**Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors’ update November 2023: District news**

**Tamahere-Woodlands Ward volunteers honoured with Mayoral Awards**

Congratulations to Sue Edmonds of Eureka, Kitty Burton of Matangi, John Bridgman of Gordonton and Leo Koppens of Tamahere, who were local recipients of the 2023 Waikato District Mayoral Awards presented at a ceremony in the Council Chambers this past month.

*Sue Edmonds****:*** A member of the Eureka community for 25 years, Sue Edmonds immortalised Eureka through a long-running column in the Waikato Times, chaired the Eureka Community Committee (currently not operating), prepared submissions to Council on behalf of Eureka, was a member of the Eureka Express committee, and a member of the Tamahere-Woodlands Heritage Committee.

*Kitty Burton* has volunteered in the Matangi community for more than 30 years. She was secretary of the Matangi School Board of Trustees through the 1990s, was on the school’s PTA fundraising committee that renovated the school pool and provided a school hall, and helped organise the school’s centennial celebrations in 2010. Since then she has served as secretary for both the Matangi Community Committee and Tamahere-Woodlands Heritage Committee, as well as running the community’s news website Matangi Link.

*John Bridgman* has lived in Gordonton all his life and has served on numerous local committees such as the Woodlands Trust, the Gordonton School Board, the Hukanui Marae and the Gordonton District Committee, for which he served as chair for more than 10 years and is currently its longest serving living member. He’s been a key local figure in many improvement projects, the major one being the Gordonton Hall.

*Leo Koppens* has been passionate about the ecological restoration of gullies in the Tamahere and Matangi area for 40 years. He has led a dedicated group of volunteers to restore the Tamahere Reserve along the Mangaone Stream, the Allan Turner Walkway and, most recently, the reserve land below Bilsthorpe Lane along the Mangaharakeke Stream. He has also inspired many private landowners to rehabilitate their own gully land.

**Long Term Plan**

The Council is working towards its next Long Term Plan 2024-34 with a focus on the first three years starting in July 2024. This is challenging, as the indicative cost of maintaining infrastructure and services currently looks like requiring a double-digit general rate increase. To keep rates down your Council is now examining what initiatives may need to be delayed or, possibly, levels of service reduced.

However, there are items that should not be avoided any longer, such as upgrading the dog pound in Ngaruawahia at a cost of $1.85 million to keep staff safe, maintain animal welfare, and meet legislated requirements.

With just 33,000 rateable properties, every rise or fall of 1% in the general rate is equivalent to about $780,000, so this Council operates tight budgets.

***Roading:*** For example, our roading budget is allocated the single largest proportion of general rates ($31.50 of every $100), but this no longer keeps pace with the rising cost of renewing one of the largest roading networks of any district council in the country. We must maintain more than 2,400 kms of road, but inflation means we haven’t met our annual target to reseal a minimum of 5% of our roads for the last two years. We still meet targets for average quality measured by smooth travel – despite rising requests to repair potholes - but we’re sweating our assets and recent weather events have strained our resources.

***Three Waters and targeted rates:*** With the new Government’s promise to repeal Three Waters’ legislation, your Council is also now working on our plans and joint recommendations (with neighbouring Councils) to the Government on how to proceed. Reform is still needed as Councils cannot afford the massive multi-million-dollar investment required in our assets to meet growing demand and higher legislated standards. Rate-based funding is likely to prove inadequate in the foreseeable future.

The Council’s LTP workshops are open for the community to attend. Formal community consultation is expected to take place about March/April next year.

**Consultations currently open:**

* **Waikato District Council Proposed Water Supply Bylaw 2023** – this contains Council’s rules for protecting our water supply from waste or contamination, and protecting our infrastructure from damage, including water meters. With about 18,000 connections, the Council supplies potable water to about half of the rateable properties in the district. Consultation on the new bylaw is open until Sunday 5 November on the *Council’s website* at <https://shape.waikatodistrict.govt.nz>.
* **Waka Kotahi community survey on SH1B Telephone Rd rail crossing** – Waka Kotahi is seeking community feedback on a new option to keep the rail crossing open - to realign Telephone Rd and to close Holland Rd at the western side of the intersection. This option is costed at $3-$4 million and, compared with the cost of the first options proposed ($8-$11 million) to meet safety requirements, it would more closely rival the cost of permanent closure ($2.5 million). Have your say on the *Waka Kotahi website* <https://nzta.govt.nz/projects/sh1b-telephone-road-rail-crossing> before the survey closes at 5pm on Friday 3 November.

***Contact your Tamahere-Woodlands Councillors:***

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