plan, she proposed that UAGC be made on each separately used and inhabited

part of a property. With regard to roading, and the reduction of funding from NZTA, she noted the reliance on NZTA for funding. Overall debt, she commented that at end of proposed budget Council would be \$102 million in debt and financing charges would be \$3.5 million. She noted her rates went up 9.4% and highlighted the problem with affordability of ongoing increases. She spoke about the increased costs for solid waste activity and questioned the proposed spend on a Pahiatua weighbridge, and what would happen if the Council did not receive the expected funding from the waste minimisation fund for that project. She also questioned the impact of Local Water Done Well on stormwater debt, and noted the Pahiatua wastewater plant was prioritised over the Eketāhuna plant. With regard to sundry debts of \$2 million, she asked how much was being put aside for bad debts. She questioned the funding of \$11,000 for districtwide signs, asked whether this was needed due to the last lot of signs not meeting regulations. She noted that inflation had not been added to the Pahiatua Pool and approved of that. She expressed concern about the increasing number of staff earning over \$100,000 and felt it was not sustainable to have so many staff on high wages. She sought assurance that for rates there were now suitable practices in place that income measured up against billing and checks on any variations. With regard to the fees and charges, she questioned the renting out of sewing machines by the libraries, and felt the focus should be on just books and dvds. She spoke about the debt servicing costs of loans being close to \$3.5 million and questioned whether the proposed accelerated debt repayment of 2% was going to clear any of the loans. She spoke about the under investment in infrastructure over previous years, however noted that when Council was trying to reduce rates previous solutions had been to defer depreciation, reduce maintenance and renewals, and she was concerned about the impact of that on the future of the assets. She asked that the Council look at its income and try to allocate this without taking on debt.

In response to a question about Council's reliance on the NZTA's Financial Assistance Rate (FAR) to pay for roading and suggested alternatives, she proposed that for footpaths the Council just did the minimum necessary to address safety issues, and for roads potentially allow some to go back to being metal roads, especially if they were only servicing a few properties. Also, fixing potholes to prevent further deterioration, and being more conservative in budgeting.

**Submission 045 – Craig Ellmers:** spoke about two main items, the footpath network and the Wai Splash carpark. With regards to funding for footpath maintenance, he felt there was insufficient information for him to either support the proposal or not support the proposal. He asked whether there was an updated footpath asset report that he could review, and what was the desired standard for the footpath network in the urban centre compared to the rest of town. With regard to UAGC for separately used or inhabited dwellings on one site, he asked whether Council proposed to look at that. He spoke about the loan made to Pukaha Mt Bruce, that had an interest free period associated with it and felt this was a lost opportunity to capitalise on investment. He spoke about the proposal for the Wai Splash carpark, and felt there needed to be a sinking lid on expenditure and a cost benefit analysis undertaken for any expenditure. He felt

there was another opportunity for extending their carpark using the land next to the existing carpark, where the old coronation baths used to be. He expressed concern about the likely cost of purchasing property which he estimated to be in the ballpark of \$1 million and installing a carpark and that no costs for this project had been included in the consultation document. He asked whether this would be an investment with a return expected.

*Councillor S M Wards joined the meeting at 11:09am.*

In response to questions seeking clarification of his estimation for the cost of the proposed Wai Splash carpark, he advised that his estimate included the cost of buying the property, removing the house, making safe the service connections, compliance costs. Clarification was provided that the loan to Pukaha Mt Bruce had initially had an interest free period, but was now interest bearing and information on this could be included in the response to the submission. With regard to the Wai Splash item this was noted as a feedback item in the consultation document, and more information would be coming through.

**Submission 003 – Stephanie Duff:** spoke about their car park proposal and noted all of the feedback provided. She advised there had been conversation about grass area, however their intention was to use that area for future development. If they were to use that area as a carpark this would leave them no room for future expansion, and would not mitigate the health and safety issue that exists with the blind corner. She spoke about how the car park was regularly overloaded, and because of the age of patrons being mainly children and elderly, they wanted to make it easy for them to attend. With regard to the upkeep of the carpark, she noted that they already maintained the current carpark, and were happy to continue this work on the expanded carpark. Additionally they had been in contact with the Department of Corrections and had been provided with workers to assist with maintenance.

She noted that the house was not currently occupied, and was not fit for occupation in its current state so removing the house would not be exacerbating the housing shortage in the district.

She expressed concern that putting off solving the health and safety issue of the blind corner in the car park would make it more expensive in the future. She noted the current owners wished to sell the property, and did not believe the costs would be at the level mentioned by the previous submitter, and outlined their expectation of the likely costs, noting that the benefits to the community would outweigh the costs. She noted the car park serves a wider community than the swimming pool patrons.

**Submission 034 – John Robertson:** spoke noting that the figures quoted by Stephanie Duff for the costs for expanding the car park were more realistic than those quoted by previous speaker. He advised that they need to respond to the property owner as soon as possible, who had been very patient. He noted that it would be possible to make the building tenantable in the short term to assist with

costs, allowing them to knock down the back fence to improve safety as a short term measure. They were keen to work with Council to keep the cost as low as possible to achieve a good outcome. He spoke about the new highway Te Ahu a Turanga opening soon, and people he talked to in the Manawatu who currently visit attractions in Dannevirke such as the Regent Theatre and a local restaurant with very good reviews, felt that numbers of visitors would improve with the opening of the road, and provide increased visitors to the swimming pool. He felt that the community had inherited a problem with too many previous councils not keeping up with funding maintenance in preference to keeping rate rises low and not even keeping up with inflation.

In response to questions relating to clarification over the short term solution for addressing the health and safety issue of the corner in the car park, what information was provided to those people signing the petition, Mr Robertson advised that their volunteers could help physically with removing the fencing, and one of their trustees had looked at the house and it was possible to make the house tenable in the short term to assist with costs, and then in future have the house removed. With regard to information provided to signatories to the petition, he advised that they were able to answer questions that were asked, and most people already knew about it, with some having already made a submission.

In conclusion he noted that because they were volunteer run, they were one of the cheapest swimming pools in the country for running costs, with the pool running very effectively at a low cost. Their opportunity for improving the safety of their car park had not been included in the Trust's ten year plan due to the property not being available for sale in the past.

**Submission 035 – Dannevirke Community Board:** Chairperson Pat Walshe and Deputy Chairperson Terry Hynes spoke about the condition of footpaths, and asked that letters be sent to owners of driveway crossings in poor repair to ask for these to be repaired, noting the danger poorly maintained driveway crossings posed to mobility scooter users. With regard to the trees in High Street, Dannevirke they asked that consideration be given to replacing these with a different type of tree that did not lose its leaves in the winter.

With regard to the proposed car park at Wai Splash, the Board would like to see that due diligence was undertaken to ensure it would be a viable proposition, and they were concerned about the cost of development of the site into the carpark. They wanted to be confident that ratepayers would not be facing increased rates due to the purchase of the property. With regard to council buying land for investment, they were supportive of this only if it was financially viable and of benefit to ratepayers of the district.

***That the report from the Manager - Democracy Services dated 09 May 2025 concerning the Hearing of Submissions on draft Annual Plan Consultation be received.***

***That the Tararua District Council provide direction to officers on matters to be considered at the extraordinary meeting of Council scheduled for 4 June 2025 as follows:***

***Charging of UAGC on land that has multiple dwellings, and information on UAGC percentage***

***Potential purchase of property for car park that will be Council owned as will be used by others, options for using the grass area at Wai Splash for a car park compared to purchasing the proposed property***

***Options for funding of footpaths, what the cost of spraying footpaths for lichen would be, and information on driveway crossings***

***Town signs – what was the funding being used for, and whether there was a need for new signs for Dannevirke.***

***Any further reductions and savings that could be made***

***Pensioners feedback on new proposed rents for pensioner housing***

***Water charges for industrial and commercial users – any unintended impacts from proposed charges and whether those discussions had been held***

***The spread of rates increase and impact on sectors including lifestyle properties***

***Pahiatua library – earthquake proofing, and maintenance costs and insurance.***

***Sealing of Ridge Road Central – clarification of costs***

***Crs Wallace/Johns***

***Carried***

There being no further business the Chairperson thanked those present for their attendance and contributions, and declared the meeting closed at 12:02pm.

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Mayor