



Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Tararua District Council held in the Council Chamber, 156 High Street, Dannevirke on Wednesday 9 July 2025 commencing at 10:30am.

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
Ms A Rule	- Policy and Planning Advisor
Ms F Chase	- Facilities Manager
Ms K Payne	- Facilities Property Officer
Mrs S Anthony	- Democracy Support Officer

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Reports

3.1 Hearing of Submissions on Freedom Camping Bylaw and Tararua District Reserves Management Plan Consultations

Freedom Camping Bylaw

Submission 020 – Colleen and Warren Cox: submitters did not appear before Council to speak to their submission.

Reserves Management Plan

Submission 003 – Dennis Wakely: spoke to his submission and presented a slideshow of photos taken from the Mangatoro Scenic Reserve. He spoke about his history in the area. He expressed his safety concerns with regard to the walking tracks, noting that the tracks were muddy and slippery, boardwalks were

broken with holes in the boards; there were no tracks in some places, and trees had fallen across paths. The swimming hole is still accessible via one track, however this track requires maintenance and he has been out and cut steps himself to ensure access. He advised that deterioration of the reserve tracks has happened over the last 5-10 years and sustained further damage following Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023. He queried the ownership of the reserve and sought information regarding the responsibilities of maintaining the reserve.

In response to questions regarding ownership and maintenance of the reserve, it was advised that Tararua District Council own the reserve and are responsible. When asked if local groups in the area would be willing to carry out maintenance work, he advised that this was not a job for them as most were over the age of 70. He queried whether other working groups such as Corrections could be utilised by the Council to maintain the reserve. It was acknowledged that this is an option and a request was made for the Chief Executive or the Facilities Manager to contact Corrections to carry out the work in the reserve as it is a safety issue and a valued amenity.

Submission 007 – Mark Wheeler: spoke to his submission and noted that the reserves were close to the hearts of the people in Pongaroa. He advised that there are 250 individual parcels of land in Tararua designated as reserves and 74 of those are in the Pongaroa district alone; there are insufficient funds to maintain all the parks and reserves in the Tararua, leading to most of the maintenance falling on the local communities, and it is vital for Council to support and work with the people who are doing the work in these areas already. He expressed that he was disappointed to see in the RMP that iwi are the sole partner for planning and management as in his opinion it does not acknowledge the decades of work done and knowledge amassed by community groups. He stated that Iwi are a business entity and services are charged for; iwi are guardians but in his opinion no support or action is shown on the ground, nor have Iwi representatives entered a submission on the RMP draft to his knowledge.

Reserve development and naming of reserves - he advised that there needs to be a greater emphasis on engaging the views of the community in the immediate area as they are the most knowledgeable and engaged, and most likely to be affected by any changes. Existing names have cultural value, it is acceptable in his opinion to add a second name however current names should be kept, as they are immediately recognised and provide emergency services instant identification of a location.

Health and safety policies – he noted that the draft mentioned preventing vandalism, providing shade and making the spaces smokefree and in his view this did not cover health and safety issues such as broken or damaged pathways, faulty equipment and fallen trees.

Culture, Heritage and Sustainability – he spoke of how equal weight should be given to preserving our European settler heritage as our Māori heritage, it is

important to tell our story as a district and as a people. He spoke of his disappointment that the rabbit weir in Waione, a 145 year relic, was destroyed. He urged that the Council be vigilant about any future attempts to remove traces of our early settlers in our district.

He noted that recent events at Four Mile Bush had created angst in the Pongaroa community, he went on to add that they had been told they generate very few CRM's as they tend to action issues themselves. He stated that better communication and cooperation from the Council is required, especially regarding speed of responses to potentially life threatening issues; the communication between Regional Council and TDC needs to be addressed as differing viewpoints create conflict.

In conclusion, he advised that something positive was required to fix the relationship between the Pongaroa community and TDC. With regard to streamlining delivery and efficiency in the area of managing reserves, he recommended the possibility of funding domain and community boards with a parks and reserves budget similar to the past main stream fund, with work being identified by both ward and council, with regular contact, financial accountability and expectation of service standards from both sides of the ledger. He noted that locals can do more per dollar spent than outside contractors; and recommended Council staff join in on community working bees to help with progress and building relationships.

In response to questions around ways to rebuild community trust and what community responsibilities could be built into the RMP, he advised that Council could invite engagement and look to the local people to take ownership; empower the locals by offering means and opportunity. It was acknowledged that not all Domain Boards operate in the same way, as some Domain Boards do not want any Council involvement. He also suggested that some reserves could be handed off to QE2, for example land locked esplanade reserves, if this was an option.

Submission 008 – Pongaroa Domain Board: Malcolm Ewenson read out a statement on behalf of Gordon Ellmers from the Pongaroa Domain Board. He stated how the Domain Board has a strong Māori presence on the Board, they are unfunded and call on Pongaroa The Way to Go Committee for assistance when needed. The Board was contacted over 2 years ago and asked what activities the Board undertook and he believed that these are what were considered as input into the draft plan. The Board consider the proposal to overlook groups in the future, who have a track record of successful reserve management and improvement, to be insulting and demeaning to the organisations. The Board are concerned over the occupation agreements clause, there are examples of buildings built by communities on council reserve land in past. How does proposed policy impact continuum, are they considered leases? What is the situation regarding ownership? And will there be compensation if council decides to reclaim the land and evict the rugby and squash clubs?

He noted that the Board expressed concern over the grazing leases arrangements, if it were not for the grazing of a small flock on the reserve without charge the Domain Board would be bankrupt, they are self-funding. Income from sheep and overnight camping fees barely cover the payments they must make to council for water rates, building WOF, and other council processing fees, as well as insurance, power, and maintenance.

He spoke about naming rights, the Board believe the current naming of reserves and signs are fine, we all know and identify with them, making changes must be done with input from local community first, then be put out for consultation. Such signage changes will have a cost which will likely diminish the poor funds.

He referred to the recent Four Mile Bush events, stating that Horizons and Council each conducted their own investigation; the Board agreed to pay the fine as cannot afford to fight it. The Board knew of the legal requirements for native timber salvage and had commenced an application through MPI when the log was removed from site. It had been hoped to sell usable timber to fund needed improvement work and pest control, however the timber has been removed. The Board believe compensation should be paid to the Board for the estimated value of the timber. The carpark and driveway were damaged by the removal of tree.

Following discussion, it was acknowledged that the Board's grazing agreement with Council should be formalised in a written agreement.

Submission 009 – Heather Monk: spoke to her submission noting she has been a member of the Pongaroa community for 56 years, beginning when it was still Akitio Council, then Dannevirke Council, and now Tararua District Council; Pongaroa got lost in the amalgamations. In 2000 the Pongaroa Way to Go Committee decided to make Four Mile Bush a Freedom Camping area; a toilet was added by her husband. She told the story from over the years as flood damage repairs were carried out in the camping/picnic area, arranged by her husband, and weed control had been carried out by herself. They check and clean the toilet every summer and the neighbour mows the area if required; following flood damage and Cyclone Gabrielle - drains were added and dead sheep removed as arranged by her husband and they cleaned silt out of the shelter. She advised that fences were broken in the flood allowing neighbouring cattle to enter and they are eating the regrowth and pugging the ground in the camping area.

She spoke of the RMP section on specimen trees, noting a pre-season check of the camping/picnic area found a dead tree; her husband as a logging contractor decided to fell the tree once tree confirmed dead and a health and safety risk, it was also reported to them by a visitor to the area as it was a significant health and safety risk. She pointed to the felling of trees section of the RMP draft and read out the criteria listed. She advised that they received a formal warning and a fine as a result of addressing the health and safety risk which met the criteria listed in the RMP draft. She stated that CRMs had been lodged in the past for

risky trees and no action was taken.

She pointed to the section of the draft regarding Council continuing to work with iwi regarding future management, and noted that in her opinion iwi have only been involved in a blessing prior to the bank repairs at a cost of \$600, she advised that she has not witnessed any assistance with weed control, maintenance, etc. but noted iwi have shown up since the cutting of the tree.

She advised that she was the recipient of a civic award, and noted that the community undergo many tasks with no cost to the council.

When asked if any CRM was lodged regarding the tree at Four Mile Bush, Heather responded no.

Her Civic Honour was acknowledged and she was thanked for her direct work and contributions to the community. When asked how the Council could work to rebuild trust she stated that she was unsure and advised that locals are now hesitant to carry out any remedial work due to regulations.

Submission 011 – Pongaroa The Way To Go Committee: Heather Monk spoke on behalf of the Committee as a member and read out a statement from the committee, noting that they were not approached for input into the draft document prior to its release and believes this should have been a core part of the plan's development and implementation. They believe consultation regarding the development of reserves or renaming them must be mandatory and place greatest emphasis on the opinions and views of the communities and groups in the areas as they live there and are the most knowledgeable and engaged.

She stated that naming reserves should always been done in consultation with local communities, domain boards or committees, and noted that this section in the draft is poorly worded.

She spoke of how changing names of reserves without notice was very concerning to the committee and must be discussed with the community directly affected to gain their support before any change is contemplated. She stated that existing names have cultural value to the local community. The committee agree that a second name could be added so long as the common usage name remains priority, she noted that new signage comes at a cost and queried what work would need to be sacrificed to fund the signs.

She queried why there is no mention of weed and pest control in the plan, and noted that it is a major issue affecting the survival of our bush reserves as they are fighting a constant battle of old man's beard, ivy, stinking iris, and jerusalem cherry to name a few.

She spoke of the recent events regarding the tree felling at Pongaroa and advised that both TDC and Horizons Regional Council had conducted investigations with Horizons concluding their investigation and TDC yet to finalise. She noted that this process highlighted a breakdown in communication between both sides and

hoped steps would be taken to rebuild relationships that have been badly damaged with the way the matter has been handled.

She outlined the works that have been carried out over the years, which still continues, using volunteer labour and funds drawn from the now disbanded main street funding programme:

- Construction, upgrades and maintenance of picnic area and shelters
- Installing of toilet
- Installation of a rock wall to prevent the reserve being eroded by the river
- Recovery of stuck vehicles
- Metalling of the parking area and driveway
- Ongoing work to remove old man's beard from the reserve area
- Various public safety improvements
- Bush walk in village (Cemetery Road) - development and maintenance of metal track network
- Undertaking drainage work
- Erection of signage and track markers
- Picnic table built
- Undertake repairs to fencing to keep stock out of reserve
- Pest control
- Centennial arch and grounds, painting and repair, removal of weeds and undergrowth and repaired pathway

She outlined work carried out by the Committee in the Pongaroa Reserve camping area in conjunction with the Pongaroa Domain Board:

- Development of the parking area
- Installed power points
- An ablution block for motor homes and campers
- Removal of row of pines threatening to fall over the camping area, and continual maintenance of this.

She also outlined work carried out by the Committee at the Pongaroa Community Hall, paid for by the Committee:

- New tables
- Sound system
- New curtains
- Equipped the kitchen with dishwasher, stove, fridge, hob, rangehood, cups, glasses, plates, and cutlery
- Removed school playground from Tiraumea and installed half behind the Hall with the other half in the village and made them code compliant

She spoke of how the current system works when people are engaged and motivated and want to make a difference. The Committee would like to a focus on greater engagement and support for existing volunteer groups that currently undertake work on behalf of the Council rather than hope that some new

arrangement will work as well or better. The Committee endorse the previous speakers of mention of funding for domains and reserves in the manner of main street funding used in the past which worked successfully. She stated that management is too large for council to undertake without the assistance of the entire community, the community which feels badly let down and ignored at the moment.

In discussion, it was asked for suggestions for the best ways to engage with the Pongaroa community. Heather advised that their current appointed Councillor currently engages well with the community. Mark Wheeler came forward as a Committee member and spoke of the difficulty in contacting staff at the council and requested more timely responses from staff when messages are left or enquiries made.

The Committee were advised that it was a legal requirement through current legislation to create the RMP for the Tararua District.

The meeting adjourned at 12:06pm and reconvened at 12:13pm.

The Chief Executive provided an update, stating that Council had received a formal complaint regarding the cutting down of the Kahikatea tree in Pongaroa and Council were obligated by law to investigate the complaint; the cutting down of the tree did fall under the Reserves Management Act (RMA) which meant Council are then obligated to look into it. Initially Council became aware that Horizons Regional Council had also received a complaint and had started their own investigation. He advised that he contacted a Senior Manager at Horizons and requested they keep TDC informed and work collaboratively together so as not to put any undue pressure on those people that needed to be spoken with in regard to the complaint, and was given assurance that that would happen. He was later notified that a Horizons Compliance Investigator had turned up in Pongaroa and interviews were carried out under caution. He advised that he then contacted Horizons to convey his disappointment that the interview had occurred without TDC's knowledge and without TDC being involved so it could be worked on together. At that point it was noted that Council will stop its investigation pending the investigation through Horizons Regional Council, who continued their investigation and a fine and warning was issued to the affected parties. He stated that from Council's perspective we could have continued the investigation under the Reserves Management Act, however, Council made the decision that whatever the result was from Horizons would be final from an enforcement perspective. If the Council had pursued the issue, it would have had to issue a fine under the RMA, however, Council was able to make a decision based on many other factors including that the intent was never there to break the Reserves Management Act, and factoring in the goodwill provided within the community in regard to that area. He advised that a letter has been sent to the affected parties on 30 June 2025. He noted that from Council's perspective this matter is now concluded. TDC's intention was never to work in silos and he has spoken to Horizons about how best they can work together in future. He stated that Council is a regulatory agency and must follow the law, and the RMA is the

one piece of legislation that governs the Reserves; it is not a Police matter. He noted that Council is now aware of where the part of the tree is and are working through what to do with the remains of the tree. He also reassured the Committee that Emergency callout is available to access 24/7.

Mark Wheeler stated that there is a \$3000 mess left from the tree removal including damage to the parking area and driveway, he advised that photos and information has been sent to Council but he has received no response. It was clarified to Mark that Council did not give permission for the tree to be removed and Council did not endorse any illegal activity; there is no commitment from Council to pay for damage from illegal activity. It was noted that the focus would be on learnings to ensure this does not happen again, and looking at how we can work together to come to a solution with better communication and better process, and to tidy up expectations from Council. A request was made for the Facilities Manager to work with Committee to find a resolution for tidying up the damaged area.

A request was also made for the Committee to feedback to their appointed Councillor representative once they have received the letter.

Following discussion, the Facilities Manager clarified that iwi were part of the development of the RMP; the second consultation and development of the final draft was completed with involvement from both our iwi partners, hence why they possibly haven't put in a submission. Next steps for collaboration with iwi is in developing our toolkit for managing the RMP following adoption.

It was also noted that pest control could be referenced in the RMP to the Horizons plan, as this sits under their responsibility as well including the funding requirements that go with it.

Freedom Camping Bylaw discussion – it was noted that there were comments in submissions around enforcement of rules and what this may look like. It was advised that Akitio experiences issues with campers on the foreshore blocking off access to furniture and BBQs that are available to public. It was queried whether the volume of freedom campers on the Akitio foreshore down from the camping ground had an impact on business for the camping ground. It was noted that Herbertville also has unique circumstances that need to be considered.

It was advised during discussion that the freedom camping prohibition in 50 and 70 km zones as mentioned in the bylaw draft, pertains to roadside only. There are visitors who stay on the street in campers outside friends or relatives houses. Councillors were advised that this needs to be considered in deliberations when it comes to the blanket prohibition clause in this area, and work will be done to present a summary of suggestions to Council. It was noted that the NZ Motorhome and Caravan Association submission provided valuable feedback to consider.

Reserves Management Plan:

Submission 012 - Judy Gleeson: Mayor Tracey Collis read out a written statement from the submitter who advised she was unable to attend in person due to being out of the area. The statement advised that she has misgivings about the service delivery review which indicates a change of direction for the parks, reserves, and domains, and recreational spaces may be pruned for financial reasons as well as control moved to other entities. She asked that Council take back control of these spaces, and consider taking care of the lawn mowing and maintenance required. She stated that where the Domain Boards are involved, Council could assign a designated Councillor for closer control. She spoke of her involvement with the Pahiatua Carnival Park Board and maintenance and weed control of the reserve that the Board has carried out over the years. She acknowledged the support they receive from TDC, and noted her plea is for the survival of the Domain Board. She described the operation of the Domain Board, including the financial position that is self-sustaining due to the camping aspect the reserve offers, and how they have been able to provide amenities for public and enhancement of facilities. Any future plan to annex off the Domain from the public would be a retrograde step and one size does not fit all. She noted that putting the Domain Board under the auspices of Explore Pahiatua would not help the cause including answering to Explore Pahiatua for elections guidance which is an ad-hoc decision not conveyed officially. She suggested that a supervisory representative from TDC present to meetings of organisations, residents and ratepayers, and offer opportunities for public to voice their opinions. She noted that Council should not dismiss the contributions of the volunteers, individuals and groups who have maintained and improved these facilities.

A request was made to Council's appointed representative on Explore Pahiatua to take back to Explore Pahiatua the comments around Explore Pahiatua and elections mentioned in the statement.

That the report from the Manager - Democracy Services dated 24 June 2025 concerning the Hearing of Submissions on Freedom Camping Bylaw and Tararua District Reserves Management Plan Consultations be received.

That the Tararua District Council provide direction to officers on matters to be considered at the meeting of Council scheduled for 30 July 2025 as discussed, including:

Tararua District Reserves Management Plan:

- ***Community Partnerships with Locals and Councils***
- ***Naming rights and buildings***
- ***Consultation on re-naming of reserves***
- ***Budgets as part of the Annual Plan***
- ***Formal Partnership agreements***

- *Main Street Funding*
- *Weed and Pest Control*
- *Flexibility and autonomy of Council with Domain Board involvement*

Freedom Camping:

- *Enforcement*
- *Akitio and Herbertville – what are the unintended consequences*
- *Length of stay clearly defined*
- *Akitio foreshore management*

Crs Johns/Wards

Carried

There being no further business the Chairperson thanked those present for their attendance and contributions, and declared the meeting closed at 1:01pm.

Mayor