

town & country matters



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From the Mayor, Meng Foon



Tena koutou katoa, kinga mate tatau, hoki wairua koutou, haere okiokinga, haere atu ra.

The past few months have been exceptionally busy for my councillors

and me. The consultation of the Ten Year Plan was well received by all who took part in the process. I deliberately went to as many organisations and community meetings as possible and as a result was at home for just two nights in April.

Council staff and I enjoyed your views and appreciate the 400 or so submissions received on a broad range of topics.

Affordability has always been an issue for the community. We have listened to the heartfelt pleas for Council to contain costs while continuing to keep our region looking neat and tidy and progressing the region's prosperity.

I have been a key witness to the wastewater treatment plant application for our city, acknowledging we do need to treat our wastewater. My submission was to get a consent which we can hopefully live with financially, with the plant providing environmental and cultural redress.

I have been part of the interview panel for a new area commander for our police district. From the good quality applications, we hope the person chosen will continue to provide a safer and happier community to live in.

It is great to see the progression of the Bunnings megastore. We hope the Mitre 10 and The Warehouse will get on with their buildings too. Hikurangi Forest Farms is tracking well with their \$240M wood processing plant, due to be commissioned in 2011. This should bring up to 300 new jobs and a flow-on benefit of another 600 new jobs.

The concept of "hubbing" is being discussed for the wood processing industry at Matawhero. An area by the Matawhero railway station is zoned light industrial, so planning is vital. Lots to do, thanks for your support, drop in for a cuppa, hei konei ra.

Meng



Six-year-old Reece Hoyt was the youngest person to make a submission on the Ten Year Plan. With grandfather Grant Vincent's help, Reece supported extending the library and walkways and further developing the inner harbour.

BRING IT ON...that's the general response to Council's plans to extend the city's riverbank walkways. One submitter called for Gisborne to be a "super-cycle" city, another said simply, "Do it now".

Such has been the success of the walkways developed to date for recreation, beautification and fraternisation, it is no surprise that about 250 submitters supported the proposal which could see river and beachside cycle and walkways extended over the next five years. Each of the three planned walkways – starting with the Waikanae Beach Walkway – depends on funding from sources outside Council in addition to Council's contribution. Several submitters suggested extending the walkway towards the Waipaoa River in a board walk (similar to those in Napier and New Plymouth), and

to connect with the proposed walk and cycleway to Wainui. Most agreed that walkways were not only good for tourism, they also brought health and wellbeing benefits through walking, cycling, running and skating. A Gisborne GP wrote: "It is essential that walking and cycling, particularly, are promoted. They remain the cheapest and most accessible forms of exercise. Exercise is good for everyone at any age and it will be key to controlling our diabetes epidemic."

Many supporters called for Council to use available government funding rather than use rates exclusively. Others suggested actively seeking partnerships with the community as Napier had done with Rotary to develop its coastal walkway. Crushed shell pathways were suggested.

Good support for major projects

Councillors will this month decide on the district's future over the next 10 years ... and the overall rates rise for the coming year.

After listening to community concerns about rates, staff have recommended halving the overall rates rise to 3.41 percent from the earlier proposed rise of 7 percent. This has been achieved by various means including halving the rate paid for the wastewater treatment plant, and capping employee benefits.

The draft Ten Year Plan has been the hot topic for discussion over the past few months with the Mayor, councillors and staff talking to more than 200 people at 37 consultation meetings. The Mayor also presented the plan to another 250 people at the meetings of 13 community organisations. More than 400 submissions were received, the majority in support of most of the major projects. Last year 470 submissions were received but 420 of them were on the single issue of Wainui reticulation.

New-look newsletter

You'll notice a new look for *Town & Country Matters* this issue with a new banner and a few additions from Council's colour palette. You will see a few changes around town too with a few vehicles brandishing the updated logo, and staff parading their new shirts and jackets.

Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie was pleased with the number of submissions received.

"Identifying the major projects in the summary Ten Year Plan and the formatting of the submission forms helped people give a preference even without expressing a view."

"Part of our strategy was to give priority to capital spending essential to the functioning of the community and the economy, such as the wastewater plant; and push back projects that improve community infrastructure, like the library and pool, until the community is better placed to fund them. We also put emphasis on capital projects that attract external funding, and collaborations with community funders. The submissions show support for this approach." Strong support was received for the proposed cycle and walkways extension, inner harbour redevelopment, War Memorial Theatre upgrade, library extension and some form of civic space. Good support was also received for the multi-purpose recreational facility, with many people supporting just the pool concept. Support was mixed for a mobile library. Universal water metering was the only major project to receive more opposition than support.

Late last month Council listened to the submissions of 61 people and read the recommendations presented by staff officers. Councillors were to finalise the Ten Year Plan at their meeting in late June, once the revised plan had been audited again. The plan takes effect from 1 July.

Ready to start wastewater treatment plant if green light given

The hearing is over, the registrations of interest have been publicly notified and, if the hearing commissioners give the green light this month, a new wastewater treatment plant could still be built at Banks Street site before the end of next year. Commissioners last month heard Council's application to vary the conditions of its existing 35-year wastewater resource consents to build a treatment plant, using the biological trickling filter

process, and to discharge the treated wastewater to sea via the existing 1.8km marine outfall pipe. Registrations of interest were called last month for the construction of the proposed plant and the separation of industrial wastewater. These include a major pipe laying contract and the installation of new sewers. The size of the project means that national contracting firms are likely to register an interest. But project manager Peter McConnell says

that this could see some sub-contracting work for local companies. Designed by CH2M Beca, the total wastewater project is estimated to be completed within a \$45M budget, including escalation and risk costs. Construction on both contracts is programmed to start in November 2009 and finish by October 2010, with commissioning and handover of the works before the end of 2010.

Litterbugs cost the whole district

Does \$400 make a difference to you?

Thought so. But it's surprising how many people regularly toss that amount out of a car. Last year about 27 people paid \$400 each when they dumped rubbish where they shouldn't.

Council has upped its fine for litterers and rubbish dumpers to up to \$400 a pop, and adds clean-up costs when required.

One person had to pay nearly \$1000 with clean-up costs added.

But it's not just the offenders who are paying. Last year, clean-up costs of illegal rubbish dumping in the city cost Council and you, the ratepayers, about \$50,000 in clean-up costs. That's why the more you can do to let Council know of illegal dumpings, the better.

Environmental educator Anne Lister says rubbish dumping around the district is nothing new.

"It is certainly no worse than in previous years but it is always disappointing to hear of new incidences. Some fines were for dumping grass clippings and garden waste, which is still dumped rubbish."

Last month Council staff were alerted to the dumping of 250 used car tyres in the Titirangi/Kaiti Hill reserve. Not only were the tyres an eyesore, they were potentially dangerous.

"The good news is that many people and organisations in the community are currently involved in keeping the city clean and tidy by picking up rubbish on a regular basis. This all helps to keep rates down.

"Council gives out gloves and bags for this type of



Dumping litter or rubbish is like throwing \$400 out your car window. That's the cost of the fine for illegal littering. Please use the litter bins provided or take your rubbish home with you. Recycling facilities are available at AllBrites in Innes Street, seven days a week.

collection and generally arranges for a contractor to pick up large amounts of the rubbish once it is collected."

For big deposits, Council pays a contractor to do the work.

Council always attempts to track down the offenders and fines them. The fine for dumping has increased to \$400, but large-scale dumpings can attract far higher fines under the Resource Management Act.

Reduce rural waste and cut costs

Are you dealing with your kitchen and garden waste on site? Or are you sending it to the transfer station or All Brites?

This year Council will cut \$1M out of its operating costs to help keep the rates increase as low as possible. But have you done all you can in your backyard to help reduce costs to Council and yourself through rates?

Increasingly more city people are dealing with their garden and kitchen waste on site. This is reflected in the reduced amount of organic matter going to landfill – now 30 percent – since direct charging was introduced for green waste and rubbish.

But environmental educator Anne Lister says rural people, who are not charged directly for dumping their waste at a rural transfer station, are lagging. Organic waste accounts for about 40 percent of the waste deposited in transfer stations.

City ratepayers currently subsidise the \$1M annual cost of running the nine rural transfer stations. Rural residents simply could not afford the cost on their own.

Rural residents and ratepayers can take their recycling and general waste to their local transfer station with no restrictions. It is well known that some Gisborne-based commercial operators, who pay rates in rural areas, take their waste from the city to rural transfer stations too. Their waste accounts for about a quarter

of the 2000 tonnes dumped each year.

"More than 60 percent, \$645,000, of the \$1M cost of running the transfer stations is spent on cartage costs and tip fees. That cost could be reduced substantially if people reduced the amount of waste they take to the transfer station, and encouraged others to do the same."

What can you do?

- Compost – learn how with Council's help.
- Use a Bokashi bucket and dig the waste into your garden.
- Put the compost on your garden.
- Grow vegetables for your family.
- Use tree and shrub clippings for kindling or firewood.
- Recycle.
- Reuse – set up a Second Hand Sunday in your rural area.
- Contact Council, 867 2049.

Cartage costs and tip fees are both based on weight. The less weight involved, the lower the cost.

Waste from Tolaga Bay and inland rural transfer stations is carted to Gisborne; Coast transfer station waste, to the Waiapu Landfill at Ruatoria. With this landfill filling fast, plans are afoot to increase the dumping area at the Waiapu Landfill. This too adds more costs.

What can you do? Anne Lister says the answer lies in the reduce, reuse, recycle message.

"Rural people could be composting instead of sending green waste to the transfer station. Tree and shrub prunings, for instance, could be cut up for use as kindling or firewood. Many city friends and relatives would probably appreciate a few bundlings of kindling or firewood from the country."

If you don't have the know-how for successful compost-making, Council can help with pamphlets and hands-on community courses on composting and other sustainable living topics like energy usage. Contact Council on 06 867 2049.

What can you do?

If you see someone illegally dumping rubbish, note the:

- car registration number, time and place.

Ring Council on 867 2049.

If you see a pile of dumped rubbish, note the:

- time and place. And ring Council as soon as possible.

How much does it cost:

up to \$400 fine for littering; \$50,000 a year in clean-up costs.

Be quick for rates rebate

About 200 people would have been better off this past year if they had reapplied for their rates rebates. The rebates provide up to \$530 off a person's rates but must be reapplied for by 30 June each rating year. Although Gisborne has one of the country's highest take-ups of the rebate, during the 2008-09 year, about 200 fewer people had applied by early June.

Senior rates officer Fiona Scragg said Council in April sent reminder letters to about 400 people who had successfully applied last year but were yet to reapply for the 2008-09 year.

"We have granted 1672 rate rebates totalling just over \$838,000 but are still down 199 rebates. Last year, 1871 rebates were granted totalling nearly \$880,000 – that's \$42,000 that ratepayers could use."

Second Hand Sunday could go to townships

The twice-yearly Second Hand Sundays have become an institution in the city. Now it could be time for rural residents to follow suit. The days allow people to put unwanted goods out on their property for others to take for free.

Environmental educator Anne Lister says that each time the day is held about 75 tonnes of potential waste is diverted from landfill.

"Rural townships could organise their own day and Council could help promote it. Often good things are thrown in the pit in rural areas that would be ideal for a Second Hand Sunday."

In short

Website wins award

Council's revamped user-friendly website gained official recognition last month when it was named people's choice for Best Redeveloped Website at the Association of Local Government Information Management web awards. The website was designed by Wellington-based Silverstripe and, with many district people still on dial-up internet access, needed to be easy to load and navigate and have a modern appearance.

Flush water before drinking

Residents are reminded of the Ministry of Health recommendation to flush a mugful of water from drinking-water taps (including those with filters) each morning before use to remove any metals that may have dissolved from plumbing fittings. This is recommended for all households, including those on public and private water supplies.

Negotiating possible sale of AML site

The sale of the Tauwhareparae Farms may be off the agenda but negotiations are well under way for the possible sale of the former Advanced Meat Ltd (AML) site to the Office of Treaty Settlements.

Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie says Council is negotiating a price and terms of conditions of sale for the AML site near Midway Beach. Community consultation will take place once a proposal and price are agreed.

Council has resolved to discontinue its discussions with the Crown regarding the sale of the Tauwhareparae farms.

"The sale of Watson Park is only likely to proceed if the Crown agrees to meet Council's cost of relocating the facility. That is unlikely since the cost would be similar to the land's sale price."

Reserves contract up for tender

Contractors will be doing their sums this month as they tender for the \$1M contract to maintain Gisborne and Wainui reserves.

The five-year contract is split into four sections to enable smaller contractors to bid for parts of the contract. The full contract includes major mowing of sports fields, minor mowing of other sections, maintaining street trees and maintaining gardens.

New home for archives

Work is expected to begin soon on redeveloping a Council-owned building in Banks Street to house Council's archives. Council bought the Banks Street site last year as an alternative location for the proposed wastewater treatment plant.

The large building still on site will be converted to provide a temperature and humidity-controlled archives facility, and an office for Council's rivers and drainage and pest and plants divisions.

More fields at Watson Park

The releveling of two full-size soccer fields has boosted the number of available playing grounds at Watson Park.

Now future tournaments will be able to be run at the same site rather than being split to Childers Road Reserve. Junior soccer teams broke in the new fields, which run parallel to Awapuni Road, in late May.

Recreation ideas for Ruatoria

Council is working with the community to help open up recreational opportunities at Ruatoria with a bike track and walkway with riverbank plantings planned over the next 12 months.

Endorsed document first step to achieving vision

A revised vision for Tairāwhiti now has the backing of some major community organisations.

Tairāwhiti By Choice, the district's Community Outcomes document, was last month endorsed by Gisborne District Council, Tairāwhiti Polytechnic, Ministry of Social Development, Department of Conservation and the Police.

The Community Outcomes revision process began in late 2007 with the aim of creating a document that was truly reflective of the community.

Council's community planning and development manager Nedine Thatcher says more than 70 agencies were involved in the process.

"The signing is significant in that it shows all the

organisations are agreeing to share responsibility for achieving the Community Outcomes. And that Council is not the sole agency responsible.

"These organisations share common objectives. It means they speak the same language when advocating for the region. The role of our voluntary sector in helping to achieve these outcomes will be critical. We have had excellent input from them throughout the process and most have 'bought in' as contributing stakeholders. The document, which will help inform and guide policy setting and the delivery of services, is just the first step."

Tairāwhiti By Choice can be downloaded from www.gdc.govt.nz or ring 867 2049 and request a hard copy.



environmentally
sustainable

healthy
Tairāwhiti

connected
Tairāwhiti

prosperous
Tairāwhiti

skilled
& educated

vibrant
Tairāwhiti

safe
Tairāwhiti

empowered
Tairāwhiti



Councillor and urban design champion Pat Seymour is excited by the potential options for the War Memorial Theatre.

Pat champions urban design cause

The title of urban design champion may seem strange for someone who spends much of their time in the farming community of Whangara. But councillor Pat Seymour has the fire in her belly and years of experience necessary to help promote and champion the cause.

As the Council buddy to urban design planner Duncan Rothwell, she sees the Ministry for the Environment-initiated role as helping to provide for Gisborne into the future – promoting outstanding urban design, providing support to those who shape the city and putting urban design at the forefront of Council plans.

She's not just talking inner city. She believes suburban centres and rural townships can also benefit from relatively simple and inexpensive design features. She wants to see more emphasis on recognising the city's landmarks of history, architecture, art and landscape as a way to promote civic pride.

"I have a real interest in urban design and the district's history, and support the work of the Historic Places Trust. It is important that character aspects of our city are retained where possible. We have a number

of Edwardian buildings worth preserving."

A councillor since 2001, chair of the environment and policy committee, and hearing committee member, Pat is well versed in the planning that makes urban areas tick. On top of that, she's visited every New Zealand city more than once as part of her former role as Plunket's national president.

She says towns and cities need to meet people's needs, be safe, accessible and prosperous. She's hot about good lighting for safety and enhancing design features; and about security cameras – she was on the original trust to install the city CCTV system. She believes a civic space needs to be under people's noses, not tucked away in a dark corner.

She is inspired by Hastings' Opera House redevelopment, and the potential that offers for Gisborne's War Memorial Theatre; the vibrancy of Christchurch's city markets; and the opportunities for Gisborne's riverbanks. Good planning, she says, will help avoid white elephants and result in better urban design.

The draft Gisborne Urban Development Strategy is expected to be finalised this month.

Local design keeps public toilet costs down

A local initiative has seen new low-cost toilets installed around the district. The tiled, concrete toilets have been erected at the BMX park in Lytton Road and others will follow soon at Sponge Bay and the Te Araroa Domain.

The unisex toilets, the same style as the more expensive Xceloo, were built by Gisborne firm Permacrete after an idea put to them by Council's community facilities department. Permacrete developed the concept

further with improved doors and other features and is now beginning to market the low-cost toilets nationally.

Community facilities asset manager Terry McMillan says the Sponge Bay toilet should be in place by the end of June.

"This will complete the upgrade of that area. Solar-powered street lights have been installed and this has enabled surveillance cameras to be put in place too."

Staff doing their bit to make savings across the organisation

An initiative to cut \$1M out of Council's operating budget and save 2.5 percent on rates is well under way. The biggest saving to date has been a \$70,000 reduction in the cost of Council's insurance premiums and brokerage fees. This was achieved thanks to Council joining a Bay of Plenty shared services arrangement which will also see savings from stationery to aerial photography and other support costs.

Chief executive Lindsay McKenzie suggested the \$1M reduction as a means to reduce the total rates

requirement for the 2009-10 year.

"Council was struggling to decide where to cut funding to the different projects and groups. There were going to be winners and losers either way. This 5 percent cut across the organisation reduces the rates requirements and doesn't result in people missing out entirely."

Staff were quick to support the quest, with one staff member cheekily asking, and getting, a 5 percent reduction in course fees from an out-of-town training provider. Other staff initiatives include

reducing the amount of paper consumed, and making more use of the internet where on-line rather than paper transactions can be made; and reducing working hours, where possible, for less pay.

"We will also hold vacancies open for a bit longer. Every time there is a vacancy, it is a collective senior management decision whether to replace.

"Achieving the 5 percent will be a stretch but we hope to get there. The challenge is that costs are still there but they are not funded."

All geared up to create cycle-friendly city

Cycling around the city could get a whole lot better over the next year, thanks to a community-Council initiative.

The Cycling Advisory Group, which met for the first time in March, wants the district to be a place where people choose to cycle and where people come to cycle.

As part of that, the group wants to encourage more cyclists to use cycleways, and to promote cycling as a preferred mode of transport.

The group arose out of an approach made to Council by an informal group of cycling enthusiasts, known as Critical Mass. The advisory group will help with reviewing and monitoring the Walking and Cycling Strategy, technical advice, road safety and education. It has no authority to commit Council to any course of action.

The group includes a range of participants from individual cyclists and cycle, racing club and school representatives, to Transit, Opus, the Gisborne Cycle and Walkway Trust and the Police.



Put your cycle where your heart lies. Join the growing number of people (some of whom are pictured above) who meet as part of Critical Mass – 12.15pm, at the Marina carpark on the last Friday of every month – to cycle through the city together. The international movement, which began in San Francisco in 1992, is a monthly ride that celebrates cycling and asserts cyclists' right to the road in a non-confrontational way. The next Critical Mass ride will be on Friday 26 June – see you there, 12.15pm for 12.30pm ride.

Engineering and works manager Peter Higgs says focus groups have been set up to look at priority issues. These include roundabout safety, cycleways, driver behaviour, and what can be done to encourage more students to cycle to and from school.

"The solutions to these are likely to be a combination

compact and has consistently good weather. Cycling is good for the environment, personal health and household finances."

He urges interested people to attend the advisory group's next meeting, scheduled for 23 June at noon in the Council Chambers.

of engineering, education and enforcement. It's good to see the willingness of all parties to help Gisborne become a cycle-friendly city. Gisborne once had one of the highest proportions of people using cycles for transport. We want to help make it easier again for people to have that choice.

"With the physical work on the Wainui cycleway likely to start next summer, subject to government approval, the group is considering the next cycleway stretch from Sponge Bay Road into the city."

Advisory group chair and Critical Mass advocate Manu Caddie says cycling makes sense in Gisborne. "The city is almost completely flat, relatively

Please call Council first, not the bulldozer company

Looking to build a house on a hillside or near a stream? Perhaps it only involves cutting into a bank and moving a few metres of soil?

It's not just a matter of calling in the bulldozer, you know. The best idea is to call Council first instead.

Certain processes need to be followed before starting to develop building sites on hill country or near a stream or river, says soil conservator Derek Birks.

"But before any earthworks take place, a geological professional should have the opportunity to view the site, or conduct any required investigation work. This involves any development on marginal land and requiring building or subdivision consent – whether for a house, subdivision or even a farm shed."

Any building consent application on potentially unstable land needs to include a detailed site-specific geotechnical investigation report.

Derek says it is important for a geotech professional to have the opportunity to see a site in its natural



A geological professional should have the opportunity to view a proposed building site in its natural state (above left) and conduct any required investigation work before the site is altered by significant earthworks (right).

state and study the land's physical features before the land is altered by earthworks.

"Altering the site with cuts and filling can greatly alter the investigation and analysis, and affect the engineering recommendations made to make the site stable."

Modifying a site with earthworks may also require a resource consent. This too should be considered before starting work. Land disturbance consents are usually free. Council is responsible, under the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Building Act 2004, for ensuring that building development and subdivision either takes place on stable land, or good engineering solutions are in place to ensure buildings will not be affected by land instability.

The District Plan has various rules which trigger the need for land disturbance consents. In some areas, this can be as small as a half metre cut over 20 metres, resulting in about 10 cubic metres of soil. In other areas, the trigger will be a greater volume of soil disturbance. Other rules come into play for natural and cultural heritage values. People also need to consider how stormwater will be managed during and after construction. Rules are available at www.gdc.govt.nz or ring Soil Conservation, ph 867 2049. Council sometimes seeks peer reviews of the geotech assessments to ensure that the land in question is suitable for building on. The need for peer reviews is based on the nature of the site and the complexity of the issues involved.

Plagued by rats?

Rats! They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles... so the poem goes.

But there's no need to call in the Pied Piper. Just ring Council for advice and bait, and deal to the vermin that have reproduced so well over the long summer.